

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary

The IIRE 1982-2007 – III – The Second Decade

Into a new and better century: 1993-2006

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When I arrived in Amsterdam to work at the IIRE early in 1993, everyone at and around the institute knew that its work was bound to be affected by the big transformations in the world. But over three years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and over a year after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we were still coming to terms with the scope of the changes. There was still no solid consensus about the difficulty of the new challenges facing the radical activists and thinkers that the IIRE exists to serve. Some emphasized new opportunities that they thought the disappearance of the Stalinist regimes could bring.

The Sandinistas' electoral defeat in Nicaragua in February 1990 had been one early sign that the whole radical left, including forces with independent traditions and democratic credentials, could be headed for hard times. But other developments were less clear-cut. Negotiations in South Africa between the apartheid government and ANC were already far advanced, and the end of legal apartheid at hand; the institute's South African co-thinkers would be divided in the run-up to the country's first multiracial elections about the attitude to take towards the ANC-COSATU-SACP alliance. Similarly, the September 1993 Oslo accords between Israel and the PLO would unleash a debate among the institute's co-thinkers in the Middle East. All of them saw the accords as deeply flawed; but some of them thought at first that the peace process could create some openings to work towards Palestinian self-determination.

In the year or two after I began work as programme director at the IIRE, a consensus took shape, slowly and not without frictions, among our Fellows and staff. The conviction took hold that the new

opportunities opened up by the fall of Stalinism were dwarfed by the challenges the radical left faced. Only part of the discussion that led to this conclusion took place at the institute itself, of course. Our Fellows were and are part of the leaderships of the Fourth International, its sections and broader political organizations, social movements and left-wing intellectual circles, and the institute was only one place where these debates were taking place. But as we joined in recognizing the changes in the world, the institute itself changed. In keeping with the critical, open-minded spirit that characterized the institute from the beginning, we helped people on the radical left understand better what was going on, why, how, and how they could resist more effectively.

In the 1980s the IIRE had focused on understanding how post-capitalist societies and states had originated; in the 1990s we helped analyze the consequences of their transition back to capitalism. We produced studies of the new phase of capitalism – the age of neoliberal globalization – that right-wing victories had set in motion years before the cracks in the post-capitalist states became unmistakable. We reorganized our educational sessions to make the challenge of neoliberal globalization their central axis. Not that we presented the challenge in a narrowly economic way; on the contrary, we devoted increasing attention to its ecological, gender, sexual and national/ethnic dimensions, as well as the wars we saw as neoliberalism's geopolitical expression. In the wake of the 1999 Seattle protests and the rise of the Social Forums, we reoriented our schools and publications to the global justice movement, viewing it as a crucial arena for the renewal of the radical left. And we came to terms – belatedly – with the practical implications of the changes in the world for the IIRE's own operations, a process that has culminated in our 2006-07 relaunch.

The backwards transition

Debates over the restoration of capitalism beginning in Eastern Europe were particularly intense. No one associated with the institute regretted the fall of the bureaucratic dictatorships. On the contrary. The IIRE's 1991 seminar on Eastern Europe that Pierre and Sally Rousset mention in their article included Eastern European participants who had resisted and suffered under bureaucratic regimes, for example as part of Solidarnosc in Poland or Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. As the first democratic governments took office in Eastern Europe, the IIRE even had a friend or two in high places, like veteran dissident Petr Uhl in Czechoslovakia. But in a matter of months the exponents of democratic socialism were unceremoniously shoved aside, often by the apparatchiks of yesterday born again as the capitalists of today. Understanding what was going on took research and time.

And emotions could run high, particularly when it came to countries like Cuba where post-capitalist states continued to survive. When the IIRE opened its doors in 1982, criticism of the Cuban regime coexisted in our circles with a certain degree of enthusiasm for the leadership of Fidel Castro, who had begun as a revolutionary outside the Stalinized Communist Parties and charted a course independent of Moscow. By the 1990s, a long-time student and supporter of the Cuban revolution like IIRE Fellow Janette Habel was striking a more critical note, as in her 1991 book *Cuba: The Revolution in Peril*. The change in tone came by way of some fierce discussions.

I particularly remember an exchange at one IIRE course not long after I joined the staff. Two of the people attending this particular course came from Senegal; they were members of a party that had emerged from largely Maoist roots and acquired a mass base and some institutional weight in Senegalese politics. The day that we discussed Cuba, one of the Senegalese participants said: I have to say that those of us who come from Africa have a hard time discussing criticisms of the Cuban leadership objectively, because of the crucial role the Cubans have played in supporting African struggles. At that point a black South African participant — a fighter against apartheid with a rather light skin whom the apartheid regime had classified as 'coloured' — responded: Well I'm an African

too, and I have to say I don't agree with that way of presenting things. The Senegalese rejoined: If you were black, you'd agree with me.

In the discussion that followed neither of them changed the other's mind, either about how to look at Cuba or about who was or wasn't black. Yet the whole exchange took place with mutual respect and even an occasional smile. It has stuck in my mind as a striking example of the institute's success in making it possible to discuss very fundamental differences in a spirit of solidarity and even friendliness. In fact the discussion could scarcely have taken place anywhere else in the world. The Senegalese and the South African didn't even have a common language: the Senegalese spoke French, the South African English, and they could only communicate thanks to our volunteer simultaneous interpreters. Nor would the two of them have been likely to have ever met without the institute, since they were not people who could easily buy plane tickets to other countries — or the kind of people whose travel is often subsidized by governments or major NGOs.

Not only surviving post-capitalist societies generated debate; post-capitalist societies in decomposition were also a source of disagreements. The wars in former Yugoslavia were a notable example, especially the war in Bosnia. Memories are already fading now of how deeply that war divided Europeans, and particularly the left. As it gradually became clear that the US under Bill Clinton and Serbia under Slobodan Milosevic were on a collision course, a number of prominent left-wing intellectuals and currents devoted themselves to refuting, qualifying or evading indictments of ethnic cleansing by Serb nationalists. Others, seeing Milosevic and his allies as the latter-day incarnation of Stalinist crimes, tended to side with the anti-Milosevic forces in ex-Yugoslavia, in some cases even including Croatian president Franjo Tudjman. And of course many on the left adopted the cause of heroic, beleaguered, multiethnic Sarajevo and Bosnia, though they were sometimes a bit taken aback when Clinton claimed to take up the same cause. In those years, well before 9/11, not much attention was paid to jihadis who arrived to fight alongside the Bosnian Muslims after a stint in Afghanistan.

In these many-sided, confused debates, people at and around the IIRE by and large adopted an unusually nuanced position. Credit for this sophisticated analysis was due largely to IIRE Fellow Catherine Samary. An economist who had spent years studying economic self-management in Yugoslavia — her expertise had been put to good use in the IIRE Notebook for Study and Research *Plan, Market, Democracy* — Samary also had a solid grasp of the intricate balancing act that Josip Tito had carried on for decades among the country's different nationalities. Her knowledge made her sceptical of the two most common narratives about the conflict: both the one that described the Western Balkan peoples as being at one another's throats for centuries, only briefly interrupted by a few decades of Communist dictatorship, and the one about the peoples who had lived side by side in harmony until nationalist apparatchiks turned them against one another.

Samary's IIRE Notebook for Study and Research *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia* had already been completed in French when I arrived. One of my first tasks as IIRE publications director was to see the English edition through to publication. I was impressed by her careful but militant account, which refused either to treat any of the competing ex-Yugoslav nationalisms as innocent or to call down a plague equally on all their houses. Samary's work was an expression of practical solidarity with the Bosnians who were trying to defend the ideal of a multiethnic society and at the same time resist the neoliberal transformation of their society. Samary soon developed her vision in greater depth in her book *Yugoslavia Dismembered*. I was glad to help it reach a bigger international audience (and bring in some extra money for the IIRE's always limited budget) by translating it into English for the edition that Monthly Review Press put out in 1995. *Yugoslavia Dismembered* never got the attention given to books on the conflict from bigger publishing houses with simpler plot lines. But I think Samary's book stands up better to rereading than the others.

Ernest Mandel's legacy

The world was not only changing drastically, it was soon the poorer by a major radical thinker: the Marxist economist Ernest Mandel, the IIRE's founding spirit, who died in 1995 at the age of 71. I remembered him well from the week he taught at the three-month course on socialist strategy I had attended in the autumn of 1987. I sometimes wondered how much he remembered about me, hoping in fact that he had forgotten our first meeting. I had been the one to open the institute's front door to him when he arrived for his week's teaching, and never having laid eyes on him before, had suspiciously demanded to know who he was before I let him in.

But I remember his teaching with unqualified pleasure. To my mind, Mandel was not entirely what people took him for. Many people saw him, approvingly or disapprovingly, as a fount of Marxist orthodoxy. His grave, old-fashioned manner suited him to play the part. But his freethinking spirit got in the way. I remember a debate in 1987 about the Spanish civil war in which students defending different positions implicitly competed for his stamp of approval while he sat listening in solemn silence. When his turn came to speak, he said that he would read to us what 'comrade Trotsky' had written on the question. He then read a very long passage from Trotsky's writings aloud to us, closed the volume, put it aside, and said: *'Now, on the basis of what happened in Spain, you cannot possibly defend what comrade Trotsky says here.'* I probably exaggerate in remembering a couple of my fellow students practically falling off their chairs.

One of my last memories of Mandel from my days on the IIRE staff is less pleasant: my memory of his first heart attack, which occurred when he was at the institute for a meeting. I remember his sitting on the steps that led up to the institute library, saying shakily: *'It's nothing, nothing. Perhaps I could have a glass of water. I just need to rest a little, I'll be fine.'* But when he got up from the steps it was to be taken away in an ambulance.

It was only fitting that his death provided an occasion to look back critically at his theoretical work over the course of over half a century, which was a significant part of the body of thought on which the IIRE was founded. This critical re-examination took place in particular at a memorial seminar at the IIRE in 1996, a year after his death. The papers presented there were later published as the book *The Legacy of Ernest Mandel* (Verso, 1999), edited and introduced by IIRE Fellow Gilbert Achcar, whose authors (besides Mandel himself) included Fellows Michael Löwy, Michel Husson and Catherine Samary. Written at a moment when optimism on the left was at something of a low ebb, Löwy's essay in particular discussed Mandel's famously incorrigible optimism, distinguishing his occasional over-optimistic judgments from the underlying bedrock of his revolutionary humanist convictions.

Samary's essay took another look at Mandel's conception of the economic transition from capitalism to socialism, showing how after his famous debate with Alec Nove he gradually became willing to allow a greater role for the market in the transition process. On the one hand, she emphasized the constants in his conception of the transition, the things that ensured its continuity and overall coherence: above all the central importance of direct democracy and workers' self-activity throughout the process. On the other hand, she underlined the importance of distinguishing means from ends. Planning, she stressed, is not the essence of socialism, but simply a means to the end of making collective, democratic social choices. While the market is wholly unsuited to making the major decisions about investments or employment in a transitional society, it can be useful as a mechanism for the allocation of consumer goods — as long as this mechanism is socialized and subordinated to human choices.

The IIRE's commitment to a critical examination of Mandel's intellectual and political work has continued since I left staff, notably this year with the reception at the new IIRE headquarters to celebrate the publication of Dutch historian Jan-Willem Stutje's biography. IIRE librarian

Christopher Beck and I are now translating it from Dutch to English, in hopes that the non-Dutch readers among the IIRE's friends will be able to read it sometime in 2008.

Before my time on staff had ended, yet another long-time IIRE Fellow had died: Livio Maitan. He had been a popular lecturer on topics from Europe to China to the history of the Fourth International. His persistent tendency to go over his allotted time — apparently a surprise to him each time it happened — had been more than compensated by his half century of experience, steadfastness, integrity and shrewd political judgment. It was my successor as programme director, Bertil Videt, who represented the IIRE in 2006 at the founding seminar of the Livio Maitan Studies Centre in Rome.

New questions

A good half of *The Legacy of Ernest Mandel* was devoted to discussing Mandel's work in Marxist economics. His *Marxist Economic Theory* (1964) had helped launch the Marx renaissance of the 1960s by putting Marxist economics on a firmly contemporary, empirical foundation; his *Late Capitalism* (1978) had been a trailblazing account of the nature and end of capitalism's post-war expansion. But clearly by the time he died new changes were visible in capitalism's functioning that Mandel had not yet had time to analyze. In the 1990s a new generation of economists took up this task. Some of them gathered to debate their findings at a series of economists' seminars at the IIRE, which after 1995 took place under the auspices of the Ernest Mandel Study Centre.

As a non-economist I did not participate in these seminars; my then colleague Robert Went was responsible for their practical organization. It's too bad that Robert has not been able to contribute a discussion of them to this volume. For my part I can only report on the aspects of these economists' work that were reflected in the IIRE's own publications and its more general educational courses. We decided in those years to emphasize the newness of the global order we were teaching about by holding several sessions entitled 'new questions'. Actually the first one was called 'New Questions, New Answers'. But by the time we organized the second one a sense of the magnitude of the issues we were grappling with had made us more modest.

One focus of the IIRE's economic publications from the mid-1990s was debunking mainstream economists' declarations that capitalism had emerged triumphantly from its doldrums and entered a new period of sustained, rapid growth. Looking back, these declarations took a variety of shifting forms, which were sometimes forgotten within a few years. Fellow Tony Smith's IIRE Notebook on *Lean Production*, for example, examined claims that the old Fordist economy had made way for a new 'Toyotist' economy, in which 'just-in-time' production systems would eliminate the sluggishness and inefficiency of the old industrial economy. The economic shifts described were real, of course. Their promise as a basis for long-term growth turned out not to be borne out by the economic performance in the 1990s of their Japanese homeland, however.

The IIRE Notebook on *Women's Lives in the New Global Economy*, edited by Fellow Penny Duggan and Heather Dashner, similarly debunked the myth that a more flexible capitalism was somehow advancing women's emancipation (except for the small minority of women in rich countries who benefit from the availability once more of cheap servants). Twelve feminist activists and scholars on five continents described the sweeping changes at workplaces and in families brought about by the growth of world trade, regional economic integration (EU/NAFTA/ MERCOSUR) and austerity policies in response to pressures for 'competitiveness'. They showed how much the new neoliberal order relies on women's cheap labour in dependent countries, flexible labour in rich countries and unpaid labour in homes everywhere. Trupti Shah's fascinating essay on India showed how even that country's plague of 'dowry death', superficially a holdover from its pre-capitalist, Hindu traditions,

was in reality the result of capitalist development and the consequent 'Sanskritization' of lower-caste Hindus.

For a large majority of the world's population, in fact, the transformation of global capitalism from the 1980s was most obvious in the human tragedy of the global debt crisis. The IIRE's work on analyzing the changes under way reflected not only an abstract scholarly interest but also a commitment to solidarity with the victims of the process. This commitment was expressed most directly in the 1990s in the institute's partnership with the Brussels-based Committee for Cancellation of the Third World Debt, better known by its French acronym CADTM. This partnership resulted in the IIRE Notebook *World Bank/IMF/WTO: The Free-Market Fiasco*, co-edited by CADTM president and IIRE Fellow Eric Toussaint. It also resulted in practical cooperation on the institute's educational courses. A great proportion of the African participants in IIRE sessions in recent years have come in contact with the institute through the CADTM's work against debt, which has drained their continent of resources and robbed its governments of their economic independence over the past quarter-century.

By the time co-director Robert Went's own IIRE Notebook on *Globalization* appeared (in my translation from Dutch) in 2000, glowing accounts of the Toyotist boom had given way to glowing accounts of the dotcom economy. The Notebook exposed the technological determinism behind the standard account of neoliberal globalization, which made it seem as if Thatcherism and Reaganism had been inevitable products of information technology and cheap transport. (Information technology has become increasingly important to the IIRE's work, of course, as Susan Caldwell explains in her contribution to this volume. Cheap international transport would mean more to us if the IIRE wasn't so dependent on fares from the world's poorest countries, which have benefited least.)

Globalization pointed out that political decisions, and political defeats for the left and labour movement, have been crucial to the ways that this technology has been used in society. The account in *Globalization* was actually a prelude to a more thorough discussion in Went's later work *The Enigma of Globalization* (Routledge, 2002), which made clear the qualitative leap involved in today's capitalist globalization by pointing out the unprecedented internationalization of all three of the circuits of capital (trading capital, finance capital and productive capital) described by Marx.

_'New' themes

Marxism as understood at the IIRE has never meant a narrow focus on economics, however. It has always included attention to so-called 'new social questions' — an odd expression, given that the woman's movement for example is at least as old as the modern labour movement. A series of women's schools and seminars at the institute, beginning before my arrival in Amsterdam, has contributed to deepening the radical left's understanding of feminism, as Penelope Duggan recounts in her contribution to this volume. Her *Working Paper on The Feminist Challenge to Traditional Political Organizing*, the distillation of many lectures over many years, is an example of the thoroughgoing, illuminating synthesis of Marxism and feminism that teachers at the institute have brought to bear on many classical political issues. Pierre Rousset, as the institute's first director, was especially concerned with ecological issues; his article discusses this dimension of the IIRE's work.

My own contribution as an IIRE staff person focused on questions of sexuality, which I had been working on for 15 years before I arrived in Amsterdam, and on issues of ethnicity and nationality. I never had any claim to make any original contribution on what Marxists call 'the national question'. I

only presented in my teaching what other IIRE associates had researched and written, notably IIRE Fellow Michael Löwy. His anthology *Fatherland or Mother Earth?* became the first IIRE Notebook for Study and Research to reach a larger audience through part of a series co-published by Pluto Press in London.

This was the second major redesign of the Notebooks during my time on staff. The new-style Notebooks had their disadvantages. For one thing, co-publishing with Pluto sharply raised the Notebooks' price, limiting our ability to distribute them for free or very cheaply in underdeveloped countries and to our own students. The process of negotiating with Pluto at every step of the way also contributed to slowing down the rhythm of Notebook publication. But most people around the IIRE seemed to feel that the disadvantages were outweighed by the advantages of producing books that really looked like serious books and were read by more people beyond our own circle of contacts.

Fatherland or Mother Earth? was a good Notebook to start with, making an important statement on Marxist debates on nationalism and internationalism. The title made Löwy's internationalism immediately clear: hardly surprising for a writer of Austrian Jewish origin who grew up in Brazil and has been living for many years in France. The book links the tradition of labour internationalism to the new internationalism of the global justice movement and social movements generally, especially the ecological movement (ecology has been another of Löwy's main themes for years). But unlike some Marxist analyses whose internationalism is abstract and expresses a certain disdain for national movements in general, Löwy's argument pays close attention to the specific historical contexts that make some national movements largely reactionary (as often in Eastern Europe since the 1990s) and others largely progressive (from Vietnamese resistance against the Japanese, French and US to the Zapatistas' revolt against NAFTA). He contrasts the aridity of Stalin's four-point definition of a nation — adopted uncritically by a surprising number of anti-Stalinist Marxists — with the insights of Austro-Marxists like Otto Bauer and the flexibility of Trotsky's analysis of African-American struggles in the US, which stressed the importance of the subjective will to national identity.

As the first Notebook in the new Pluto Press series, *Fatherland or Mother Earth?* actually appeared before the last Notebook in the previous format, IIRE Fellow Claude Jacquin's *The Trade-Union Left and the Birth of a New South Africa*. It was no accident that Jacquin's Notebook was published in the old format for a more limited audience. Writing in the wake of the ANC's rise to power, Jacquin was forthrightly critical of the leaders of the former COSATU left. By the time the Notebook was published, several of these unionists had become ministers in the ANC government, without losing their network of contacts on the international left. There were people otherwise sympathetic to the IIRE who thought we were foolish to needlessly alienate leftists in positions of power by publishing this Notebook. I thought it nicely complemented Löwy's discussion of black struggles in the US.

Jacquin had had a good relationship with these 'workerists' when they were still resisting the ANC's attempts to control South Africa's anti-apartheid unions and were trying to develop an anti-apartheid vision linked to democratic, grassroots socialism. At the time they had seen the founders of the Brazilian Workers Party (PT), and even leaders of Polish Solidarnosc, as fellow leaders of another working class on the rise and as co-thinkers in a common, critical socialist project. COSATU leaders' encounter with neoliberalism gave a foretaste of what the PT leadership would go through a decade later.

Jacquin showed that COSATU leaders' decision in the early 1990s to join the South African Communist Party and ANC went together with an abandonment of their socialist perspective. Their policies robbed the victory over apartheid of much of its practical significance (e.g. for housing and land) and had disastrous social consequences for tens of millions of black South Africans. Jacquin

explained how the end of de jure apartheid in South Africa was compatible with the perpetuation of the society's deep-rooted structural racism.

About the same time, I developed a lecture for the IIRE's New Questions Schools that discussed a non-Eurocentric approach to history. My starting point was the conception of open, plurilinear history that lecturers at the institute in the 1980s like Pierre Rousset, Claude Jacquin and Daniel Bensaïd had stressed as an alternative to the unilinear approach of Stalinized Marxism. Like these earlier lecturers, I underlined the role of human intervention and the specificity of social formations in sending history in one direction or another at decisive moments. I also benefited from the early Women's Schools that Penny Duggan describes in her article, in which a genuinely international team worked together to further develop a non-Eurocentric feminism.

With these starting points, I tried to take up the challenge to Eurocentrism made by books like Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People Without History* and Samir Amin's *Eurocentrism*. The lectures examined for example the ongoing debates, which Ernest Mandel had also touched on in his time, about why capitalism had originated in Europe rather than in the initially far wealthier societies of Asia and what the role of slavery and colonialism had been in the process. Even after the rise of capitalist states in the Netherlands and Britain, I argued, capitalism's ultimate triumph on a global scale cannot be understood without connecting its development to the late 17th and 18th-century crises of the Ottoman, Persian, Mughal and Chinese empires. I continue to think that an institute based in Europe, in the midst of societies wrestling with their demographic composition and cultural identities, needs to devote constant attention to such issues.

The second Notebook co-published with Pluto Press — Enzo Traverso's *Understanding the Nazi Genocide* — looked at another crucial period for Europe's history and identity. Here too, unsurprisingly, racism plays a central part. Like Michael Löwy, Traverso sees the 20th century as a watershed in the development of radical thought. The Marxism of the Second International was infused with a sense of the inevitable triumph of socialism; the radicalism of the 21st century cannot escape a sense of tragedy. Walter Benjamin has taught us to view history from the point of view of its victims, pointing out that 'not even the dead will be safe from the enemy if he is victorious'. Traverso's Notebook, in dialogue with writings on Auschwitz from Hannah Arendt to Daniel Goldhagen, contends that while racial hatred was the first cause of the slaughter of the European Jews in 1941-45, its execution required a 'rationality' typical of modern capitalism.

Sexuality

The study of sexuality (and activism in lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) movements) has been a constant in my political and intellectual life. Although the Women's Schools always paid attention to women's sexuality, the subject did not occupy a big place in the IIRE's other sessions before I arrived. I was encouraged from the beginning to make room for it, however. Fellow Gilbert Achcar in particular said that I should lecture on the topic at the first session I helped organize at the institute in 1993. Given that the great majority of the students were from Asia and Africa, this meant I had to read and think an enormous amount in the space of a few months. Since I had worked both on issues of sexuality in general before and on the place of underdeveloped societies in the global political economy, I summoned up my courage and plunged in.

This was the beginning of a new direction for me and for the institute that would absorb many of my energies for several years. After lecturing particularly on same-sex sexualities in underdeveloped countries at a number of sessions, I wrote up my approach in an IIRE *Working Paper*, 'In the Tropics there is No Sin'. These *Working Papers* were always sent out for comments to several dozen IIRE

Fellows and associates; I also sent this one out to people in the field. One of them was David Fernbach, himself the author of the pathbreaking study *The Spiral Path*, an editor at *New Left Review* and one of the founders and directors of Gay Men's Press. Thanks to his support, the *Working Paper* became an article in *New Left Review* in 1996, which led in turn to the publication in 2000 of the anthology *Different Rainbows*, which I edited and introduced.

Though no bestseller, the book has been praised by important figures in its field. For example, Martin Duberman, Distinguished Professor of History at the City University of New York and the unofficial dean of US lesbian/gay studies, called it '*a unique, long-needed, and immensely valuable book whose significance cannot be overstated, brilliantly bound together by the book's editor*'. More recently historian John D'Emilio described my introduction as '*one of the best analyses yet written of gay identities and politics on a global scale*'.

Different Rainbows could never have been written without the uniquely stimulating international environment of the IIRE. The book was only one part of a process of integrating sexuality into the institute's curriculum. Virtually every course had there over the past decade and a half has including one day or more devoted to sexuality; I have been only one of several teachers to focus on the topic. (Others have included Terry Conway, Raquel Osborne and Paul Mepschen.) Nor has attention to sexuality been limited to the specific lectures on the subject. IIRE Women's Schools have of course had many lectures linking sexuality to issues like violence and reproductive freedom. Links have been made in other courses as well. Gilbert Achcar's lectures on Islamic fundamentalism have often integrated issues of gender and sexuality, for instance.

High points in the IIRE's work on sexuality have been the international LGBT strategy seminars that took place there in 1998, 2000 and 2002. They brought together scholars and activists from several dozen countries to study themes too numerous to list, ranging from the family to left history to trade-union work to partnership legislation to HIV/AIDS. Alan Sears of the University of Windsor commented in his report on the '*grounded, practical focus to much of the discussion*' at the 2002 seminar, and the participants' sense that it could "make a difference" in LGBT movements'.

Global justice

From the mid-1990s, the IIRE focused increasingly on neoliberal globalization as the main feature of the times our students and teachers were living through. The economists' seminars and the Notebooks on Lean Production, IMF/World Bank/WTO and Globalization contributed to analyzing the economic side of the process. The 1999 Seattle protests and the rise of the Social Forums made us look more closely at its political implications. As often happens, the change in focus was reflected in new terminology before we were fully able to reflect it in the content of our courses. One year, the New Questions School was rebaptized an 'Anti-Globalization School'. This was of course a poor, first approximation to describing what we were trying to do. The IIRE's staff and students have always been internationalists, and not opposed to internationalisation as such. Their problem with globalization is not that it is global but that it is neoliberal, corroding labour's gains and social programmes that were won by decades of struggle at the national level without replacing them by anything remotely equivalent at the regional or international level. After one year the Anti-Globalization School was renamed again to reflect their perspective more accurately, and our series of Global Justice Schools began.

It has taken a certain amount of discussion over several years to make the IIRE's Fellows entirely recast the subjects they were teaching by putting globalization and global justice front and centre. But it has happened, thanks in part to collective reflection at the institute but even more to

pressures from the surrounding social and political environment. Through much of the 1990s, intellectual renewal at the IIRE took place in something of a vacuum, in the context of social movements and a radical left that were shrinking and on the defensive. By the end of the decade, though the challenges facing the left remained daunting, debates at the institute were more and more responses to questions being posed in revitalized movements and parties. Increasingly, the activists who attend our Global Justice Schools have been at recent World Social Forums or European Social Forums, and are feeling pressure from the movements to come up with strategic answers.

The 1997 Asian financial crisis set off one wave of social and political events, with for example the collapse of the Suharto dictatorship in Indonesia and recurrent People's Power struggles in the Philippines. Many Filipinos and Filipinas have studied at the IIRE in the course of the past two decades. Many of them found the institute a valuable resource as the long dominant Communist Party of the Philippines went into crisis and its Maoist orthodoxy was questioned from different sides in different ways. Some of our courses in the 1990s included Philippine participants from half a dozen different political currents thrashing out the issues that divided them; in some cases these were people who might not have spoken to one another in the Philippines.

Besides recasting the subject matter of our sessions to fit the era of globalization, we had to change our teaching methods. Participants are no longer willing to accept the course formats that had been acceptable for activists in left-wing organizations in the 1970s and '80s. Now they want shorter lectures, more time to ask questions and more time for discussion. The IIRE's sessions have increasingly featured small discussion groups divided by language, which then come together for plenary discussions with simultaneous translation. Since the most stimulating discussions are often between people from different parts of the world who speak different languages, however, we are often under pressure to shorten the single-language discussion groups and lengthen the plenaries — while we have to watch out not to overwork our indispensable volunteer interpreters! The age of globalization is also the age of internet: Susan Caldwell describes in her contribution the ways she helped the IIRE keep up with its students.

The switch from three-month sessions to sessions of a few weeks has also had many consequences for the practical organization of life at the IIRE. When students were living at the institute for months, it was possible to train them to take on many tasks like cleaning and shopping themselves. In shorter sessions, students often fully master their tasks only about the time they leave. The strain on the institute's small staff — particularly on our first building manager, Michèle Vermeulen, the IIRE's longest-serving staff member — has been far greater. The move to a new building should help moderate this strain, as some of the work can now be shared with the IIRE's partners in the Timorplein complex.

One sad consequence of the move to shorter sessions is that students have had far less time for independent reading. It has been as much as they could do to keep up with the readings assigned for the lectures. This has meant that the IIRE library, which was steadily better organized and computerized in the last years at the Willemsparkweg, was nonetheless less of a resource for the institute's own students. In addition, part of the library was competing for room with the IIRE staff's office space. This too should change at Timorplein, where the library has its own, completely autonomous space. Cooperation with the nearby International Institute for Social History should also make the IIRE library more accessible to outside researchers — that is, once the tremendous work involved in moving and reorganizing the thousands of volumes has been completed.

Porto Alegre

The Asian and particularly Philippine students engaged in an extraordinary process of cross-fertilization at a number of IIRE sessions with students from Latin America, particularly Brazil. The Brazilian Workers Party had been represented in the institute's courses from its first years. The PT founded its own tradition on the Latin American left, neither orthodox Communist nor Maoist nor Trotskyist (though several Trotskyist currents always played a significant role in it) nor social democratic. Its activists' radical and open-minded approach was significant in shaping the IIRE's atmosphere. Particularly left-wing PTers from the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, who were developing their city's participatory budget in the 1990s, came in significant numbers to the institute to explain their innovative project to radicals from other continents and respond to the critical-minded questions they were asked. When the first World Social Forum was held in Porto Alegre in 2000, we had students at the institute from the de facto capital of the global justice movement.

This meant that the Brazilian trade unionists and local officials who came to study in Amsterdam were dealing with some of the thorniest strategic and political issues to face the global justice movement. These students were not only social activists and practitioners of a new experiment in grassroots local democracy; they were also cadre of a political party contending for national office. And they were engaged in intense debates about the PT's programme and direction. In the autumn of 1998, I remember, the Brazilians at the Global Justice School were still confident and enthused at the prospect of an election victory for the PT's presidential candidate Luis Ignacio da Silva (Lula). As supporters of the PT's left wing, they found Lula himself too moderate; but at that moment the left wing had a majority (briefly) in the party's leadership bodies, and they thought they could hold Lula to their party's radical programme. But Lula lost by a hair that year. By late 2002, when he won the presidency on his fourth try, the PT right wing was firmly in control of the party apparatus, PT members were much more polarized, and left-wingers were more uncertain and anxious.

It was during the first months of the Lula government in 2003 that the IIRE/Pluto Press Notebook *The Porto Alegre Alternative: Direct Democracy in Action* was written, edited and published. I had come to know its editor, Iain Bruce, as one of our volunteer Spanish-English interpreters at Global Justice Schools. When Brazilian students spoke in 'Portuñol', it soon became clear that Iain's Portuguese was even better than his Spanish, and that he himself had a wealth of knowledge, experience and contacts in the PT. As Lula's victory approached, the institute's staff and Iain made plans for a Notebook that would capture the best and most radical aspects of the PT's record in office in several Brazilian cities, making this the basis for a possible radical programme for the PT at national level in the framework of a transition to socialism.

Looking back several years later as Lula begins his second term, many on the international left are quick to say that the PT's project was always inherently reformist, and even that the participatory budget was never anything more than a clever radical-sounding device for imposing IMF-style austerity. The IIRE's insistence on seeing history as open and plurilinear suggests that there may have been another way, and that the participatory budget could have had far more radical potential on a national scale if the PT leadership had had the political vision and will to defend it. But the PT's tragedy is illuminated by reading down the table of contents of *The Porto Alegre Alternative* and seeing what has become of its contributors. Those who held office in Porto Alegre are obviously out of office now, since disenchantment with Lula's administration cost the PT control of Porto Alegre city hall. Some of the contributors are still PT members, though the PT's policies in government today offer little scope for participatory budgets as the Notebook described them. João Machado, who wrote the concluding chapter on the participatory budget and the transition to socialism, is a leader of the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL), the main Brazilian party challenging the PT

today from the left.

The story of *The Porto Alegre Alternative* has an interesting epilogue, situated at the Caracas gathering of the pluricentric World Social Forum in early 2006. Editor Iain Bruce, who has spent much time in Venezuela in the last few years, organized a workshop in Caracas on the participatory budget, co-sponsored by the IIRE. With the spread of left-wing governments in Latin America, many of the international left have adopted Hugo Chavez as their alternative to Lula, the man who dares to stand up to George W. Bush while Lula has cosied up to Bush. As Chavez' Bolivarian revolution has deepened, however, the question has arisen to what extent the process still depends on the president's own initiative. Can the poor Venezuelans who saved Chavez' government from a CIA-backed coup also take more power into their own hands and more initiative in transforming Venezuelan society? In this sense, the experience of Brazil's participatory budgets may be of some use for the broader Latin American left.

Clash of barbarisms

In the roller coaster of my years at the IIRE, the high of Seattle in 1999 and the first Social Forums were followed by the shock of 9/11 in 2001. Fortunately, at least in Western Europe and Latin America, the global justice movement proved capable of not only surviving the 'war on terror' but of becoming an organizing centre for the antiwar movement. And the rise of the global justice movement in Asia has occurred mainly since 9/11, with the WSF in Mumbai in 2005 as a big leap forward. But events since 9/11 have made clear that the movements and the left face the continuing challenge not only of neoliberal economic globalization, but also of what some have called 'armed globalization': imperial wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere.

In this field too the IIRE has done its part to help orient the movements, in large part through the work of Fellow Gilbert Achcar. Of course every course since 9/11 has included discussion of the 'war on terror', usually introduced by Achcar's lectures (though I have occasionally taken his place at Youth Schools). We have reached a wider audience with a number of books, beginning with Achcar's *The Clash of Barbarisms: September 11 and the Making of the New World Disorder*. Published by Monthly Review Press but distributed to the institute's *Notebook* subscribers, *Clash of Barbarisms* traces the rise of anti-Western Islamic fundamentalism to US policies aimed at controlling the oil reserves of the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, the 'Muslim Texas'. Analyzing the disintegration of class-ridden Middle Eastern societies, Achcar shows how US policies fuelled this disintegration in the past and is raising it to new heights of destruction today.

Clash of Barbarisms was only the first of several works that have made Achcar well known to antiwar activists around the world. Most recently he has collaborated with the writer who is probably the best-known analyst of the US imperium, Noam Chomsky, on a book of dialogues between them called *Perilous Power* (Zed Books). In between, in 2004, Monthly Review Press collected and published Achcar's essays on the Middle East of the past quarter-century in the anthology *Eastern Cauldron: Islam, Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq in a Marxist Mirror*. Like *Clash of Barbarisms*, parts of *Eastern Cauldron* were translated from the original French by me on IIRE staff time. The volume includes two of Achcar's most important and best known short works: his theses on Islamic fundamentalism, written in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, and his 'Letter to a Slightly Depressed Antiwar Activist' just after Bush's 2003 proclamation of 'victory' in Iraq. Analysis of the Middle East by the IIRE's associates has not been limited to Achcar's works. Israeli activist Michel Warshawski's *Toward an Open Tomb: The Crisis of Israeli Society* (Monthly Review Press, 2004) is another book that I translated on IIRE staff time. At one time we even hoped to organize a seminar at the institute that would bring Achcar and Warshawski together with many

Palestinian solidarity activists from a number of countries. Unfortunately practical and financial obstacles — and some strongly held disagreements among those we hoped to invite, which do often arise even among those on the same side of Middle East issues — have so far prevented the seminar from taking place.

Renewed vision

Many of the central themes around globalization and global justice were addressed systematically at the IIRE at our July 2003 Fellows' seminar. Given the many other commitments of the institute's lecturers, this was the first chance for many of them to discuss some of the issues in depth with one another. The weekend of intensive discussions in Amsterdam resulted in a renewed curriculum and vision for the Global Justice School later in 2003. The importance of these discussions for the IIRE's work justifies citing the report of the seminar here at length.

Discussions of globalization on the left begin with the understanding that capitalism has always been international and often getting more international. So what's new? Economist Bruno Jetin summed up our Fellows' consensus at the seminar: there are new aspects compared with earlier periods of internationalization (e.g. 1896-1914); but globalization is not a completed process that has made national markets and states irrelevant.... In a whole series of industries (high-speed trains, pharmaceuticals, etc.) the only market on which research and development costs can be recouped is the world market. But everyone agreed that no multinational today is truly 'footloose', truly autonomous of any single national market. Jetin raised the question of whether the process of internationalization and concentration of capital will continue until there are only two or three companies dominating any given sector of the economy (given that the US, European Union and Japan will presumably each insist on having a multinational "of its own" in key markets)....

If today's globalization is unprecedented and even irreversible, then that undermines some of the radical strategies put forward in the global justice movement. [Some say] that the nation-state is still the privileged site for democracy, so that a strategy for economic democracy has to be nationally based and require a high degree of national economic self-sufficiency; and secondly that diversity is a good in itself, so that more uniformity across the world is necessarily a bad thing. Jetin criticized these arguments as being blind to class and gender dynamics, treating national 'communities' as monolithic, and exaggerating the progressive character of the nation state.... Strategies for social transformation must move more quickly than ever before from the national level to the regional or the international and global level....

Who will transform society?

Labour remains a key actor in the scenarios for social transformation discussed at the IIRE; that makes updating our analysis of labour crucial. IIRE co-director Susan Caldwell focused on the sex-segregated nature of the workforce and the gendered structure of the globalization process through the maquiladoras, sex trade, etc. She also raised the issue of the family as the primary location of working class solidarity and the increasing radicalization of workers and women's movements in the advanced capitalist countries, based on the reality that our children's future is a step backward from what the previous generation had achieved.

Fellow Claude Jacquin introduced a discussion of how changes in capitalist production and corporate restructuring have drastically changed the face of the working class. Corporate restructuring has led to a process of industrial deconcentration and segmentation of the proletariat, with workers in

different categories and regions having increasingly different situations and even to some extent different interests. This raised questions in some participants' minds — beyond our already existing consensus (formulated by Stephanie Coontz) that class is not the only 'moving contradiction' in patriarchal capitalism — of in what sense the working class is still the central subject of social transformation today.

There is no unifying identity common to all the forces joining in the global justice movement today. That does not detract from the central analytical importance of class. Socialist feminists have always made a key distinction: the autonomy of the women's movement from class and political organizations does not mean its autonomy from class struggle. But that does not automatically resolve the issue of whether a new unifying identity will emerge for today's movements, unifying class, gender, 'civic' and 'human' identities, and if so how and what form it could take....

The lack of a unifying identity in the global justice movement also complicates the question of democratic organization. Former IIRE director Pierre Rousset defended the global justice movement in the seminar against charges that it is undemocratic. Our conception of democracy is too much based on the old 'representative pyramid', he said, or on a juxtaposition of the old representative pyramid to an old model of direct democracy. Networking meets a need of the constantly expanding and shifting movements today that neither the representative pyramid nor simple direct participation ever could. Efficiency is not the central issue here; inclusion is, so as to sustain the dynamic of the movement. Even 'network' is an inaccurate concept as networks are usually composed of equals while the global justice movement is made of radically different components from individuals to mass organizations.

What then is the role of the party in all this, Rousset asked? One answer was that political organizations embody the choices that movements need to make. As Fellow Penelope Duggan pointed out, this does not necessarily mean that the party is the privileged place where programme is developed. We have certainly been aware since the rise of the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s that we must take on board the programmatic and analytical developments made within such movements but the party consciously strives to develop a programme that defends the interests of the majority of society. This leaves the question open whether the party must still ultimately be the 'keystone in the seizure of power'....

A different kind of politics

IIRE co-director Peter Drucker defined a further series of political challenges that the radical left is facing, particularly in light of experiences like the argentinazo (Argentinean revolt of December 2001) and Lula's presidency in Brazil. How can the left make an idea of politics credible to people that would be fundamentally different from the failed or inadequate politics of reformism, vanguardism and the rejection of politics by anarchistic currents in the global justice movement? The neoliberal state order lacks the capacity to manage resistance movements by buying them off with concessions, as the welfare state used to do. But the capitalist order survived the rebellion and crisis of the past two years in Argentina through a whole set of other mechanisms at the neoliberal state's disposal for defusing resistance: co-optation through subsidies, marketing, polarizing the population along ethnic, communal or traditional political lines, manipulating the rules of the political game, and outright fraud. The radical left needs to insist on the continued necessity of developing medium-term political alternatives and not abandoning the political terrain, Drucker argued, while distinguishing its politics more clearly and explicitly from the kind of failed reformism represented today by Lula in Brazil on the one hand and various, sectarian, self-proclamatory vanguards on the other....

The Global Justice School that followed this Fellows' seminar was reshaped in various ways as a result of its work. For example, lectures on gender, peasantry and ethnicity were brought together in a bloc on 'globalization and social recomposition', with a stronger focus on developments in the global working class. The section on the new world imperial order linked the discussion of US wars and world domination more clearly to the world's economic architecture, international institutions and regional blocs, and was followed by a section on 'globalization and political representation: movements, parties and rethinking democracy'. The already existing section on 'confronting neoliberal globalization, the globalization of resistance', finally, included more concrete discussions of alternative trade and financial policies.

Fortress Europe

All this work at the institute was done over the years in increasingly difficult conditions. When the IIRE's founders decided to locate it in Amsterdam, they were relying on the Netherlands' reputation for tolerance for dissent and hospitality to dissenters from other parts of the world. Although the country's reputation has been only somewhat battered in the intervening years, the reality has changed very much for the worse. Pressure from the right-wing VVD in government from 1994 to 2002 and anti-immigrant rhetoric from its leader Frits Bolkestein (later notorious as the European Commissioner who did his best to push through the EU Services Directive in a form as damaging as possible to labour) began the process. In the wake of 9/11, the brief political career in 2002 of right-wing populist Pim Fortuyn and a series of even more right-wing governments in 2002-07 completed it. The result, according to European immigrant rights advocates, is that Netherlands together with Denmark now has the most restrictive laws on immigration and asylum of any EU member state.

The effect on an institute like the IIRE, which depends for its functioning on having students come for courses for periods of a few months or weeks, has been terrible. Most Europeans and North and Latin Americans do not need visas to come to the Netherlands, luckily. But most Asians and especially Africans do. The adoption of the Schengen agreement has meant that any one Schengen country can block entrance for any applicant, with appeal being virtually impossible in practice. Where a visa could often be obtained twenty years ago in a matter of days, many weeks are now often necessary, together with the careful preparation of a file. And that is sometimes not enough for an applicant who is the wrong age, has the wrong job or even lives in the wrong country. The system is geared to admit middle-class professionals. Young activists living among the peasants or poor people they organize, excellent candidates for IIRE courses, simply do not qualify as students in the eyes of immigration bureaucrats. And for years the chances of bringing in participants from a country like Algeria — feminists defending women's rights against both the government and the fundamentalist opposition, sometimes at risk of their lives, for example — were zero. The Dutch authorities demanded that we cough up several thousand euros per applicant as a guarantee of their return home, which the IIRE simply does not have to spare.

The immigration bureaucracy has not been the only one complicating our lives. A few years ago two bad fires in the Netherlands prompted a crackdown by fire inspectors. When the institute opened its doors in 1982, its building complied fully with the existing fire code, and a permit was issued with no problem. In later years each visit of the inspectors could bring unwelcome news that new requirements were being imposed. At one point a new, state-of-the-art fire alarm system was demanded: thousands of euros to install, thousands of euros more each year to maintain it — and simply to be allowed to have it! An urgent appeal to the institute's donors brought in the needed funds. But in 2005 the process reached its ineluctable end: our building simply could not get its permit renewed to house students without ripping out and replacing all our staircases at a completely prohibitive cost. Since we couldn't bring in students from other countries without

housing them somewhere, and we didn't have the money to house our students elsewhere, there were several months when we could no longer hold any courses.

By that point, in any event, we knew that we would not be staying much longer at the IIRE's original building on the Willemsparkweg near the Vondelpark. Our move to a new building on Timorplein, in the eastern Amsterdam borough of Zeeburg, was already being planned — in the nick of time.

A new start

The decision to move to a new building was the culmination of many years of budgetary difficulties. The IIRE at its old Willemsparkweg headquarters had in fact never been meant as a paying commercial proposition. Dutch state or corporate funding was never likely for an institution with our outlook. The original building was bought and the institute's operations made possible by generous donations from people who understood our mission and were willing to support it. Unfortunately, by the mid-1990s there were not enough of these people around any more. Essentially, the institute stayed afloat during its last decade on the basis of financial stopgap solutions. Mainly, although the accommodations and meeting facilities we had to offer were far from luxurious — they had been built with our own, rather Spartan ethos in mind — we sometimes managed to find renters among NGOs who took advantage of our excellent location, low prices, service and charm. This became a financial mainstay. But the Willemsparkweg building simply had not been designed for this kind of operation, nor had our staff been trained to run it. It could not be sustained indefinitely.

The Timorplein project in Zeeburg, discovered by IIRE board chairman Joost Kircz, provided a way out of our impasse. Supported by the local council, it includes a hostel with hundreds of beds, a restaurant, café, cyber café, theatres ... designed and run by professionals to professional standards. By selling our Willemsparkweg building and buying a relatively small percentage of the Timorplein space, the IIRE has acquired the room it needs for its classrooms, auditorium, library, offices and student accommodations, while having all the other facilities it needs conveniently close at hand. Cooperative agreements signed with other Timorplein partners should enable IIRE staff to benefit from our partners' professional expertise while focusing on our own educational core business. All this is new for us, of course; there are still a hundred and one details to work out in practice. But the key elements of a workable future for the IIRE are now present, whereas before they were absent.

A few months before the institute moved out of its old building on the Willemsparkweg, I moved on to another job, after 13 years at the IIRE. The Jesuits whom Pierre and Sally Rousset cite in their article would have said that I had overstayed my ideal five-year term. Looking back, I think that my most significant contributions were made in my second five years: guiding the institute through the aftermath of Seattle and 9/11, organizing the LGBT seminars, launching the book series with Pluto Press. But 13 years was certainly longer than I meant to stay. An institute with such a small staff needs to plan these transitions many years in advance to bring in new blood while ensuring an essential minimum of continuity. And because the IIRE does not lie on any mainstream career path, finding new jobs for departing staff and finding new staff to replace them is always a prolonged and challenging process.

Going off staff has not meant the end of my responsibilities. The IIRE's work has never been done by its paid staff alone. It was and is part of a broader radical left movement; its teaching, writing, editing, translating and much more are done by the unpaid activists who make up that movement. The demand for changes at the IIRE has come, ultimately, from them, in response to the major changes in the world they have faced over the past two decades. Clearly more changes are ahead for the left and the institute — now, let's hope, for the better.

One change now in progress was foreshadowed in my last months at the institute, as I began work on one last Notebook. I wanted a book that would disseminate the debates between prominent theorists of one wing of the global justice movement — people like Toni Negri and John Holloway — and IIRE Fellows like Daniel Bensaïd and Michael Löwy. My successor as IIRE publications director, Murray Smith, has seen the book into print under the title *Change the World by Taking Power*. Its appearance signals the return of the big questions of political strategy that (as Pierre and Sally Rousset say in their article) were at the centre of the IIRE's discussions in the 1980s, but receded into the background in the 1990s. I am sure the IIRE can address them as creatively and critically in this new period as it did in the past.