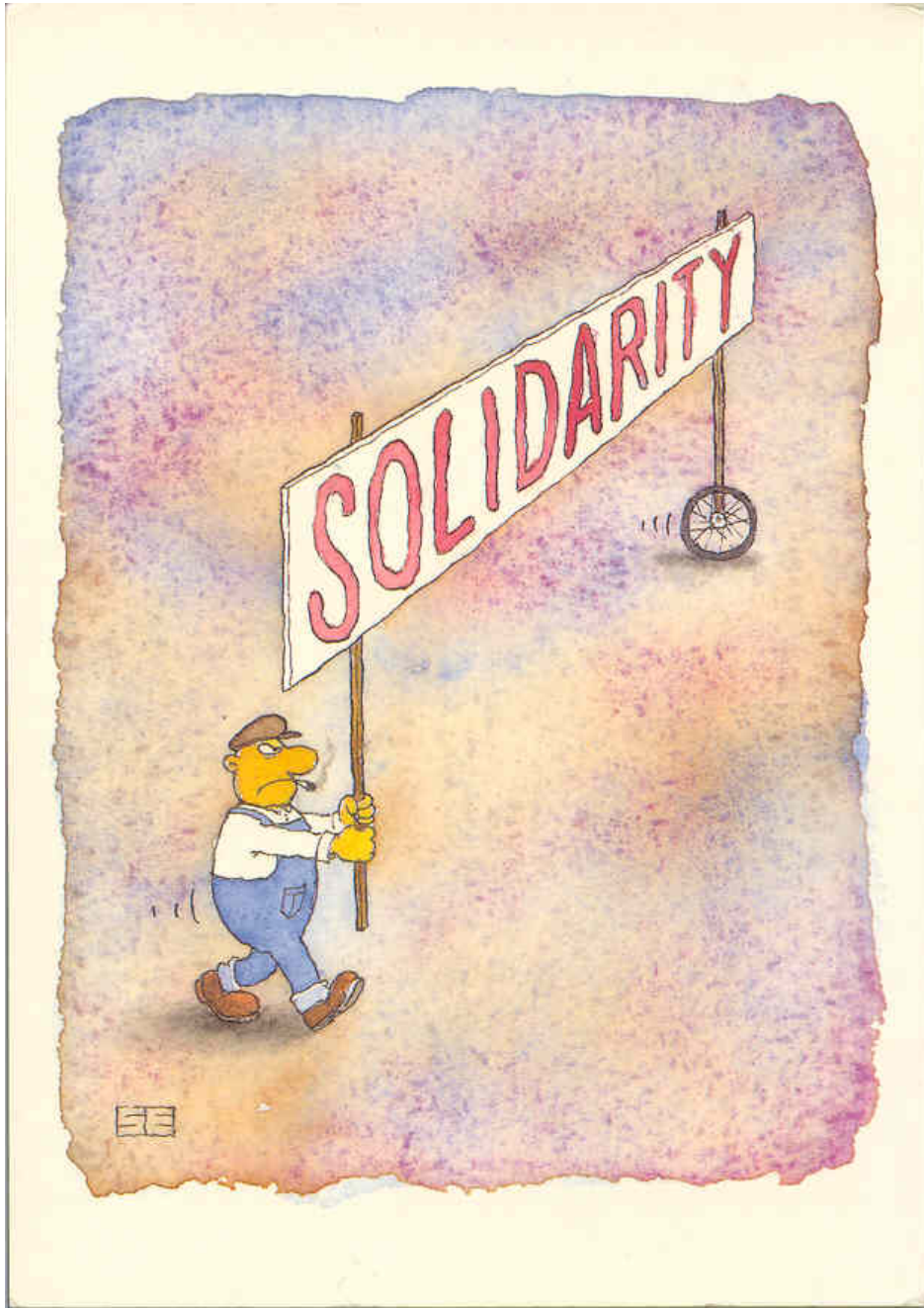


Introduction



Source: Leeds Postcards, 1980s?
<http://www.poptel.org.uk/leedspostcards/leedspostcards1.htm>

Recovering Internationalism, Creating the New Global Solidarity

(2008)

While the Power has done all within its power to erase us from the map of actual history, you have taken the word and the streets (the asphalt ones and the media ones) in order to remind us, and in passing the Mexican government, that we are not alone.

We know little of your struggles. The bridge your generosity has extended to us in order to hear the world of the indigenous Zapatistas has only begun its return flight. With surprise and admiration we begin to recognise your collective histories of rebellion and resistance, your struggles against racism, against patriarchy, against religious intolerance, against xenophobia, against militarization, against ecological destruction, against fascism, against segregation, against moral hypocrisy, against exclusion, against the war, against hunger, against the lack of housing, against great capital, against authoritarianism, against dictatorship, against the politics of economic liberalization, against poverty, against robbery, against corruption, against discrimination, against stupidity, against the lie, against ignorance, against slavery, against injustice, against oblivion, against neoliberalism, for humanity [...]

So here...we want to send our thanks for turning to look at us and for the hand which you extend to us so we will not fall once again into oblivion. Some time ago we sent you a flower. Today we send you a little cloud of rain from here, so that you may water that flower, as you should, by dancing.

(Greeting to supporters from Subcomandante Marcos, Mexico, March, 1997).
http://struggle.ws/mexico/ezln/marcos_sol_world.html).

Around the time that El Sub wrote the above, I published my 'global social movements' book, *Globalisation, Social Movements and the New Internationalisms* (Waterman 1998/2001). I naturally made at least some reference to the Zapatistas in that work. Just as naturally, my words did not receive the same attention as the words of Marcos. The fact is that despite the Zapatista uprising, 1994, 'Internationalism' was then hardly a subject, except in rhetorical declarations, mostly in archaic terms. A pity, maybe, that I did not complete the work a few years later, in the sound and fury of the 'Battle of Seattle' (1999) and the rise and rise of the World Social Forums (WSF, launched 2001). I had not predicted these events or processes. And, indeed, I had difficulty in coming to terms with my first WSF, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2002. I would put this down to my own political/theoretical itinerary (for which see the non-conclusion to this work). Yet that book remains, I think, the one existing attempt to conceptualise what was shaping up globally in the 1990s. And this was done in terms of what I then called 'the new internationalisms'.¹

¹ There has been, it is true, a considerable literature on 'the new transnational activism', as witness (Tarrow 2005). However, this makes little or no reference to Marx, labour or 19th century internationalism – the

Early-retirement from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, a couple of years earlier than legally obligatory, 1998, deprived me of various academic privileges but enabled and even required me to find a new community to work with/in. I thus found myself increasingly involved with what some call 'the anti-globalisation movement' but I prefer to call 'the global justice and solidarity movement' (GJ&SM). I have been involved with the WSF, mostly as a self-funded participant-observer, in both its global and its more local emanations – maybe six or seven events at different levels. I have also become involved with various other networks, whether these exist on the ground, in 'real virtuality' or in both simultaneously. These bodies, physical or spectral, are all involved with the new social emancipatory wave, whether locally, nationally, regionally or globally (customarily all four). And such involvement has meant an extensive exposure to and occasional engagement with innovatory emancipatory thought and action.

Unfortunately, however, neither the movement nor the theorists have much to do with, or say about, *labour!* Trade unions, the labour movement, working people – none of these has a high profile in either the GJ&SM in general or the WSF in particular. Marx somewhere said that the traditions of the dead generations weigh like a nightmare upon the living. So it is with the international labour movement. But there has been a particularly heavy legacy from the 1980s-90s, when labour was being down-sized, geographically displaced or restructured by a world-scale, computerised, paleo-liberalism. And in which workers and unions were being ignored, dismissed - even condemned - by the new social movements and their ideologues. Yet this new world disorder has been stimulating the new industrial giant of China, and proletarianising women, peasants, tribals and others worldwide and in myriad forms.

As I first drafted this introduction, late-2007, the following news items were being broadcast by the BBC - or narrowcast by the alternative labour media - a dramatic march on parliament by landless labour in India; a wave of industrial protest, despite state and trade-union repression, in Egypt; disruptive strikes by transport workers in Germany and France; a first major strike by unorganised migrant construction workers in Dubai. And I here leave out of account multi-year waves of urban or rural unrest and protest in China (tens of thousands) and South Africa (6,000 or so a year).

The continuing significance and changing forms of alienated labour may be more readily recognised by artists than by politicians or academics. In a witty and poignant novel on labour migrants in the UK, the British-Ukrainian author says (in her *Immigrant-Labour-English*):

For as that brainy bearded Karl Marx said, no person can ever build up a fortune just by his own labour, but in order to become VIP elite rich you must appropriate the labour of others. In pursuit of this dream, many ingenious human solutions have been applied throughout the millennia, from slavery, forced labour, transportation, indentured labour, debt bondage and penal colonies, right through to casualisation, zero-hours contract [i.e. casual employment with no contract at all. PW], flexible working, no-strike clause, compulsory overtime, compulsory self-employment, agency working, sub-contracting, illegal immigration, outsourcing and many other such maximum flexibility organizational

tradition from which I draw. Then there has been the essay on internationalism by the British New Left theorist, Perry Anderson, <http://www.newleftreview.org/?view=2376>. This quite fails to relate the term to the long history of emancipatory universalisms, dealing with it largely as dependent on 'nationalism'.

advances. And spearheading this permanent revolutionisation of the work process has been the historic role of the dynamic edge cutting employment solution recruitment consultant. Not enough people appreciate this. (Lewycka 2007: 222)

Thank you, Marina, for reminding readers of the continuing relevance of Karl Marx, and introducing me to the zero-hours contract...and the crucial role of the immigrant labour broker with his post-industrial discourse and computerised *mobilofon!*²

If I continue to concern myself with labour it is in recognition of the need of the somewhat amorphous GJ&SM for labour's millions – unionised or not. It is also in recognition of the necessity for a reinvention of the international labour movement *in the light of* the global justice movement, and for an emancipation of labour internationalism. And, lastly, it is in order to compare and contrast the 'old' international labour movement with the 'new' international women's one.

A direct stimulus to the production of this compilation was one I did in Spanish, published in Lima (Waterman 2006). This was requested by a young, WSF-oriented NGO, Democracia Global <http://democraciaglobal.org>. Well, as they say, no-one makes a prophet in their own world-system area. I was delighted to do this collection, not least because of the stimulus provided to my own thinking over the years by my Peruvian Connection, by José Carlos Mariátegui (1973, 1986) and by my affiliation with the Network Institute of Global Democratisation <http://www.nigd.org> in Helsinki, and Teivo Teivainen, one of its founders, in Europe, Lima and various events of the World Social Forum. Producing that reader, during one or two months in Peru, took me back to period in which I was producing, in a much flatter place, The Hague, the *Newsletter of International Labour Studies* (c. 1980-89). Working with one young Dutch graduate, Raphael Hoetmer, and what seemed like half a dozen young Peruan@s, there was a considerable call on both improvisation and faith. At the last moment, something had to go back to the printers. On the day of the launch, at Lima's ancient, public, San Marcos University, we had a meagre 10-15 copies on display. But this proved sufficient, and the San Marcos product was, I must say, classy. Since, moreover, that compilation consisted primarily of pieces already in Spanish - the Spanish of a half-dozen different countries and translators, from Spain to Ecuador - it turns out that the overlap with this present collection is limited to only one or two pieces.

The selection and structuring of this present compilation has been inevitably arbitrary. I have tried to cover my main concerns over the past decade. I have tried to avoid the temptation of applying post-event wisdom to them. But I have accepted the necessity of cutting for excessive length and repetition. I have also avoided republishing here *all* my numerous review articles, though I love reading these even more than writing them! The pieces are in varied styles, intended for varied kinds of publication, electronic lists or websites. Thus there are polemical pieces, analytical ones, conceptual essays and, importantly I think, action-oriented research proposals. A few comments follow on each section, if not each item.

Part I: Labouring People and Trade Unions

'The New Social Unionism in a Nutshell' provides a backgrounder for the compilation, summarising my thinking around the beginning of the decade. Reference to

² For another such artistic recognition, but in which the broker is a young working-class Englishwoman, see Ken Loach's movie, *It's a Free World*).

'social movement unionism' or 'the new social unionism' relates to a discussion, dialogue or debate that I launched in the later 1980s and that seems to have intensified recently. ('Social Movement Unionism', as a phrase, rates around 25,000 hits on Google, of which not more than, say, half can possibly be mine!).

This section ends with 'Towards a Global Labour Charter Movement', which has been received with an enthusiasm similar to that of my old book. I put this deafening silence down to its utopian nature. Strange: writers on labour used to write or at least sing about utopias. But perhaps I mean that utopian writers used to reflect on labour. I am, in any case, inspired here by Oscar Wilde, who said that a map of the world that did not show utopia was not worth a second glance. I am also hoping that this piece will get a response *in less than* a decade and a half when, if still more than virtually present, I will be around 86. This hope is also based on the conviction that my utopianism, if presently exotic to a movement dominated by realists, or backward-looking utopians, is actually no more radical than that of other, more adventurous social movements.

Part II. Women, Feminism and Internationalism

OK, the one item here *is* a review article. It seems that this has been the major form of my engagement with the international women's and feminist movement over the last decade. But the piece does provide an overview of what limited writing in English was available at the moment of conception. And both women and feminism are, hopefully, prominently visible elsewhere in the compilation (as they have been in my life). The review also suggests my orientation toward the international women's movement, which is one of admiration – not to say envy - combined with a refusal to consider that the movement is predestined or privileged, by its subject or its theoretical energy and variety, to either lead the global justice movement or escape the traps and obstacles that international labour has much longer encountered.

Part III: Globalisation, Communication and Culture

What on earth, or cyberspace, has 'Aliens 'R' Us' to do with culture and communication? I am not sure. But I would like to think that, in its satirical and surrealist mode, it has a relationship with such work as that of US cineaste and shit-stirrer, Michael Moore. In any case, it must be evident that the work of Moore has done more to subvert the Mad Masters of the Universe than that of five dozen po-faced social(ist) scientists. So I am hoping this little piece might be seen as – momentarily - rubbing shoulders with him rather than those five dozen colleagues...

'Reflections on a Communications Internationalism' summarises a considerable amount of research and writing I did in the 1990s and even earlier. In a gesture to the subject matter it is also presented in experimental form.³ I am convinced, with Manuel Castells, that computerisation represents as epochal a social transformation as did invention of the alphabet. And that it could also represent the kind of emancipatory force that Marx assigned to the railways (and, it is said, telegraph), Brecht to radio. I say 'could' to avoid any technological determinism. Despite the belief of earlier computer utopians that 'information wants to be free!', the contemporary information

³ Most of that work was first published in the Working Paper series of my long-time employer, the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. Much to my delight, and surprise, this steam-age institute of 'development studies' has scanned these, thus making them available as pdf files to the previously deprived inhabitants of Cyberia. This will require such visitors to go firstly to <http://www.iss.nl/Library-Collections-and-connections>, and then search firstly for <working papers> and then search for <waterman>. If the present compilation is successful, I may seek ISS permission to publish these as a similar collection with similar ease of access.

and ideas of freedom have to be first imagined and invented, and then liberated from capital and state.

The piece 'Communication, Culture and the World Social Forum' clearly moves toward the following section of the compilation. It represents an application of the above reflections to this particular expression of the GJ&SM. Although inevitably inspired by a particular event, it does identify a major and *continuing* problem area for the WSF.

Part IV: The Global Justice Movement and World Social Forum

'The Augean Stables of Global Governance' compares and contrasts the positions of the international unions with those of the GJ&SM. Now, above the entrance to the First Circle of Global Governance there should be carved 'Abandon Hope All Ye Who Enter Here'. The enthusiastic presence of the international unions *within* this First, or Charmed, Circle, suggests that if they retain hope it is in the mercy of the international hegemony. Most voices or instances within the GJ&SM consider hope an *alternative* to entryism. But this does not necessarily mean that the new movement represents new social movement virtue against old trade-union vice. These bodies may be in tension with one another but they are also unavoidably intertwined.

I would like to hope that 'The Bamako Appeal of Samir Amin' expresses a similarly dialectical disposition. The criticism of this veteran Thirdworldist is not that he has proposed a 'more political' orientation to the WSF: it is due to both the nature of this project and the manner in which it has been proposed. The road to global social emancipation is being paved by 'new manifestos' (Santos 2007), in other words by rhetorical or practical declarations – today preferentially expressed as discussion documents. The more the merrier! My own is clearly in my 'Global Labour Charter Movement' chapter.

If the last item in the previous section might seem to properly belong in this one, then 'Of Saints, Sinners and Compañer@s' could just as well have been in the previous section. I have, however, placed it here because, written in 1999, it addresses the new movement before it got a name...[delete!]...*many* names. This chapter is one of two current research interests of my own, oriented toward the future, even if informed by the past. The challenge to *my* compañer@s, to run with this proposal, has not yet been taken up. It still needs to be.

The conclusion: beginning again?

I toyed with various conclusions to this compilation before going off, or back, to the Communist internationalism of my younger years. Readers will rightly assume that this is actually one of those book reviews I was going to avoid reproducing. Well, rather than getting a boring repetition, you are getting something more exotic. Enjoy!

The conclusion (to this Introduction)

An appreciation of this book may benefit from a little autobiography (of which more in the 'non-conclusion' below). My background is in the romantic, highly-charged, hyperactive but also sectarian and ambiguously internationalist tradition of British Communism (family sub-species: Jewish Humanist/Messianist) as it emerged from World War Two. I spent my childhood, youth and early-adulthood within this tradition. I worked twice for the international Communist movement in Prague, for its student front

(1955-8) and its union one (1966-9). My assumption that Communism would democratise itself seemed to be proven peacefully by the 'Prague Spring' of 1968, only to be violently disproved by the 'Prague Winter' (the Soviet invasion of August 20).

It is clearly a long way from 1968 to 2008 and, since I am drafting my own internationalist autobio, I will not attempt to summarise my itinerary here. But I do want to say something about the two ends of this journey. Despite all the crimes and misdemeanours,⁴ I cannot disavow my Communist background. Indeed, in its emancipatory and experimental phases or aspects (which were fading as I was growing) it both discovered and invented. The global justice and solidarity movement, having learned, at least implicitly, from the failures of statist socialism (which also has to include social democracy and left-populism) is simply more creative, more peaceful, more democratic, more open, more pluralist, more dialogical, more flexible. All respect to those who initiated this movement, amongst whom I have made many friends. But not all credit can go to those who initiated this movement. As suggested above, it also has to do with the passing from a machine-age to a computer-age capitalism, and therefore from the logic of the railway (basically an earthbound, hierarchical, centripetal and national or *inter*-national system, with trains moving backwards and forwards) to that of the computer. This allows for decentred, horizontal, dialogical networking, and repeated escape to the outer reaches of Cyberia, from which one can repeatedly return to the stressed multi-cultured inner city of The Hague, or the even more pressed indigenous rural communities around Ranchi, India.

As a result of capitalist globalisation, of the epochal transformation implied by computerisation, of the self-learning processes within the international women's, ecological and communications movements, we have this nebulous new phenomenon-without-a-name, which I have been calling the global justice and solidarity movement. It is, compared with the international Communist movement of my earlier days, a much friendlier place/space to be in. When Mao said, in 1927, that 'A revolution is not a dinner party', what he actually meant was the opposite: revolution implied inflexible doctrine, iron discipline, self-subordination to the Party or the Revolution, theoretical diatribe, physical violence, war and death (not to mention repression of women and destruction of the environment). This turned out to be extended, after Communist seizures of power (sometimes in underground struggle), to the working class, to peasants, 'bourgeois feminists', ethnic minorities, and even to 'fraternal' Communist states, to founding party members, to 'flinching cowards' and 'sneering traitors' – and even to the independently-minded amongst Communist internationalists! There was a phallic model of the revolutionary - one which entirely forgot that what goes up must come down.⁵ I do not know whether to be shocked, amused or resigned, to see this Bolshevik model reproduced amongst the mutually warring vanguardist *groupuscules* that are still trying to instrumentalise the new movements.

⁴ As a Polish joke (*joke?*) had it at an earlier emancipatory moment, 1956, 'If you start by murdering people you may end up telling little white lies'.

⁵ The literary representative of this old model is Pavel Korchagin in the Soviet novel, translated as 'How Heroes Are Made' or 'How the Steel was Tempered' (Ostrovski 1936). When I joined the Young Communist League, romantically on my 15th birthday, 1951, we pledged allegiance to a quotation from this on the cover of our cards. I am impressed to learn that the Chinese have made a TV series of this story, using Ukrainian actors, as late as 2000. Thank you, Wikipedia, for this gem! http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/How_the_Steel_Was_Tempered. The theoretical expression of Iron Man Communism is 'How to be a Good Communist' by Liu Shao Qi (1939). <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/liu-shaoqi/1939/how-to-be/index.htm>. Reading this today, in the light of major studies of Mao, it is clear that he Mao was Not a Very Good Communist.

Fortunately, however, emancipation now speaks (again) of exchange of experiences, of flowers, rain and dancing. It is not that we have surpassed the military model of social emancipation (consider only Palestine). It is that we are surpassing the notion that the end justifies the means. The opposition between these two, and the prioritisation of an idealised but actually quite hypothetical end, is being replaced by the understanding that the means actually pre-figure the ends. Or that the method is the message. Or that emancipation means less the world turned upside down than a revolution in everyday life, a process in which the sphere of civil society, of social autonomy, creativity and ownership is extended. And that this process can and must take place in every sphere of human activity – from the inter-state organisation to the bedroom - rather than waiting for, or being determined by, state ‘ownership and control of the commanding heights’.

Oh, and it can also involve dinner parties, and, as Emma Goldman insisted (and my long-time partner, Gina, demonstrates), a considerable amount of dancing. For me it has been fascinating to observe how the WSF dinner parties take place without anyone being poisoned, or even storming out to create a ‘Real WSF’, a ‘WSF (Marxist-Leninist)’, an ‘Amin-ist WSF’. It could happen but, despite the most fundamental disagreements, it has, after seven intensive years, not yet occurred.⁶ I have been privileged to not only witness this but to have been also involved in the WSF and the much wider movement. And to be still learning from the process. I hope some at least of this novelty, these new spheres of social emancipation, come over in this compilation. And so, in my seventies, I have to express my thanks to Wordsworth, responding to the French Revolution:

Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very heaven

I don’t actually think this dawn is bliss, and doubt whether even the engaged youth feel they are in heaven. For me, actually, Compañero Wordsworth, it is the other way round. To be involved in this movement is to enjoy many moments of joy, and certainly to keep myself young.

Beyond all conclusions: on circumventing capitalism and steam-age publishing

I did originally submit this compilation to a good globalisation-critical series with a globalised print- capitalist publishing company. Fortunately, they turned it down: too much of it was already online; university staff had developed the practice of referring students to free stuff in cyberspace, rather than books priced at GBP 19.99 to 49.99. I say fortunate because I had already been exploring possibilities for online publishing. They are developing exponentially. Capitalist book production is moving from the industrial to the service sector! Check out Lulu Press at <http://www.lulu.com/uk/>. I thought I would go one step further and publish in a global civil society space. Choike, at <http://www.choike.org/>, happens to be one of my favourites, being broad, friendly, bilingual, attractive, and fast. Choike (‘Southern Cross’) has the disadvantage of a name in Mapuche and the advantage of coming up top of screen when you Google it!

⁶ Well, Indian and international Maoists *did* create a Mumbai Resistance site opposite the 2004 WSF. The local and international organisers of the WSF (official?) did not give it too much attention. The experiment has not been repeated. In Nairobi, 2007, a People’s Parliament, complaining that the WSF was too expensive and too distant, met in a Nairobi park, but this represent a claim on rather than a rejection of the WSF.

Utopia is still somewhere over the horizon.⁷ But this space will certainly do in the meantime. And Choike makes no copyright claims. So, thanks to Elsa Duhagon for her welcome to this submission and to the effort that will be surely required to standardise the layout.

There is no more one road to utopia than there is one utopia that the road leads to. Steam-age publishing will continue, and good books will be published in this form. But I think that if we are talking of global social emancipation in the 21st century, then it behoves us to be experimenting with the latest, cheapest and most effective way of making stuff accessible.

This is, therefore, one such experiment.

Feedback to p.waterman@inter.nl.net would be more than welcome.

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⁷ Thus reminding me of a Communist joke - by which I mean another joke about Communism, customarily bandied about by the less-religious amongst us – though at considerable personal risk if so done *under* Communism. It goes like this. Following a Party education course for collective farmers in Soviet Russia, a farmer approaches the speaker, who had several times said ‘Communism is on the horizon’. The farmer wants to know the meaning of the word ‘horizon’. The answer: ‘The horizon is an imaginary line, separating the earth and the heavens, that moves away as one moves toward it’.