

COMMENT ON WAGAR

David Schwartzman
Department of Biology
Howard University
Washington, DC 20059 USA
dws@scs.howard.edu

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Wagar's paper is most welcome for reviving attention to the vital role that a transnational political party might play in global politics. I fully agree with Warren that globalization from above is the material reality that will, sooner or later, engender the self-organization of a countervailing "globalization from below," including the emergence of world parties. His vision is both utopian and "as radical as reality itself." While progressive transnational organizations like Greenpeace are well known, it is not widely recognized that there is a world party presently organized, the Transnational Radical Party (TRP), an outgrowth, or more like an appendage, of the Italian Radical Party (see full page ads in the N.Y. Times, 9/28/94, 10/28/94; for U.S. citizens to join the membership fee was \$255!). In existence since 1993 (?), with a claimed international membership of 50,000, including

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parliamentarians from every continent, its focus has been primarily on gaining a moratorium on the death penalty worldwide, an international tribunal to try war crimes in former Yugoslavia (now formed) and the legalization of drugs. TRP now has consultative status as a Category I NGO in the UN, qualifying it, unlike Greenpeace and many other progressive NGOs, with being able to introduce draft resolutions which may even reach the General Assembly (only 42 NGOs have this status, e.g., the International Red Cross). Up to now, the TRP has not addressed the challenge of constraining the global power of the transnational corporations and banks, an absence which may reflect its libertarian ideology and tilt to supporting U.S. foreign policy positions. With all of its limitations and lack of real challenge to global capital, the TRP does partially fill a political vacuum, a vacuum likely to be filled with other world parties in this decade, including I predict at least one sponsored by transnational capital itself. The TRP has made extensive use of the Internet in their global outreach (to get their communiques, send an E-mail to listserv@agora.stm.it, note SUBSCRIBE TRANSNAT Firstname Lastname; "owner" is radical.party@agora.stm.it). Arguably, utilization of the Internet is a necessary (but of course not sufficient) condition for the emergence and organization of a Wagarian ecosocialist world party (henceforth "WP").

What is a plausible scenario for the emergence of a WP? In

contrast to Wallerstein's arguments regarding the possibility of the "deghettoization" of anti-systemic movements, Wagar emphasizes their national exclusiveness, downplaying the new material basis for their possible synergistic convergence. For example, a rebirth of the U.S. trade union movement (now a realistic possibility with new leadership of the AFL-CIO), is arguably a necessary condition for shifting politics to the left in the U.S., and by its multiplier effects, in much of the rest of the planet.

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This development in turn depends increasingly on its convergence with the anti-systemic movements of people of color and women, since these sectors constitute the core of the most organizable sectors. Similarly, with NAFTA, U.S. trade unions are forced to confront the necessity of building transnational labor solidarity. Of course other "convergences" are required for a WP, particularly that of the "red" and "green" movements - the emergence of "ecosocialism" - that can bring into being both a new vision of socialism and a movement to achieve it. Viable socialist internationalism should now be centered on the struggle for a sustainable global economy, entailing equity in North/South economic and ecological relations. Viable green politics must increasingly adopt a perspective for democratization of the economy, for social governance of production and consumption. Again, there are multifold grounds to argue that the objective basis for this convergence is growing out of the phenomenon of globalization. To be sure there is nothing inevitable about these prospects, given the countervailing forces, above all racism, sexism, and nationalism, fragmenting the national and international workforce and dividing national movements. But confronting this challenge is both the burden and the immense opportunity for an emergent transnational political movement along the lines of the WP.

Some see the real hope in capturing the imagination of the youth: "The alternative to nationalism is not an abstract and bureaucratic internationalism; it is supranationalism. Despite the dreary deterioration of educational systems, the attraction of supranationalism exists among the young, whose idealism is not extinct" (John Lukacs, N.Y. Times, 1/8/93, p.A25). Wagar argues that this supranationalist movement in the form of the WP should be guided by the secular ideology rooted in the Enlightenment. I would agree so long as the WP reaches out to humanist currents in

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the world religious movements. The WP should make full use of contemporary world science (no longer "Western") to fight against all retrogressive ideologies that divide humanity into "races" and castes, that subordinate and oppress women and sexual minorities.

Instead of "multiracial," the movement against racism should be "transracial," embodying a critique of the concept of race as a biological category (the racists invented this classification of *H. sapiens*); the unavoidable use of the word race carries its racist biological baggage (see essays in Harding, 1993).

The WP should strive to represent humanity's common interests in national and local struggles, while recognizing the vital role of the anti-systemic movements, and above all labor, movements which are bound to have nationalistic distortions. The contradictory character of individual multiple identities of participants in each anti-systemic movement is reflected in the limits of its agendas and achievements in local/national struggles, but it is also an opening for the presence of transnational consciousness. In other words, globalization from below is bound to have a complex and uneven development. To pretend that a WP could emerge in a mode of pure conversion without being deeply rooted in national anti-systemic movements is idealist in a most anti-utopian sense. The WP's first constituency is natural: the minority non-geographical community in every nation state that is active in anti-systemic movements, particularly among the youth, i.e., those who are consciously "planetary citizens." The pessimistic assessments of the feasibility of organizing a WP may well be correct (e.g., Wallerstein's remarks at the ASA panel), but we will never know unless a serious attempt is made in that direction. Let us begin!

Some ideas on moving ahead with the very initial steps to forming the WP: a study of the Transnational Radical Party would be most useful as well as circulating draft principles,

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manifestos, calls, organizational ideas, and near-term scenarios. Any such effort should naturally assume a transnational character from the beginning. I close with an updated quotation: "The World Party does not form a separate party opposed to other progressive parties. It has no interests separate and apart from those of humanity as a whole. It does not set up sectarian principles of its own, by which to shape and mold the movement for a sustainable global economy in a healthy planetary environment. The World Party is distinguished from the other progressive parties by this only: 1) In the national struggles of progressives in different countries, it points out and brings to the front the common interests of all of humanity, independently of all nationality. 2) In the various stages of development which the struggle for global sustainability has to pass through, it always and everywhere represents the interests of the movement as a whole." (after *The Communist Manifesto*, with apologies to K. Marx and W. Warren Wagar)

References

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