



Angelo Palma

Placing human beings at the centre of our concerns

My first two words will be gratitude and tribute. Gratitude to Pierre, for his very kind words that come from his heart, and gratitude for your confidence which I do not deserve but will try to justify. And also a tribute to Pierre Mauroy. If you asked me what are the humane and political qualities of a true socialist activist, the answer would be very simple: all these qualities and skills you will find them in the person of Pierre Mauroy.

My dear Pierre, what a privilege to have worked so closely with you throughout these seven years. What a privilege to have been at your side while you were pursuing the work started by Willy Brandt, turning a European social democratic movement into the largest political organisation in the world, into a truly universal movement which is our Socialist International. It is because of this outstanding success, which is due to your perseverance, to your political intelligence, to your capacity for dialogue, to your work and also to the permanent cooperation of our dear friend Luis, that I wish that my first initiative as elected president of the Socialist International be to propose to this Congress that Pierre Mauroy be elected honorary president of the Socialist International.

Dear friends, dear comrades, this Congress and in particular everything we do for our peoples in concrete terms is evidence of the failure of the theses of "the end of History" or of the decline of ideologies. We are here in the name of principles inspired by a clear ideological position. We reject political power for its own sake. We reject a tactical vision of politics without any strategy. We reject technocracy without humanism and pragmatism without values.

António Guterres, President of the Socialist International, Secretary General of the Socialist Party and Prime Minister of Portugal, addressing the XXI SI Congress following his election

We live in a world of constant technological and cultural change, and it is quite natural that the ideas, the thoughts of social democracy, of democratic socialism, be continually in search of new answers to the new challenges and of new solutions to new problems. This is the reason why we have to assert a new ideological synthesis able to address the problems we face as we enter the new millennium. But this is to be a synthesis that can draw its inspiration from the legacy and the values of the century of Enlightenment, from the primacy of reason over all forms of irrationality in political life, from opposition to exacerbated nationalism, religious fundamentalism, racism and xenophobia. A synthesis which is particularly innovative in its capacity to integrate into the history of emancipation the values of social democracy, freedom, equality, solidarity, social justice, and the contributions of various styles of humanism that exist in this world and which are dear to us. And I say in the world because we are rejecting a eurocentric vision of the world and of history. A synthesis that can include the best tradition of left liberal thought, that should not be confused with neo-liberalism, which can draw our attention to the role of initiative, fulfilment and responsibility of citizens but within the framework of a society of solidarity.

This then is the response of social democracy, without complexes, emphasising the importance of citizenship, over autonomy of the individual which was the trend of the political culture of the last decade. So we are the proud inheritors of the thoughts of Bernstein, Bauer, Kautsky, Jaurès, Rosselli, Brandt, Olof Palme. And because we are proud of such a legacy, because we are sure of our convictions, we are also able to be open to new contributions from contemporary political philosophy: visions of justice of philosophers like John Rawls or Michael Walzer; conceptions of democracy itself, based on a permanent inter-communication between civil society and political society of which Jürgen Habermas speaks. A new ideological synthesis, open but rooted in our tradition, in our values and in our principles.

A synthesis from which we have to draw conclusions. The first being the essential primacy of human rights, of fundamental rights and freedoms, and there it is important to say that we cannot accept any limits, we cannot accept any different interpretation in light of economic or cultural conditions of any country. Basic rights and basic freedoms have to be fully respected without exceptions. Economic and social rights, which are also part of our heritage, and the rights of the so-called 'third generation', the right to parity between men and women, the right to a healthy environment in nature and in societies where cities play an increasingly important role, the new urban rights: right to privacy, to space, to light, to history, to identity and to memory.

This new ideological synthesis places human beings at the centre of the concerns of each of our parties and each of our governments. Education naturally becomes the absolute priority for social democrats and the strategic triangle of education, training, employment take on an essential role in the rediscovery of full employment as an objective of the economic policy of social democrats and democratic socialists. Full employment which takes on a new character because it must be created and formed within the framework of a reforming society that can incorporate technological innovations, the new information and knowledge-based society. But let us be clear, for us social democrats, for us democratic socialists, full employment, social cohesion, the eradication of exclusion are not utopias, they are part of the necessary and pressing agenda of each party and each socialist government in the world.

An ideological synthesis thanks to which we can also present a new vision, a new synthesis for the reform of the welfare state. Synthesis between support for maintaining the universality of social rights of our citizens and the positive differentiation vis-à-vis the weak because in the name of equality we have to treat differently what is different. Clearly this synthesis will be different in a wealthy country with a developed welfare state, from a poorer country where



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nevertheless there are still forms of solidarity that need to be highlighted in order to move towards a society of true solidarity.

Dear friends and dear comrades, Socialist International has always been, is and will remain a movement in the forefront of the struggle for democracy and for the liberation of men and peoples. The Socialist International has always been and will remain a frontrunner in the struggle for justice and peace in the world. All forms of totalitarianism in the East and West, all dictatorships, colonial dominations, including apartheid, and all forms of oppression of people and men, all religious fundamentalisms, have always met with the firm and determined opposition of the Socialist International, in the Soviet Union as in Chile, in Portugal as in South Africa, in Burma and in East Timor, anywhere in the world whenever it was, and is, necessary, we are present. We are not going to stop at that, we will continue to be present, we will remain attentive, active and determined, particularly where we have to seek or keep peace, in particular in the Middle East, in Africa or in the Balkans. I would like to salute the very impressive accounts we heard this morning from Yasser Arafat and Ehud Barak.

Everywhere in the world we remain true to our history and to our tradition of emancipating men and peoples. But dear friends, dear comrades, the major challenge of our times, the essential point of our action over the coming years is reflected in a twin objective: to ensure the governability of globalisation and to ensure the capacity to control the economic globalisation of markets as well as that of culture and information. We live in a world which is not politically structured, which is incapable of ensuring peace, democracy, stability, and which has weak global organisations and one single hegemonic power. And I say this without bitterness or ill-feeling because never in history has a hegemonic power

endeavoured to lose its dominance. It is up to us to build a world that is fairer and more balanced.

So these are the two major aspects of policy for our agenda. Firstly, strengthening the role of global political organisations and in particular strengthening and reforming the United Nations system in order to guarantee its efficiency, improve its democratisation and enable it to intervene rapidly, particularly with the current possibilities of humanitarian intervention, which are welcome but have to be settled within the framework of international law. And secondly, we have to create strong regional political organisations to be in a position to speak with one voice on all the major international issues and to build a multipolar world, well-balanced in favour of maintaining peace, stability and justice, in protecting human rights and the liberation of peoples.

But dear friends, dear comrades, we also live in a global economy which is not regulated. It is true that the global economy has made possible a tremendous growth in world trade, in productivity, in technological innovation. But it has also caused the globalisation of poverty and social tensions, including in the richer countries, by dividing those who succeed and who profit from this affluence and the women and men, the sectors, the regions who are left behind. A globalisation which has widened the gap that separates the more affluent countries from the poorest regions on our planet. Our agenda is therefore very clear: we have to regulate globalisation and set order where chaos reigns. A century ago social democratic parties in Europe were struggling to regulate the market economy in their countries in order to create a strong, regulating State, a society based on solidarity. We are in favour of a market economy but, as Lionel Jospin said, we are not in favour of a market society: we are in favour of a society based on solidarity. Now the same problem has arisen at world level. And we do not lack ideas to turn our vision into reality, what we sometimes lack is the strength or the tools, the capacity to coordinate our efforts and, let us admit it, what is missing at times is the political determination to fight the logic of dominant interests.

Dear friends and comrades, allow me two words on the ideas that we have shared in our debate. We have upheld the setting up of an Economic Security Council in the United Nations, also proposed by Jacques Delors some years ago, in trying to control more effectively the world economy and create the conditions for the coordination of economic policies in favour of growth and employment. We are in favour of reforming the Bretton Woods system, a system for which reform has been recognised as necessary by President Clinton himself at the G7 meeting in Naples. Reform in favour of clarification, to at least clarify the role of the IMF and the World Bank. A reform that would be capable of ensuring greater political control of these organisations and the way they function. But also a reform in methods, a reform of the conditionality tied to aid, in particular regarding aid from the IMF. This is because a conditionality based purely on the financial orthodoxy as it is today is one which risks creating social conflicts, endangering democracy itself and failing completely. So what we need is a conditionality which combines rigour (because rigour is necessary - we must recognise that) with an answer to the social and economic problems and needs of the countries receiving aid from the Monetary Fund, while ensuring at the same time an increase in the Fund's resources, the creation of special drawing rights for third world countries and debt relief of the poorest countries in particular.

We need new rules to deal with the global financial market which today is essentially speculative: rules of transparency, of supervision, codes of behaviour for financial operators as well as coordination of fiscal policy, if possible, fiscal measures to discourage strictly speculative transactions. We also need reform at the World Trade Organisation in order to open up the markets of the most developed countries to exports from the poorest countries in the world, and in order to be alert and in a position to incorporate social concerns as well as

8 environmental concerns, which normally do not feature in the liberal thought that usually triumphs in WTO discussions. The idea is not to create new forms of protectionism but to broaden and promote rights to freely join a trade union, to free collective bargaining, the right to strike, in short, the rights of societies which are based on the social democratic model, the democratic socialist model.

Dear friends, dear comrades, regulating globalisation will not be possible without regional organisations that are strong and vigorous inter-regional cooperation, but these regional organisations must not be built on the neo-liberal model to be merely free trade areas, rather they must be regional organisations of economic, political and social integration as we have already achieved in part at the European Union level. Organisations that can control the effects of the global economy.

The coordination of economic policies is an absolute pre-requisite if we want to relaunch growth and employment on a worldwide scale. Obviously this coordination must fully comply with the macro-economic balance. Social democrats are in favour of stability, social democrats are not in favour of inflation. But social democrats combine a rigorous approach with a social conscience. Social democrats combine stability with policies to promote growth and employment. Both aspects must exist together otherwise a major part of our planet and of our societies, even in the wealthiest areas, will be condemned to a poverty that is totally inexplicable and unacceptable from the political and moral viewpoint.

Dear friends, dear comrades, what we want, in a world which is disorganised is a new system of collective responsibility based on a fairer and more equitable architecture of international relations. This is the mobilising agenda which lies before us. But it must be said, and we have to give recognition to the fact that we will not be able to do this on our own, in isolation. We require dialogue and coordination of all our efforts with all other progressive forces throughout the world.

But here we have to issue a word of caution: we want cooperation but it should not lead to the dissolution of the Socialist International into a wider movement, whose features would not be clear-cut and would necessarily be contradictory. The SI has its history, its values, its traditions, its identity, and we are proud of them. The SI has kept this identity but must be open to close cooperation with all those who wish to share our priorities and place our global agenda at the very core of the concerns for reform in today's world. And here, there is a necessity to engage in dialogue and to cooperate, particularly with the Democratic Party of the United States, but also with a variety of other influential forces in different parts of the world.

Dear friends, dear comrades, faced with the many challenges before us, we should remember that the struggle of social democrats has never been easy, the results have never been fast. Perseverance is needed, but we also have to work quickly which is why, with the guidance of Felipe González, at the next Council of Socialist International we will put forward to you a global platform and three regional platforms which will develop the Declaration of Paris we adopted yesterday.

Dear friends and dear comrades, by way of a conclusion let me say that we should be responsible but without losing our ability to harbour dreams. And, let me once again quote Olof Palme, my fundamental political reference. He said and I repeat: "We must not abandon utopia because the antagonism between ideas and reality is both the major dilemma of democratic socialism and its fascinating driving force".