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Legacy

Peter Waterman (1936–2017): Radical Internationalist, Scholar-Activist

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INTRODUCTION

If one were to scroll through Peter Waterman's considerable curriculum vitae without knowing much about him, it would be the word 'internationalism' that would jump out. His life and work traversed many spaces of engagement across several decades and continents. His autobiography is appropriately titled: *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement: Itinerary of a Long-distance Internationalist* (Waterman, 2014). Living 'many lives to the full' (Cox, 2017: 9), his journey from the London of the late 1930s, to Prague, back to the UK, then onto Nigeria and finally settling in The Netherlands, involved a major transition from a full-time communist activist to a scholar-activist who remained engaged with labour and social movements, making significant contributions to new conceptualizations in labour studies, social movement unionism and what he called 'a global emancipatory movement'.

Born into a middle-class communist Jewish family in London in 1936, Peter Waterman grew up during the war in a household infused with the spirit of communist internationalism — in his own words, 'chanting "Open the Second Front!" (i.e. in Europe, which the UK and USA were deliberately postponing), "Free India Now!" and "They Shall Not Pass!". There was a worldwide struggle between Red Communist Revolution and Black Nazi Reaction. Britain could go either way' (Waterman, 2014: 24).[1] His mother worked for various international solidarity committees and published two

With thanks to Ronaldo Munck for kindly allowing me to use notes he had prepared on Peter Waterman's work, some of which appear in his brief obituary published in the *Global Labour Journal* (Munck, 2017) and to Virginia Vargas for sharing political and personal memories of Peter.

1. The autobiography is available online at http://democraciaglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/Waterman_Autobio-35.pdf. Page numbers may differ when downloaded.

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semi-autobiographical books. His father was the General Manager of Collet's, the well-known Communist bookshop chain. Peter joined the Young Communist League at the age of 15 and as he recalls: 'The Party and "the movement" became my family, my club, my church, my country, my universe. It also belonged in my mind to the wartime tradition of guns, bombs, sacrifice and heroism' (ibid.: 29). At this stage he had no desire to be an academic, preferring to do a course on journalism and 'wanting only to get out and make the increasingly-overdue revolution (my five years were running out)' (ibid.: 35). His comrade in the Young Communist League, Ralph Samuel (Marxist social historian who wrote the classic three-volume study on British Communism and was one of the founders of *New Left Review* launched in 1960) remained a lifelong friend until his passing in 1996.

Waterman then headed for Prague and became the English language editor of the monthly journal *World Student News*, of the International Union of Students in Prague (1955–58), set up to link students from countries that had fought fascism. After compulsory UK military service (1959–60), he studied at Ruskin College, Oxford (1961–63) — known as the 'worker's college' — where he did his bachelor's degree in philosophy, politics and economics. He married Ruth Kupferschmidt (a Montessori schoolteacher, artist and Holocaust survivor, who spent five years as a 'hidden child' in The Netherlands), whom he met at the annual demonstration organized since 1958 by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. They had two children and Waterman supported his family with a stint of truck driving. He then returned to Prague and worked as a labour educator for the World Federation of Trade Unions (1966–69), becoming interested in African politics and unions through interaction with unionists from the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and others.

After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968,[2] disillusioned and disenchanted, yet still a communist, he left Prague saying 'Goodbye Stalin (if not yet Lenin)' (Waterman, 2014: 140). Along with many other communists of the time, Waterman was profoundly shaken, questioning firmly held beliefs and hopes in the emancipatory vision and the future of the world Communist movement. Some new hope was generated when the British Communist Party (CPGB) condemned the Russian intervention and supported the Czechs. However, when the CPGB refused to publish a paper written by Waterman in 1969 refuting the justifications for the Soviet invasion, he realized — as he says in his inimitable style — that 'the gingerbread had not only lost its gilt but also its ginger' (ibid.).

This was a moment of major transition and the point at which Waterman began to follow up his interest in the African trade union movement, triggered by a trade union training course he ran in Nigeria and a meeting

2. In his autobiography Waterman provides a graphic day-by-day account of the Soviet occupation; see Chapter 4 'Prague, 1966–69', section 'August 1968: The Re-imposition of Abnormality' (Waterman, 2014: 132 ff.).

with Robin Cohen, a South African socialist then doing his PhD on Nigerian trade unions, based at the University of Ibadan. With Cohen's encouragement, Waterman did a master's degree in West African Studies at Birmingham University, writing his thesis on the Nigerian dock workers' trade union movement. Now fully ensconced in the academic world, Waterman worked at Ahmadu Bello University in northern Nigeria for two years. Then, from 1972 until his retirement in 1998, he taught at the inter-disciplinary development studies Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, first on Third World unions, later on labour and other social movements, and on new internationalisms, especially through electronic communications. Expanding on his MA thesis, he obtained his PhD from Nijmegen Catholic University in 1982 with a thesis entitled 'Aristocrats and Plebeians in African Unions? Lagos Port and Dock Worker Organisation and Struggle', published in 1983.

While his academic-activist contributions moved — in interest, focus and themes — through what we might call an early, a mature and a late phase yet, as we will see, there was a thread of continuity in Waterman's constant and consistent internationalism, radicalism and the translation of analytical insights into strategies for social transformation.

NIGERIA AND AFRICAN LABOUR STUDIES

The 'early' Peter Waterman was part of a wave of British academics doing their PhDs on West Africa. Waterman's topic was the dockworkers in Lagos at a time when 'labour aristocracy' debates were raging. Were these organized workers playing a conservative and self-interested role or would they play a leading and radical role organizing the mass of workers? Critical of the trade union leadership, an article in *Development and Change* on the 'labour aristocracy' in Africa (Waterman, 1975)[3] sums up the debate and Waterman's own engagement with it. It shows him already moving away from any orthodoxy, whether Marxist or mainstream. He further developed these ideas in an article for a book edited by Gavin Williams, a fellow British academic working in Nigeria, a collaborator and the founder and editor of *Review of African Political Economy* (Waterman, 1976). As Williams recalls:

> Peter and I went to Nigeria in different directions, geographically. He taught at Ahmadu Bello University in the North. I was trying to make sense of how ordinary people lived their lives in Ibadan, in the West. Peter naturally went south, to Lagos, to form political links with

3. An earlier version of this article titled 'The labour aristocracy in Africa: Introduction to an unfinished controversy', appeared in the *South African Labour Bulletin*, but was banned by the apartheid government because Waterman used 'the Hegelian method of thesis, antithesis and synthesis to structure his argument', which the South African censorship board considered a typical example of Hegelian Marxist method (from an interview with Eddie Webster, 15 March 2004, quoted in Kiem, 2017: 141).

> and conduct research among Lagos dockworkers and, as he discovered, port workers, whose social situations did not coincide with one another's. His research proved more successful [than] his political initiatives, but that was itself part of his story. He combined in his work in Lagos a wry view of union politics with respect for the workers he was studying. I was, and still am, pleased that in a volume I edited, Peter published an essay on 'Conservatism amongst the Nigerian working class', which as always is less straightforward than might appear. He also held me back from some over-enthusiastic Marxist flourishes in my own analyses. (Williams, 2017)

In relation to the labour aristocracy, Waterman was engaging with a fraught issue in both the British and the then-incipient African labour studies tradition. For many at the time the labour aristocracy thesis explained the relative quiescence of unionized African workers. There was also a strong Fanonist trend which tended to focus attention on 'the wretched of the earth' as against the relatively secure urban workers. For Waterman, writing his PhD, on the contrary:

> my reading of British labour history and admittedly-limited knowledge of Nigerian trade unionism in no way suggested either that rich workers were more conservative or that poor labourers were more radical (as distinguished from volatile). And in reading back on the classical Marxist uses of the 'labour aristocracy' I came to the conclusion that this was less a Marxist theory or even a Marxist concept (i.e. related to Marxist class theory) than a Marxist rationalisation for the failure of the working class to behave as — according to Marxist eschatology — it ought. (Waterman, 1983: 18)

This debate seemingly ended with the partial retreat of the labour aristocracy thesis, although now and then it resurfaces, not least in left populist analysis of the South African trade union movement, accused by some of acting like a labour aristocracy. A recent article which reviews the debate, and refers to Waterman's work, argues for the need to reconstruct the thesis to show how an aristocracy of labour merges with an aristocracy of colour in South Africa (Çelik, 2017).

During this period Waterman established links with other radical African scholars calling the network a hypothetical 'Travelling Labour Seminar':

> This consisted of Adrian Peace, working on factory protest in Ikeja, an industrial estate near Lagos Airport . . . , of Gavin Williams, working on rural protest around Ibadan, the vast semi-rural city in Western Nigeria . . . , and, finally, of Paul Lubeck, up the road in Kano . . . . They were either Marxist or more generally, I guess, historical-materialist scholars, all working on their PhDs. These or other members of our left Zaria mafia turn up as contributors to a compilation by Gavin Williams (1976), or another one co-edited by Robin Cohen [Sandbrook and Cohen, 1975]. Many of them turned up later in the *Review of African Political Economy*, such as the special issue on Nigeria edited by Gavin (Williams, 1978). (Waterman, 2014: 157).

One outcome of the informal travelling labour seminar was a collection entitled *African Social Studies: A Radical Reader*, co-edited with Peter Gutkind (Africanist, anthropologist, founder/editor of *Labour, Capital and Society*). The anthology (Gutkind and Waterman, 1977) stressed class structure, class consciousness and the struggle for socialism, and included contributions from, among others, Ken Post, Archie Mafeje, Immanuel Wallerstein, John

Saul, Colin Leys, Samir Amin, Segun Osoba, Majhemout Diop and Amilcar Cabral. It was originally published in 1977, during what 'may have been the most important years for left analyses on West Africa' (Williams, 2017), and republished in 2011.

Now based at the ISS, in The Hague, Waterman organized a workshop on 'Third World Strikes' in 1977 which led to a special issue of *Development and Change* on Strikes in the Third World (Waterman, 1979) with contributions covering Pakistan, Namibia, Argentina, Ghana and Singapore, as well as an article on research methodology by Paul Lubeck — another member of the travelling labour seminar — and an overview paper by Richard Hyman. Early studies on African labour were heavily influenced by Marxism and universalist conceptions of working class consciousness and proletarianization; Waterman was part of a cohort of scholars who began to move away from these conceptions. Based on his PhD thesis, Waterman elaborated the broader implications of his findings for understanding the African working classes through a review of four classical works by Meillassoux and Bagayogo, Sandbrook, Peil, and Bromley and Gerry. He argued that these studies signalled a shift in African labour studies most significantly by identifying a new area of focus:

> The new problem area is that of the relations of the better-paid and more-securely employed wage earners with other labouring people, either 1) as urban residents or 2) in terms of relations on wage/non-wage axis either urban or rural or 3) as all — but differentially — semi-proletarianized. With the explicit addition of relations between wage-earning men and women (wage earning or not) this suggests not only a broad terrain for research but a wide area for political activity in creating an anti-capitalist movement. If full proletarianization is blocked in the manner that most of the writers reviewed suggest, this need not be seen only as a disqualification for effective anti-capitalist struggle. (Waterman, 1984: 358)

Always looking for organizational implications, Waterman agreed with the critique of Eurocentric union forms and strategies in these books and argued for the need for alternative forms of organization relevant to the African context.

These observations presaged subsequent debates which are still ongoing, not just in African labour studies but also in other southern contexts.[4] Together with Arvind Das, Waterman organized an important international

4. Meanwhile African labour studies moved on and away from essentialist categories. In a review calling for a rethinking of African labour studies, Schler et al. (2009: 289) note that 'recent studies on African labour have shifted from their former rigorously materialist orientation to reflect a growing preoccupation with representation, imagery and ideology as the means through which the African working classes negotiate their place in global markets'. They argue for an approach to studying labour which brings back a new materialism so that 'our understanding of the modes through which Africans represent and negotiate their participation in political and cultural contexts will be enriched and complicated by a sustained awareness of material opportunities as well as by the vectors resulting from articulated identities and allegiances' (ibid.).

workshop in India in 1981 to set up a research project on 'Trade Unions and the Labouring Poor', which addressed the fact that a working class movement had to represent not just the miniscule section of unionized workers but also the non-unionized. Based on meetings with several Indian labour activists and scholars, he wrote a strong critique of Indian trade unions, delineating the crisis in trade unions at the level of policy, organization and strategy, and the limited outreach to the labouring poor (Waterman, 1982). The points he raised decades ago remain salient today.

A major engagement with India in this period was forged around the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal in 1984. Along with the Dutch solidarity group India Werkgroep, Waterman organized teach-ins on Bhopal and a demonstration, while Ruthie, his wife, was building a sculpture outside the gates of Union Carbide to commemorate the victims. The sculpture still stands there, a powerful indictment of the world's worst industrial chemical disaster.

NEW INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STUDIES AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM

A significant development in labour studies was heralded by the launching in the 1970s of the 'new international labour studies'. A continuous strand of Waterman's research and engagement was with organized labour's relationship with community groups as occurred, for example, with the emergence of the independent trade union movement in South Africa. This problematic — which generated much debate internationally — is well captured by another of his articles: 'Social Movement Unionism: A New Union Model for a New World Order' (Waterman, 1993a). It is a debate that has continued to this day and Waterman's active engagement in this reflected a continuity with his early work.

The notion of social movement (or just social) unionism was one that Waterman developed and promoted to the extent that it became mainstreamed, sometimes to his discomfort. The basis for developing this new model was the crisis in trade unionism evident since the 1980s, and the need to 'catch up' with a globalized, informationalized complex new capitalism. There was the economistic trade unionism in the advanced industrial societies during the post-war boom and then there was the Leninist-inspired political unionism, particularly in the South during and after the anti-colonial struggle. Now, Waterman and others (not least in South Africa during the anti-apartheid struggle) were posing the need for a social (or social movement) unionism. It was to connect unionized workers with non-unionized sectors such as homeworkers and the petty-commodity production sector. It would also articulate with non-class democratic movements such as residents', ecological, human rights and church movements. It was to be a network-based movement and not a hierarchical one.

Like all concepts or political ideas this one travelled and it was adopted and, at times, traduced or co-opted. For Waterman it was always a radical model fit for global dissemination which needed to evolve 'in such a way that it provides both a new theoretical tool and suggests a new political norm. In other words, that it be distinguished from both traditional terminologies and traditional practices' (Waterman, 1988: 1). He acknowledged the adaptation of the concept but continued to posit a broader conception:

> First suggested by myself, in the Netherlands, in the late-1980s, the notion of Social Movement Unionism (SMU) was first *applied* by Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster, in South Africa, where it had considerable political and academic impact. Unhappy with their Class/Popular-Community understanding, I then (re-)conceptualised SMU in Class+New Social Movement terms, with a distinct international/ist dimension. This was meant not to oppose but to surpass the South African understanding. (Waterman, 2004a: 217)

He distanced himself from its original deployment in South Africa in regard to links with 'national-popular communities', calling his version 'the new global social unionism'.

There is an interesting discussion on the genealogy of the SMU concept, with Kim Scipes noting that there are three sets of writers on SMU:

> those writing on contemporary unionism in North America, especially those stimulated directly or indirectly by the work of Kim Moody; those writing initially in regards to the new unions and labor organizations that emerged in the 1970s through the mid-'80s in the Global South, and subsequent theorization based on experiences of certain 'southern' organizations; and then subsequent writings by early theorists who have gone in different directions without explicitly noting their respective changes in direction. (Scipes, 2014: n.p.)

Scipes argues that the original referent of SMU to the type of unionism which emerged from alliances between labour centres and unions in the global South — specifically CUT (Central Única dos Trabalhadores — Unified Workers' Central) of Brazil, KMU (Kilusang Mayo Uno — May First Movement) of the Philippines, and COSATU (the Congress of South African Trade Unions) of South Africa — while global in its possibilities, cannot be applied to 'North America today, as there are no labor centers or unions present that are developing this type of trade unionism' (Scipes, 2014: n.p.). Others contend that the concept took off in the United States in the 1990s precisely in terms of labour–community alliances that may escape the bonds of collective bargaining activity and the hierarchal national union structures, and that it was this labour–community alliance concept that was more widely adopted, with the most influential formulation developed by Kim Moody. This debate alerts one to the use (and possible conflation) of the same terminology for a concept which has different meanings and contextual roots, and to the recognition of the genealogy of concepts. Although Waterman was often sharp in his criticisms and lost some good labour and social movement colleagues in the process, his own take on his interventions in social movement debates was not proprietary or arrogant.

> I repeat that I have never been satisfied with my own understanding of SMU, considering it schematic, lacking in a clear relationship to union and general social theory, and too radical to be effective amongst labour movement activists. I do not, either, cherish the role of the prophet in the wilderness, or the small, still, voice of truth. So the revelation of other pathways to paradise, other roads to other possible labour utopias, is reassuring. (Waterman, 2004a: 239)

The 'mature' Waterman became known for his critical stance with regard to international trade union leadership and his promotion of the new labour internationalism. His commitment to this was already expressed in the publication he edited, the *Newsletter of International Labour Studies* (NILS), from 1978 to 1989. The special issues of NILS reflect a global scope and linkage with major scholars working on labour: on Tanzania (co-edited by fellow ISS staff member, Paschal Mihyo); Internationalism, Women and Homework (Isa Baud and Anneke van Luijken); Indian Labour Studies (guest-edited by Arvind Das); International Labour Migration (Robin Cohen); Trade Union Internationalism, Asia: Europe, Brazil, Indonesia (Celia Mather); the First World, Labour and the New Social Movements (featuring a major paper by André Gunder Frank and his wife, Marta Fuentes); Solidarnosc and International Solidarity, Trade Unions and the Third World (Roger Southall); The New Internationalism and the New International Labour Studies: The USA 'Beyond Trade Union Imperialism' (Kim Scipes); and Workers' Control at the Capitalist Periphery (Asef Bayat). NILS reflected a wave of militant labour actions, shop-floor internationalism and a new kind of international labour studies occurring globally. Oriented towards labour activists, the Newsletter was highly appreciated. As Waterman states in his autobiography: 'Many years later, my first South African labour studies contact, Eddie Webster, recalled that by the late-1970s, the new labour studies had "reached the status of a new paradigm"' (Waterman, 2014: 180). Waterman then goes on to quote from Webster himself: 'They [the Newsletters] are an extraordinarily rich and informative collection … consisting of reviews, publication news, audio-visual aids, research resources, events, organizations, projects and periodicals over the ten-year period … when the new paradigm was arguably at its most influential' (quoted in Waterman, ibid.).[5]

Engagement with the new labour internationalism is best illustrated by his own book *Globalization, Social Movements and the New Internationalisms* (Waterman, 1998/2001) which focused on the history of and prospects for labour internationalism. At this stage he was much influenced by Anthony Giddens and Manuel Castells with their work on globalization and the rise of the network society. This book also saw the radical-democratic language

5. For further development of the new international labour studies (NILS) into the field of the new global labour studies (NGLS) and ongoing discussions, see Brookes and McCallum (2017); Munck (2009).

and perspective replacing the Marxist-socialist paradigm. The book was positively reviewed:

> This is a rare book by a rare scholar. Peter Waterman has devoted the last thirty years of his life to studying the ways in which and the degree to which social movements have been truly international. He believes that most of the so called internationalism preached by the movements and analysed by the scholars has really been simply the cumulative story of a series of national movements. He wishes it were otherwise. . . . As I read the book, I could only cheer Peter Waterman on. He is right on the mark on issue after issue. (Wallerstein, 2000: 515, 516)

Two co-edited collections also marked this phase of Waterman's collaborative work: *Labour Worldwide in the Era of Globalization* (Munck and Waterman, 1999) and *Place, Space and the New Labour Internationalisms* (Waterman and Wills, 2001). They also signalled a shift from a focus on trade unions and organized labour (the former volume) to a more explicit or total commitment (in the latter volume) to the construction of a new internationalism based squarely on the radical-democratic or 'new' social movements. The 'new' internationalism Waterman advocated dovetailed nicely with a prior interest in electronic labour communications that he had pursued since the early days of the Internet. He berated the trade unions for their traditionalist or instrumental attitude towards electronic communication and was an early advocate for cyberspace solidarity and internationalism. In a succession of working papers and publications from 1985 onwards, Waterman argued that networking through communication rather than institutions would produce a radical-democratic style of communication and culture that would break with the dominant values of capitalism and the traditional trade unions alike. In his enthusiasm for this new era he would often quote Marx and Engels saying 'all that is solid melts into air'. But he also liked the phrase by Hans-Magnus Enzensberger that the electronic media was (and maybe could make us) 'as free as dancers, as aware as football players, as surprising as guerrillas'.[6] This, in a sense, would nicely sum up Waterman at his best.

This commitment to internationalism was combined with a strong dislike of what Waterman called populism and Third Worldism, which was essentially a form of nationalism. He saw Latin American dependency theory as just such a radical-nationalist ideology and accused its followers of 'seeing a fundamental contradiction between capitalist core and periphery, with some kind of common Third World interest — of workers, people, and possibly national industry and economy — against imperialism' (Waterman, 1998/2001: 136). Many of his contemporaries found such a characterization of dependency theory too simplistic.

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6. From Enzenberger's *Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien*. For an English version, see Enzenberger (1970).

GLOBAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT AND THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

From the Zapatista uprising in 1994 through the Seattle protests in 1999 and then the first World Social Forum (WSF) meeting in Porto Allegre, Brazil, a new era of hope was ushered in with the emergence of counter-hegemonic globalization movements. As de Souza Santos eloquently put it:

> In the last thirty years, conservative thought believed it had gained immortality. In the political and social domain, a certain kind of thought gains the appearance of immortality when it pronounces it rival thoughts dead, and makes this credible for large sectors of the population. The end of history, the death of the state, the end of the left/right cleavage, the obsolescence of revolution and the Third World are some of the obituaries that have allowed conservative thought to flag its immortality . . . .. [T]he last decade has witnessed a kind of revenge of the dead thoughts. Resurging under new forms, many of these thoughts led to the conclusion that several of the deaths had been pronounced prematurely. (Santos, 2006: ix)

The global solidarity and justice movement and the WSF, in particular, not only brought together struggles for social emancipation, but provided a space for the renewal/reinvention of left thinking.

Waterman was always looking to the 'new' social movements to inspire a new emancipatory strategy for labour and after 2000 he engaged mainly with the emerging global justice and solidarity movement, enthusiastically but also critically. The plural, decentralized and reflexive nature of the alter-globalization movements suited his personality and modus operandi — as far away as possible from the Soviet tanks rolling into Czechoslovakia in 1968 while he was working for the stifling and bureaucratic World Federation of Trade Unions! The aims and objectives emerging in the alter-globalization movement squared very much with his own ideas springing from the critique of traditional forms of mobilization. He attended many of the WSF events, particularly those held in Latin America (his *companero* Virginia Vargas was one of the key figures in the Forum and on the international committee), organizing several panels, one of which resulted in the collaborative book *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires*, co-edited with Jai Sen, Anita Anand and Arturo Escobar, published in 2004 to coincide with the WFS gathering in India (Sen et al., 2004). Waterman called this 'the Big Orange Book, or BoB, since it was almost a kilo in weight and it was, well, orange' (Waterman, 2014: 250), clearly a tongue in cheek reference to Mao's Little Red Book. Continuing the collaboration with Jai Sen he co-edited another book on the WSF (Sen and Waterman, 2012). He also launched, at the WSF, what he called his most ambitious intervention since social movement unionism: a Global Labour Charter movement project.

A combination of disorientation and stimulation, as Waterman himself acknowledges in his autobiography, always accompanied his participation in the WSF events. His criticisms of the WSF were many, not only because of the weak presence of the unions. He also criticized what he considered the bureaucratization and lack of representation in the International Council, the presence of large NGOs and fewer movements. Nevertheless, as he also

says in his biography, he was more at ease in the Forum than in traditional international unions, since the Forum, despite its vicissitudes and limitations, opened up much more space for dialogue. Although still inspired and enthusiastic, he (along with others such as de Souza Santos) began to raise critical issues for self-reflection within the WSF, urging it not to be overwhelmed by the past. His paper 'The Secret of Fire' expressed his concern:

> Pandora has opened her box, the genie is out of the lamp, and the secret of fire for emancipatory movements is now an open one. . . . This secret is to *keep moving.* In other words: a moment of stasis within a movement (institutionalization, incorporation, bureaucratization, collapse, regression) requires that activists be prepared to move to the periphery, or to move beyond it, or create a new movement to advance again, the potential represented by the old movement during its emancipatory moment. (Waterman, 2004b: 159)

Waterman became increasingly critical of the WSF, especially after Hugo Chávez turned up in Porto Alegre in 2005. What was a military *caudillo* doing at an event of the new Left? This was the old politics creeping back in, he thought. More broadly, he felt that the WSF lacked openness, transparency and procedures for accountability — a politics he was very familiar with of course. He saw it reproducing the politics of party and of the big international NGOs that were key to the formation of the WSF. Waterman began to fear that this new broad movement that he thought was a novel emancipatory space, a movement of movements, might end up promoting a 'decent globalization' reminiscent of the 'decent work' campaign promoted by the ILO and international trade unions in the 1990s, of which he had been fiercely critical.

Despite being disheartened, Waterman entered into a controversial discussion initiated by Samir Amin on labour at the WSF. At that time there was a debate raging between those who wanted the WSF to remain an 'open space' and those who felt it needed a clearer political direction and coordinated action (see Conway, 2013 for details on this). Samir Amin, a proponent of the latter and a member of the international council of the WSF, issued the Bamako Appeal in 2006 at the meeting in Bamako, Mali. Uncomfortable with the vanguardism implicit in this approach, Waterman nevertheless engaged with the appeal; he made a critical assessment of the Labour Chapter and also co-edited an online publication with contributions on the debate (Sen et al., 2007). In 2008, a number of significant publications on the new global labour studies appeared, including a collection edited by Bieler et al. (2008), which included a foreword by Samir Amin entitled, 'Rebuilding the Unity of the "Labour Front"' (Amin, 2008) and a chapter by Waterman on "A Trade Union Internationalism for the 21st Century: Meeting the Challenges from Above, Below and Beyond" (Waterman, 2008).

By the mid-2000s the WSF had become well established and in the views of many commentators it had lost its radical edge. Be that as it may, it seemed clear that the WSF was not going to radicalize the international trade union movement as some (including Waterman) had hoped. Waterman argued that

this was due to the disinterest of the WSF in general to the labour movement as well as the disinterest of the traditional unions in the broader movement in the WSF and the vision of another possible world which required a re-articulation of the labour movement. Reflecting on this in his autobiography:

> I have felt that ... the WSF–union relationship was one of informal mutual instrumentalisation rather than of dialogue. The unions, until time of writing, have been giving increasing attention to the WSF, whilst tending to preserve their own stalls or events within such. And the WSF — if we can give this somewhat amorphous entity singularity — grants space to the unions without significantly challenging their representativity, their bureaucratic modus operandi, and their notion that another world for labour pre-existed the WSF in — say — Sweden around 1980. (Waterman, 2014: 248)

The re-articulation and re-inventing of the labour movement has yet to happen.

During his years at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Waterman inevitably engaged with the Dutch trade unions, particularly around the issue of development cooperation. From his international solidarity perspective, he was very critical of the way Dutch trade unions related to their counterparts in the South. He often referred to the Dutch colonial period to explain this issue. A constant *leitmotiv* was the impossibility of practising trade union internationalism if the activity was state funded. In a review of a book celebrating 'forty years of international trade union solidarity' by the Dutch trade union federation, Waterman wrote scathingly that:

> The lack of any significant South-to-North activity makes the recipients of Dutch unions' aid/solidarity not 'partners' (in the language of this book) but, let's face it, *clients*. So what we are here talking about is a patron–client relation, with the clients doing what clients do: expressing their gratitude to the patrons. And the patrons basking in a self-congratulatory glow of well-being. (Waterman, 2017: 167)

Such a sharp tongue did not endear him to trade union leaders but Waterman maintained what he called a dialogical critical conversation, despite its consequences. Clearly aware of these consequences, it was no accident that he drew inspiration from the following words of Edward Said, quoted at the start of his autobiography:

> [T]here is something fundamentally unsettling about intellectuals who have neither offices to protect nor territory to consolidate and guard; self irony is therefore more frequent than pomposity, directness more than hemming and hawing. But there is no dodging the inescapable reality that such representations by intellectuals will neither make them friends in high places nor win them official honours. It is a lonely condition, yes, but it is always better than a gregarious tolerance for the way things are. (Quoted in Waterman, 2014: 8)

Provocative and critical yet constantly reaching out, Waterman was exceptional in connecting with the women's movement and feminist thought (Waterman, 1993b). Feminists considered him a 'true' feminist since he not only supported them by being present in demonstrations but engaged critically with their writings and discussed feminist theory and strategies with total involvement. Younger feminists continue to value this quality:

Katy Fox-Hodess noted how she 'appreciated his rejection of orthodoxies and [his] interest in, for example, feminist perspectives, which I would say really put him ahead of his time' (quoted in Cole, 2017).

Waterman came up with an interesting observation through his study of labour/social movements: that the revolutionary movements in which women played a leading role tended to become more international, invoking the lives and politics of Rosa Luxemburg and Flora Tristan and their dreams for an internationalist, inter-connected world, nourished with global solidarity. He also considered that feminist internationalism had more possibilities to feed a new internationalism. For this reason, he specifically wrote about the theoretical and political importance of the internationalist activism practised by Latin American and South Asian feminists. Critical of many aspects of contemporary women's movements, he nevertheless concluded a review of feminist international networks, events and declarations which sought to overcome divisive identities, stating: 'Most contemporary feminisms argue for the necessity of joining together such divided and denied identities, and most are suggesting a shift of paradigm away from the impossible past of inter-nationalism (which could only be a dream) and towards a global solidarity to be built day by day in our waking hours' (Waterman, 1998/2001: 187).

His autobiography is rare in its honest and open discussion about his journey regarding the challenges of hegemonic masculinity and the way he found feminism through his own life experience. His long relationship with his second wife, Virginia Vargas, international feminist writer/activist, from 1990 until his death, contributed to further deepening and affirming this special sensitivity. And despite his strong criticism of the old Left he remained passionate about political commitment until the end:

> Like Alain Lipietz (1992), I feel that the 21st century has begun, presaged by Berlin, Baghdad and Rio. As a lifelong socialist I cannot but feel a responsibility for what collapsed in Berlin, even if I left the Communist Party in 1970. And as a lifelong anti-imperialist I feel the same responsibility for not having been at least prepared for the Gulf War. I rejoice at the rise of the green 'global solidarity' expressed by the ecological movement. And I see a possible and necessary role for a new kind of labour movement amongst this and other new internationalisms. (Waterman, 1993c: 165)

In some ways, Waterman got more recognition for his work and ideas after retirement. He also became involved in a number of initiatives such as the Network Institute for Global Democracy in Helsinki, Programa Democracia y Transformacion Global in Lima, and India Institute for Critical Action: Centre in Movement in New Delhi. He remained an active board member of the *Global Labour Journal*. Invited to do a special section for the online journal *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements*, he was happy to be back in the world of labour and cyberspace and edited and contributed to a number of issues. He was one of the main movers for a special issue on social movement auto/biographies. A cancer survivor, he remained actively engaged over the last years, especially interacting with young scholars, for

instance via the Critical Labour Studies e-list. In October 2018 some of them re-activated the Social Network Unionism blog project in his memory.[7]

His voluminous output of papers, published articles and correspondence are archived online and also in the Peter Waterman Papers at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam (collection ID ARCH02586). His work continues to be consulted and cited with the Google Scholar citations index recording 3,799 citations, an h-index of 26 and i10-index of 64. Totally contemptuous of metrics and the neoliberalization of the university — of which he experienced the early stages in his days at the ISS — he was amused that his 'metrics' would qualify him for a much higher academic position than he had achieved before retirement!

For those who knew him and those who read his work, especially his autobiography, what stands out is his sympathetic warmth, often cloaked in self-irony, expressed in a particular sense of humour: bold, ironic, critical, funny, irreverent — his eyes conveyed amusement before he expressed it. An everyday political humour which permanently invited laughter or an accomplice to a smile — Jewish jokes, jokes about socialism, Marxism etc. — though he was himself a Jew and remained until the end a committed libertarian Marxist.[8] One of his jokes ran: After the East Berlin Uprising, 1953, Brecht's Little Man was considering the breakdown of confidence between the working class and the state. 'Would it not be possible', he wondered, 'for the government to dissolve the people and elect a new one in its place?'.

Upon reading Waterman's self-published autobiography, de Souza Santos wrote:

> It is a living history book. But even more than this, this book is so clearly and vividly written that at times it reads like the script for an imaginary documentary of our times. This book should be read by all concerned with our recent history in order to get a much more complex inside view of what happened while it was happening. In particular it should be read by the youth in order to get a close-up of the difficulties and possibilities in building another possible world at a time where there existed a vibrant international communist movement. (Santos quoted in Waterman, 2014: 7)

But the final word belongs to Peter:

> I dedicated my globalisation and solidarity book to four local martyrs of social movements that are today major parts of the GJ&SM. They were: Maria Elena Moyano, popular feminist of Villa El Salvador, Lima, Peru; Chico Mendes of the rural labour and ecological movement in Amazonia, Brazil; Shankar Guha Niyogi, leader of a mineworkers and tribals movement in Dalli-Rajhara, India; and Ken Saro-Wiwa, leader of the minority rights and ecological

7. See: https://snuproject.wordpress.com/
8. In conversation with a younger ISS colleague, Waterman said he was 'still inspired by the Communist Manifesto of 1848 and think that anyone who is cultured should read it especially in light of globalization and neoliberalism today'. He went on to say, in his distinctive style: 'I consider myself today a Liberation Marxist — someone concerned to liberate Marxism from the Marxists and if necessary even from Marx himself!' (Icaza Garza, 2008: 5).

movement in the Niger Delta (Waterman 1998/2002). I dedicated the book to them because I thought that with more effective solidarity globally, they might not have been killed. I am not, therefore, proposing the rootless cosmopolitan or the radical democratic cyberspace communicator as the very model of the twenty-first century internationalist. I am just asking whether s/he is not one significant type of such. And suggesting there is no necessary contradiction, in a cyberspatial world, between being a somewhat rootless global solidarity activist and the protection, promotion and projection of more local ones. (Waterman, 2014: 272)

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