

# The Occupy movement, a nascent Left, and Marxism today

## An interview with Slavoj Žižek

Haseeb Ahmed with Chris Cutrone

*On November 5, 2011, using questions formulated together with Chris Cutrone, Haseeb Ahmed interviewed Slavoj Žižek at the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht, the Netherlands. The following is an edited transcript of their conversation.*

**Haseeb Ahmed:** Are we currently—after Tahrir Square and the eruption of the #Occupy movement—living through a renaissance of the Left? If so, what is the historical legacy that stands in need of reconsideration?

**Slavoj Žižek:** I would say my answer is very cautious. Conditionally: Yes. That is to say, the way I read all these events, totally spontaneous as they are, is that, although people try, for example, to read the Tahrir Square events as the simple demand for democracy, nonetheless there is a deeper systemic dissatisfaction. What I see as a hopeful sign is that these are no longer simple, one-issue protests against this or that. There is some vague awareness that there is another fault in the system as such. By this I mean precisely the capitalist system. And, point two, that the standard representative multi-party political democracy is not a form through which we can deal with the problems. The problem today is that we have a lot of “anti-capitalism,” indeed an overload of anti-capitalism, but it is an ethical anti-capitalism. In the media,



Protesters in Tahrir Square, Egypt.

everywhere one finds stories about how this company is exploiting people someplace and ruining the environment, or this bank is ruining hardworking people’s funds. All of these are moralistic critiques of distortions. This is not enough. The anti-capitalism of the popular media remains at the level of something to be resolved within the established structure: through investigative journalism, democratic reforms, and the like. But I see in all of this the vague instinct that something more is at stake. The battle now, as for the capitalists themselves, is over who will appropriate it.

Events happen, and then you have the crucial battle to decide what an event *means*. I think that precisely these events, like Occupy Wall Street, are crucial because, on the one hand, they demonstrate that the problem is capitalism as such. This was the big issue in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but somehow disappeared in the last decades from the traditional left, where the focus became specific issues such as racism and sexism. But this problem is still here. At the same time, I claim that nonetheless old answers no longer work. This is why, what critics and sympathizers notice, there is a lack of concrete proposals, what to do. Apart from abstract things, like with Spain’s *Indignados*, against people serving money instead of money serving people. But every fascist would subscribe to this.

What it reminds us is the fact that, as my friend Alain Badiou puts it, the 20<sup>th</sup> century is over. Not only state socialism and the social-democratic welfare state, but also, I would add, the deepest hope of the utopian left, “horizontal organization,” local communities, direct democracy, self-organization—all this, I don’t think it works. So, again, it is a big challenge. The old problem is back, but it is clearer than ever that the old answers are not up to the challenge. It is a great challenge. If you look at predominant ways the modest liberal left is conceptualizing problems, for instance, in John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*, you can see that all this doesn’t work to recuperate this negative energy.

What surprises me is that there is so much energy. I thought that maybe it would stop. But look at how it is exploding all around the United States. Even Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans join them. This is the big news. There is an incredibly serious, great degree of rage and dissatisfaction that clearly doesn’t fit the established channels to resolve problems within the traditional scope of economic protests. It’s a wonderful, crucial moment. It’s a negative gesture. My slogan is, “No dialogue!” at this point. Let’s not get

caught into this dialectic of dialogue with the enemy. No. It is too early. Not in the sense of, “We won’t talk, we’ll just kill you.” But, rather, if we talk now, we have to use some language, but this will be the language of the enemy. We need time to construct our own new language, time to formulate.

**HA:** Still the language of the Left?

**SŽ:** Either orthodox left or the American language of the pragmatic left: Is it “trade unions,” is it “pressure groups,” etc.? All of this is not enough. I think the strength is what the hegemonic bourgeois press identifies as the weakness of the protests. “Isn’t this a hysterical protest? What do these guys really want?” That’s what is great about it. It doesn’t fit. You can’t simply say, “Let’s do democratic protest,” whatever. There is the approach of, “Tell us, what do you want?” “Translate it into concrete demands.” But also—and I know it’s marginal—there are the elements of this old hippy carnival logic. Someone told me there was this guy in San Francisco who said, “What program? We’re here to have a good time!” These are all traps. But, nonetheless, it is nice that something new happens which doesn’t yet have form. You have to begin like this. In contrast to people who say that before you protest you must know what you want. No. If you put it in this way, “You are just hysterical,” you are in the logic of the way a master addresses a man. It is as a master asking a hysterical woman, “Tell me what you want!” No, this is the worst form of oppression. This means, “Speak my language or shut up!” That’s why: “No debate!” I don’t see this as a criticism. On the contrary. These protests are hysterical.

But as all good Freudians know, hysteria is the authentic thing. One of the big mistakes in 1968 was to partially accept in the mass ideology the presupposition that hysterics just complain, but perverts are the real radicals: Hysterics don’t know what they want. Even Freud says somewhere that perverts do what hysterics only dream about doing. But Foucault was right: Every power regime needs its own form of perversion; perversion fits power relations. Hysteria is the true question: when you problematize the master, but without clear answers. You yourself do not know, “What do you want?”

**HA:** What about the role the sectarian left would have in the #Occupy movement? These are perceived precisely as “the masters”: the ISO, the RCP, et al., the leftovers from the sectarian left.

**SŽ:** I know of the group of Bob Avakian, the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA. But are they authentically Maoists? I’ve argued with them. I almost become a bourgeois liberal with them. I even wrote a short introduction to one of Avakian’s books.<sup>1</sup> But, for all their talk of the “new synthesis,” there is no theoretical substance: It doesn’t do the work. They always have the answers: no questions, only answers. They have a manifesto for exactly what they will do when they take power. But when you press them with the questions of, will there be a mass working class movement that you will coordinate, will you win elections, what? For them, somehow they take power, and then they have a problem. They are precisely the “perverts,” I would say. Lacan has a good formulation: The pervert is the instrument of the other’s desire. A pervert is the one who

knows better than you what you really want. They always have the answers: never the questions, only the answers. They are not a danger but an annoyance. They pretend to have the answers, but totally without anything substantial. Also, more in detail, they’ve disputed with me concrete historical, dramatic events in China, not only the Cultural Revolution, but also, in the late 1950s: the Great Leap Forward. Their answer is that these are merely the portrayals of “bourgeois propaganda.” Now, some archives are opened, and they do demonstrate that it was a mega-tragedy, the Great Leap Forward, what happened there. But, crucially, for the Left, we need to deal with our heritage. I don’t like the Left that has the attitude that, “Yes, Stalinism was bad. But look at the horrors of colonialism!” Yes, I agree there are the problems of neo-colonialism, post-colonialism, etc. But the problem with the Stalinist 20<sup>th</sup> century, even now, with all the liberal and conservative critiques, is that we don’t have a good account of what really happened. What we get is quick generalizations. You look for philosophical origins. You say, “Rousseau. This is a direct consequence of such an approach.”

Here I am very critical of Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. They are an extreme example. They address fascism. Look, I’ve done my homework. But you will notice that the Frankfurt School almost totally ignores Stalinism—despite Marcuse’s *Soviet Marxism*. But there is no true theory of Stalinism. They think that the totalitarian potentials that exploded in the 20<sup>th</sup> century started already with the most primitive logic of manipulation of matter, the philosophy of identity, etc. I don’t think that this really works, the philosophical approach to establishing some transcendental matrix that explains the possibility for 20<sup>th</sup> century events. The task is still ahead. With all the horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the liberals’ account is insufficient. It remains for the Left to explain this.

**HA:** But it is a *dialectic* of Enlightenment! What gives rise to totalitarianism is also what gives rise to possibilities for freedom.

**SŽ:** I know that they say that the problem of Enlightenment demands more enlightenment. They are very clear about this. I don’t agree with Habermas’s critique of Horkheimer and Adorno [in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*]. But maybe he has a minor point. The emancipatory aspect of Enlightenment is much less explicated by Adorno and Horkheimer. You get some mystical formulations, about the “wholly other.” In the recently published small book by Verso, the dialogues between Horkheimer and Adorno from the late 1950s, what strikes me, to be blunt, is how empty this was.

I appreciate [Moishe] Postone claiming that what we need to rehabilitate today, at all levels, is the critique of political economy. Not only as an economic theory, but also, with Marx, it is much more. I am tempted to say that it is rather a historical transcendental *a priori*. The categories that Marx uses in his deployment of the critique of political economy are not just categories to analyze a certain sphere of society. They are stronger categories. They organize the totality of social life. This is what needs to be rehabilitated today. But where I don’t agree with Postone is that, sometimes, he sounds as if the class division somehow becomes secondary and

gets lost. No. As if commodity fetishism is a kind of general structure more fundamental than class struggle. I think he sometimes goes too quickly in this direction of reducing class struggle just to a certain empirical historical occurrence. Here, I appreciate much more the young Lukács, in *History and Class Consciousness*, who is very clear about this non-empirical, historical *a priori* for the critique of political economy, but at the same time speaks totally to class struggle.

Even if we no longer have the old working class—I agree here. In the sense of what I was improvising here [at the Jan van Eyck Academie] today, that we need to conceptualize the emancipatory subject, even if we cannot ground it in the old Marxist working class. You must include the so-called “rogue states,” outside the capitalist dynamic. You must include unemployment, which is becoming a much stronger category. This is the task: how to truly render things, apparently. Postone approaches this. If we cut the bullshit, can we speak of, and in what sense, Marx’s labor theory of value? For instance, I like to provoke my friends, who think I am attacking Chavez and defending the United States. But you cannot mechanically apply Marx’s so-called labor theory of value. Because you have to conclude, for instance, today, that Venezuela is exploiting the United States through oil profits. But Marx tries to demonstrate in *Capital* that natural resources are not a source of value. So this means that we need to rethink the category of exploitation.

Another point that I make is that when Marx, in the famous passage of the *Grundrisse*, speaks about the “general intellect,” in the sense of general, common knowledge, this is Marx at his best, but also, at the same time, his worst. Because Marx thought that when knowledge becomes the center of agency, of generating social wealth, then the capitalist logic of exploiting labor, following the labor theory of value, becomes meaningless, because it no longer works. But Marx here sounds like some kind of a technological determinist, when he says that capitalism becomes meaningless, because the time of labor is no longer the source of value. What Marx doesn’t see is that you can have this “general intellect,” which, as a general intellect, is then, in a perverse way, privatized. So you can’t just return to Marx. In view of today’s global capitalism, we must ask the question of how to rethink the critique of political economy. This is a great task: I don’t see any answers.

**HA:** A lot of what you say is very close to what Platypus has to say. Platypus’s main slogan is “The Left is dead!—Long live the Left!”

**SŽ:** This is great! This is the only way to truly resuscitate the Left. Because it refers to all varieties of the Left. 1968 is a model for how the movement recuperated and gave an incredible new boost to capitalism. All the post-1968 phenomena show this.

**HA:** Platypus emerged in the context of the anti-war movement. So, it emerged in response to the logic of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” and thus the support for far-right Islamist Iraqi insurgent groups out of anti-Bush-ism.

**SŽ:** I know we must avoid Islamophobia. But I reject totally the idea of Islamic fundamentalism’s emancipatory potential. The question



is why the contrast between liberal permissiveness and fundamentalism is totally immanent to the system. Liberalism generates such fundamentalism, which is not restricted to Islamism, but also Christian fundamentalism in the U.S., for instance. While it is not serious theory, Thomas Frank’s book *What’s the Matter with Kansas?* speaks to this. Kansas was once, traditionally, the most radical state—John Brown was from there. This bastion of radical social demands became the center of Christian fundamentalism. I don’t buy claims about Islam’s “sense of justice,” etc. Some people go so far as to claim that if you critique theology then you are imperialist, practically, and in the camp of the enemy. I don’t buy this.

**HA:** But much of the Left buys into this logic.

**SŽ:** I got into a shouting match with the big anti-colonialist theorist Samir Amin over this. He shouted at me when I said that there is a historical legacy that every leftist should be thankful for in Bush, the second President. I pointed out, ironically, that, let’s cut the crap, the biggest result of the Bush presidency is that the U.S. is becoming merely a local superpower. They are effectively gradually losing true hegemony. They were close to becoming a universal policeman. But, ironically, or cynically speaking, perhaps this development is not good. Take the Congo: Let the U.S. intervene there. What I am saying is that Bush’s stupidity accelerated so-called multi-centricity. We should not merely point out how bad the U.S. is. But we should apply the same standards, for example, to China—let’s forget about Tibet, a complex problem—with what they are doing in Myanmar or Africa: neocolonialist exploitation collaborating with tyrants, etc. This is where Amin exploded. Whenever there is a crisis, we should be critical of the U.S., but my God, they are not always the enemy. Look at India and what they’re doing in Kashmir, for example. The main resistance group in Kashmir formally renounced violence and said, “We will do the political struggle,” but the Indian establishment still treats them as terrorists. That’s all I’m saying. I also don’t like—another horror I will tell you—the kind of Marxism that has an automatic Pavlovian response, when one speaks of “universal human rights”: “Oh, you’re speaking the language of the enemy! You’re apologizing for imperialism.” Most of the time, yes, but not all of the time. I know this whole Marxist game, “You say ‘universal,’ but you really mean

white, male,” etc.

But let’s not forget that universality is nonetheless maybe the most important tool of emancipation we have. I am deeply suspicious of postmodern models. And, here, we should be at the same level with Postone and the Frankfurt School and some others, against postmodernism’s mantra that every universality is essentially “identitarian” and totalitarian. I am very suspicious of “resistance to global capitalism” along the lines of multiple particularities resisting globalization, etc. I think it is important to speak to universality. At the same time, I wrote previously, years ago—which brought me many enemies—of “multiculturalism, the logic of global capitalism.”<sup>2</sup> I don’t agree with those neo-colonialists like Homi Bhabha, who said, at some point, that capitalism is universalizing and wanting to erase difference. No. Capitalism is infinitely multiculturalist and culturally pluralist. Why? This is what American right-wing populism is, not “correct” about, but is a response to a real problem. They’ve got the lower classes manipulated with their basically correct insight that, in today’s global capitalism, as my friend David Harvey also points out, there is no longer the metropolis screwing the Third World countries. Rather, for higher profits, one turns one’s own country into a colony. What this means is that, through outsourcing, etc., today’s American capital is willing to sacrifice American workers. Capitalism is really universal today. American capital cannot be considered that of the U.S. I don’t agree with my Latin American friends who say that capitalism is inherently “Anglo-Saxon,” etc. Alain Badiou emphasizes this. Capitalism is truly universal. It is not rooted in any culture. It is not Eurocentric. The effect of the ongoing crisis will be the definitive end of any such “Eurocentrism.” This is not simply a good process. For instance, there is “capitalism with Asian values”—that is, capitalism more productive than liberalism and without democracy.

**HA:** We in Platypus would agree with this. For example, Platypus held a reading group last summer, for the second time, on “radical bourgeois philosophy,” including Rousseau, Adam Smith, Benjamin Constant, and others, on the emergence of the modern notion of freedom.

**SŽ:** Yes. I don’t agree with Claude Lefort, for example, that bourgeois freedom is only formal freedom. No, it’s not true. Radical bourgeois freedom fighters were well aware that freedom comes only insofar as it is truly social freedom. They were well aware of the social dimension, and upheld the right to organize collectively, etc. On the other hand, this critique of formal democracy as bourgeois democracy is deeply anti-Marxist. As Marx was deeply aware, form is never simply form. To begin a break, one must have first a “formal” break. For instance, when Marx wrote of the development of capitalism, first there was “formal subsumption” of production under capitalism. This means that the production was the same as before, for instance knitting at home, only, then there was the merchant who was buying from them for money. Following this formal subsumption, however, they were drawn into the factories. We should totally drop this prejudice that form follows content, that, first, something new develops, and then it acquires a form. No.

**HA:** Just a few years ago, during the Iraq anti-war movement, the salient comparison for the Left was the Vietnam anti-war movement. But how has the situation today and opportunities for the Left changed [for the better] from the 1960s?

**SŽ:** Here I agree with Postone, very much. For example, with all these Iraq anti-war protests, there was never any attempt to link with the Left in Iraq. It was purely, “We should prevent this from happening,” etc. For example, in the first government after the U.S. occupation, the Iraqi Communist Party took part. This was for me the clear limitation of the anti-war Iraq protests. They totally neglected contact with the Iraqi left. The standard narrative was that the Iraqi people should liberate themselves, without the U.S. occupation. But they had the same problem, and got into a deadlock. With attacks on the Green Zone: which side should you take, there? I was not ready to do what some did, to claim that, since they opposed the American occupation, they should side with the resistance. I don’t think these radical Islamists should ever be supported.

This is where I see the historical significance of the Tahrir Square protests. The racist Western left’s view was that the only way you can mobilize the stupid Arabs was through anti-Semitism, religious fundamentalism, or nationalism. But here we had secular democratic protest that was not anti-Semitic, not Islamic fundamentalist, or even nationalist. No one was duped into an anti-Semitic line of thought. Their line was always that this has nothing to do with Israel, this is our problem, for the freedom of us all. The Mubarak regime was always saying that Zionism and the Jews were our enemy. No, this is the true enemy, the Egyptian military. This is the historical significance.

For the Western powers, in supporting the movement, will contribute to something very dangerous. Slowly, there is a schism developing between the army and the Muslim Brotherhood. Let’s not forget that the army is the old Mubarak army, with its privileges and corruption, etc. But in the Egyptian economy now there is a serious drop in the standard of living. So, the army will retain its privileges but the Muslim Brotherhood will hold ideological hegemony. This will be the crucial battle. In this, the Muslim fundamentalists can gain power. At the same time, I was shocked to see some Israeli commentary that this shows that Arabs can’t achieve democracy. As long as there are totalitarian regimes in Arab countries, there will be anti-Semitism. The only chance is secular democracy. There’s this joke, in China, allegedly, if you really hate someone, tell them, “May you live in interesting times.” But when I was in China, I asked them, and they said they knew nothing of this saying, only that in the West they say it is a Chinese expression!

**HA:** What about capitalism? In your recent book, *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso, 2010), you invoke Moishe Postone’s reading of Marx to raise the question of the commodity form and subjectivity in new ways. Where does such reconsideration of Marx fit into the present developing situation? What would overcoming the commodity form of labor entail, politically?

**SŽ:** This is what they call, on TV quiz shows, the one million dollar

question. I don't have an answer; I'm very modest. But, if you look at critical issues such as ecology it is clear that this will not be able to be addressed according to what we call the Fukuyama thesis of liberal democratic capitalism as the end of history. But I don't believe in some local self-organized community utopia. We—in the bombastic sense, humanity—will need the massive large-scale power of corporations, to move millions of people.

**HA:** How does this point to the commodity form of labor?

**SŽ:** All I'm saying is that some large-scale authority will need to be established. It is the only solution in today's complex world. The problem, of course, is how to do it. Beyond a certain quantitative scope, democracy in the traditional sense no longer works. It's meaningless to say, "Let's have universal elections." Five billion people vote? It will be like *Star Wars* and the Galactic Republic.

You know, Ayn Rand was right: Money is the strongest means or instrument for freedom. She means this: We exchange only if both parties want it. At least formally, both sides of the exchange get something. Without money, direct means of domination will need to be restored. Of course, I don't accept her premise: either the rule of money, or direct domination. Nonetheless, isn't there a correct point? One can criticize money as an alienated form. But how can we actually organize complex social interaction outside money without direct domination? In other words, isn't the tragedy of 20<sup>th</sup> century Stalinism that precisely they tried to suspend, not money, but the market, and what was the result? The re-assertion of brutal direct domination.

I'm not an optimist. I think where we are now is extremely dangerous. I think we are moving towards a much more authoritarian global apartheid society. Traditionally, for Marx, the ideal form of exploitation was through formal legal freedom. In ideal capitalist conditions there is equal, free exchange. But, more and more, capitalism can no longer sustain this. It can no longer afford freedom and equality. In the Giorgio Agamben way, some will become *homo sacer*. New forms of apartheid are appearing. Mike Davis's *Planet of Slums*, while really naïve, has the idea that we are controlled, but there are larger and larger populations outside the control of the state: According to Davis, over one billion people already live in slums. I don't mean only poverty. The state authority already treats these as internal zones that are left wild, wild spaces. Politically, it is as if wide spaces remain really murky. I see a tremendous problem here. What is my idea of the future? Can this go on? Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*, which is half-comedy, shows this: it is half-totalitarianism, but also hedonism. A totalitarian regime, but with private pleasure. Berlusconi comes close to this: Groucho Marx in power. Also, in China, at the level of private life, no one cares about your private perversions, but just don't mess with politics. It is no longer the typical fascist mobilization.

Anti-immigration, for instance, is not fascism. Fascism is not returning. No. This isn't thinking in concepts but rather vague associations. This is post-ideology. Traditional fascism was ultra-ideology. Today's predominant ideology is a Western Buddhist capitalism of, "Realize who you are." It is permissive private hedonism with political totalitarianism.

**HA:** What is the relevance of the history of Marxism today? What can we learn from historical figures such as, for example, Lenin, about changing the world? Didn't Marxism fail? How do we avoid repeating that failure? Or, as you've put it previously [in "How to Begin from the Beginning," *New Left Review* 57 (May-June 2009)],<sup>3</sup> linking Lenin to Beckett, is the point, after all, to "fail again" and to "fail better?" What is your prognosis for "success," then, in this regard?

**SŽ:** I totally agree with you. I have become self-critical of this Beckett line, "Fail again, but fail better." It would be nice to have some victories! I am getting tired of, "We are all in this together," but then things go back to normal. What interests me is what comes after. How is our daily life affected? The true revolution for me is there. The hard work and pleasures of daily life, how are they affected?

I am not a Leninist in the sense of, "Let's return to Lenin." What I like in Lenin is that he was totally unorthodox and was willing to rethink the situation. He didn't stick to some dogma. At the same time, he wasn't afraid to act. I claim that quite many leftists secretly enjoy their role of opposition and are afraid to intervene. I disagree with Badiou and some others about how "politics is made at some distance from the state." Still, we have the state as a regulatory form in society.

Take Greece. The state is almost falling apart. So the Left will remain outside state politics, not in the sense of making a revolution, but rather selectively putting pressure on and supporting existing parties. What this means is that we are not ready.

For me, the greatest failure of the Soviet Union in Lenin's time was right after the Civil War. When things returned to normal, it was a beautiful time. The Bolsheviks were challenged to reform everyday life. There, they failed. So, we have these enthusiastic victories, but afterwards failure. The greatest Marxists are those who write books on the analysis of failure.

The big task today is to avoid this, what Lacan called, with a beautiful term, the "narcissism of the lost cause."<sup>4</sup> You know, "We lost, but how beautifully we lost." You fall in love with your own defeat, and, even worse, make of defeat a sign of authenticity. "We lost because life is cruel, but look at how beautiful it was," etc. No. The same holds for '68: We should find a way for Marxism or communist revolution to be something other than a detour between one and another stage of capitalism. This is the lesson of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The lessons are only negative: We learn what not to do. This is very important. Maybe I'm wrong, but I don't see positive lessons. I am an honest pessimist.

But, if we do nothing, it will be even a greater radical catastrophe. The true utopia is that things can go on indefinitely as they are. The crisis of 2008 made it seem like it was merely a lack of regulation and corrupted individuals. No, the crisis is different. Today we are approaching dangerous times. We cannot rely on any tradition. Left tradition has a tendency, when it takes power, to turn into brutal domination. How to break this deadlock between two sides that are, as Stalin would have put it, "both worse."

Mandela was great, but he was seduced by the IMF. I agree, but

with the great proviso: What was the choice? End up in a Zimbabwe fiasco? This is the real deadlock, here. Mandela was not a traitor. Even with Venezuela, I am a pessimist: Chavez is losing steam. It is a real tragedy. Because of playing these populist games, he neglected physical infrastructure. The machinery of oil extraction is falling apart, and they are compelled to pump less and less. Chavez started well to politicize and mobilize the excluded, but then he fell into the traditional populist trap. Oil money is a curse for Chavez, because it opened maneuvering space to not confront problems. But now he must confront them. He had enough money to patch things up without solving problems. For instance, Venezuela has a great brain drain to Colombia: in the long term, a catastrophe. I am distrustful of all these traditions, "Bolivarianism," etc.—all bullshit.

**HA:** I am interested in what you said about the opportunity to reformulate the whole of life. With Lenin, when was this?

**SŽ:** Around the time of the New Economic Policy. It's interesting what happened. The most pessimistic reading is that the Stalinist state emerged then. The logic was that we will withdraw from the economy but, in order not to lose power, we will strengthen the state. It was in the NEP years that there was an explosion of the state bureaucracy, the apparatus. In 1923 already, Stalin nominated 100,000 mid-level cadre. Trotsky was stupid, playing arrogant games, and didn't notice this. He thought that he had created the Red Army and had popular appeal. But, in the diaries of Dmitrov, Stalin said that Trotsky was much more popular in the early 1920s, but Stalin controlled the cadre and so won out. If Trotsky had won, who knows what would have happened? It would have been something different, but who knows what? What I like about Trotsky was that, like Lenin, he was a brutal realist. Perhaps the best that could be done was in terms of the bourgeois revolution.<sup>5</sup> Lenin was totally honest about the end of the Civil War, the madness of the situation, there being no organized working class after being slaughtered in the Civil War. **IP**

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1. Bob Avakian and Bill Martin, *Marxism and the Call of the Future: Conversations on Ethics, History, Politics* (Peru, Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 2005).
  2. See "Multiculturalism or the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism," available online at <<http://libcom.org/library/multiculturalism-or-the-cultural-logic-of-multinational-capitalism-zizek>>.
  3. Available online at <<http://www.newleftreview.org/?view=2779>>.
  4. See, however, Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London: Verso, 2008).
  5. See Lars T. Lih, "October 1921: Lenin Looks Back," *Platypus Review* 37 (July 2011), available online at <<http://platypus1917.org/2011/07/01/october-1921-lenin-looks-back/>>.