

OPENING SPEECH AT THE ELEVENTH FORUM OF THE WORLD ASSOCIATION FOR POLITICAL ECONOMY

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Dear Mr. President Jaspal Singh and members of the Indian Political Economy Association, Dear Mr. President Cheng Enfu and members of the World Association for Political Economy (WAPE), Distinguished guests,

It is a great pleasure, I am sure, for all of us, to gather at this very important country, INDIA, in this very famous Punjabi University at Patiala, for discussing and debating about “Globalization, Employment and Agriculture.”

But first, on behalf of the Indian Political Economy Association and of the WAPE, let me say our sincere welcome to the scholars and experts from more than 13 countries around the world who are going to attend this forum. I would like also to express our deep gratitude to the leaders, scholars, and staff members at the Punjabi University of Patiala, who co-host this forum.

After these words, which are not only the words of politeness but the words of friendship, I would like to say some words concerning our coming debate.

Be sure I am not going to start a forum inside this forum. I would simply like, after the words of politeness and the words of friendship, to tell you the words of fight. Because, whatever deeply and sincerely peaceful we are, we, intellectuals, scholars, researchers, deans, professors, teachers, students, also have to fight with our appropriate weapons.

Let me talk and ask some few questions about the three following points: (1) Agriculture and globalization; (2) Employment, working conditions and globalization; (3) Nation and globalization.

1. Agriculture and Globalization

We are used to thinking of agriculture as if it were a very special activity compared with industry and services.

Of course, there are differences between agriculture and industry. But in reality, agriculture, which is more and more penetrated by industry, is not so different.

Through the huge quantities of problems affecting agriculture, we can observe the dual meaning of globalization today.

- A. The first meaning is that globalization is a capitalist process, more and more critical.

On one side, globalization is a capitalist mature process, going on within the frame of what we name “Imperialism,” since Hobson and Lenin.

Agriculture is a part of this process. We can observe three points which make this activity a part of the present global crisis.

- a. The very large volatility of prices, especially since 2006. As you know, the present crisis started officially in 2007–2008.
- b. Anticipations relative to the evolution of demand of food products. Food should bring high opportunities of high profits for multinational firms.
- c. The tendency of reducing State intervention for the solution of agricultural problems, especially in Europe.

- B. But there is a second meaning of globalization. More and more countries are developing and want to be full members of the world life.

Countries which still recently, were industrially underdeveloped are going to be more and more developed and want to be a part of the world.

With this meaning, globalization of agriculture means that people want to eat as much as they need and want to eat good stuff.

According to this new and revolutionary situation, there is a fight between those who wants to develop free markets for food and those who say that it is necessary to organize production and distribution of food.

The first ones say that global markets are going to be the best way for every people to get the necessary food. *They “marketize” food security.* In reality they want to develop free markets for high profits.

On the contrary, there are countries (United States included, which is apparently surprising) that are wanting to *organize and regulate food security* on their territory, with the help of their State.

How to organize food security at a global scale, in the dual context of globalization? I guess this question will be one of the most important in this forum.

But there will be some others, and I go to the second point.

2. Employment, Working Conditions and Globalization

The second point of my short introduction deals with employment. How to develop employment and good working conditions in the present context of globalization?

Here also, we can find two kinds of positions, two kinds of opposite conceptions.

A. The capitalist position is the following. Capitalists say: “Work for free, as much as WE want, for OUR PROFITS.”

According to the “capitalist solution,” it is very simple. In every developed capitalist country, capitalist say to their workers: “*Your rights are nowadays an obstacle to your employment. You have to give up these rights.*” If you don’t do, we have to quit this country and go to countries where workers are reasonable.

The success of capitalist globalization was a big success for capitalist ruling classes in the world. They were thinking that it was finished with their working class because they were able to oppose strongly their working class to the developing countries working class.

They were wrong. Let me express my admiration to workers of the world who are fighting against capitalist firms and government. We can also have, at this moment, a special thought for the workers who, in France, are fighting resolutely against the governmental project of destroying the previous regulations on working time.

B. The antagonistic position is: Everybody has the right to work and live decently.

It is simple to say. It is not so simple to put into practice and to avoid angry reactions from workers of capitalist developed countries against workers of developing countries.

So it is a very important fight we are certainly thinking about and debating during these 3 days of the forum: How to win against capitalist ruling class and how, in the same time, to convince and help workers of every country, whatever it is, developed or developing, to unite?

I now go to the third point.

3. Nations and Globalization

This topic is not less important than the two previous ones. But it is a very exciting topic from a theoretical point of view, because Marx and Engels were not very much concerned by the nation phenomenon. They discovered the “nation phenomenon” through the struggle of Irish and Polish people. But their idea was that capitalism was creating a large world market with nations disappearing and working class becoming more and more unified.

To a certain extent, they were right. Samir Amin, who is attending this forum and who is probably one of us having the longest experience of life, has studied how value of commodities is changing under the circumstances of global markets. But he can say also that nations are still existing and powerful.

We can observe two extreme positions.

A. Capitalists think that nations have to be replaced by multinational organizations, by military, economic, financial organizations, where they are still dominating.

With capitalist globalization, the global market they were expecting in the 1970s is now going on.

This is the position of capitalist countries, of capitalist leaders. They create military organizations, yesterday against socialism and Soviet Union, today against every State or nation that is supposed to threaten their economic and political interest. Every nation has to respect their Global order.

But nations have not disappeared as well. And it is one of the questions raised by this forum: maybe we can say that here is the time of globalization and the time of nations as well.

B. Indeed, there is another conception than the one promoted by capitalist ideology. According to this conception, nations are not only existing, but also they are necessary. Because they are the natural territory for people to live, to work and to consume.

Nations are the space of their history and culture. Histories and cultures are not going to be forgotten rapidly. There is no reason for that. Histories and culture are all components of the Humankind Treasury.

Anyway, it doesn't mean that nations do not have to change.

Maybe, under the control of people, nations have to be organized through new relationships for solving peacefully the big amount of existing problems.

I have to conclude.

Dear colleagues, the journal of our association, *World Review of Political Economy*, began its publication in 2010 by Pluto Press of UK and is now accessible in over 2000 libraries around the world. Quality papers presented during this conference will be selected after review to be published in this journal, some of which will be translated and published in the Chinese quarterly *Journal of Economics of Shanghai School*.

In this conference, we will also present the 2016 “World Marxian Economics Award” as appreciation of distinguished contributions from economists of all ages around the world.

I believe that the forum this year will be a very productive one through efforts of all participants.

Let us move on! Have a great conference and enjoy a healthy and pleasant stay in India!