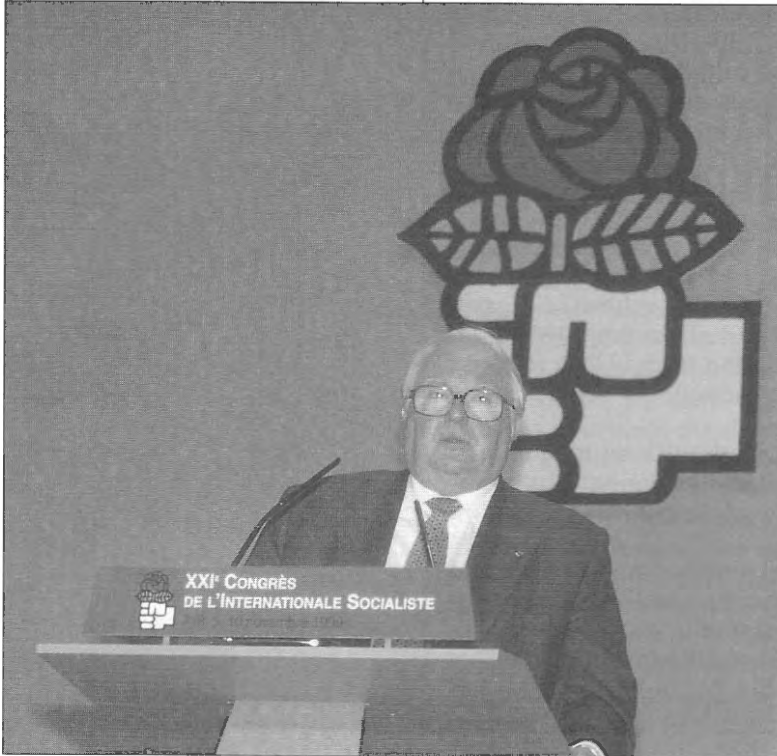


Congress voices

Leaders of the Socialist International and its member parties from all continents took part in the XXI Congress of the International in Paris.

These are excerpts from some contributions.



Pierre Mauroy

Outgoing President of the Socialist International

All social democrats share the same basic values of peace, democracy, liberty, social justice and solidarity, which constitute today, as in the past, a beacon to guide us.

These values have always been at the very heart of the socialist struggle. More than ever before they continue to be of current relevance and constitute the basis of our meeting here in Paris.

But, my dear comrades, it is also true that we have changed. And it is thanks to our ability to adapt to change that we are today the world's leading political organisation.

Our identity lies fully within the core of the debate at the Paris Congress. I believe this debate is necessary. Socialism would be threatened more by an inability to respond to change than by adapting to it, although it clearly can be a subject of debate. [...]

For most of our member parties, the political struggle continues to be defined in terms of the differences between left and right, between progressive and conservative forces. We know where we stand.

There are other debates, centred on the past. The Socialist International has always been on the side of democracy, of human rights, of the rule of law. It has forever led the fight against inequality and worked for the development of the Welfare State, notably in Europe. We should be proud of our history in support of freedom and our struggle for equality.

In reality, our debate centres on modernism.

I believe socialism is undoubtedly modern. But I do not believe that modernity must necessarily be socialist.

Let us be quite clear. There is a modernity we all share.

- Yes, we believe that the market economy, that is to say open competition, is in itself a generally efficient instrument for the creation of wealth, a stimulus to private initiative and a reward for work and effort.

- Yes, we agree that the left is not, in principle, in favour of excessive growth in public expenditure but should be rather more attentive in ensuring efficiency.

- Yes, we consider the left should be interested both in the new technologies and in the new businesses of today.

- Yes, we know the left finds its support not only among the more deprived and the working class but also within the middle classes which participate in their diverse ways in growth and progress.

In short, the Socialist International should not refrain from going beyond the concept of redistribution of wealth but must also be involved in its creation.

Nonetheless, I am fully of the opinion that true modernism does not simply end here.

To recognise the merits of the market economy does not mean accepting its growth without constraints: that is the meaning of Lionel Jospin's formula 'yes to a market economy, no to a market society'. All goods and services are not, and neither should they be, simple merchandise: in our view work, culture, education and health are not trading goods.

A recognition of the merits of the market economy also does not imply our

10 acceptance of its unregulated development: today's modernism actually lies in devising new regulations.

This holds at international level, by way of a single example.

In the field of trade, we need transparent institutions and social as well as environmental regulations: therein lies the challenge that awaits future negotiations at the WTO.

In the financial area, we need to fight banking and fiscal paradises, off-shore centres or speculative funds.

In the economic area, we must coordinate our policies so as to encourage growth, development and progress.

Indeed, the SI has submitted proposals along these lines: the reform of the role played by the IMF and the World Bank, a reduction - partially accomplished - of the debt accrued by the poorest countries, a consolidation of the UN's role and the creation, within the UN, of an Economic Security Council.

But true modernism goes still further.

True modernism means struggling in defence of growth without inequalities. We must never resign ourselves to a world in which the assets held by a few hundred individuals are larger than the annual income of almost half the world's population.

We must not simply accept a world in which several hundred million men and women live in the direst poverty, lacking food and water. On the dawn of the twenty-first century we refuse to let this situation continue.

For this reason we have come together within the Socialist International. For this same reason we are convinced that modernism lies not in a passive stance, but rather in the exercise of will.

A will for political action, the will of citizens, of those militants directly involved in the struggle towards a world more fair and just and a more humane society.

Dear comrades, henceforth you face an absorbing challenge, that of offering every human being those conditions and opportunities for development that will allow them a free choice on their future. Democratic socialism has placed the human being and shaping the destiny of humankind at the heart of its work.

A rejection of the workings of fate, of misery, of injustice, of oppression, of fundamentalism of any sort, has through the years defined our identity, and comprise the foundation of our values. They have all transcended our struggle, thus providing a universal nature to our identity.

Tomorrow, when I leave the presidency of the Socialist International, I will quote León Blum's words from 1941, written in the darkest depths of horror, and drawn from his great work 'A l'échelle humaine': 'When man is confused and loses heart, he need only think of Humanity'.