

THE IMPLOSION OF THE CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL CAPITALIST SYSTEM

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The South: Emerging countries and lumpen development

What is “emerging” ?

This term has been used by some to mean one thing and by others something entirely different in different contexts, often without any caution regarding precision around the meaning of the term. I will therefore here define the sense that I will give to the set of economic, social, political, and cultural transformations which permit one to speak of the ‘emergence’ of a state, a nation, and a people who have been placed in a peripheral place in the capitalist world system. (The term peripheral having the meaning that I have defined in my own work.)

Emergence is not measured by a rising rate of GDP growth (or exports) over a long period of time (more than a decade), nor the fact that the society in question has obtained a higher level of GDP per capita, as defined by the World Bank, aid institutions controlled by Western powers, and conventional economists.

Emergence involves much more: a sustained growth in industrial production in the state in question and a strengthening of the capacity of these industries to be competitive on a global scale. Again one must define which specific industries are important and what is meant by competitiveness.

Extractive industries (minerals and fossil fuels) must be excluded from this definition. In states endowed by nature with these resources, accelerated growth can occur in these countries without necessarily leaving in its wake productive activities. The extreme example of this situation of ‘non-emergence’ would be the Gulf States, Venezuela, Gabon, and others.

One must also understand that the competitiveness of productive activities in the economy should be considered as a productive system in its entirety and not a certain

unit of production alone. Due to the preference for outsourcing and subcontracting, multinationals operating in the South can be the impetus for the creation of local units of production tied to transnationals, or autonomous and capable of exporting to the world market, which earns them the status of competitive in the language of conventional economists. This truncated concept of competitiveness, which proceeds from an empiricist method, is not ours. Competitiveness is that of a productive system. For this to exist, the economy must be made up of productive elements with branches of this production sufficiently interdependent that one can speak of it as a system.

This competitiveness depends upon diverse economic and social factors, among others the general level of education and training of workers of all levels and the efficiency of the group of institutions which manage the national political economy – fiscal policy, business law, labour law, credit, social services, etc. The productive system in question cannot reduce productive transformation to only activities involved in manufacturing and consumption – although the absence of these annuls the existence of a productive system worthy of the name – but rather must integrate food and agriculture as services required for the normal functioning of the system.

A real productive system can be more or less ‘advanced’. By this I mean that the group of activities must be qualified: is it involved in ‘banal’ productions or high technologies? It is important to situate an emerging state using this point of view: in what measure is it on the path of generating value added products? It is important to see emergent states from this point of view: at what stage are they in mounting the ladder towards producing value-added products?

The question of emergence therefore requires both a political and holistic examination. A state cannot be emerging if it is not inward (rather than outward) looking with the goal of creating a domestic market and thus reasserting national economic sovereignty. This complex objective requires sovereignty over all aspects of economic life. In particular it demands policies which protect food security and sovereignty, and equally sovereignty over one’s natural resources and access to others outside of one’s territory. These multiple and complementary objectives are contrasted with those of the comprador class who are content to adopt growth models which meet the requirements of the dominant global system (liberal-internationalism) and the possibilities which these offer.

This proposed definition of emergence does not address the political strategy of the state and society: capitalism or socialism? However this question cannot be left out of

the debate as the choice made by the leading classes will have major effects, both positive and negative, for a successful emergence. I would not say that the only option is to follow a capitalist perspective, which implements a system of a capitalist nature – control and exploitation of the workforce and a free market. Nor would I suggest that only a radical socialist option which challenges these forms of capitalism – property, organized labour, market controls- is able to last over long periods of time and move the society forwards in the world system.

The links between the politics of emergence on one hand and the accompanying social transformation, on the other hand, do not depend solely on the internal coherence of the former, but equally its degree of complementarity, or conflict, with the latter. Social struggles, whether class based or political, do not adjust themselves to fit the logic of a state's implementation of an emergence. Rather they are a determinant of this program. Current experience shows the diversity and dynamism of these links. Emergence is often accompanied by inequalities. One must examine the nature of these: inequalities where the beneficiaries are a tiny minority or a large minority (the middle class) and are realised in a framework which promotes the pauperisation of the majority of workers, or, on the contrary, one where the same people see a betterment in their quality of life, even if the growth rates of compensation for workers will be less than those who benefit from the system. Said in another manner, politics can associate emergence with pauperisation or not. Emergence does not follow a definitive set of rules. Rather it is a series of successive steps; the first can prepare the way for following successes, or bring about deadlock.

In the same manner the relation between the emerging economy and the global economy is constantly transforming as well. From these two different perspectives come policies which can promote sovereignty or weaken it, and at the same time promote social solidarity in the nation or weaken it. Emergence is therefore not synonymous with growth in exports and an increase in power measured in such a manner. Growth in exports can strengthen or weaken the autonomy of an emerging state relative to the world market.

We cannot speak of emergence in general, nor can we speak of models – Chinese, Indian, Brazilian and Korean – in general. One must concretely examine, in each case, the successive steps in the evolution of their emergence, identify the strong and weak points, and analyse the dynamic of their implementation and the associated contradictions.

Emergence is a political and not only economic project. The measure of success is therefore determined by reducing the means by which the dominant capitalist centre perpetuates their domination, in spite of the fact that economic success of emergent states is measured in the conventional economic terms. I define the means as control of the dominant powers over the areas of technological development, access to natural resources, the global financial system, dissemination of information, and weapons of mass destruction. The imperialist collective triad – United States, Europe and Japan – intends to conserve, using all of these means, their privileged positions in dominating the planet and prohibiting emergent states from bringing this domination into question. I conclude that the ambitions of emergent states enter into conflict with the strategic objectives of the triad and the measure of the violence emanating from this conflict will be determined by the degree of radicalism with which the emergent state challenges the aforementioned privileges of the centre.

Economic emergence is not separable from the foreign policies of the states. Do they align themselves with the military and political coalition of the triad? Do they accept strategies put in place by NATO? Conversely, will they oppose them?

Emergence and Lumpen Development

There can be no emergence without state politics, resting on a comfortable social bloc, which gives it legitimacy, capable of constructing a coherent project an inward looking national productive system. They must at the same time ensure the participation of the great majority of social classes and that these groups receive the benefits of growth.

Opposing the favourable evolution of an authentic emergence is the unilateral submission to the requirements of the implementation of global capitalism and general monopolies which produce nothing other than what I would call 'lumpen development'. I will now liberally borrow from the late Andre Gunder Frank, who analysed a similar evolution, albeit at a different time and place. Today lumpen development is the product of accelerated social disintegration associated with the 'development' model (which does not deserve its name) imposed by the monopolies from the imperialist core on the peripheral societies they dominate. It is manifested by a dizzying growth of subsistence activities (called the informal sphere), otherwise called the pauperisation associated with the unilateral logic of accumulation of capital.

One can remark that I did not qualify the emergence as ‘capitalist’ or ‘socialist’. This is because emergence is a process associated with complementarity, while at the same time conflict, of the logic of capitalist management of the economy and the logics of ‘non-capitalist’ – and potentially socialist - management of society and politics.

Among the experiences of emergence, some cases merit special mention as they are not associated with the processes of lumpen development. There is not a pauperisation among the popular classes, but rather progress in the living standards, modest or otherwise. Two of these experiences are clearly capitalist – those of South Korea and Taiwan (I will not discuss here the particular historical conditions which permitted the success of the implementation in the two countries). Two others inherited the aspirations conducted in the name of socialism – Vietnam and China. Cuba could also be included in this group if it can master the contradictions which it is currently going through.

But we know of other cases of emergence which have been associated with lumpen development of a massive nature. India is the best example. There are segments of this project which correspond to the requirements of emergence. There is a state policy which favours the building of an industrial productive system. Consequently there is an associated expansion of the middle classes and progress in technological capacities and education. They are capable of playing autonomously on the chessboard of international politics. But for a grand majority, two thirds of society, there is accelerated pauperisation. We have therefore a hybrid system which ties together emergence and lumpen development. We can highlight the link between these two complementary parts of reality. I believe, without suggesting too gross a generalisation, that all the other cases that are considered emergent belong to this familiar hybrid, which includes Brazil, South Africa, and others.

But there exist also, and it is most of the other Southern countries, situations in which there are no elements of emergence as the processes of lumpen development occupy much of the society. The three countries (Turkey, Iran, Egypt) are part of this group and it is for this reason that I declare them non-emergent and the projects of emergence abandoned.

The challenge for the South: A shift in the center of gravity of global capitalism?

Do the victories of the anti-imperialist struggles of the states and peoples of the

peripheries prepare the way for socialism or for the building of new centers of capitalism?

The present conjuncture seems to indicate an opposition between the decline of the old centers of the capitalist triad (the U.S., Europe and Japan) in crisis, with the surge in capitalism in the growth of emerging countries (China and others). Would the current crisis then not lead to a new rise of capitalism, now centered in Asia and South America? This would mean that the victories of the anti-imperialist struggles of emerging countries would lead not to socialism, but a new rise of capitalism, albeit less polarized than it was before.

The main argument of my critique of this popular thesis proceeds from the observation that the pattern of historical capitalism, now promoted as the only option, depended from the beginning (European mercantilism) on the production and reproduction of global polarization. This feature is itself the product of the mass expulsion of the peasantry on which the development of capitalism was founded. The model was sustainable only through the safety valve allowed by the mass emigration to the Americas. It would be absolutely impossible for the countries of the periphery to day – who make up 80% of the world's people, of which almost half are rural -- to reproduce this model. They would need 5 or 6 Americas to be able to "catch up" in the same way. "Catching up" is therefore an illusion and any progress in this direction can only result in an impasse. This is why I say that the anti-imperialist struggles are potentially anti capitalist. If we cannot "catch up", we might as well "do something else."

Of course such a transformation in the long-term visions of emerging countries for "development" is by no means "inescapable." It is only necessary and possible. The current success of emerging countries in terms of accelerated growth within globalized capitalism and with capitalist means reinforces the illusion that catching-up is possible. The same illusion accompanied the experiences of the first wave of "the awakening of the South" in the 20th century, even though at that time they were experienced as a "catch-up by the road of socialism." I analyzed the contradictions of the "project of Bandung" (1955-1980), in the same terms, given the conflicting projects of the national bourgeoisies and working classes allied in the struggles for liberation.

Today the collective imperialism of the triad makes use of all the means at its disposal – economic, financial and military – to continue its domination of the world.

Emerging countries that take on strategies to eliminate the advantages of the triad - the control of technologies, control of access to the globe's natural resources, and the military control of the planet - are therefore in conflict with the triad. This conflict helps to dispel any illusions about their ability "to advance within the system" and gives popular democratic forces the possibility of influencing the course of events in the direction of progress on the long road of the transition to socialism.

Three major challenges: democracy, the agrarian question, ecology

1) 'Democracy'? or democratization associated with social progress?

It was a stroke of genius of Atlantic alliance diplomacy to choose the field of 'democracy' for their offensive, which was aimed, from the beginning, at the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the re-conquest of the countries of Eastern Europe. This decision goes back to the 1970s and gradually became crystallized in the Conference of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and then with the signing of the final Act in Helsinki in 1975. Jacques Andreani, in his book with the evocative title *Le Piège, Helsinki et la chute du communisme (The Trap: Helsinki and the Fall of Communism)*, explains how the Soviets, who were expecting an agreement on the disarmament of NATO and a genuine détente, were quite simply deceived by their Western partners.

It was a stroke of genius because the 'question of democracy' was a genuine issue and the least one could say was that the Soviet regimes were certainly not 'democratic', however one defined its concept and practice. The countries of the Atlantic Alliance, in contrast, could qualify themselves as 'democratic', whatever the limitations and contradictions in their actual political practices, subordinated to the requirements of capitalist reproduction. The comparison of the systems operated in their favour.

This discourse on democracy was then gradually replaced by the one supported by the Soviets and their allies: 'pacific coexistence', associated with 'respect' for the political practices of both parties and for 'non interference' in their internal affairs.

The coexistence discourse had had its important moments. For example, the Stockholm Appeal in the 1950s, reminded people of the real nuclear threat implied by the aggressive diplomacy employed by the United States since the Potsdam Conference (1945), reinforced by the atomic bombing of Japan just a few days after

the conference.

However, at the same time the choice of this strategy (coexistence and non-interference) was convenient – or could be convenient, according to circumstances – to the dominant powers in both West and East. For it enabled the realities of the respective descriptions, ‘capitalist’ and ‘socialist’, to be taken for granted by the countries of both West and East. It eliminated all serious discussion about the precise nature of the two systems: that is, from examining the actually existing capitalism of our era (oligopoly capitalism) and actually existing socialism. The United Nations (with the tacit agreement of the powers of the two worlds) changed the terms of ‘capitalism’ and ‘socialism’ to the ‘market economies’ and the ‘centrally planned economies’ (or, to be mischievous, the ‘administered economies’).

These two terms – both of them false (or only superficially true) – sometimes made it possible to emphasize the ‘convergence of the systems’: a convergence that was itself imposed by modern technology (a theory – also false – derived from a monistic, technicist concept of history). It also accepted coexistence in order to facilitate this ‘natural’ convergence or, on the contrary, stressed the irreducible opposition between the ‘democratic’ model (associated with the market economy) and ‘totalitarianism’ (produced by the ‘administered’ economy), at certain moments during the cold war.

Choosing to concentrate the battle around the ‘democracy’ discourse made it possible to opt for the ‘implacability’ of systems and to offer the Eastern countries only the prospect of capitulation by returning to capitalism (the ‘market’) which should then produce – naturally – the conditions for democratization. The fact that this has not been the case (for post-Soviet Russia), or has taken place in highly caricatural forms (for ethnic groups here and there in Eastern Europe) is another matter.

The ‘democratic’ discourse of the countries of the Atlantic alliance is in fact recent. At the outset NATO accommodated itself perfectly well to Salazar in Portugal, the Turkish generals and the Greek colonels. At the same time the Triad diplomacies supported (and often established) the worst dictatorships that Latin America, Africa and Asia had ever known.

At first the new democratic discourse was adopted with much reticence. Many of the main political authorities of the Atlantic alliance saw the inconveniences that could upset their preferred ‘realpolitik’. It was not until Carter was President of the United States (rather like Obama today) that the ‘moral’ sermon conveyed by democracy was

understood. It was Mitterand in France who broke with the Gaullist tradition of refusing the 'division' imposed on Europe by the cold war strategy promoted by the United States. Later, the experience of Gorbachev in the USSR made it clear that rallying to this discourse was a guarantee for catastrophe.

The new 'democratic' discourse thus bore its fruits. It seemed sufficiently convincing for 'leftwing' opinion in Europe to support it. This was so, not only for the electoral left (the socialist parties) but also those with a more radical tradition, of which the communist parties were the heir. With 'eurocommunism' the consensus became general.

The dominant classes of the imperialist Triad learnt lessons from their victory. They thus decided to continue this strategy of centring the debate on the 'democratic question'. China is not reproached for having opened up its economy to the outside world, but because its policies are managed by the communist party. No account is taken for the social achievements of Cuba, unequalled in the whole of Latin America, but its one-party system is constantly stigmatized. The same discourse is even levelled against Putin's Russia.

Is the triumph of democracy the real objective of this strategy? One has to be very naïve to think so. The only aim is to impose on recalcitrant countries 'the market economy', open and integrated into the so-called liberal world system. This is in reality imperialistic, its purpose being to reduce these countries to the status of dominated peripheries of the system. This is an objective that, once achieved, becomes an obstacle to the progress of democracy in the victimized countries and is in no way an advance in response to the 'democratic question'.

The chances of democratic progress in the countries that practised 'actually existing socialism' (at least at the beginning) would have been much greater, in the medium term if not immediately. The dialectics of social struggles would have been left to develop on their own, opening up the possibility of outstripping the limits of 'actually existing socialism' (which had, moreover, been deformed by a partial adherence to the opening of the liberal economy) to reach the 'end of the tunnel'.

In actual fact the 'democratic' theme is only invoked against countries that do not want to open up to the globalized liberal economy. There is less concern for highly autocratic political regimes. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are good examples, but also Georgia (pro the Atlantic alliance) and many others.

Besides, at the very best, the proposed ‘democratic’ formula hardly goes beyond the caricature of ‘multi-party elections’ that are not only completely alien to the requirements of social progress but that are always – or almost always – associated with the social regression that the domination of actually existing capitalism (that of the oligopolies) demands and produces. The formula has already largely undermined democracy, for which many peoples, profoundly confused, have now substituted religious and ethnic attachment to the past.

It is therefore more than ever necessary now to reinforce the critique of the radical left (I underline radical to distinguish it from the critique of the left, which is confusing and vague). In other words it must be a critique that associates, rather than dissociates, the democratization of society (and not only its political management) with social progress (in a socialist perspective). In this critique, the struggle for democratization and the struggle for socialism are one and the same. No socialism without democracy, but also no democratic progress without a socialist perspective.

Democratisation is an endless process, not to be reduced to pluriparty elected representative so called democracy, which does not empower the people and permit them to transform society. Democratisation is multidimensional. It integrates the major issue of gender as well as the guarantee of individual liberties, which should be developed, not restricted. It involves also collective social rights, with a view to socialising the management of the economy, moving therefore beyond capitalism, based on the sacred character of private property.

2) *The new agrarian question: the access to land for all peasants of the South*

All societies before modern (capitalist) time were peasant societies and their production ruled by various specific systems and logics sharing nevertheless the fact that these were not those which rule capitalism (i.e. the maximisation of the return on capital in a market society).

Modern capitalist agriculture, represented by both rich family farming and/or by agribusiness corporations, is now looking forward to a massive attack on third world peasant production. The project did get the green light from WTO in its Doha session. Yet, the peasantry still occupies half of humankind. But its production is shared between two sectors enormously unequal in size with a clearly distinct economic and social character and levels of efficiency.

Capitalist agriculture governed by the principle of return on capital, which is localised almost exclusively in North America, in Europe, in the South cone of Latin America and in Australia, employs only a few tens of millions of farmers who are no longer “peasants”. But their productivity, which depends on mechanisation (of which they have monopoly worldwide) and the area of land possessed by each farmer, ranges between 10.000 and 20.000 quintals of equivalent cereals per worker annually.

On the other hand, peasant-farming systems still constitute the occupation of nearly half of humanity – i.e. three billion human beings. These farming systems are in turn shared between those who benefited from the green revolution (fertilisers, pesticides and selected seeds), but are nevertheless poorly mechanised, with production ranging between 100 and 500 quintals per farmer, and the other group still excluded from this revolution, whose production is estimated around 10 quintals per farmer.

The new agrarian question is the result of that unequal development.

Indeed modernisation had always combined constructive dimensions (accumulation of capital and progress of productivities) with destructive aspects (reducing labour to the statute of a commodity sold on the market, often destroying the natural ecological basis needed for the reproduction of life and production, polarising wealth on a global level). Modernisation had always simultaneously “integrated” those for whom employment was created by the very expansion of markets, and “excluded” those who, having lost their positions in the previous systems were not integrated in the new labour force. But, in its ascending phase, capitalist global expansion did integrate along with its excluding processes. But now, with respect to the area of Third World peasant societies, it would be massively excluding, including only insignificant minorities.

The question raised here is precisely whether this trend continues and will continue to operate with respect to the three billion human beings still producing and living in the frame of peasant societies, in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Indeed, what would happen as of now, should “agriculture and food production” be treated as any other form of production submitted to the rules of competition in an open-deregulated market as it has been decided in principle at the last WTO conference (Doha, November 2001) ?

Would such principles foster the accelerating of production ?

Indeed one can imagine some twenty million new additional modern farmers, producing whatever the three billion present peasants can offer on the market beyond they ensuring their own (poor) self-subsistence. The conditions for the success of such an alternative would necessitate the transfer of important pieces of good land to the new agriculturalists (and these lands have to be taken out of the hands of present peasant societies), access to capital markets (to buy equipments) and access to the consumers markets. Such agriculturalists would indeed “compete” successfully with the billions of present peasants. But what would happen to those?

Under the circumstances, admitting the general principle of competition for agricultural products and foodstuffs, as imposed by WTO, means accepting that billions of “non-competitive” producers be eliminated within the short historic time of a few decades. What will become of these billions of humans beings, the majority of whom are already poor among the poor, but who feed themselves with great difficulty, and worse still, what will be the plight of the one third of this population (since three-quarters of the underfed population of the world are rural dwellers) ? In fifty years’ time, no relatively competitive industrial development, even in the fanciful hypothesis of a continued growth of 7 % annually for three-quarters of humanity, could absorb even one-third of this reserve.

The major argument presented to legitimate the WTO-competition doctrine alternative is that such development did happen in XIXth century Europe and finally produced a modern-wealthy urban-industrial-post industrial society as well as a modern agriculture able to feed the nation and even to export. Why should not this pattern be repeated in the contemporary Third World countries, in particular for the emerging nations ?

The argument fails to consider two major factors which make the reproduction of the pattern almost impossible now in third world countries. The first is that the European model developed throughout a century and a half along with industrial technologies which were intensive labour using. Modern technologies are far less. And therefore if the new comers of the third world have to be competitive on global markets for their industrial exports they have to adopt them. The second is that Europe benefited during that long transition from the possibility of massive out migration of their “surplus” population to the Americas.

That argument – i.e. that capitalism has indeed “solved” the agrarian question in its developed centers – has always been admitted by large sections of the left, including within historical Marxism, as testified by the famous book of Kautsky – “the agrarian question” – written before world war I. Leninism itself inherited that view and on its basis undertook a modernisation through the Stalinist collectivisation, with doubtful results. What was always overlooked was that capitalism while it solved the question in its centers did it through generating a gigantic agrarian question in the peripheries, which it cannot solve but through the genocide of half of humankind. Within historical Marxism only Maoism did understand the size of the challenge. Therefore those who charge Maoism with its so called “peasant deviation” show by this very criticism that they do not have the analytical capacity for an understanding of what is actually existing imperialist capitalism, that they reduce to an abstract discourse on capitalism in general.

Modernisation through market liberalisation as suggested by WTO and its supporters finally aligns side by side, without even necessarily combining two components: (i) the production of food on a global scale by modern competitive agriculturalists mostly based in the North but also possibly in the future in some pockets of the South; (ii) the marginalisation – exclusion – and further impoverishment of the majority of the three billion peasants of present third world and finally their seclusion in some kinds of “reserves”. It therefore combines (i) a pro-modernisation- efficiency dominant discourse and (ii) an ecological cultural reserve set of policies making possible for the victims to “survive”. These two components might therefore complement one another rather than “conflict”.

Can we imagine other alternatives and have them widely debated. In that frame it is implied that peasant agriculture should be maintained throughout the visible future of the XXIth Century but simultaneously engaged in a process of continuous technological/social change and progress. At a rate which would allow a progressive transfer to non rural – non agricultural employment. Such a strategic set of targets involves complex policy mixes at national, regional and global levels:

At the national levels it implies macro-policies protecting peasant food production from the unequal competition of modernised agriculturalists – agro-business local and international. With a view to guaranteeing acceptable internal food prices eventually disconnected from the so called international market prices (in fact also markets biased by subsidies of the wealthy North-USA/Canada/Europe).

Such policy targets also question the patterns of industrial – urban developments, which should be less based on export oriented priorities, themselves taking advantage of low wages (implying in their turn low prices for food), and be more attentive to a socially balanced internal market expansion.

A development strategy in keeping with the challenge must be based on the guarantee of access to land and to the means if its use to all peasants, as equally as possible. Yet the necessary progress of productivity of peasant family agriculture does need industries to support it. Industrialisation therefore cannot be escaped from, but its patterns should not reproduce those of capitalism, which generates growing inequalities and ecological devastation. Programs that substitute to the inventing of new patterns of industrialisation so called foreign aid, associated with empty discourses (good governance, alleviating poverty) are nothing but the continuation of colonial discourses. The real objective of imperialism is to marginalize peoples. For imperialism African natural resources (oil, minerals, land) are important, not African peoples who represent rather an obstacle to the plunder of resources.

Simultaneously such a choice of principle facilitates integrating in the overall scheme patterns of policies ensuring national food security, an indispensable condition for a country to be an active member of the global community, enjoying the indispensable margin of autonomy and negotiating capacity.

At regional and global levels it implies international agreements and policies moving away from the doctrinaire liberal principles ruling WTO, imaginative and specific to different areas, since it has to take into consideration specific issues and concrete historical and social conditions.

3) 'The environment', or the socialist perspective of use value? The ecological question and so-called sustainable development

Here too, the point of departure is an acknowledgement of a real problem, the destruction of the natural environment and, at last resort, the survival of life on the planet, which has been brought about by the logic of capital accumulation.

Here, too, the question dates back to the 1970s, more precisely the Stockholm Conference of 1972. But for a long time it was a minor issue, marginalized by all the dominant discourses and the practices of economic management. The question has only been put forward as a new central plank in the dominating strategy relatively

recently.

Taking into account use value (of which the ecological footprint constitutes the first good example) implies that socialism must be ‘ecological’, cannot be anything but ecological. As Altvater has observed “Solar socialism” or ”No socialism”(Elmar Altvater, *The plagues of capitalism, energy crisis, climate collapse, hunger and financial instabilities*, paper presented to the World Forum for Alternatives, Caracas, 2008).

However, it also implies that it is impossible for any capitalist system whatsoever, even ‘reformed’, to take it into account, as we shall see later.

In the time of Marx he not only suspected the existence of this problem. He had already formulated a rigorous distinction between value and wealth, which were confused by vulgar economics. He said explicitly that capitalist accumulation destroyed the natural bases on which it was founded: human beings (the alienated, exploited, dominated and oppressed worker) and the land (symbol of the natural wealth given to humanity). And whatever the limits of this expression, as always a prisoner of its epoch, it is nonetheless true that it shows a lucid awareness of the problem (beyond that of intuition), which should be recognized.

It is therefore regrettable that the ecologists of our era, have not read Marx. It would have enabled them to carry their propositions further, to understand their revolutionary impact better and even, obviously, go beyond Marx himself on the subject.

This deficiency of modern ecology makes it easier for it to be taken over by the vulgar economics that is in a dominant position in the contemporary world. This take-over is already under way – even well advanced.

Political ecology, like that proposed by Alain Lipietz, was first found in the ranks of the ‘pro-socialist’ political left. Then the ‘green’ movements (and after that, the ‘green’ parties) were classed as centre left, because of their expressed sympathies for social and international justice, their criticism of ‘waste’ and their empathy with the workers and the ‘poor’ populations. But, apart from the diversity of these movements, none of them had established a rigorous relationship between the authentic socialist dimension necessary to respond to the challenge and the no less necessary ecological dimension. To be able to do so, the distinction between value

and wealth, as originated by Marx, cannot be ignored.

The take-over of ecology by vulgar ideology operates on two levels: by reducing the calculation in use value to an ‘improved’ calculation of exchange value and also by integrating the ecological challenge into a ‘consensus’ ideology. Both of these operations prevent a lucid awareness of the fact that ecology and capitalism are antagonistic in their very essence.

Vulgar economics has been capturing ecological calculation by leaps and bounds. Thousands of younger researchers, in the United States and, by imitation, in Europe, have been mobilized for that purpose.

The ‘ecological costs’ are thus assimilated to the externalities. The common method of cost/benefit analysis for measuring the exchange value (which itself is confused with the market price) is thus used to arrive at a ‘fair price’, integrating the external economies and the ‘diseconomies’. And the trick is done!

In fact, as we can already see, the oligopolies have taken over ecologism to justify opening up new fields for their destructive expansion. François Houtart has given an excellent example in his book on agrofuels (François Houtart, *L’Agroénergie, solution pour le climat ou sortie de crise pour le capital?*; Couleur Livres, Charleroi, 2009. An English version has been published by Pluto Books, London, in Spring 2010 under the title *Agrofuels: big profits, ruined lives and human ecological destruction*).

‘Green’ capitalism is now the order of the day for those in power in the Triad (right and left) and the directors of oligopolies. The ecologism in question of course conforms to so-called ‘weak sustainability’ – to use the current jargon – that is, the marketing of “rights of access to the planet’s resources. All the conventional economists have openly rallied to this position, proposing “the auctioning of world resources (fisheries, pollution permits, etc.)”. This is a proposition which simply supports the oligopolies in their ambition to mortgage the future of the peoples of the South still further.

This capture of the ecologist discourse is providing a very useful service to imperialism. It makes it possible to marginalize, if not to eliminate, the development issue. As we know, the question of development was not on the international agenda until the countries of the South were able to impose it by their own initiatives, forcing

the powers of the Triad to negotiate and make concessions. But once the Bandung era was over, it was no longer a question of development, but only of opening up the markets. And ecology, as it is interpreted by the dominant powers, is just prolonging this state of affairs.

The taking over of the ecologist discourse through consensus politics (the necessary expression of the concept of end-of-history capitalism) is no less advanced.

This capture has had an easy passage, for it responds to the alienations and illusions on which the dominant culture feeds, which is that of capitalism. It has been easy because this culture really does exist, is in place and dominant in the minds of most human beings, in the South as well as in the North.

In contrast, it is difficult to express the needs of a socialist counter culture. A socialist culture is not there, in front of us. It is the future and has to be invented, a civilization project, open to an inventive imaginary. Formula like “socialization through democracy and not through the market” and “cultural dominance instead of economics, served by politics” are not enough, in spite of the success they have had in initiating the historical process of transformation. For it will be a long ‘secular’ process: the reconstruction of societies on principles other than those of capitalism, both in the North and in the South, cannot be ‘rapid’. But the construction of the future, even if it is far off, starts today.

Audacity, more audacity

The historical circumstances created by the implosion of contemporary capitalism requires the radical left, in the North as well as the South, to be bold in formulating its political alternative to the existing system. The purpose of this paper is to show why audacity is required and what it means.

Why audacity?

1. Contemporary capitalism is a capitalism of *generalized* monopolies. By this I mean that monopolies are now no longer islands (albeit important) in a sea of other still relatively autonomous companies, but are an integrated system. Therefore, these monopolies now tightly control all the systems of production. Small and medium enterprises, and even the large corporations that are not strictly speaking oligopolies

are locked in a network of control put in place by the monopolies. Their degree of autonomy has shrunk to the point that they are nothing more than subcontractors of the monopolies.

This system of generalized monopolies is the product of a new phase of centralization of capital in the countries of the Triad (the United States, Western and Central Europe, and Japan) that took place during the 1980s and 1990s.

The generalized monopolies now dominate the world economy. "Globalization" is the name they have given to the set of demands by which they exert their control over the productive systems of the periphery of global capitalism (the world beyond the partners of the triad). It is nothing other than a new stage of imperialism.

2. The capitalism of generalized and globalized monopolies is a system that guarantees these monopolies a monopoly rent levied on the mass of surplus value (transformed into profits) that capital extracts from the exploitation of labor. To the extent that these monopolies are operating in the peripheries of the global system, monopoly rent is imperialist rent. The process of capital accumulation - that defines capitalism in all its successive historical forms - is therefore driven by the maximization of monopoly/imperialist rent seeking.

This shift in the center of gravity of the accumulation of capital is the source of the continuous concentration of income and wealth to the benefit of the monopolies, largely monopolized by the oligarchies ("plutocracies") that govern oligopolistic groups at the expense of the remuneration of labor and even the remuneration of non-monopolistic capital.

3. This imbalance in continued growth is itself, in turn, the source of the *financialization* of the economic system. By this I mean that a growing portion of the surplus cannot be invested in the expansion and deepening of systems of production and therefore the "financial investment" of this excessive surplus becomes the only option for continued accumulation under the control of the monopolies.

The implementation of specific systems by capital permits the financialization to operate in different ways:

- (i) the subjugation of the management of firms to the principle of "shareholder value"

- (ii) the substitution of pension systems funded by capitalization (Pension Funds) by systems of pension distribution
- (iii) the adoption of the principle of "flexible exchange rates"
- (iv) the abandonment of the principle of central banks determining the interest rate - the price of "liquidity" – and the transfer of this responsibility to the “market”.

Financialization has transferred the major responsibility for control of the reproduction of the system of accumulation to some thirty giant banks of the triad. What are euphemistically called "markets" are nothing other than the places where the strategies of these actors who dominate the economic scene are deployed.

In turn this financialization, which is responsible for the growth of inequality in income distribution (and fortunes), generates the growing surplus on which it feeds. The "financial investments" (or rather the investments in financial speculation) continue to grow at dizzying speeds, not commensurate with growth in GDP (which is therefore becoming largely fictitious) or with investment in real production.

The explosive growth of financial investment requires - and fuels – among other things debt in all its forms, especially sovereign debt. When the governments in power claim to be pursuing the goal of "debt reduction", they are deliberately lying. For the strategy of financialized monopolies requires the growth in debt (which they seek, rather than combat) as a way to absorb the surplus profit of monopolies. The austerity policies imposed "to reduce debt" have indeed resulted (as intended) in increasing its volume.

4. It is this system – commonly called "neoliberal", the system of generalized monopoly capitalism, "globalized" (imperialist) and financialized (of necessity for its own reproduction) – that is imploding before our eyes. This system, apparently unable to overcome its growing internal contradictions, is doomed to continue its wild ride.

The "crisis" of the system is due to its own "success." Indeed so far the strategy deployed by monopolies has always produced the desired results: “austerity” plans and the so-called social (in fact antisocial) downsizing plans that are still being imposed, in spite of resistance and struggles. To this day the initiative remains in the hands of the monopolies ("the markets") and their political servants (the governments that submit to the demands of the so-called "market").

5. Under these conditions monopoly capital has openly declared war on workers and peoples. This declaration is formulated in the sentence "liberalism is not negotiable." Monopoly capital will definitely continue its wild ride and not slow down. The criticism of "regulation" that I make below is grounded in this fact.

We are not living in a historical moment in which the search for a "social compromise" is a possible option. There have been such moments in the past, such as the post-war social compromise between capital and labor specific to the social democratic state in the West, the actually existing socialism in the East, and the popular national projects of the South. But our present historical moment is not the same. So the conflict is between monopoly capital and workers and people who are invited to an unconditional surrender. Defensive strategies of resistance under these conditions are ineffective and bound to be eventually defeated. In the face of war declared by monopoly capital, workers and peoples must develop strategies that allow them to take the offensive.

The period of social war is necessarily accompanied by the proliferation of international political conflicts and military interventions of the imperialist powers of the triad. The strategy of "military control of the planet" by the armed forces of the United States and its subordinate NATO allies is ultimately the only means by which the imperialist monopolies of the triad can expect to continue their domination over the peoples, nations and the states of the South.

Faced with this challenge of the war declared by the monopolies, what alternatives are being proposed?

First response: "market regulation" (financial and otherwise).

These are initiatives that monopolies and governments claim they are pursuing. In fact it is only empty rhetoric, designed to mislead public opinion. These initiatives cannot stop the mad rush for financial return that is the result of the logic of accumulation controlled by monopolies. They are therefore a false alternative.

Second response: a return to the post-war models.

These responses feed a triple nostalgia: (i) the rebuilding of a true "social democracy" in the West, (ii) the resurrection of "socialisms" founded on the principles that governed those of the twentieth century, (iii) the return to formulas of popular

nationalism in the peripheries of the South. These nostalgias imagine it is possible to "roll back" monopoly capitalism, forcing it to regress to what it was in 1945. But history never allows such returns to the past. Capitalism must be confronted as it is today, not as what we would have wished it to be by imagining the blocking of its evolution. However, these longings continue to haunt large segments of the left throughout the world.

Third response: the search for a "humanist" consensus.

I define this pious wish in the following way: the illusion that a consensus among fundamentally conflicting interests would be possible. Naïve ecology movements, among others, share this illusion.

Fourth response: the illusions of the past.

These illusions invoke "specificity" and "right to difference" without bothering to understand their scope and meaning. The past has already answered the questions for the future. These "culturalisms" can take many para-religious or ethnic forms. Theocracies and ethnocracies become convenient substitutes for the democratic social struggles that have been evacuated from their agenda.

Fifth response: priority of "personal freedom".

The range of responses based on this priority, considered the exclusive "supreme value", includes in its ranks the diehards of "representative electoral democracy," which they equate with democracy itself. The formula separates the democratization of societies from social progress, and even tolerates a de facto association with social regression in order not to risk to discrediting democracy, now reduced to the status of a tragic farce.

But there are even more dangerous forms of this position. I am referring here to some common "post modernist" currents (such as Toni Negri in particular) who imagine that the individual has already become the subject of history, as if communism, which will allow the individual to be emancipated from alienation and actually become the subject of history, were already here!

It is clear that all of the responses above, including those of the right (such as the "regulations" that do not affect private property monopolies) still find powerful

echoes among a majority of the people on the left.

6. The war declared by the generalized monopoly capitalism of contemporary imperialism has nothing to fear from the false alternatives that I have just outlined.

So what is to be done?

This moment offers us the historic opportunity to go much further; it demands as the only effective response a bold and audacious radicalization in the formulation of alternatives capable of moving workers and peoples to take the offensive to defeat their adversary's strategy of war. These formulations, based on the analysis of actually existing contemporary capitalism, must directly confront the future that is to be built, and turn their back on the nostalgia for the past and illusions of identity or consensus.

Audacious programs for the radical left

I will organize the following general proposals under three headings: (i) socialize the ownership of monopolies, (ii) de-financialize the management of the economy, (iii) de-globalize international relations.

Socialize the ownership of monopolies

The effectiveness of the alternative response necessarily requires the questioning of the very principle of private property of monopoly capital. Proposing to "regulate" financial operations, to return markets to 'transparency' to allow "agents' expectations" to be "rational" and to define the terms of a consensus on these reforms without abolishing the private property of monopolies, is nothing other than throwing dust in the eyes of the naive public. Monopolies are asked to "manage" reforms against their own interests, ignoring the fact that they retain a thousand and one ways to circumvent the objectives of such reforms.

The alternative social project should be to reverse the direction of the current social order (social disorder) produced by the strategies of monopolies, in order to ensure maximum and stabilized employment, and to ensure decent wages growing in parallel with the productivity of social labour. This objective is simply impossible without the expropriation of the power of monopolies.

The "software of economic theorists" must be reconstructed (in the words of François Morin). The absurd and impossible economic theory of "expectations" expels democracy from the management of economic decision-making. Audacity in this instance requires radical reform of education for the training not only of economists, but also of all those called to occupy management positions.

Monopolies are institutional bodies that must be managed according to the principles of democracy, in direct conflict with those who sanctify private property. Although the term "commons", imported from the Anglo-Saxon world, is itself ambiguous because always disconnected from the debate on the meaning of social conflicts (Anglo-Saxon language deliberately ignores the reality of social classes), the term could be invoked here specifically to call monopolies part of the "commons".

The abolition of the private ownership of monopolies takes place through their nationalization. This first legal action is unavoidable. But audacity here means going beyond that step to propose plans for the socialization of the management of nationalized monopolies and the promotion of the democratic social struggles that are engaged on this long road.

I will give here a concrete example of what could be involved in plans of socialization.

'Capitalist' farmers (those of developed countries) like 'peasant' farmers (mostly in the South) are all prisoners of both the upstream monopolies that provide inputs and credit, and the downstream ones on which they depend for processing, transportation and marketing of their products. Therefore they have no real autonomy in their "decisions". In addition the productivity gains they make are siphoned off by the monopolies that have reduced producers to the status of "subcontractors". What possible alternative?

Public institutions working within a legal framework that would set the mode of governance must replace the monopolies. These would be constituted of representatives of: (i) farmers (the principle interests), (ii) upstream units (manufacturers of inputs, banks) and downstream (food industry, retail chains) and (iii) consumers, (iv) local authorities (interested in natural and social environment - schools, hospitals, urban planning and housing, transportation), (v) the State (citizens). Representatives of the components listed above would be self-selected according to procedures consistent with their own mode of socialized management, such as units of

production of inputs that are themselves managed by directorates of workers directly employed by the units concerned as well as those who are employed by sub-contracting units and so on. These structures should be designed by formulas that associate management personnel with each of these levels, such as research centers for scientific independent and appropriate technology. We could even conceive of a representation of capital providers (the "small shareholders") inherited from the nationalization, if deemed useful.

We are therefore talking about institutional approaches that are more complex than the forms of "self-directed" or "cooperative" that we have known. Ways of working need to be invented that allow the exercise of genuine democracy in the management of the economy, based on open negotiation among all interested parties. A formula is required that systematically links the democratization of society with social progress, in contrast with the reality of capitalism which dissociates democracy, which is reduced to the formal management of politics, from social conditions abandoned to the "market" dominated by what monopoly capital produces. Then and only then can we talk about true transparency of markets, regulated in institutionalized forms of socialized management.

The example may seem marginal in the developed capitalist countries because farmers there are a very small proportion of workers (3-7%), However, this issue is central to the South where the rural population will remain significant for some time. Here access to land, which must be guaranteed for all (with the least possible inequality of access) is fundamental to principles advancing peasant agriculture (I refer here to my previous work on this question). "Peasant agriculture" should not be understood as synonymous with "stagnant agriculture" (or "traditional and folklorique"). The necessary progress of peasant agriculture does require some "modernization" (although this term is a misnomer because it immediately suggests to many modernization through capitalism). More effective inputs, credits, and production and supply chains are necessary to improve the productivity of peasant labor. The formulas proposed here pursue the objective of enabling this modernization in ways and in a spirit that is "non-capitalist", that is to say grounded in a socialist perspective.

Obviously the specific example chosen here is one that needs to be institutionalized. The nationalization / socialization of the management of monopolies in the sectors of industry and transport, banks and other financial institutions should be imagined in the same spirit, while taking into account the specificities of their economic and social functions in the constitution of their directorates. Again these directorates should

involve the workers in the company as well as those of subcontractors, representatives of upstream industries, banks, research institutions, consumers, and citizens.

The nationalization / socialization of monopolies addresses a fundamental need at the central axis of the challenge confronting workers and peoples under contemporary capitalism of generalized monopolies. It is the only way to stop the accumulation by dispossession that is driving the management of the economy by the monopolies.

The accumulation dominated by monopolies can indeed only reproduce itself if the area subject to "market management" is constantly expanding. This is achieved by excessive privatization of public services (dispossession of citizens), and access to natural resources (dispossession of peoples). The extraction of profit of "independent" economic units by the monopolies is even a dispossession (of capitalists!) by the financial oligarchy.

De-financialization: a world without Wall Street

Nationalization / socialization of monopolies would in and of itself abolish the principle of "shareholder value" imposed by the strategy of accumulation in the service of monopoly rents. This objective is essential for any bold agenda to escape the ruts in which the management of today's economy is mired. Its implementation pulls the rug out from under the feet of the financialization of management of the economy. Are we returning to the famous "euthanasia of the rentier" advocated by Keynes in his time? Not necessarily, and certainly not completely. Savings can be encouraged by financial reward, but on condition that their origin (household savings of workers, businesses, communities) and their conditions of earnings are precisely defined. The discourse on macroeconomic savings in conventional economic theory hides the organization of exclusive access to the capital market of the monopolies. The so-called "market driven remuneration" is then nothing other than the means to guarantee the growth of monopoly rents.

Of course the nationalization / socialization of monopolies also applies to banks, at least the major ones. But the socialization of their intervention ("credit policies") has specific characteristics that require an appropriate design in the constitution of their directorates. Nationalization in the classical sense of the term implies only the substitution of the State for the boards of directors formed by private shareholders. This would permit, in principle, implementation of bank credit policies formulated by the State – which is no small thing. But it is certainly not sufficient when we

consider that socialization requires the direct participation in the management of the bank by the relevant social partners. Here the "self-management" of banks by their staff would not be appropriate. The staff concerned should certainly be involved in decisions about their working conditions, but little else, because it is not their place to determine the credit policies to be implemented.

If the directorates must deal with the conflicts of interest of those that provide loans (the banks) and those who receive them (the "enterprises"), the formula for the composition of directorates must be designed taking into account what the enterprises are and what they require. A restructuring of the banking system which has become overly centralized since the regulatory frameworks of the past two centuries were abandoned over the past four decades. There is a strong argument to justify the reconstruction of banking specialization according to the requirements of the recipients of their credit as well as their economic function (provision of short-term liquidity, contributing to the financing of investments in the medium and long term). We could then, for example, create an "agriculture bank" (or a coordinated ensemble of agriculture banks) whose clientele is comprised not only of farmers and peasants but also those involved in the "upstream and downstream" of agriculture described above. The bank's directorate would involve on the one hand the "bankers" (staff officers of the bank – who would have been recruited by the directorate) and other clients (farmers or peasants, and other upstream and downstream entities).

We can imagine other sets of articulated banking systems, appropriate to various industrial sectors, in which the directorates would involve the industrial clients, centers of research and technology and services to ensure control of the ecological impact of the industry, thus ensuring minimal risk (while recognizing that no human action is completely without risk), and subject to transparent democratic debate.

The de-financialization of economic management would also require two sets of legislation. The first concerns the authority of a sovereign state to ban speculative fund (hedge funds) operations in its territory. The second concerns pension funds, which are now major operators in the financialization of the economic system. These funds were designed - first in the US of course - to transfer to employees the risks normally incurred by capital, and which are the reasons invoked to justify capital's remuneration! So this is a scandalous arrangement, in clear contradiction even with the ideological defense of capitalism! But this "invention" is an ideal instrument for the strategies of accumulation dominated by monopolies.

The abolition of pension funds is necessary for the benefit of distributive pension systems, which, by their very nature, require and allow democratic debate to determine the amounts and periods of assessment and the relationship between the amounts of pensions and remuneration paid. In a democracy that respects social rights, these pension systems are universally available to all workers. However, at a pinch, and so as not to prohibit what a group of individuals might desire to put in place, supplementary pensions funds could be allowed.

All measures of de-financialization suggested here lead to an obvious conclusion: A *world without Wall Street*, to borrow the title of the book by François Morin, is possible *and* desirable.

In a world without Wall Street, the economy is still largely controlled by the "market". But these markets are for the first time truly transparent, regulated by democratic negotiation among genuine social partners (for the first time also they are no longer adversaries as they are necessarily under capitalism). It is the financial "market" – opaque by nature and subjected to the requirements of management for the benefit of the monopolies – that is abolished. We could even explore whether it would be useful or not to shut down the stock exchanges, given that the rights to property, both in its their private as well as social form, would be conducted "differently". We could even consider whether the stock exchange could be re-established to this new end. The symbol in any case – "a world without Wall Street" – nevertheless retains its power.

De-financialization certainly does not mean the abolition of macroeconomic policy and in particular the macro management of credit. On the contrary it restores its efficiency by freeing it from its subjugation to the strategies of rent-seeking monopolies. The restoration of the powers of national central banks, no longer "independent" but dependent on both the state and markets regulated by the democratic negotiation of social partners, gives the formulation of macro credit policy its effectiveness in the service of socialized management of the economy.

At the international level: delinking

I use here the term "delinking" that I proposed half a century ago, a term that contemporary discourse appears to have substituted with the synonym "de-globalisation". I have never conceptualised *delinking* as an autarkic retreat, but rather as a strategic reversal in the face of both internal and external forces in

response to the unavoidable requirements of self-determined development. Delinking promotes the reconstruction of a globalization based on negotiation, rather than submission to the exclusive interests of the imperialist monopolies. It also makes possible the reduction of international inequalities.

Delinking is necessary because the measures advocated in the two previous sections can never really be implemented at the global scale, or even at a regional level (e.g. Europe). They can only be initiated in the context of states / nations with advanced radical social and political struggles, committed to a process of socialization of the management of their economy.

Imperialism, in the form that it took until just after the Second World War, had created the contrast between industrialized imperialist centers and dominated peripheries where industry was prohibited. The victories of national liberation movements began the process of the industrialization of the peripheries, through the implementation of delinking policies required for the option of self-reliant development. Associated with social reforms that were at times radical, these delinkings created the conditions for the eventual "emergence" of those countries that had gone furthest in this direction – China leading the pack, of course.

But the imperialism of the current era, the imperialism of the Triad, forced to retreat and "adjust" itself to the conditions of this new era, rebuilt itself on new foundations, based on "advantage" by which it sought to hold on to the privilege of exclusivity that I have classified in five categories. The control of:

- technology;
- access to natural resources of the planet
- global integration of the monetary and financial system
- systems of communication and information
- weapons of mass destruction.

The main form of delinking today is thus defined precisely by the challenge to these five privileges of contemporary imperialism. Emerging countries are engaged in delinking from these five privileges, with varying degrees of control and self-determination, of course. While earlier success over the past two decades in delinking enabled them to accelerate their development, in particular through industrial development within the globalized "liberal" system using "capitalist" means, this success has fueled delusions about the possibility of continuing on this

path, that is to say, emerging as new "equal capitalist partners". The attempt to "co-opt" the most prestigious of these countries with the creation of the G20 has encouraged these illusions.

But with the current ongoing implosion of the imperialist system (called "globalization"), these illusions are likely to dissipate. The conflict between the imperialist powers of the triad and emerging countries is already visible, and is expected to worsen. If they want to move forward, the societies of emerging countries will be forced to turn more towards self-reliant modes of development through national plans and by strengthening South-South cooperation.

Audacity, under such circumstances, involves engaging vigorously and coherently towards this end, bringing together the required measures of delinking with the desired advances in social progress.

The goal of this radicalization is threefold: the democratization of society; the consequent social progress achieved; and the taking of anti-imperialist positions. A commitment to this direction is possible, not only for societies in emerging countries, but also in the "abandoned" or the "written-off" of the global South. These countries had been effectively recolonized through the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s. Their peoples are now in open revolt, whether they have already scored victories (South America) or not (in the Arab world).

Audacity here means that the radical left in these societies must have the courage to take measure of the challenges they face and to support the continuation and radicalization of the necessary struggles that are in progress.

The delinking of the South prepares the way for the deconstruction of the imperialist system itself. This is particularly apparent in areas affected by the management of the global monetary and financial system, since it is the result of the hegemony of the dollar.

But beware: it is an illusion to expect to substitute for this system "another world monetary and financial system" that is better balanced and favorable to the development of the peripheries. As always, the search of a "consensus" over international reconstruction from above is mere wishful thinking akin to waiting for a miracle. What is on the agenda now is the deconstruction of the existing system - its implosion - and reconstruction of national alternative systems (for countries or

continents or regions), as some projects in South America have already begun. Audacity here is to have the courage to move forward with the strongest determination possible, without too much worry about the reaction of imperialism.

This same problematique of delinking / dismantling is also of relevance to Europe, which is a subset of globalization dominated by monopolies. The European project was designed from the outset and built systematically to dispossess its peoples of their ability to exercise their democratic power. The European Union was established as a protectorate of the monopolies. With the implosion of the euro zone, its submission to the will of the monopolies has resulted in the abolishment of democracy which has been reduced to the status of farce and takes on extreme forms, namely focused only on the question: how are the "market" (that is to say monopolies) and the "Rating Agencies" (that is to say, again, the monopolies) reacting? That's the only question now posed. How the people might react is no longer given the slightest consideration.

It is thus obvious that here too there is no alternative to audacity: "disobeying" the rules imposed by the "European Constitution" and the imaginary central bank of the euro. In other words, there is no alternative to deconstruct the institutions of Europe and the euro zone. This is the unavoidable prerequisite for the eventual reconstruction of "another Europe" of peoples and nations.

In conclusion: Audacity, more audacity, always audacity.

What I mean by audacity is therefore:

- (i) For the radical left in the societies of the imperialist triad, the need for an engagement in the building an alternative anti-monopoly social bloc.
- (ii) For the radical left in the societies of the peripheries to engage in the building an alternative anti-comprador social bloc.

It will take time to make progress in building these blocs, but it could well accelerate if the radical left takes on movement with determination and engages in making progress on the long road of socialism. It is therefore necessary to propose strategies not "out of the crisis of capitalism", but "out of capitalism in crisis" to borrow from the title of one of my recent works.

We are in a crucial period in history. The only legitimacy of capitalism is to have created the conditions for passing on to socialism, understood as a higher stage of

civilization. Capitalism is now an obsolete system, its continuation leading only to barbarism. No other capitalism is possible. The outcome of a clash of civilizations is, as always, uncertain. Either the radical left will succeed through the audacity of its initiatives to make revolutionary advances, or the counter-revolution will win. There is no effective compromise between these two responses to the challenge.

All the strategies of the non-radical left are in fact non-strategies, they are merely day-to-day adjustments to the vicissitudes of the imploding system. And if the powers that be want, like le Guépard, to "change everything so that nothing changes", the candidates of the left believe it is possible to "change life without touching the power of monopolies"! The non-radical left will not stop the triumph of capitalist barbarism. They have already lost the battle for lack of wanting to take it on.

Audacity is what is necessary to bring about the autumn of capitalism that will be announced by the implosion of its system and by the birth of an authentic spring of the people, a spring that is possible.

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