

Popular Movements Toward Socialism

Their Unity and Diversity

SAMIR AMIN

The Movement Toward Socialism

The following reflections deal with a permanent and fundamental challenge that has confronted, and continues to confront, all popular movements struggling against capitalism. By this I mean both those of movements whose explicit radical aim is to abolish the system based on private proprietorship over the modern means of production (capital) in order to replace it with a system based on workers' social proprietorship, and those of movements which, without going so far, involve mobilization aimed at real and significant transformation of the relations between labor ("employed by capital") and capital ("which employs the workers"). Both sorts of movements can contribute, in varying degree, to calling capitalism into question; but they also might merely create the illusion of movement in that direction, although in fact only forcing capital to make the transformations it would need to co-opt a given set of working-class demands. We are well aware that it is not always easy to draw the boundary between efficacy and impotence in regard to the strategies resorted to by these movements, no more so than to determine whether their strategic aims are clashing with their tactical situation.

Taken as a whole, many of these movements can be termed "movement toward socialism." I borrow this phrase from the terminology introduced during recent decades by some South American parties (Chilean, Bolivian, and others). These parties have given up the traditional aim of communist parties ("take and hold power to build socialism"), substituting for it the apparently more modest aim of patiently constructing social and political conditions which allow an

SAMIR AMIN is director of the Third World Forum in Dakar, Senegal. His books published by Monthly Review Press include *The Liberal Virus*, *The World We Wish to See*, *The Law of Worldwide Value* and, most recently, *The Implosion of Contemporary Capitalism*. This article was translated from the French by Shane Mage.

advance toward socialism. The difference derives from the fact that the building of socialism as proposed by those communist parties stemmed from a preconceived definition of socialism, derived from the Soviet experience, which can be summed up in two terms: nationalization and State planning. Those parties choosing the label “movement toward socialism” leave as an open question the specification of the methods to be used in socializing the management of a modern economy.

Some, but not all, of these organizations and parties that portray themselves as socialist, or even communist, claim to be the heirs of Marx and even sometimes of the versions of Marxism inherited from Sovietism and/or Maoism.

In fact the triumph of capitalism since the industrial revolution, and its globalization through imperialist expansion, have simultaneously created the conditions for the projected emergence of a higher universal socialist/communist form of civilization. Many streams came together in this invention. Engels, and Lenin after him, gave a well-known classification of its Marxist variant: English classical political economy, French utopian socialism, and German Hegelian philosophy. But this classification simplifies the reality and leaves aside many pre- and post-Marxian contributions.

Of course, Marx’s contribution to formulating the socialist/communist project was the critical breakthrough in its elaboration. Marx’s thought, in fact, was elaborated on the basis of a rigorous scientific critical analysis of capitalism taking into account all aspects of its historical reality. This had not been the case with previous socialist formulations or later ones that disregarded Marx. The formulation of capitalism’s own law of value; the specification of the long-run tendencies of capital accumulation and of their contradictions; the analysis of the relationship between class struggles and international conflicts and likewise of the transformations in methods for managing accumulation and governance; and analysis of the alienated forms of social consciousness—these together define the thoughts of Marx that initiated the unfolding of historic Marxisms, especially those of the Second and Third Internationals, of Sovietism and of Maoism.

The Central Place of the French Revolution in Forming the Modern World

In my understanding of the modern world’s construction, the French Revolution takes a central place. It defined a system of values—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity (in present-day terms, Solidarity)—that founded modernity on its fundamental contradiction. In the last analysis these

values are much more the values of the still-to-be-invented higher socialist civilization than they are values whose real and full actualization could be acceptable to capitalism. In this sense the French Revolution was more than a “bourgeois revolution” (such as the 1688 English “Glorious Revolution”); it proclaimed—with the Jacobin ascendancy—the need to go beyond.

Capitalist values—those which are useful to its spread—are those that inspired the American Non-Revolution: Liberty and Property. Together they define “free enterprise”: whether in the form of a small family farming business, as was the case in the New England colonies; or of the slave-labor-based farms of the Southern colonies; or, in later periods, of industrial Big Business and then of financialized monopolies. Linked together, these two values exclude any aspirations for an equality going beyond universal equality of legal rights. “Equality of opportunity” is the ideological phraseology that finesses the starting-point inequalities which distinguish the property-owning classes from the proletarians who have only their labor-power to sell. Liberty and Property together make inequality seem legitimate: inequality is made to seem the result of individuals’ talent and hard work. They lead people to ignore the virtues of solidarity and recognize only their opposites: competition among individuals and among businesses.

By their very nature Liberty and Equality are conflicting values that can be reconciled only when bourgeois property, as the property only of a minority, has been suppressed. The French Revolution, even at its most radical Jacobin phase, did not go that far: it remained protective of property rights and held them sacred, imagining them to be generalizable in the form of small family farms and artisanal enterprises. It had no way to grasp how capitalism would develop, how it would put such emphasis on the inevitably ongoing concentration of modern capitalist property.

The socialist/communist idea, understood as a stage of civilization superior to the capitalist stage, takes form precisely through the gradually growing consciousness of what is implied in a sincere effectuation of the slogan “liberty, equality, solidarity”: the substitution of collective workers’ property in place of the bourgeois-minority property form.

Diverse Lines of Descent in the Formation of Socialist Thought and Action

At the origin of modern peoples’ struggle movements is the challenge posed by capitalist social relations and concomitant exploitation of the workers. These movements, in some instances, arose spontaneously; in

others, they were prompted, with varying degrees of success, by groups that endeavored to mobilize and organize the workers for that purpose.

Such movements appeared very early in the new Industrial Revolution Europe, especially in England, France, and Belgium; a little later in Germany and elsewhere in Europe; and in the New England region of the United States. They expanded throughout the nineteenth century and took varying directions (termed “revolutionary” and “reformist”) in the twentieth.

Other movements sprang up in the peripheral capitalist societies, i.e., in those countries integrated into the globalized capitalist system as regions subjected to the accumulation requirements of the dominant centers. As it extended itself worldwide historical capitalism was polarizing, in the sense that dominant centers and dominated peripheries took shape simultaneously in an asymmetric relationship steadily reproduced and deepened by the logic of the system. Capitalism and imperialism constituted the inseparable two sides of a single reality. In those conditions the movements of struggle against the established system were broadly anti-imperialist, the forces initiating them seeking not to build a post-capitalist society but to “copy in order to catch up” with the opulent societies of the centers. Nevertheless, because the bourgeoisies of those countries, formed at their births by a relationship of dependency (and by that very fact naturally “comprador,” the term originally used by Chinese Communism to characterize them), were in no state to remake themselves into national bourgeoisies able to carry out a true bourgeois revolution (“anti-feudal,” in the terminology of Third International communism). Because of this, the combat against imperialism, undertaken by a broad anti-imperialist and anti-feudal social alliance led by a party proclaiming its perspective as socialist/communist, became potentially an anti-capitalist one.

These peoples’ and national emancipation movements took as their aim to pass through the stage of anti-imperialist/anti-feudal/peoples’ (and not bourgeois)/democratic revolution. So they are to be counted in the movement toward socialism.

We thus have to examine more closely two sorts of movement to socialism: those arising and spreading in the imperialist centers, and those developing in their dominated peripheries. These two sorts of movements never bear a union label saying “movement toward socialism,” but some of them might potentially become such. What then are the conditions and criteria allowing us so to classify them?

The Lineages of Movements Toward Socialism in the Centers of the World Capitalist System

In the nineteenth century, more so than elsewhere in Europe or in the United States, it was in France that a newborn awareness of the need to abolish capitalism and replace it with a socialist organization of society took its first steps. The carrier for this progression was provided by the heirs of Jacobinism, major actors in 1848 and then in the 1871 Paris Commune—most notably Auguste Blanqui, whose theories were the inspiration for French revolutionary syndicalism. Self-governing production cooperatives, according to these initial formulations, were to provide the institutional and legal framework for the socialization of property.

“French socialism”—if that is what it is to be called—was distinguished by its idealist character from the socialism inspired by Marx. It derived, rather, from the heritage of eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophy—to whose ethical values like justice, citizenship, equality, liberty, and solidarity it gave the most socially radical interpretation. But it remained unaware of any scientific analysis of how the process of capital accumulation is produced and reproduced, the process that provided Marx with the first and only analytic understanding of the rationale and nature of the aspiration for socialism.

It is thus understandable that Marx, and then the historical Second and Third Internationals’ varieties of Marxism, were critical of this “French socialism’s” theory and practice. Blanquism is criticized for substituting a strategy of conspiracy and coup d’État for strategies based on struggle by a self-organized proletariat over the long haul; Proudhon was subjected to as harsh a critique; and revolutionary syndicalism was criticized for its “elitist” organizational conception. We will come back to this question of French-style “revolutionary syndicalism,” whose living traces can still be discerned in modern-day France, in distinction from the “mass” or “consensus” trade unionism of the other European countries. Of course there are other traditions beyond the French, especially the English, that in Europe helped to form the movement or movements, effective or illusory, to socialism. But I will not discuss them here.

It was those streams that were to merge, during Marx’s lifetime and with his active participation, into the International Workingmen’s Association (“First International”). In this connection, the founding resolution of the First International, written by Marx, stated: “The task of the International is to generalize and unify the working class’s spontaneous movements, but not to prescribe for or impose upon them any doctrinal system whatsoever.”

The First International grouped certain organizations—parties and unions in an embryonic stage, associations of various sorts—which subscribed to differing “doctrinal systems”; that of Marx but also those of Proudhon and Bakunin. Within the International, Marx carried on a political and ideological combat against doctrines that he regarded as scientifically unfounded and thereby likely to spread illusions and render the working-class movement ineffective. But, in the quoted sentence, he propounded the fundamental principle (to which I adhere): accept and recognize diversity, act to reinforce unity in struggle.

But what in Europe was to develop in the last third of the nineteenth century, especially after Marx’s death but while Engels was still alive, was precisely an evolution away from that principle on the part of its movements to socialism.

The Second International was founded by a meeting among “parties” that had become, at least relatively, “mass workers’ parties,” in practice one for each country. This evolution went along with the formation of mass trade unions, vastly bigger than those in the Europe that Marx had known: to each country, “its” party. Differing from one country to the other, all still shared the ideal of being its country’s “only workers’ party.” They considered themselves such since their establishment was based on fusion among movements with different traditions. The German Social Democratic Party (SPD) grouped Lassalians and Marxists, the French Socialist Party united Jaurèsians (heirs of the “French socialism” tradition), Guesdists (Marxists), and Blanquists. The British party was indistinguishable from the Trade Unions, federated in the Labor Party. To many, at the time, this evolution seemed positive and solid. But history was to show it to be more fragile than was thought. Nevertheless “unity,” realized in form on the organizational level, was thenceforward to be taken not as complementary to diversity—whose very existence was denied by many—but as incompatible with it. The apparent unity of the workers’ party seemed strengthened by the emergence of similarly unified trade unions. “Mass unionism” cleared its own pathway—its chosen aim was that all the workers in each line of industry or trade were to be organized in and belong to a the same union. France remained an exception to this general tendency. Each union, in the tradition of revolutionary syndicalism, recruited only a politicized vanguard and endeavored to lead the masses of wage-workers, to organize their struggles, and/or to support spontaneous movements. The Union would see itself as a quasi-party, an ally or a competitor to the workers’ parties. Mass unionism, in contrast, does not favor the politicization of its rank and file but actually

favors their passive obedience, their depoliticization. The mass union sticks with its lowest common denominator—purely economic demands and, possibly, electoral support to its ally, the social-democratic party.

The 1914 war was to expose, for all to see, the impotence of the Second International's parties and trade unions. Lenin himself was surprised by Kautsky's "betrayal." Nevertheless, the "revisionist" deviation initiated by Eduard Bernstein—and its success—ought to have produced an understanding that those parties and trade unions no longer constituted a "movement toward socialism." The principal cause of this deviation, nevertheless, was not to be found in a "betrayal by the leaders," nor in the corruption of the small layer of labor-aristocrats, nor in the careerism of those organizations' bureaucrats. It originated from an objective fact: the opulence of a society based on imperialist plunder. The deviation kept going during the interwar period (1920–1939) and even after the Second World War in the thirty-year postwar boom (1945–1975). The "reformist" parties and trade-unions—who had given up on calling capitalism into question—retained the confidence of the majority of the working class, reducing the Leninist-communists to minority status.

Of course, in writing these lines I am aware that they should be read in a nuanced way. At certain times in the interwar period, struggles to preserve (bourgeois) democracy from the Nazi and other fascist threats combined with struggles to improve the workers' living conditions. At that instant the Popular Fronts offered a hope of possibly reconverting themselves into movements to socialism. In the immediate postwar years, because the class-collaboration of the European bourgeoisies with triumphant Nazi Germany had coincided with the decisive role of the working classes in the resistance movements and the prestige of the Red Army which had routed the Nazis, it once more became possible to hope for a rebirth of movements to socialism, especially in France and Italy. The conquests of the working classes in Great Britain, Western Europe, and even the United States—social security, full-employment policies, annual wage increases in pace with increases in the average productivity of social labor—can in no case be viewed with contempt. They transformed, for the better, the face of those societies. But at the same time one is forced to recognize that those workers' gains were made possible—for capital—by the intensification of imperialist plunder. During the whole thirty-year postwar boom energy (petroleum) had become practically costless.

Thus there was, in the imperialist centers, no serious obstacle to the victory of capital's counter-offensive that began in 1975 and put an end both to the long boom and to further workers' gains—nor, likewise, to

continued deviation by the former Second International's parties and trade-unions, which thenceforward were merely social-liberal. So we reached the end of the road: a "consensus" society accepting "eternal capitalism"; depoliticization; and, in place of worker/citizens a populace of spectators and consumers.

Nevertheless, this victory of capital and the disappearance of any movement to socialism from the imperialist centers are not as solid as one might believe, or pretend to believe. The renewal of struggles against the social devastations concomitant to the dictatorship of triumphant capital signify the possible renewal of a movement to socialism. This will be discussed further on.

The Leninist Lineages of the Movement Toward Socialism

The first victorious revolution to be carried out in the name of socialism was that of Russia, a semi-peripheral country. And this was not fortuitous. The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, established at the close of the nineteenth century, regarded itself as part of the European Marxist family, whose mentor was Karl Kautsky. But in fact the RSDLP was not European; it signified the shift in the center of gravity of movements to socialism from the imperialist centers to their peripheries. That shift was to shape the whole twentieth century. So it was not by chance that its radical tendency (the Bolsheviks) gained the upper hand over, and put on the defensive, the conciliating tendency (the Mensheviks), while the inverse of that relationship prevailed in all the European parties.

Nevertheless, Lenin always stayed faithful to Second International thinking as regards the relationship between necessary unity and the diversity of the currents comprising the movement toward socialism. He even emphasized its view on two important questions. In the first place he believed there to be no place for multiple working-class parties—"one class/one party." No parties except those recognized by the Third International could be participants in the movement toward socialism. They were nothing but traitors, and the task was to win the masses they were deceiving. He thought that possible until the—completely foreseeable—defeat of the 1918-1919 German revolution. Secondly, he refused to allow for trade-unions independent of the Party. For, without guidance from the Party, they could never think beyond reformist struggle for immediate economic demands. It was therefore necessary to integrate them into the system of the movement toward socialism by making them submit to the status of a transmission belt for the revolutionary strategy of the revolutionary Party. Nevertheless, the real history of labor struggles

in Europe itself was to refute both Lenin's and the Second International's conceptualizations of the role of trade unions. At the present moment the "big mass unions" (as in Germany), consensus-based and firmly allied to the "big parliamentary parties of the left" (like the German SPD), have posed no obstacle to the unfolding offensive by capital of the financialized monopolies; on the contrary, they helped it to reach its objectives. Contrariwise, the remnant of the revolutionary syndicalist tradition in France (ironically called "elitist" and "minoritarian"), because it leaves a large measure of autonomy to grassroots initiatives, has proved to be more effective in resisting capital's offensive—a state of affairs deplored by the French bosses, who reserve their praise for the "German model."

Leninism, defined like that, was to inspire the dominant lineages of the twentieth century's movement toward socialism while the European lineages were, as I pointed out above, to slide more and more openly toward opportunist positions. At best they advance merely trade-union demands—signing up for permanent maintenance of fundamental capitalist relationships and thereby taking their leave from anything that might be considered the movement toward socialism.

Was Lenin personally responsible for the "Leninism" of his successors, in the USSR and throughout the world? Yes and no. Yes, in the sense that all his successors, including Stalin, adhered to Leninist dogmas on management of the unity/diversity relationship. No, of course, insofar as Lenin lived through only the first years of the Russian Revolution and so bears no personal responsibility for whatever ensued.

And that which ensued had a positive aspect, one of decisive importance for the future of the world movement toward socialism. Leninism broke with the Eurocentric dogma that socialist revolution was on the agenda only in advanced (i.e., imperialist) capitalist countries. He takes account of the transfer, from the centers to the peripheries, of the combat for socialism's center of gravity. This was proclaimed, Lenin present, in 1920 at the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku. And the Third International was to be present throughout the world while the Second had existed only in Europe.

In regard to Soviet society the movement toward socialism led by Leninist bolshevism was constrained by the objective conditions of the country (its backwardness; its semi-peripheral-capitalist nature) to reduce "building socialism" (its professed aim) to the building of State Socialism. I insist here that State Socialism is different from State Capitalism. State Capitalism (like that of France under de Gaulle) remains a system in service to monopoly capital (even when making major concessions benefiting

the workers), State Socialism involves two aspects of a quite different nature: (1) its obligation to pose as equivalent to worker-power at least by legitimating itself through bold social policies; and (2) its independent posture in relations with the world capitalist system.

This State Socialism, the defining characteristic of Stalinism, which, consequently, makes it correct to call Stalinist-Leninist [in preference to Marxist-Leninist—Ed.] was pregnant with the possibility of gradual leftward evolution. (That is to say, the potential remained for the socialization of economic management) through effective participation of the workers in the exercise of power—progressively more advanced, more in keeping with socialist values, forms. But it also was pregnant with the risk of stagnation with a final fall to the right by way of capitalist restoration. Which is what happened in Eastern Europe and the USSR with Yeltsin and Gorbachev. Would Trotsky have done better? I doubt that very much. Which is why the Fourth International (in reality the Third International, second edition) never amounted to more than a springboard for orators reproducing ad nauseam the principles of Leninism without going beyond them.

The Stalinist and post-Stalinist systems never were able even to begin going beyond the State Socialism (economic stratification and central planning) stage. A start to such a going beyond was made by Titoist Yugoslavia. It is not by chance that this attempt was ostracized by Moscow. For at the level of its actions on the world stage Third International (and then Cominform) communism had gradually come to subordinate all strategies of the movements to socialism to the tactical needs of the Soviet state, whose sole concern was with the requirements of resistance to capitalist encirclement. The theory of the “non-capitalist path,” imposed on its Bandung-period nonaligned partner countries—especially the radicalized anti-imperialist Egypt of Nasser—which I criticized as soon as it was formulated (**while I was attached to the Planning bodies of the Nasser regime and shortly thereafter**) constituted the abandonment of any strategic perspective in favor of mere tactics.

It was left for Chinese communism and Mao to introduce a different conception of the movement toward socialism in world capitalism’s peripheries, not by breaking with the heritage of Leninism but by going beyond it. That makes up the subject of another lineage of the movement toward socialism, which we will take up below.

Lineages of the Movement Toward Socialism in World Capitalism's Peripheries

I will begin by taking a look at the Chinese experience.

The March–May 1871 Paris Commune and the 1851–1864 Taiping Revolution (and I do mean to say Revolution, not Revolt) initiated the entrance of the human race into the contemporary phase of its history. They put an end to the illusive belief that capitalism was progressive, they proclaimed the end of its summer.

Judged by their long-term significance, these were two gigantic revolutions. One of them (the Commune) unfolded in a developed capitalist metropolis, at the time second only to England in economic stature; the other broke out in a region of the world that had just been integrated into globalized imperialist capitalism with the status of a dominated periphery.

The Taiping Revolution overthrew the despotic imperial autocracy of the Ching dynasty, it abolished the regime of peasant exploitation by the ruling class of that mode of social production which I have termed “tributary” (the Chinese Communists called it “feudal,” a difference in terminology that is secondary). But at the same time the Taiping Revolution rejected the forms of capitalism which had infiltrated themselves into the interstices of the tributary system; it abolished private commerce. It rejected just as strongly foreign domination by imperialist capital. And it did so extremely early, since the first imperialist aggressions foreshadowing the reduction of China to the status of a dominated periphery in imperialist capitalist globalization—the 1840 Opium War—had taken place a mere decade earlier. And, in advance of their time, the Taipings abolished polygamy, concubinage, and prostitution.

The Taiping Revolution—they also were “sons of heaven,” i.e., it had a messianical aspect “linked” to Christianity—laid the foundation-stones for socialism/higher stage of human civilization by formulating the first revolutionary strategy of global imperialist capitalism's peripheral peoples. The Taiping Revolution is the ancestor of (to use the later terminology of the Chinese Communists) “the people's anti-feudal/anti-imperialist revolution.” It proclaimed the awakening of the peoples of the South (of Asia, Africa, and Latin America) that was to shape the twentieth century. It was an inspiration to Mao. It showed the pathway to revolution for all the peoples of the modern global capitalist system's peripheries, the path that allowed them to enter into the long socialist transition.

The Paris Commune is not just a chapter in French history, nor are the Taipings just a chapter in Chinese history. These two revolutions had universal significance. The Paris Commune gave substance to the

“proletarian” internationalism that the First International invoked as alternative to chauvinist nationalisms, to capitalist cosmopolitanism, to past racial, linguistic, and confessional identities. The universalism of the Taipings’ call was symbolized by their (said to be “curious”) adoption of the figure of Christ, who nevertheless was a figure alien to Chinese history. How could a human being defeated by his adversaries—the ruling power—be a supposedly invincible “God?” For the Taipings their Christ was not the one held up by the missionaries who had tried to introduce their submissive Christianity into China. Rather, he was the exemplary example of what the struggle for human liberation had to be: courageous unto death and by that very fact proving the secret of success to be solidarity in struggle.

The Paris Commune and the Taiping Revolution elsewhere proved capitalism to be a mere parenthesis in history. A short parenthesis, moreover. Capitalism has merely fulfilled the (honorable) role of creating—in an historically short space of time—the conditions that made its surpassing/abolition necessary in order to allow the construction of a more advanced stage of human civilization. The Paris Commune and the Taiping Revolution, by that very fact, opened history’s current chapter—that which was to develop in the twentieth century and be continued in the twenty-first. They opened the succeeding chapters of the springtime of peoples, parallel to capitalism’s autumn.

China, at the far end of the continent, likewise showed characteristics particularly favorable to precocious political maturation. China had very early, even before Europe, begun to go beyond its (“advanced,” solidly formed) socio-economic tributary mode. In its invention of modernity it was ahead by five centuries in its abandonment of a religion of individual salvation—Buddhism—in favor of a sort of unreligious secularism before that word existed; and bold development of commercial relationships based on the internal market. Moreover, China (unlike India and the Ottoman Empire) long resisted the assaults of European imperialist capitalism. It thus was not until 1840 that British gunboats broke open the doors to the Celestial Empire. In combination, this aggression together with the earlier advancements of Chinese capitalism had prodigious accelerating effects: inequalities in landownership (to which the logic of the the tributary system posed declining resistance) grew faster, and the “betrayal” of the ruling class (the Emperor and the landed aristocracy) quickly replaced their earlier attempts at “national” resistance. So this is how we understand the precociousness of the Taiping Revolution and its “anti-feudal/anti-imperialist” nature.

So two great revolutions, but two revolutions at work on each of the two complementary fields of globalized imperialist capitalism—at the center and at the periphery—in the two “weak links” of this worldwide system.

Were Marx and historic Marxism(s) up to the analytic demands of this reality of globalized capitalism and thus able to form effective strategies to “change the world,” i.e., to abolish capitalism? Yes and no. Marx yielded to the temptation of seeing in the worldwide expansion of capitalism a force that would homogenize economic and social conditions, reducing the workers of the whole world to the sole status of employees exploited by capital in the same way and to the same intensity everywhere. On this basis it justified, as progressive in the last analysis, colonialism. There is no lack of supporting citations to be found in Marx’s writings, spotlighting the progressive consequences, however unintentional, of colonialism—i.e., despite its odious practices (denounced by Marx) in India, Algeria, South Africa, Eritrea—as well as “Yankee” annexation of Texas and California (“industrious,” as distinguished from the “lazy” Mexicans.¹ By this logic Marx condemned the Taipings—about whom he knew nothing at all! Nevertheless, whenever he dealt with countries of which he was not totally ignorant, Marx sketched out a quite different vision of capitalist expansion. Marx saw nothing positive in the colonization of Ireland by England; on the contrary, he unreservedly denounced its destructive effects upon the English working class itself. In regard to Russia—which was less foreign to him than China was—Marx had an intuition that it was a “weak link” (to use a term coined by Lenin) in the worldwide capitalist chain and that, by that very fact, an anti-capitalist revolution which would clear the way for socialist advance was possible. Marx’s correspondence with Vera Zasulich is evidence of this.² He saw the possibility of a revolution with a strong peasant dimension, based on the resistance of peasant communities (organized as a *mir*—, if they could free themselves from feudalism through the real abolition of serfdom. Even though the peasants would themselves be threatened by expropriation to the gain of both some newly rich peasants and of the new latifundary landlords (former feudal lords), a revolution that might be able to clear an original path for the socialist advance.

Lenin, and so the historic “Leninist” Marxism, made a great stride forward. Lenin denounced “imperialism.” It does not matter at all that, probably because of his respect for Marx, he called it a new and recent stage of capitalism. He drew the two obligatory and conjoined consequences: “the revolution” was no longer on the agenda in the “West”; contrariwise, “revolution,” was on the agenda in the “East.” Lenin did

not come to this conclusion right away. He wavered. He still hoped, for example, that the revolution which had started in the “weak link of the system” (Russia) would carry in its wake that of the workers in the developed centers (Germany, first of all). His reading of capitalism’s first great systemic crisis (which began in the 1870s and led to the First World War) saw it also as the “final” crisis of moribund capitalism. But Lenin quickly drew a different conclusion from the facts: He had been fooling himself; the revolution had been defeated in Europe (in Germany); those to come were starting to sprout in the East (in China, in Iran, in the former Ottoman Empire, in the colonies and semi-colonies). Nevertheless, Lenin failed to relate his new reading of Marxism to a deepening of his thought regarding the place of Russia in the global capitalist system, that of a periphery (or semi-periphery). He saw in that position—“semi-Asiatic” Russia—an obstacle rather than a trump card. No more did Lenin see the “peasant question” as central to the new “revolution” on the agenda. He thought, rightly or wrongly, that the possibilities inherent in the *mir* had been wiped out by the development of capitalism in Russia (*The Development of Capitalism in Russia* was the title of one of his earliest books.) He drew the consequence: the Russian revolution would give the land to the peasants, but only to make them owners of their land.

So it was for Mao, the heir of the Taipings, to master absolutely all the teachings of this story. Mao formulated the strategy and the aims of the long transition to socialism starting with an anti-imperialist/anti-“feudal” revolution to be carried out in the given conditions of the global system’s peripheral societies. His definition of the tasks of this “anti-feudal” revolution expressed Mao’s absolute rejection of the backward-looking illusion in any form whatsoever. The revolution of the peoples of the periphery would of necessity sign up for the universalist perspective of socialism.

So Mao’s Chinese Communism was to put in operation a coherent strategy of movement toward socialism for China, whose teachings carry great importance for all the peoples of the peripheries (Asia, Africa, and Latin America). Here we are, come back to our fundamental question: the relationship between unity and diversity.

The anti-imperialist/anti-feudal/popular and democratic (but not bourgeois democratic) revolution links diverse social, ideological, and cultural forces. It cannot be a “proletarian revolution.” Indeed, to this day the proletariat is scarcely better than a feeble, embryonic, presence in any of the modern societies of the peripheries. This revolution has to be, just as much, that of the majority of oppressed and exploited peasants. It has to be that of large portions of the educated middle classes who find their expression

in the revolutionary intelligentsia. It can neutralize (without suppressing) political intervention, seeking to restrain the movement toward socialism, by the local bourgeoisie. It can even grease the slide of that bourgeoisie from its natural comprador behavior to a pro-national outlook.

The fact remains that Chinese objective conditions, at that stage, scarcely allowed anything but the establishment of a State socialism. Which was done. But this State socialism, which began as an imitation of the Soviet model, quickly diverged from it on diverse and important questions. Among these were questions indissociable from governance over the rural population and democratization of the socialization of economic and political life.

According to Mao, maintenance and reinforcement of the unity of the people that had been sealed in the course of the liberation war implied management of urban/rural relations emphasizing equality of living standards among industrial and agricultural workers and consequently rejecting the option of “the primitive socialist accumulation” which puts all the burden of development and industrial modernization onto the peasantry. That choice having been made, the conditions were then ripe for advancing in a possible democratization of the society. The Maoist formula for this was that of the “mass line.” As for everything to do with the evolution of the Chinese system of movement toward socialism, its advances and (post-Maoist) steps backward, the differing future alternatives that it opens up (transformation of state socialism into state capitalism).

The major lesson that I draw from this reading of China’s evolution (from 1950 to today) is that until now its treatment of the relationship between the unity (of the nation, of the people) and the diversity (of the social components of that nation) has been correct enough to give some legitimacy to the Beijing power structure and consequently to guarantee social stability. The unparalleled success of the emergence of China, in comparison with that of other countries of the contemporary South (Brazil and India, for example), is the result of this better (or less bad!) management of the unity/diversity relationship.

Other examples of movement toward socialism in countries of the periphery have successfully gone past several fine stages, having, among other things, known how to manage correctly the unity/diversity relationship and thus have eased the evolution of the originally anti-imperialist struggle toward the implementation of policies that, having gone outside the framework of the logics of capitalism, write themselves onto the long road to socialism. We refer, of course, to Vietnam and Cuba.

We might likewise refer to the advances realized in South America during the previous decades in Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Starting from powerful revolts of the popular classes, these movements have won elections (exceptionally, for these times) and have passed a first stage. But, to go forward and become real movements to socialism establishing facts and not merely expressions of hopes, they need to find more effective answers to the challenge of the unity/diversity contradiction.

We cannot, however, ignore the examples of swingeing [i.e., scathing] failure that characterized the broad popular movements that during recent decades overthrew bloody dictatorships but were unable to impose themselves as movements to socialism. We are thinking here of the movements that overthrew the dictatorships of Moussa Traoré in Mali, Marcos in the Philippines, and Suharto in Indonesia. None of these movements were able to formulate and impose a common program based on unity in diversity. The same nonexistent or even deplorable management of this contradiction is characteristic of the movements in Arab societies since 2011 (Egypt, Tunisia, Syria). So there is no movement toward socialism in any of these countries, despite the fact that objective conditions for its possible emergence do exist.

Looking backward in time, the Bandung epoch (1955–1975/1980) was that of a victorious takeoff for national liberation movements in Africa and Asia. For basic reasons, which I have invoked in my analysis, were pregnant with the possibility of becoming movements toward socialism. But in reality what happened to their unfolding, to their victories, to their tomorrows?

This question needs a nuanced answer. Yes, at certain moments in the expansion of popular movements that were relatively more advanced, the movement toward socialism seemed, in outline, possible. This, for example was the case in “communist” (actually advanced national popular) South Yemen or, very sketchily, in Sudan. In many African instances the State powers issuing from parties that had organized and directed the national liberation were professedly socialist, sometimes even Marxist-Leninist, more often professing a tradition, more imaginary than real, that they termed socialist. And this posture was not demagogic; it expressed the ambitions of leading progressive groups and of their real popular bases. Nevertheless, all these regimes emphasized “the unity of the people” (behind their leaders!) and most often denied the extent, even the reality, of the diversity of social interests competing within the broad national alliance or of other sorts of diversity among the components (ethnic, religious, linguistic) of the nation. This mediocre, at

best, management of the fundamental contradiction of the movement toward socialism is at the bottom of their incapacity to progress at a sustained pace, of their rapid decrepitude once the limits of what they could achieve had been reached, of the erosion of their legitimacy—and thus of their sliding toward a return to the sheepfold managed by contemporary imperialism and its partners the compradorized bourgeoisie or, if need be, the compradore State.

Only a concrete, country by country, examination would let us say more. I have put forward some concrete analyses of this obstructed emergence of the movement for socialism for some countries of Asia, Africa, and the Arab world—obviously and especially for Nasserist Egypt.

In this tumultuous history, the parties professing Marxism-Leninism—when they existed—were unable to bend the course of events towards the movement toward socialism. There are various reasons for their weakness; but undoubtedly their adhesion to the Moscow camp within international communism sometimes played a decisive role in the annihilation of the hopes placed upon them. That they went over to the “non-capitalist path” propounded by Moscow provides the most dramatic example of this: these parties thus became the “left wing” of a power system that was sliding rightward. In the case of India the breakup of the former Communist Party of India, aligning itself *de facto* with the Congress, and the formation of the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-M) did not result in the qualitative leap that would have been needed to make of the CPI-M a replica of what the Chinese Communist Party had been. There are many and various reasons that explain this failure, such as the sacred nature of the caste system with its alienating effects on the spread of class struggles, and the diversity of the nations comprising the Indian Union. Having entered governments (by way of elections) in West Bengal and Kerala, the CPI-M had to the credit side of its balance sheet the realization of non-negligible progressive measures. But it did not succeed in reversing the balance of forces on the scale of the Indian Union in favor of a movement toward socialism. Unable to go beyond the limits of what could be realized by it in those two states, it then was gradually “absorbed” by the system. A radicalization of Maoist Indian communism then was outlined in the formation of the Communist Party of India-Marxist-Leninist (CPI-ML) and the peasant/tribal war that it undertook. We have no choice but to recognize its failure, and then the breakup of the Party. It must nevertheless be noted that the same line of action produced some results in Nepal and outlined, sketchily, a possible ward socialism.

I have termed as “national-popular” regimes the family of these advances of the “first awakening of the South” (the Bandung decades), within which the movement toward socialism was only sketchily inscribed, impeded in its possible development by the tendency of the ruling political classes to maintain their exclusive power, even at the price of a return to the comprador fold.

**The Challenge Before the Movement Toward Socialism:
Socialization of the Management of A Modern Economy**

The central question posed by revolutionary and/or authentic socialism (or communism or Marxism, or Marxist-Leninism, or Maoism) professing reformist advances was and remains that of socialization of the management of a “modern” economy, whose foundations were laid by the spread of historic capitalism as much in its dominant centers as in its dominated peripheries. In the centers the deviation of reformist socialism and then its later abandonment of its references to Marx led logically to giving up on posing the “post-capitalism” question. Contrariwise, in the peripheries that make up the stage for enactment of revolutions carried out in the perspective of building socialism, the question of socialization of the management of economic life has remained at the heart of the debates and conflicts that have unfolded among the revolutionary vanguards and the holders of state power. Of course the specific objective conditions of the revolution in the peripheries of globalized capitalism have weighed heavily on the scale: it was simultaneously necessary to “catch up” (develop the productive forces and in order to do so, to “copy” and reproduce capitalist forms of organizing production) and “to do something else” (to build socialism). The answer given to that question has been the construction of “State socialisms” or “State capitalisms,” the line between these two forms being itself vague and shifting. The fact remains that in the theoretical elaborations, as in the programs, of the parties professing socialism, advances in socialization of economic management and advances in democratization of society’s political management have always been thought of as inseparable. Affirmation of this central principle in formulating the project for a future socialism/communism is worthy of recall, the more so because it was exactly the State socialisms/State capitalisms of the Chinese, Soviet, and others’ experiments which, in their practices, have on a broad scale separated these two dimensions of a single challenge.

Autumn of Capitalism, Springtime of the Peoples?

Although susceptible to forming the head and tail of a single coin, the autumn of capitalism and the springtime of peoples are not the same thing.

The emergence at the end of the nineteenth century of the new form of capitalism, monopoly capitalism, was the autumnal equinox of that system—of that historical parenthesis, as I have said. Capitalism had “done its time,” the short period (limited to the nineteenth century) during which it still accomplished progressive functions was over. By this I mean that although, in the nineteenth century the “creative” dimension of capitalist accumulation (fantastic acceleration, in comparison with previous periods throughout human history; technological progress; the emancipation of the individual, even though this mainly benefited the privileged but limited and deformed for everyone else) still outweighed the destructive consequences of that accumulation. The latter were primarily the effects of destruction of societies of the peripheries incorporated by imperialist expansion inseparable from historic capitalism. But with the emergence of monopoly capitalism the relationship of creative destruction in all of these respects was reversed to the detriment of the “creative” one.

It is in the framework of this long-run perspective that I have analyzed the two long systemic crises of “obsolete” (“senile”) capitalism: the first long crisis which extended from 1871-1873 up to 1945-1955, the second, still underway, which began a century later, starting with 1971-1973. I have emphasized in this analysis the central means mobilized by capital to overcome its permanent crisis: the construction and vertiginous growth of a Department III (complementing the two departments—production of means of consumption and production of means of production—dealt with by Marx) for absorption of the surplus linked to conjoined monopoly rents and imperialist rents. The reader stands referred to it.

Lenin was the first to take notice of this qualitative change in the nature of capitalism. His sole sin was optimism, the belief that this first crisis of capitalism would be the last one. He underestimated the perverse and destructive effects of the imperialist unfolding in the central societies of the system. Having drawn the consequences of a precise estimate of those effects, Mao chose patience: the socialist road would be very long and strewn with ambushes.

The twentieth century was indeed that of a first time “awakening of the South,” more exactly an awakening of the peoples, the nations, and the States of the peripheries of the system: starting with Russia (a “semi-periphery”) then engulfing China, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In

this sense the twentieth century was that of the first springtime of the peoples involved. I have pointed out the series of major events which, right from the outset of the century, proclaimed those springtimes—the Russian (1905–1917), Chinese (from 1911), Mexican (1910–1920), and other revolutions. I have put the Bandung period for contemporary Asia and Africa, which was both the crown and the end of that great moment in universal history, back into this framework. Thus, in some way we can read this response of the peoples dominated by the imperialist unfolding as a continuation of the task undertaken by the Taiping Revolution and as its generalization across three continents.

In contrast, the Paris Commune had no successors in the developed West. Despite their courageous attempts, the Third International communists did not succeed in building a historic camp alternative to the camp aligned upon rule of society by the imperialist monopolies. It is here that lies the true tragedy of the twentieth century, not in the inadequacies of the peripheries' awakening but in its absence in the centers. The inadequacies—then the fatal deviations—of the peripheries' nations might well have been overcome if the peoples of the centers had broken with their own pro-imperialist alignment.

The springtimes of peoples that unfolded during the twentieth century have worn out their effects. From deviation to deviation, they ended by collapsing and falling rightward before capital's counter-offensive. During the 1990s this collapse was expressed through the series of triumphant counter-revolutions in that decade. Those possibilities that had existed, whether a leftward evolution of these exhausted systems or, in crisis, their stabilization around center-left formulae keeping open the future, were broken by the triple conjunction linking: (1) the inadequacies of popular protest limited to democratic demands unrelated to social or geopolitical questions; (2) the exclusively repressive responses of the power structures; (3) interventions by the imperialist West. In these conditions it is just farcical to treat the “revolutions” of the USSR and the countries of the European East (1989–1991) as “springtimes of peoples.” Built on huge illusions about capitalist reality, these movements ended with nothing that might be considered positive. The peoples involved are still waiting for their springtime, which perhaps might yet come.

Throughout the course of the twentieth century and right up to today the autumn of capitalism and the springtime of the peoples (itself confined to the peoples of the peripheries) have been entirely separate. For that reason the autumn of capitalism has provided the

major motive force of evolution. Which it has switched onto the rails of increasing barbarism, the only logical answer that conforms to the requirements for maintaining the dominion of capital. In the first instance, imperialist barbarism, redoubled by putting into effect military control of the planet by the armed forces of the United States and their subaltern European allies of NATO to the sole profit of the monopolies of the collective imperialism of the triad United States–Europe–Japan. But also in response to this the sliding of the responses of their victims—the peoples of the South—toward backward-looking illusions which themselves are pregnant with barbarity.

That risk—which at present is the dominant reality—will not diminish until advances toward the conjunction between the autumn of capitalism and the springtime of peoples—of all the peoples, those both of the peripheries and of the centers—will be decisive enough to open the universalist socialist perspective. Will the twenty-first century be a “remake” of the twentieth, with the liberation attempts of the peoples of the South going together with maintenance of the pro-imperialist alignment of the peoples of the North?

To Build Unity Within Recognition of Diversity

There is no possible revolutionary advance of the movement toward socialism without construction of strategic unity of action linking together the needed critical mass of diverse social forces in conflict with the dominant capitalist system. It yet remains to identify correctly the nature of the social diversity at issue: distinguishing between those differences that count more and those that count less. The sources and forms of diversity are themselves innumerable. To describe them would take many pages of statistical tables: there are the men and the women, the young and the old, the natives and the immigrants, in some countries the human beings with different shades of skin color, those belonging to this or that religion or linguistic group, those who own property and those who do not, skilled and unskilled workers, etc.

A non-simplifying class analysis permits deeper comprehension of the problems. At bottom, there is certainly in capitalism the contrast between the bourgeois (owners of the means of production and/or the managers of that property) and the proletarians (who have only their labor power to sell). But this contrast is expressed through a great diversity in the spectrum of concrete social situations. There are wage-earners (sellers of labor power) whose possession of unusual skills lets them benefit from a certain degree of stability, and there are those

relegated to permanent instability. There are the capitalists—owners—small, medium, or large-scale entrepreneurs, and there are the managing executives of the big capital of the financialized monopolies, etc.

This great differentiation of the basic classes is likewise extremely different depending on whether the society in question is that of a dominant capitalist/imperialist country or that of a dominated peripheral capitalism. The social situation of a proletarian in an opulent country is different from that of his alter ego in a poor society. The rural and peasant mass, reduced to numerical insignificance in today's centers, remains a strong presence in the peripheries, etc.

There is certainly a weighty tendency toward simplification of social structures resulting from the logic of capital accumulation (concentration of property and/or concentration of control) but there are several false notions about the simplification of social structure resulting from capitalism: (1) the idea that the bourgeois/proletarian contrast would wipe out expression of the presence of other social forces from the field of politics; (2) the idea that the bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the proletariat, on the other, would become homogeneous camps with little internal differentiation; (3) the idea that the globalized expansion of capitalism would bring closer together the social structures of the advanced countries and those of the backward countries pursuing the path of "catching up" ("developing," as they say).

Let us take, for example, the expansion of industrial capitalism in nineteenth-century Europe. Not in any country of that continent did the bourgeoisie, the new dominant class, wipe out the aristocratic classes from the *ancien régime*. Everywhere it reached political compromises with them that preserved their control over important segments of the power-structure (like the officer corps). And though the 1914 war was an inter-imperialist war, it was also a war belonging to the crowned heads of Europe; until the entry of the United States, France was the only republic at war.

The bourgeoisie is not a class composed of all those with formal ownership of the means of production. That property could, once limited-liability corporations had been invented, be spread around even though control over it was not. The bourgeoisie is not a homogeneous class organized as a pyramid of wealth rising from small, through middle, to great capitalists. An integral part of it is provided by segments of the middle classes (middle as measured by quantity of income formally derived from wage labor) involved in economic and political management

of society. The bourgeoisie is likewise differentiated by business-sector positioning and/or location in advancing or declining regions, etc.

In the peripheries the bourgeoisie is not simply a late-born bourgeoisie growing up comfortably, living a lavish, if even more parasitic, lifestyle akin to that of its counterparts in the center. No more is it divided into two segments, one comprador (bad bourgeoisie) the other national (good bourgeoisie). Having entered the world within the framework of the worldwide expansion of imperialism, the bourgeoisie of the periphery is comprador by nature. Nevertheless, it might behave like a national bourgeoisie when the circumstances offer it some room for maneuver. I insist on the importance of this Maoist interpretation about the nature of the bourgeoisies of the periphery.

The structure of the classes making up a people in the countries of the periphery is likewise very different from that in the centers. The peasant classes in the South are themselves differently differentiated from one country to the other, with structurings partly inherited from different precapitalist pasts—and themselves reshaped in turn by the particular ways in which they were integrated/subordinated into modern capitalism. The pauperization processes resulting from global capitalist accumulation have created there, in the peripheries, a growing mass of the dispossessed who survive only through “informal” economic activity.

Under the deceptive label of “neoliberalism,” during the past three decades weighty tendencies have been at work in the framework of the spread of globalized, financialized, and generalized monopoly capitalism.³ These weighty tendencies have produced: (1) a general, but extremely segmented, proletarianization (80 percent of the population, at least in the centers, comprising waged and salaried sellers of labor power); (2) forms of subordination established everywhere, in the centers as in the peripheries, reducing economic activities seemingly independent of the monopolies (especially those of the peripheries’ peasants but also of their industries) to the de jure or de facto status of subcontractors—thus enabling the transformation of a growing fraction of surplus value into monopoly rents; (3) replacement of historic forms of capitalist organization as embodied in concrete bourgeoisies with a new form of domination by abstract capital (“incarnate in the market,” specifically in the “financial market”). Thenceforward the bourgeoisie had become a class composed of—very well paid!—wage-workers employed by the financial oligarchy (the 1% of Occupy Wall Street and of the Spanish *Indignados*).

The unfolding of this new structure of generalized-monopoly capitalism did not (and could not) result in relative social

stabilization—it resulted in social degradation pregnant with popular revolts. Neither did it (nor could it) result in relative stabilization of the new center/periphery relationships—on the contrary, it resulted in aggravation of the contradictions and conflicts between them. The historic imperialist centers (the United States–Europe–Japan triad) could no longer maintain their global dominance other than through military control over the whole world. In the face of this geostrategic deployment by Washington and its subaltern allies some “emerging” States and peoples of the South resist by affirming—to various degrees—“sovereign projects” leading to growing North–South conflicts. In other countries of the periphery the domination system of globalized-monopoly capitalism works through its alliance with compradore State power structures lacking national and popular legitimacy. This is a second motive for revolts of the peoples.

Under our eyes, generalized-monopoly capitalism is imploding in the various forms here recalled. By that very fact a new period of revolutionary situations is opening to us. How are we to act, in these circumstances, to make of the possible a reality: advances of the movement toward socialism? To answer we must take up again our reflection on the relationship: strategic unity of action/diversity of the social and political components of the movement of the peoples.

In the past, revolutionary situations allowed revolutionary advances (towards socialism) whenever concrete responses were given to this unity/diversity dialectical contradiction.

I speak here of dialectical contradiction. In effect, its solution does not proceed through negation of one of its two terms but through the transformation of their contrast into their active complementarity. A metaphysical view of contradiction cannot understand the nature of this challenge and the way to respond to it. Now, that view has often been, and still is, prevalent because it offers easy answers that, according to immediate appearances, might seem to be the only ones possible.

For example: the absolute priority of “unity” (of the people) is affirmed and the real effects of diversity, which make implementation of that unity impossible or pernicious, are denied. Or contrariwise, the unavoidable need for unity (identification of common staged strategic objectives and organization of a united front taking responsibility for their realization) is denied in favor of the affirmation that diverse struggles (those of various fractions of the people in revolt) will all by themselves provide a solution of the problem. The unavoidable question of power is then avoided. This metaphysical response to the contradiction still prevails

on the contemporary scene everywhere in the South and the North. It reduces the movements in struggle to maintenance of defensive positions leaving the initiative to the enemy—monopoly capitalism and its State political instruments in North and South. So it is a strategy powerless to push forward the movement toward socialism.

As I have said, in the past correct dialectical responses have sometimes been applied with success. In Russia in 1917, Lenin grasped the way to maximize the power of unity by proposing, to the diverse components of the people in revolt, shared strategic objectives: peace and land. By offering land to the soldier-peasants he founded an alliance that allowed the new Bolshevik party to escape its isolation. For that party, until then, had no real audience among peasants. In China, as early as the 1930s, Mao refounded the Communist Party on the base of a firm and lasting alliance with the poor and exploited peasantry. That is the secret of the 1949 victory. What happened to it afterwards in regard to management of the unity/diversity relationship (i.e., the question of alliances making up the historic coalition of the movement toward socialism) constitutes a different problem, one that I will not take up in this essay.

In both cases there was a concrete response to the challenge. It stemmed from a concrete analysis, which turned out to be right, of what were the diversities: those that are crucial (in the sense that taking them into account enables working the lever of revolutionary advance) and those that were not. In this domain there are no worthwhile general formulae that could be substituted for concrete analysis. The crucial contemporary diversities cannot be the same in France as in the United States, in China as in India, in Peru as in Congo.

Whatever “generality” can be expressed in this connection I have already formulated in my propositions about the necessary “audacity” which alone enables the radical lefts of our epoch to respond properly to the challenge.⁴ I will sum up the meaning of these propositions in the next two paragraphs:

(1) In the imperialist centers the radical left must dare to advocate the pure and simple expropriation of the monopolies through nationalization/statification (a first stage), together with plans concerning the organization of advances toward the democratic socialization of their management. It is then a matter of identifying the crucial diversities that are to be linked together through constructing a unity of action based on the identification at each stage of their common partial goals.

(2) In the peripheries the radical left must be able to identify the diverse components of a hegemonic social alliance that is an alternative to the one on which the compradore coalition in power finds support. Only if it becomes capable, at each stage, of identifying strategically the common partial goals crucial to the anti-compradore alliance, can it achieve this result.

It is only when these conditions will have been fulfilled that the movement to socialism can be seen to be affirmed through advances in the real, albeit progressive, transformation of contemporary societies.

Communism, Higher Stage of Human Civilization

Toward a second wave of emergence for the States, peoples, and nations of the peripheries.

The ambition of the movement toward socialism is to refound human society on other foundations than those that are fundamentally characteristic of capitalism. This future is conceived as realizing a higher stage of universal human civilization, not simply as realizing a more “just,” or even more “efficacious,” model of our familiar civilization (“modern” capitalist civilization).

Well, preparation of the future, even of the distant future, begins today. It is good to know what one wants. What social model? Based on what principles: Destructive competition among individuals or affirmation of the benefits of solidarity? A liberty that legitimizes inequality or a liberty tied to equality? Exploitation of the planet’s resources with no concern for the future or an exact accounting of the requirements for reproduction of the planet’s conditions of life?

Socialism will be democratic or it will not exist at all. On condition of understanding the democratization of society as an unending process that cannot be reduced to the formula of electoral multiparty representative as the definition of “real democracy.” The dominant Western media propounds “democracy first” for the countries of the South, which it understands as the immediate holding of multiparty elections; and many civil society organizations in the South have gone over to that proposition. Nevertheless, repeated experiments prove that this is merely a miserable farce which the imperialists and their local allies have no trouble manipulating to their own gain. In the centers, representative electoral democracy had always constituted the effective means for blocking any threats that labor struggles would become radicalized. Class struggles, which unfold on a basis of the extreme diversity of living conditions and segmentation within the

laboring classes, articulated in these conditions to electoral settlement of political conflicts, had always been effective means for blocking the radicalization of popular movements. Electoralism (which Lenin called parliamentary cretinism) reinforces the negative effects of the segmentation of classes within the people and deprives of all effectiveness any strategy for building their unity. Western public opinion, alas, envisages no alternative to this system of political management, to which even the Communists have now gone over. Nevertheless, with the establishment of generalized-monopoly capitalism the electoral farce becomes totally visible, effacing the former right/left contrast.

The movement toward socialism has the duty of opening new fields for the invention of more advanced ways to manage political democracy.

Elmer Altvater has written that socialism will be green (“solar”) or it will not exist at all. I add that green capitalism is still an impossible utopia because respect for the requirements of a political environmentalism worthy of the name is incompatible with respect for the basic laws governing capitalist accumulation. Here also the movement toward socialism has the duty of opening new fields for the invention of procedures of economic management that integrate the long run, that link democratic socialization of social relationships to the requirements for reproduction of life-spaces on the planet, which, in its turn, is the condition for transmitting the heritage of these common properties from one generation to another.

In its answers to these questions, the movement toward socialism cannot restrict itself to expressing pious vows, to propounding a remake of the nineteenth century’s utopian socialisms. To avoid that fate it must answer the following questions: (1) Today, what is our scientific knowledge in the fields of anthropology and sociology that calls into question the “utopias” formulated in the past? (2) what is our new scientific knowledge about reproduction conditions of life on the planet? (3) can this knowledge be integrated into an open Marxist thought?

In this general framework, we must give full treatment to the emergence projects of the States and peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The first wave of emergings, which extended successfully between 1950 and 1980, is exhausted. That page having been turned, the imperialist powers were able to retake the initiative and to impose the “*diktat*” (and not the supposed “consensus”) of Washington. In its turn, this project of wildcat globalization is in implosion, offering to the peoples of the peripheries a chance to undertake a second wave of liberation and progress. What might be the goals of that second wave? There is a confrontation here

among different political and cultural visions (reactionary, or illusory, or progressive whose likelihoods will need to be studied.

To Exit From the Framework of Established Globalization

Within the framework of the established globalization model, there is no space available for the movement toward socialism to begin its deployment onto the field of reality. So it has to write into its program both immediate and more distant strategic objectives that allow an exit from that framework. If not, there will be no exit from the model of “lumpen development” based on subcontracting and resource pillage, resulting in an indescribable pauperization of all the countries that accept their submission to the extension requirements of liberal globalization.

The problem is worldwide; its solution must be worldwide. The first proposition is correct, but the second does not flow from it. A transformation of globalization from above, for example by international negotiations in a UN framework, has absolutely no chance of permitting even the least progress. The long series of UN international conferences, from which nothing (as was foreseeable) has ever emerged, is evidence of that. The global system has never been transformed from above, but always starting from below, i.e., from initial changes of the line of development that at first became possible at local levels (or else national levels, in the framework of States/nations, which are the centers of crucial political struggles). Then conditions might eventually be formed to open possibilities for transformation of globalized relationships. Deconstruction must always be preliminary to the possibility of reconstructing differently. The example of Europe in crisis is testimony to that. The European structures will never undergo transformation from above by Brussels. Only disobedience by some European state, and then by another one, would make it possible to envisage the reconstruction of “another Europe.”

The strategy of starting transformations by action at national levels can be summed up in the following sentence: one must refuse to adjust unilaterally to the requirements for extension of the established globalization, replace it by prioritizing getting to work on “sovereign projects,” and force the global system to adjust to the requirements for the unfolding of these national projects.

But what then is meant by “sovereign projects”?

In certain conditions, getting to work on sovereign projects opens a space for advances of the movement toward socialism. Of course, the very notion of “sovereign project” is open to discussion. Given the

degree of penetration of transnational investments in all domains and all countries we cannot avoid the question: What sort of sovereignty are you talking about?

The global conflict for access to natural resources is one of those most determining for the dynamics of contemporary capitalism. The matter is a special question whose examination is not to be drowned in other general considerations. The United State's dependence for many of those resources and the growing demand from China are a challenge to South America, Africa, and the Middle East, which are particularly well endowed with resources and have been shaped by the history of their pillage. Can one develop, in these domains, national and regional policies that initiate rational and equitable planetary management, benefitting all the peoples? Can one develop, written into that perspective, new relationships between China and the countries of the South at issue? Will they link China's access to those resources to support for the industrialization of the countries involved (something the supposed "donors" of the OECD refuse to do)?

The framework for the unfolding of an effective sovereign project is not limited to the field of international action. An independent national policy remains fragile and vulnerable so long as it does not enjoy real national and popular support, which requires that it be based on economic and social policies enabling the popular classes to benefit from "development." Social stability, which is the condition for success of a sovereign project confronted by the destabilization policies of the imperialists, is at that price. We therefore have to examine the nature of the relationships among different established or possible sovereign projects and the bases of the power systems: national, democratic, and popular project, or (illusory?) project for national capitalism?

We can then, in this framework, draw up the "balance sheet" of the "sovereign projects" currently being put into effect by the "emerging" countries.

(1) China is the only country truly engaged on the path of a sovereign project, and is the only one of which this is the case. This is a coherent project: it articulates the planned establishment of a self-centered (although being simultaneously and aggressively open to exporting) modern and complete industrial system to a mode of agricultural development based on the modernization of small farms not owned by the farmers (thus guaranteeing access to the land for everyone). But what is the nature of the objective of sovereignty being pursued? Is it a matter of national bourgeois sovereignty (whose success, in my opinion,

remains based on illusions), or of national/popular sovereignty? Is it a matter of a State capitalism based on the illusion of the governing role of a new national bourgeoisie (part of which is made up of State bourgeois)? Or of a State capitalism with a social dimension, evolving toward a possible “State socialism” that would itself be a stage on the long road to socialism? The answer to that question has not yet been given by the facts. Here I refer the reader to my argument about the future alternatives on offer to contemporary China.⁵

(2) Russia has returned to the international political stage, posing itself as the adversary of Washington. For all that, is it engaged on the path of a sovereign project? Yes, perhaps, in the intentions of the power-holders to rebuild a State capitalism independent of the *diktats* of the globalized monopolies? But the economic management of the country remains liberal, controlled by the oligarchy of private monopolies established by Yeltsin on the Western model. This policy, then, remains without any social dimension that would enable it to rally its people behind it.

(3) Elements of a sovereign policy exist in India, notably state-supported industrial policies of private national industrial monopolies. But nothing more than that: its general economic policies remain liberal, tragically speeding up the pauperization of the majority of peasants.

(4) In the same fashion elements of a sovereign policy exist in Brazil, carried out by big private Brazilian financial and industrial capital and big capitalist agricultural estates. But here as in India the general economic policies remain liberal, bringing no solution to the problems of poverty in a country that has become 90 percent urbanized—except that poverty has been lessened through redistributive public welfare measures. In Brazil, as in India, the power-holders’ reluctance to go further favors the ambiguous behavior of big capital, tempted to seek compromises with international capital. The fabulous natural riches of Brazil, and their exploitation under deplorable conditions (destruction of the Amazonian rainforest), further strengthen their efforts to insert the country in the established globalization system

(5) There exists no sovereign project in South Africa, whose system remains under the control of Anglo-American. What then are the conditions for emergence of a sovereign project in that country? What new relationships with Africa would be implied by such emergence?

(6) Can non-continent-size countries develop sovereign projects? Within what limits? What forms of regional association might facilitate their advancement?

Where to start?

In regard to the sovereign projects of which the movement toward socialism ought to promote implementation, I propose to start their display by identifying the priorities of action on the economic level and on the political level.

In regard to the economic level:

I will suggest beginning the display with an exit from financial globalization. But take note: this involves only the financial aspect of globalization, not globalization in all its dimensions, notably the commercial ones.

We start from the hypothesis that we are dealing with the weak link of the established globalized neoliberal system. With this in mind we will examine:

- the question of the dollar as universal money, of its future, account taken of the United State's increasing foreign indebtedness.
- the questions in relation to the prospective adoption of the principle of "total convertibility" of the yuan, the ruble, and the rupee (*the reader is referred to Samir Amin's paper on the discussion about the yuan*⁶)
- the question of "exit from convertibility" of certain emerging-country currencies (Brazil, South Africa);

the measures that might be taken in regard to management of their national currencies by the fragile countries (especially the African ones)

Some initiatives, whose scope remains modest, have been taken towards a deconstruction of the integrated globalized financial system. We here mention the establishment of the Shanghai Conference, the agreements between China and ASEAN, ALBA, the Bank of the South, the "Sucre" project, and the BRICS Bank.

In regard to the political level

I will suggest prioritizing the implementation of strategies capable of holding in check the geopolitics and geostrategics developed by the United States and their subaltern allies of the triad.

Our starting point is the following: the capitalist monopolies of the historic (United States, Europe, Japan) imperialist powers' pursuit of worldwide dominion is threatened by growing conflicts between: (1) on the one hand the goals of the triad (to maintain their dominion); and (2) on the other the aspirations of the emerging countries and those of the peoples victimized by and in revolt against "neoliberalism." In these conditions the United States and its subaltern allies (linked together in "the triad's collective imperialism") have chosen to add to their risks

by taking recourse to violence and military interventions. Testifying to this are: (a) the deployment and reinforcement of US military bases (Africom and other); and (b) military interventions in the Middle East (Iraq, Syria, tomorrow Iran?); measures taken to encircle China militarily, Japanese provocations, manipulations involving China/India and China/Southeast Asia conflicts.

But it appears that, while the violence of imperialist powers' interventions remains in fact on the agenda, they find it ever harder to respond to the requirements for the coherent strategy that is the condition for possible success. Is the United States at bay? Is its decline a passing one, or is it definitive? Washington's responses, though made in a day-to-day fashion, remain no less dangerously criminal.

In confrontation with these major challenges, what strategies of international political (or even military) alliance might force a withdrawal on the U.S. project of military control over the whole planet? The importance of possible advances on this terrain is obvious. It is not by chance that the BRICS, and behind them many countries of the South—some having to various degrees entered on the path of sovereign projects, others still mired in the ruts of lumpen development—still express refusal to support the U.S. military adventures and dare to take initiatives contradicting Washington (like the use of the veto by Russia and China)? It is necessary to go further in these directions, in a broader and more systematic fashion.

Notes

1. For references to this see Howard B. Davis, *Nationalism and Socialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), 61-63. Davis points out that such comments were confined to Marx and Engels's earlier works, roughly before 1860.

2. Teodor Shanin, ed., *Late Marx*

and the Russian Road (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 97-126.

3. See in particular my discussion of this in *The Implosion of Contemporary Capitalism* (Monthly Review Press, 2013)

4. *Ibid*, 133-47.

5. See Samir Amin, "China 2013," *Monthly Review* 64, no. 10 (March 2013): 14-33.

6. Samir Amin, "The Chinese Yuan and HSBC Bank," *Pambazuka* #643, August 13, 2013, <http://www.pambazuka.org/>.

REFERENCES:

The paper deals strictly with the issue as indicated in the title. Yet it hints to concepts that I introduced in my recent writings: generalized monopoly capitalism, generalized and segmented proletarianization, implosion of the system, the historical trajectory of capitalism, the long systemic crisis of declining capitalism, emergent nations, lumpen development, revolutionary advances and retreats in a number of African, Asian, and Arab countries, green capitalism and green socialism, a critique of international aid. The reader will find developments on these issues in the following bibliography:

Books :

- The Liberal Virus; Pluto and MR 2003
- Obsolescent Capitalism; ZED 2003, chap 4 and 5
- Beyond US Hegemony, assessing the prospects for a multipolar world; Zed 2006, chap 2,4 and 5
- Ending the Crisis of Capitalism, or Ending Capitalism?; Fahamu Books 2011, chap 1,2 and 4.
- The worldwide law of value; MRPress 2011, chap 4
- The implosion of capitalism; Pluto and MR Press, 2013 chap 1 and 2
- Global History, a view from the South; Fahamu Books, 2011 , chap 5 and 6
- Three Essays on Marx's Value Theory; Monthly Review Press 2013
- Articles:
- Samir Amin interviewed by Ali Amady Dieng; Development and Change, Vol 38, N°6, 2007.
- Market economy or oligopoly Finance capital; Monthly Review, 2008.
- Nepal, A Revolutionary Advance, Monthly Review , Feb. 2009.
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- Y a-t-il une solution aux problèmes de la Somalie? Recherches Internationales, N° 89, 2011.
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- Samir Amin ou Wallerstein's, The Modern World System, Monthly Review, Vol 63, N° 8, 2012.
- The Surplus in Monopoly Capital and the Imperialist Rent, Monthly Review, Vol 64, N° 3, 2012.
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- What "radical" means in the XXIst Century; Review of Radical Political Economy, Vol 45, N° 3, 2013.
- Egypt, July 2013; interview published in Chinese; English on Samir Amin Blogspot and Face Book; 2013.
- Egypt, August 2013; Blog and Facebook Samir Amin; 2013.
- Samir Amin, "The Chinese Yuan and HSBC Bank," Pambazuka #643, August 13, 2013, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/88632>