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Is There a Worthwhile Alternative in Russia Today ?

The picture of Russia I have portrayed in the preceding pages may seem seriously pessimistic as regards the future of the country. In fact the failure of new Russian capitalism and its inability to provide the conditions for stabilisation should, on the contrary, be reason for optimism. It is sometimes said in Moscow that Russia, as on the eve of 1917, is almost ripe for a new revolution or for radical transformation capable of redressing the direction of evolution. With what local and global perspectives? Under what conditions?

The basic principles on which the alternative to the current system in place in the world should be established are simple, clear and in fact largely understood. On internal ("national") plans: (i) a "mixed economy" that on the one hand gives the state the means to orient overall development and on the other offers private property and the market a sufficient profit margin to make the promotion of initiatives possible; (ii) the institutionalisation of worker/enterprise/state collective bargaining; (iii) the development of representative democracy through the promotion of participative democracy initiatives. On a global scale: (i) the organisation of the negotiation of forms of economic management (trade , capital flows, technological transfers, monetary management) based on the acknowledgement of the diversity of interests and the inequality of the partners; (ii) acknowledgement of the principle of the sovereignty of the people reinforced by support for the progress of democratisation, the foundations of a multi-polar political world. The implementation of all of

these principles would make it possible to begin an initial stage on the road to the "long transition to world socialism".

Of course, these very general principles which are valid for all (China or Russia, Germany or the Congo) only come into their own when put into practice in a way that respects the diversity of objective situations.

For Russia this means: (i) the re-nationalisation of large enterprises, particularly in oil and energy (therefore expropriation of the oligarchy); (ii) the invention of new forms of joint management (workers and leaders) of the industrial and commercial enterprises, whether these should be formally public (state, communities, workers collectives) or private; (iii) the reestablishment and reinforcement of public social services, education (which was of a high standard in the USSR) and scientific and technological research; (iv) the abolition of the constitution of 1993 and the elaboration of an authentically democratic constitution by a large elected convention; (v) support for forms of popular intervention of participative democracy; (vi) the initiation of extensive negotiation between the republics of the former USSR to enable the construction of an economic and political regional space that respects the autonomy of the partners and is capable of establishing interdependence to the benefit of all; (vii) the re-establishment of Russian military power (until there is a general disarmament when the United States are prepared to submit to one); (viii) the development of negotiated commercial, technological and financial arrangements initiating the construction of a "great Europe" from the Atlantic to the Pacific; (ix) the development of a foreign policy that is active and independent (of United States policy in particular) designed to strengthen the institutions responsible for the construction of a multi-polar world.

From the perspective of the alternative globalisation envisaged here, the place and the roles fulfilled by the national partners shall by force of circumstance remain specific and different from one another. Russia shall occupy the place of both a major producer/exporter of raw materials (oil and mineral products) and renewed industrial power (without being necessarily subject to the hazards that the search for "competitiveness" on a so-called open world market implies). China's place, by comparison, is that of a new industrial power whose production would be commanded principally by the enlargement of its internal market and only accessorially by its exports (the opposite of the principle that the WTO is determined to impose). This option would mean in China, as elsewhere in Asia and Africa, appropriate solutions to the agrarian problem based on acknowledgement of the right of access to land for all peasants (I refer here to what I have written elsewhere on the subject). Certainly, Russia also still has an agrarian problem (as does Eastern Europe) that cannot be resolved by the development of capitalism as it was in the developed centres of the global system. But the questions are posed here in rather different concrete terms from those that characterise the countries of the "third world" (Asia, Africa and Latin America) and require appropriate solutions.

The government of Yevgeny Primakov had well and truly begun a recovery programme along the same lines as those described here with, it seems, plenty of determination but also considerable prudence in the first measures taken (which is easy to understand). As Gorbachev might have wished to do but did not know how, Primakov envisaged the construction of a "centre left" economic and political system. First, Primakov was the victim of the inability of the Communist Party (still powerful at the time) to understand and support the initiative. He was also the victim of international hostility mainly from the United States but,

unfortunately, also from Europe which did not abandon its intention to "Latin-Americanise" the former USSR (and also Eastern Europe through the process of its integration into the European Union).

The result of this failure facilitated the initial success of the United States offensive in the Middle East, central Asia and on a world scale, and reinforced the submission of Putin's regime to their immediate requirements. This fact has led Russia and the whole world to a crossroads: either American plans will be derailed (and that has become a prerequisite for the construction of an alternative on all levels) from national to global levels, or it will (for a time) continue to be deployed (with Bush or Kerry) annihilating the potential for transformation in the direction of the democratisation and the social progress of all societies.

In this fight, the responsibility of the people is paramount in Russia as it is elsewhere. The reinforcement of the social struggles and democratic demands, the dissipation of the illusions and the beginning of the reconstruction of a new open left, capable of winning over the popular classes, which the Communist Party and the Unions try to continue to treat as "clientele" at the service of their short term political calculations, are positive signs of possible recovery in Russia.

Europe's responsibility is no less important. Europe must stretch out its hand to Russia. It must relinquish its vision, which is still that of a partner of the collective imperialism of the triad that is aligned on the plans of US hegemony. As I said earlier, in order to do that, it will have to find a way out of the "quicksand" in which it has become mired.

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pas de résister avec efficacité aux assauts destructeurs de la triade impérialiste. Car pour y faire face il lui faudrait sacrifier son soutien à l'oligarchie qui exploite et opprime le peuple russe. A défaut celui-ci laissera faire.

Les exemples de la Géorgie et de l'Ukraine illustrent le drame. Par le soutien que le pouvoir russe apportait à ceux des autocrates locaux qu'il considérait comme « ses amis », Moscou a transformé en héros des individus qui ne sont que de vulgaires agents de l'étranger !

Depuis trente ans les Etats-Unis et l'Europe bénéficient du mépris dans lequel les pouvoirs hérités du soviétisme tiennent la démocratie et, de ce fait, jouent sur du velours. C'est ainsi que Walesa, l'ami de Washington et du Pape, s'est fait passer pour le dirigeant d'un mouvement de « rénovation de la classe ouvrière » (c'est ainsi que Solidarnosc a été présenté) alors que son projet véritable était de détruire la capacité de celle-ci de résister aux assauts du capitalisme. Les aspirations démocratiques légitimes des peuples de l'Est sont ainsi manipulées et dévoyées avec d'autant plus de facilité que les gauches majoritaires de l'Europe se font complices du projet de l'impérialisme dominant. Ce faisant elles n'aident pas à la reconstruction nécessaire d'une gauche post soviétique, mais tout au contraire, contribuent à perpétuer la confusion.

The geometry of the geopolitics of the features of possible alliances between the United States, Europe and Russia will weigh heavily on the determination of future globalisation. Two configurations are possible here: the first commanded by a possible privileged Euro-Russian partnership and the second illustrated by the consolidation of "Russian-American alliance" based on the choice of Russia to become a major exporter of oil to the United States. The "common fight against terrorism"

has, since the 11th September 2001, apparently consolidated this alliance. The facts amply demonstrate that we are dealing with a completely dissymmetrical partnership which is nothing other than the implementation of the Washington plan to destroy Russia. Far from providing Russia with the means to modernise its production system, this partnership is closely linked with the interests of the Russian oligarchy and its submission to the project of the transformation of Russia exclusively into a supplier of raw materials. Furthermore, it has facilitated the penetration of the United States into Caucasia and central Asia from where Moscow is currently being ousted. This configuration cannot therefore constitute an element of the construction of an alternative globalisation.

Perhaps the second configuration can. A Euro-Russian partnership could be devised from a different perspective if it did not limit itself to favouring the export of Russian oil to Europe but were accompanied by Europe's active support for the modernisation of the whole of the Russian production system. Europe could have taken the initiative since 1990 and proposed a partnership capable of reinforcing the autonomy of the two partners vis-à-vis the United States. Europe, apprehensive as usual, did not do this, afraid of clashing with Washington, thus opening the way for the United States offensive directed at Moscow. Russian oil is therefore destined first and foremost to meet American needs and is sold in dollars. A partnership that could have planned its sales giving priority to Europe and in euros would have significantly reduced European dependence on suppliers largely controlled by Washington whether we are talking about the Middle East, the Caspian Sea or the Guinean Gulf. Europe has therefore accepted this extremely unequal division of the remains of the former Soviet world: Russia and central Asia for the United States, Poland and the Baltic states for the Europeans!

It is not too late to consider reversing Russia's alliances. Opposition to the oligarchy's monopoly of power is gaining ground in Russia. Diplomatic setbacks both in Russia and Europe in the light of Washington's offensive should end up making people think. A rapprochement between the large partners of Eurasia (Europe, Russia, China and India) involving the rest of the old world (Africa in particular) is necessary, possible and would put an end to Washington's plans to extend the Monroe doctrine to the entire planet once and for all. We must head in this direction, with patience certainly, but above all with determination.

FRENCH PARAS

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ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Poutine may by now have understood that the objective of the US and of their European allies is not to help Russia moving ahead, but to destroy it. But the system on which his power relies is not equipped

to face with success the destructive assault of the imperialist triad. To meet that challenge it would be necessary to get rid of the support of the oligarchy which exploits the Russian people.

The examples of Georgia and Ukraine illustrate that drama. The support of local autocrats considered as « friend » by the Russian power has made possible to agents of foreign powers appearing as heroes !

Since 30 years US and Europe are taking advantage of the deny of democracy by the followers of the defunct Soviet regime. For instance Les Walesa, the friend of Washington and of the Pope was able to present himself as a « renovator » of the power of the working class (this is how Solidarnosc was presented) while his real objective was to destroy the capacity of the working class to resist the assaults of capitalism.

The legitimate aspirations of the peoples of Eastern Europe for democracy were easily manipulated, with the complicity of the electoral lefts of Western Europe. This complicity with imperialism does not help reconstructing a post soviet left, but on the opposite perpetuate confusion.