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IDEOLOGY AND SOCIAL THOUGHT : The Intelligentsia and the Development crisis

1. I use the term “social thought” (or “social theory”) advisedly, in preference to “social science”, so as to avoid the spurious identification of analytical social disciplines with the natural sciences. I think the presumption that the former could ever attain the epistemological status of the latter overweening. For one thing, were any social discipline to rival the natural sciences, even to a relative degree, in power, such a development would be harmful. It would reduce social governance to the level of livestock management, and thus abolish human liberty. Human, social liberation, and the twin objective of control over nature (both understood, again, as relative constructs) necessarily imply resistance to the pretensions of self-styled rational management even when such claims are backed by social disciplines hyped up as scientific, objective and therefore effective.

It is, of course, a longstanding ambition of bourgeois thought – which post modernist critics confuse with modern thought – to make the social disciplines, as rigorously scientific as the natural science. The social system that serves as bedrock for bourgeois thought (in plain terms, the capitalist system), seen in this context, is a product of a worldview most clearly expressed in the economic sphere. Weber, who is enjoying a revival these days, presented this self-image of capitalist society in a formula of astounding naïveté: capitalism, he argued, entailed the triumph of a rational ethos working to liberate the world from the thralldom of age old irrational norms.

For some time now I’ve been suggesting an alternative view of the contrast between past thought systems and modern (capitalist) thought. My comparative approach is based on the contrast in emphasis between pre-capitalist societies (I call them tributary societies), with their stress on metaphysical aspects of reality, and capitalist societies, with their stress on economic aspects. From this novel point of view, the difference between the metaphysical worldview of tributary societies and the thinking of a more advanced society due to evolve after resolving the economic biases and contradictions of the bourgeois system, need not be so sharply oppositional. We might call such an advanced society socialist.

By enshrining its new economic rationality as an absolute value, bourgeois thought sought to legitimise the emergent form of social organization. In the process, it assumed the new organizational form to be an eternal construct somehow signalling, as certain commentators have quite recently written, again with extraordinary naïveté, the end of history. This was a worldview in which Progress (with a capital P) became a surrogate for God, the basis of an everlasting scheme of things.

From our viewpoint, there were two aspects in which capitalism and bourgeois thought, despite their limitations, represented a measure of progress (with a lower-case p). They birthed forces which initiated prodigious material development, achieving unprecedented control over nature. We should remember, though, that this control was by no means entirely positive: it now poses a threat to the survival of the planet. Simultaneously, by freeing social ideas from old metaphysical prejudices, capitalism and bourgeois thought prepared the way for the concept and the modern practice of democracy. Here again we should point out that such democratic practice was circumscribed by the very nature of the system. The equation of

the market (as synecdoche for capitalist reality) with democracy is of course unduly facile. But it is based on this real, tangible instance of progress.

The critic of capitalism is meaningless unless it sharpens our awareness of these limitations of bourgeois thought. To do this it must examine capitalism both as a qualitatively new stage of historical development and as an instance of the unfolding of contradictions between the liberatory aspirations the new system encourages and its inability to satisfy those aspirations on the scale of its own creation the global society. The critique of capitalism aims unambiguously to transcend capitalism. That means it must be ready to transcend modernity interpreted as a simile for capitalism. To achieve that aim, the critique of capitalism should also put forward alternative rules for social organisation, along with alternative values. In short, it has to present an alternative system of rationality. Does that mean the critique of capitalism will, like capitalism itself before it, inevitably be tempted to present the new rationality of its own creative utopia as an eternal construct? I think the new critique can avoid that lapse.

But has the critique of capitalism truly outgrown the existing framework of bourgeois thought? That is the question. For the moment it cannot be given a cut and dried answer. The new critique is still incomplete. It needs to be deepened and enriched with insights generated from its interaction with new challenges thrown up by the very development of capitalism. Initially focused on moral values, the critique of capitalism reached what I maintain was a decisive stage in the work of Karl Marx. At that juncture Marxism went through a series of gradual developments under the Second and then the Third Internationale. Along the way it assimilated the economistic bias of bourgeois theory, yielded to the lure of its deterministic vision, and thus turned the “laws of history” into a set of implacable rules identical to the inexorable laws of the natural sciences. Marxism thus ended up advocating, in the name of Socialism, a utopian system of rationalized management based on knowledge of these “laws”, and in that process trashed the dialectic of human freedom.

Marxism, then, is by any measure obviously incomplete. Nevertheless, it would be totally unjust to reduce it to a particular form, that of Soviet ideology, which I have long considered as closer to bourgeois thought than to Marxist thinking.

The critique of capitalism antedated the faddish critique now offered us by post modernist theoreticians. The point is to judge whether post modernist theory contributes any fresh insights. I consider post modernism an intellectual non starter, in the sense that beyond its hype, it offers no conceptual instruments capable of transcending the capitalist framework; neither does it demonstrate any capacity to inspire an innovative design for social change. In short, the post modernist critique is less radical than the critique whose seminal ideas were put forward in Marx’s work.

No doubt the exercises in the deconstruction of discourse whereby Lyotard, Derrida, Deleuze, Guattari, Foucault and Baudrillard laid the groundwork for post modernism (in the form advocated by American scholars and by Touraine in France) did serve some useful purpose. They had the merit of exposing the metaphysical nature both of post Enlightenment bourgeois discourse and of its extension in the prevailing schools of Socialist thought. They laid bare the essentialist bias of that discourse, that is to say, its option in favour of metaphysical explanations, in its search for the absolute. They shed light on its economistic prejudices, which subordinated every aspect of social life to the imperatives of economic rationality.

They made explicit its implicit teleological thrust, according to which historical laws work with implacable rigidity in the steady onward march of Progress.

The insights of such post modernists may therefore look fresh to readers previously impressed by the assumptions of bourgeois essentialism, economism and teleology. For those who never swallowed such assumptions, however, they represent nothing fresher than one more trip along the boundaries of bourgeois thought. And on that itinerary the pioneer, in my opinion, was Marx.

Post modernist thinkers, as we know, rediscovered that the Enlightenment did not liberate humanity. From the standpoint of the precise strain of Marxist thinking that I share, that is merely trivial. Our school of Marxist theory highlights the realization that the economic alienation peculiar to bourgeois ideology (including its so-called socialist variants) is an extension of and a functional surrogate for the metaphysical alienation typical of past worldviews, in the same way as capitalist exploitation as an extension of and a surrogate for tributary exploitation. So when Lyotard says Auschwitz and Stalin meant the failure of the modernist dream, his laconic formula leaves out an adjective: capitalist. For imperialism and its virulent offspring, fascism, along with world wars and colonial massacres, are all precisely a product of sharpening contradictions within the capitalist system, a measure of the conflict between the promises of freedom it holds out and its inability to deliver commensurate improvements. The Soviet ideology itself, with its economic vision focused on “catching up” (signifying, in my opinion, a dream of capitalism without capitalists), was a variation of bourgeois ideology. As such, as Maoist thinkers predicted 45 years ago, it was scheduled in the course of its natural development to lead to “normal” capitalism. Events over the past several years, in themselves hardly surprising, have borne out that prediction.

The post modernist critique, pitched short of the radical perspectives attained by Marxist thought, fails to provide the tools needed to transcend capitalism. For that reason, its propositions remain ambiguous, hazy. Its penchant for the uncritical adulation of difference and the glorification of empiricism make it quite compatible with conventional economic management practices designed to perpetuate capitalism practices, still considered the definitive, eternal expression of rationality. That leaves the way open for neo-conservative communitarian ideologies of the kind common in Anglo-Saxon traditions of social management. In extreme cases, it may also lead to nihilistic explosions. Either way, the result is an ideology compatible with the interest of the privileged, those whom Galbraith, in his brilliant analysis, calls the “haves”.

Still, the emphasis on the need for democracy is far from pointless. It might, in fact, turn out to be an effective stimulus for new advances in the theoretical and practical critique of capitalism, assuming the concept of democracy is understood in all its dynamic scope. Workers’ struggles gave depth and meaning to democracy in past times; in much the same way, we should not overlook the possibility that the struggle for democracy might impart a progressive spin to the course of coming events. That, as a matter of fact, is a hope shared by a substantial section of the post modernist school. It is not my intention to accuse them of harbouring “evolutionary” illusions doomed to frustration from the start. For I maintain that the dichotomy established between evolution, misconstrued as betrayal, and revolution, presented as the sole acceptable path of socialist transition, was a specific result of circumstances linked to the world wars and the Russian Revolution, not a logical inference from the radical critique of capitalism. In the particular conditions of the time such an interpretation might have reflected reality accurately enough. But then what began as an

expedient interpretation was subsequently raised to the level of an absolute principle by vulgar Marxist in an unwarranted shift. Similarly, the role assigned to the working class may well have been an accurate reflection of the real function of that class under the objective conditions created by capitalism at an earlier stage of its development. But it now needs to be revised in the light of changes in the capitalist system resulting from the interplay of social forces both in their national environments and on the world scale. For some time now, strategies for a revolutionary break with capitalism have been pushed backstage. That does not mean there is no longer any need to transcend the capitalist system. All it means is that the time is ripe for the design of new strategies sophisticated enough to encompass current changes within the capitalist system itself.

The fact remains that the rejection of Marxism is fashionable these days. To facilitate such rejection, Marxism is first reduced to its Soviet manifestation, then condemned for “explanatory overkill”, by which is meant a tendency to explain reality in terms of a deterministic scheme which makes every event not only explainable but also the necessary outcome of the laws of capitalist development. Many Marxists may deserve this accusation. When levelled at Marx himself, however, it is patently unjust.

Meanwhile, the issue of the relation between the economic and non economic spheres, that is to say, of links between politics and culture, remains unsettled both within the Marxist framework as so far developed, and within other theoretical frameworks including the post modernist scheme. The economistic idea according to which culture adjusts to economic imperatives does not come from Marx. Instead, it reflects prevalent bourgeois ideological perceptions from the Enlightenment to this day. But the contrary notion of cultures as nucleic constants, peddled by the now modish cultural pluralists, some of them simply Eurocentric, some reverse Eurocentrists, seems to me even less tenable, even flimsier in the face of reality, if that is possible. What then of a middle position between these extremes, dictated perhaps by prudence (*in medio stat virtus*)? How satisfactory might it be, and how would it operate? The fact is that certain thinkers have in the past adopted just such an attitude yet shed no useful light on the issue. Weber is a good example. His theses, in particular those on the Protestant ethic and the rise of capitalism, seem to me rather unconvincing if not downright weak.

Similarly, the issue of the dynamics of social conflict, a simpler problem at first glance, has within the Marxist tradition itself continued to raise questions eluding definitive answers. How, for example, does a class in itself turn into a class for itself? We know that on this issue Lenin advanced a set of propositions asserting that theory is imported into the working class from external sources, an argument others have described as non Marxist. And how, for instance, does Gramsci’s organic intellectual group emerge? Needless to say, any progress in the solution of these problems presupposes advances in our understanding of relationships between the economic, political and cultural spheres. Here again we might choose to stay on solid empirical ground and observe that there are many “social actors”, to use the term in vogue; that their plans, implicit or explicit, are piecemeal and cover domains naturally different from each other, that there is therefore no way to predict whether they will complement each other or clash, whether they are feasible or utopian; and that for these reasons the outcome of their confrontations is impossible to forecast.

Thus formulated, all this is trivial. But it seems to me illogical to argue from these premises that “social movements” (invariably plural), because they are vectors of social change, and because they express the aspirations of real human groups, all deserve respect and support in the spirit of democratic equity. Why should we respect and support any group if we have no

idea where its plans may lead? Why exclude the possibility that established regimes may manipulate them? It seems to me that many of the ethnic claims advanced these days are subject to manipulation by governments more concerned with crisis management than with solving underlying problems. Such governments may manipulate a people's right to self-determination not in order to increase their freedom but to curtail it. So the option of "activism in the service of movements", an approach supposedly based on the analysis of social actors, carries the risk of an anti-theoretical bias no less dangerous than its opposite, the prejudice of dogmatic theory.

2. The social sciences comprise a range of loosely integrated skills and methods applicable to the analysis of social reality. The epistemological status of these disciplines varies widely from field to field. In Economics, the prevailing obsession with management has imposed an agenda of specific issues, a selective approach to significant data, and a tunnel vision of reality narrowly focused on management goals. True, such options sometimes enhance efficiency. But then the so-called science of Economics implies a latent ideological option that legitimises the kind of management involved, and by extension the social system it perpetuates: the capitalist system. For that reason the discipline of Economics side-steps more basic issues related to social change and historical development, assigning them to the free play of imaginative thinking, a process it considers unscientific.

Marx sought, successfully, I think, to expose the alienation engendered by capitalist society, by whose workings "economic laws" are supposed to operate "as inexorably as" natural laws, a ploy that enhances the practical managerial efficiency of the system to a perceptible degree. He shifted the issues raised from this narrow domain of system maintenance to the much broader field of social change. Despite this shift, however, a Marxian tradition in the analysis of the capitalist economy did develop whose approach was close to that of the economic school, notably in its definition of problems.

In any case the radical critique of capitalism formulated by Marx contains no definitive solutions to problems related to the management of a society liberated from economic dogma. Neither does it offer a panacea for the transition to such a society. These issues came to the fore the moment revolutionary social movements took over political power and set about building socialism. Given objective conditions at the time, their plans were tinged with ambiguity. What was the goal: to construct socialism, or to catch up with advanced capitalism? This uncertainty was no doubt at the root of certain options regarding the management of the transition, such as the adoption of an administrative command economy in place of a market economy. These options were then rationalized by an invocation of rationality (the construction of a society managed by scientific Reason) typical of bourgeois ideology. It was this kind of rationalization that had provoked Engels's criticism of the German Social Democrats when he called their plans a dream of "capitalism without capitalists".

In my opinion these issues are still unresolved. For the world-wide polarization inherent in capitalism implies a need for long range strategies for the transition taking full account of a somewhat contradictory agenda: on the one hand, the need to build up productive forces; on the other, the need to design alternative social relationships. The debate on these strategies, especially regarding their economic aspect (the social management of the market) is therefore still wide open.

Social thought, in short, cannot be penned up within the confines into which the economic school would like to push it. But there is no way we can separate the urge to understand society as a whole from the desire to direct its evolution one way or another. Ideology (the value system underpinning the advocacy of a particular social design) and Science (knowledge of objective functional realities affecting change) are here inseparable. I think, for instance, that the concept of development is an ideological concept defined by the design of the type of society the development process is supposed to bring about. And as I have tried constantly to make clear, development should not be confused with the realities of the modern world. Those realities are geared not to development but to the expansion of capitalism. The fact that the gurus, politicians and managers playing the current development game routinely blur this crucial distinction merely underlines their commitment to a latent capitalist design. Similarly, feminists have entirely exposed the ideological bases of established social “science”. They have showed how, through the definition of issues (What is significant, what is marginal?) and through the selective use of methodologies serving established definitions of reality, the social disciplines manage to push feminist questions outside the framework of investigation, because the social aims subtending the disciplines are geared to the perpetuation of the patriarchal system.

The foregoing reflections in turn call for the clear differentiation of social thinkers according to the social aims driving their work. On the one hand, there are those Galbraith calls the “haves”. From their viewpoint all our society needs is managers (of the capitalist system, of course, understood as a system capable of changing in hopefully positive directions, still to be defined). Anything beyond that frame presents, according to these “haves”, a public danger. On the other hand there are those who say our society’s overriding need is for critical thinking leading to a better understanding of the mechanisms of change, and therefore able to influence such change in ways that free society from capitalist alienation and its tragic consequences. As far as the overwhelming majority of humanity the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America are concerned, this need is vital, since they experience actually existing capitalism as nothing short of savagery.

The distinction I propose here, then, separates those whom I call operatives, serving the established ideological apparatus, from the intelligentsia proper. The latter has no impact except to the extent that it is critical and competent. In other words, it has to be capable of inspiring liberatory action within a sustained programme of linked theory and practice. From this perspective, any assessment of the output of Third World intellectuals, ought to start from an analysis of the relationship between the challenges faced by their peoples in the confrontation with “actually existing capitalism”, and the orientation of the actions inspired by their work. I shall return later to a more concrete interpretation of the kind of assessment proposed here.

3. Now that the critique of development has become a live issue, I think the time has come to examine the types of criticism levelled at the concept and practice of the post-war development scheme, to conduct a critical assessment of theories, concepts and practices attendant on the process now in its crisis-ridden state, to review new analytical techniques used by these critics, and to evaluate the strategies they propose.

Critiques of development fall into two schools. According to the first school, in the palmy days from the 50s to the 70s, the experience of development, however uneven, was on the whole positive. Since then, the process has stalled. The point therefore is to kick-start it once more. According to these critics, the cause of the stall is the general crisis affecting the

developed centres of the world economy. Some trace the root of this crisis to the development policies followed considered excessively nationalistic, and for that reason incompatible with the imperatives of globalization. Others see the problem as the result of the combined impact of the two processes. Obviously, such critics still consider development coterminous with the world-wide expansion of capitalism. From their viewpoint the development process is a sort of natural outcome of capitalism, though some would add that capitalist expansion needs to be channelled along adequate policy guidelines, so as to plane down its rough edges. In short, such criticism remains bounded within the parameters of the managerial approach.

Then there are critics of an opposite school who think the development process under discussion is in crisis because it has defaulted on its promises; because it has led to increasingly unequal patterns of income distribution between societies on this planet and within societies on the periphery of the system, in the process worsening the poverty and marginalization of the disadvantaged instead of integrating all social strata into a steadily inclusive and more stable system; and because it has produced a dangerous waste of non-renewable resources and provoked a horrific devastation of the environment. Our own concerns coincide largely with such critiques. It might be helpful, then, at this stage, to point out that articulate criticism of the development ethos antedated the crisis of the 1980s. And that brings us to the need to recapitulate the ideas of critics of the development process in its heyday.

I am well aware that current criticisms of past critiques of development vary in type and scope, and that any attempt to file them down to a few general statements will only compromise the clarity of ongoing debates. I shall therefore do my best not to over-generalize. However, it seems to me that quite often, our critics present skewed summaries of our arguments, then lump them together under the general label of “Neo-Marxism in Recent Decades”, which they present as a body of thought in a state of crisis. As a matter of fact, most frequently our critics have themselves been members of one or another such “neo-Marxist school”, and the criticisms and self-criticisms advanced by some of them have been inspired by the same preoccupation as in the past.

In this recurrent presentation, neo-Marxist schools of thought are in turn classified under three main categories depending on whether their theoretical emphasis is on modes of production, dependence, or the world system. The analyses presented are of course varied, with key stresses differing from author to author; But I confess I am in agreement with a great deal of the criticisms most frequently raised against these neo-Marxist schools. I think, for instance, that the perennial fine-tuning of concepts related to modes of production is an expression of a donnish obsession with detail more likely to obscure real issues than to clarify them. Further, it seems to me that theories developed within the framework of dependency or that of the world system have sometimes been mechanistic, economic, deterministic, et. The list of reservations could go on.

Valid as these criticisms are, however, I think no purpose is served by flushing the baby down the drain with the bathwater. It would be useful to keep a clear focus on what in my view are important contributions of the neo-Marxist thinking under discussion. One such achievement is the highlighting of links between the national and world spheres. All subsequent modifications of this theoretical insight have shown that it was of vital importance, and that it served as an antidote to the naïve approaches of the ideologues and theorists of both the bourgeois and the dominant Marxist schools.

That said, let me point out that I do not see my work as belonging to any of these “schools” (see my critique in *Capitalisme et Système Monde*, Sociologie et Sociétés, N° 2, 1992, Montréal). I am certain I am not alone in this case, further proof of the limitations of this artificial kind of categorization. My constant focus on historical materialism, understood in its totality, with special reference to the history of and the transition to capitalism, my criticism of the economistic and Eurocentric vision of dominant meta-theories in these fields, were at the very least an expression of a determination to avoid the kind of faults now imputed sometimes justifiably to the neo-Marxist schools: their economistic and essentialist bias, their often sophomoric and dogmatic interpretations of Marxism, and their teleological tendencies, particularly obvious in the Soviet strain of vulgar Marxism.

The gist of my critique of the critical corpus, however, falls outside the scope of so-called theoretical works. For social thought is inseparable from the practical work it inspires. I would therefore rather examine and re-examine statements and analyses put forward within the framework of neo-Marxist critiques of development by situating the underlying theoretical and policy connections on which they rode within the environment in which they were formulated. This was the task I set myself in a recent re-examination of “The Unfolding and Erosion of the Bandung Plan” (Cf. *Re-reading the Post War Period*, MR, NY, 1994; see also *50 years after Bandung*, Inter Asia Cultural Studies, Vol 6, N° 4, 2005, Routledge) where I emphasized challenges facing theoretical thinkers on account of the impact of real-life conflicts. In this framework there is no way anyone can overlook past Soviet formulations, the rival formulations of Maoist thought, and the ambiguous stances of radical populist Third World nationalism, which has, alas, petered out completely in the current criticism of past critiques of the development process. I find this intellectual penury deplorable, and I think that this serious lacuna is an outcome of the ivory-tower nature of most of these criticisms. I think a further contributing factor has been the U-turn executed by many Western left-wing intellectuals, in their retreat from a characteristically naïve enthusiasm for the Third World to a pro-imperialist stance now hardly distinguishable from Third World-bashing.

The main argument used in this self-criticism of Third World advocacy is that given the wide range of developmental paths, it was foolhardy to insist on comprehensive assessments of capitalism on a world scale, to focus on the contrast between centres and peripheries, and to highlight imperialism, etc. That, supposedly, was the fatal flaw in Marxism, shared by neo-Marxism as well. For the diverse reality in question necessarily called for a subtly differentiated analysis capable of accounting seriously for internal circumstances governing the development of each society at all levels (economic, political, cultural), and thus determining the evolution - progressive or regressive - of each society within the world system.

Formulated thus, the argument strikes me as a truism. At no point in our analyses have I (or any authors whose perspectives I share) claimed that the world-wide expansion of capitalism levelled all differences. Quite the contrary: all our efforts were focused on analysing the nature and scope of differentiation occurring in the process of that expansion, precisely on account of the interface between the general (or world) and the particular (or national) aspects of reality. The acknowledgement of diversity, perfectly normal in itself, does not absolve us from the parallel necessity to recognize the general. For in the absence of the general, diversity is meaningless. The real issue raised by diversity lies elsewhere, and it is often misperceived by the critics referred to here: does modernization within the capitalist framework lead to “catching-up”, that is to say, to the abolition of world-wide polarization? And if so, does the outcome depend on internal national conditions?

Now as in the past, implicitly or explicitly, the question draws two opposite responses. Yes, according to some, no according to others. I share the latter view. Meanwhile, these polarized positions take on new forms in keeping with the new configuration of the capitalist system, different from that of the post-war boom years (1945-1990).

There are other critiques, set in a framework fundamentally different from the Marxist or neo-Marxist tradition, and in explicit disagreement therewith. Post-modernist criticism, as we have already seen, belongs to this category. As a matter of fact, it would be accurate to say that the Third World does not interest post-modernist thinkers, because they see it as a mere collection of “backward” states, in line with the bourgeois worldview, past and present. Some post-modernists are in the habit of projecting trends they discern in the developed world on to “social movements” within the peripheral countries. In my opinion, their extrapolations have little to do with reality. Far from expressing a rejection of modernity, the movements in question are in fact the consequence of the shattering of the promise of real modernization, a failure typical of peripheral capitalism.

The various development strategies, often hastily hyped up as new when the only novelty they present is their packaging, remain vague and short of credibility. The repeated calls for democracy, given a high profile in contemporary discourse by practically unanimous consent, is certainly a positive change. It should at least help demolish such wrong-headed but widespread prejudices as the supposition that democracy follows automatically from development. For those of us who see development as a shorthand term for a progressive social design, the democratisation of society is by definition an integral part of the development process. Without it the objective of liberation and the effective exercise of power by the people is reduced to empty talk.

Agreement with this viewpoint, however, does not mean the problem is solved. Beyond that, we also need to analyse the practical ways in which peripheral capitalism acts as an objective obstacle blocking the path to democracy. That, incidentally, is why anti-democratic prejudices have characterized the approaches not only of so-called socialist technocrats but also those of overtly capitalist establishments, a clear indication that real development clashes with the imperatives of capitalist expansion. Lastly, we have to be able to design practical action programmes linking democratisation with social advancement, with sufficient courage to implement effective policies within such a framework and to deal boldly with the risk of conflict with the thrust of capitalist expansion. It is this option that I call delinking.

Other strategic options currently in fashion, such as advances in women’s liberation, increased cultural awareness and concern with the environment, are certainly, on their merits, undeniably important. Unfortunately, rhetorical outpourings on these issues are still often ambiguous and superficial. Development agencies have become extraordinarily clever in handling these issues, changing their rhetoric without ever challenging established regimes. There is constant talk of “women in development”, of “respect for cultural values”, of “sustainable development”. But rarely does anyone take the trouble to conduct a preliminary analysis of relationships nurtured by the expansionist capitalist system as far as male and female roles, extant cultural values or the reproduction of the natural conditions of production are concerned.

Any design for development as a liberating process is bound to throw up extremely complex issues in these areas. And the typical evasive arrogance of development managers is a totally

inadequate response. Here too the connection between the universal (especially the universalistic objective of necessarily world-wide transformation) and the particular (which defines the stages of transition) raises a series of theoretical and practical dilemmas. Instead of facing them, development managers with their frothy simply and shamelessly sidestep these problems.

Under these conditions, strategic proposals put forward in scattershot fashion run a high risk of getting turned into simple crisis-management stratagems, instead of serving as pointers to a resolution of the crisis. The risk is especially high since the managerial elite is not above manipulating potentially progressive but incoherently organized proposals, turning them into slogans helpful to established regimes.

4. My intention, then, is to examine the analyses and strategies put forward by the Third World intelligentsia during the past several decades, and to interpret them, clarifying linkages between them and the real-life stakes involved in the liberation struggles of the time. I intend to conduct a similar assessment of the debate about ongoing transformations on the scale of the world system and of the various regional systems, as a way of identifying pointers to new stakes and appropriate strategies.

I propose an analysis of the half century following World War II (1945-1990) as a long phase in the expansion of ascendant capitalism. That analysis will be founded on three bases: the national social-democratic compromise in the developed Western countries; the Soviet design for catching up with the West within a framework of delinking; and the bourgeois nationalist development scheme to which I have given the name the Bandung Project (see *The Empire of chaos*, MR, NY 1992, *Rereading the Post War Period, An Intellectual Itinerary*, MR, NY 1993). The steady erosion of the systems built on these bases, culminating in their collapse, has led to a phase of long term structural crisis on the world scale. Meanwhile, the deepening process of globalization, which caused the erosion of the now outmoded systems in the first place, has resulted in a new definition of world-wide capitalist polarization. By the same token it has defined the parameters of new challenges facing those committed to liberation struggles.

Within this optic, it is necessary to re-examine the analyses and strategies put forward by the Third World intelligentsia in the post war period as expressions of the process I have called “the unfolding and erosion of the Bandung Plan”. What that Plan entailed was a bourgeois nationalist modernization scheme designed to lead to the construction of relatively endocentric and industrialized national economies within an international framework of controlled interdependence on the world scale, as opposed to the Soviet framework of disengagement. Needless to say, there were numerous variations of this Plan, depending on internal factors, in particular the degree of radicalisation of the anti-imperialist liberation front, in much the same way as achievements in the liberation struggle, as measured by effective industrialization and competitiveness, have turned out to be uneven, depending on internal and external factors.

The way I see it, throughout the past half-century the main divide between the principal opponents in this debate in the Third World was defined by the following question: Was the Plan workable? In other words, would it facilitate the effective establishment of modernized, national capitalist societies striving to “catch up” with the advanced societies within a framework of interdependence on the world scale? Or was it utopian, in the measure to which the objective sought would necessarily have required a radicalisation of the Plan that would

shift it beyond the capitalist logic that inspired it? Some asserted that the national bourgeoisie still had a historic mission to fulfil, while others argued that this was an illusion doomed to end in rapid disillusionment. I was of the latter school, and I think history has proved us right.

So the time has come to define the challenges afresh, on the basis of achievements chalked up during the so-called “development decades”, while taking due account of the new configuration of the global system.

5. I propose, then, to analyse the diversity of what used to be called the Third World, using the competitive capacity of the various partners in the system as a basic criterion. On this basis, the peripheral societies fall into two distinct categories. On the one hand there are those whose manufactured products have achieved a competitive edge on the world market. On the other, there are those societies which, either because they still have not entered the industrial age, or because their industries are still far from achieving a competitive potential, remain trapped in the role of exporters of raw materials, prisoners of an outmoded division of labour.

The first group comprises the countries of East Asia, large countries of Latin America, and, to a lesser extent, India and South-East Asia. In the jargon of development managers, these are the real “developing countries”, - so called “emerging” - meaning that they are seriously engaged in catching up with the developed societies. In my opinion, they constitute the real periphery of the emerging world system of tomorrow. The pattern of their industrialization resembles a gigantic sub-contracting enterprise controlled from countries at the centre of the system and working through what I call the five new monopolies, which enable the latter to polarize the world for their exclusive benefit. (The five monopolies comprise control over new technologies; control over financial flows; control over access to the world’s raw material resources; control over media manipulation; and the monopoly of weapons of mass destruction). The second group (the others comprising all Africa, including North and South Africa), sometimes referred to as the “Fourth World”, faces the prospect of further marginalization in the new world order. I mean that their people are “useless” for capital expansion, while the natural resources of their countries remain, of course, very important for the imperialist center.

The various ideologies and strategies proffered by ruling regimes are the means they use in their endeavour to manage the crisis of the emergent system. Their management style leans heavily on a patchwork of rhetoric gleaned from disparate sources, haphazardly buttressed with arguments of varying degrees of validity, most of them presenting a moral veneer, all recycled in the service of the existing regime. For example, in the name of the construction of a world system, and of the inadequacy of the outmoded concept of the nation, attempts are made to justify the diktat that now uses the United Nations flag as a flimsy fig leaf while beating down the States on the system’s periphery into down-and-out entities incapable of resisting the world-wide onslaught of the market. And for this purpose such causes as the defence of minority rights are exploited. In the name of privatisation, strenuous efforts are made to reinforce the efficiency of technological and financial monopolies, and to keep peripheral States defenceless in these domains. In the name of the environment societies of the centre accuse peripheral States of waste, while themselves strengthening their monopoly over access to global resources and reaffirming their right to waste them. In the name of a manipulated democracy they arrogate to themselves the right to unlimited intervention...

It is the duty of the intelligentsia of the Third World, to “deconstruct” the new justificatory rhetoric, thus laying bare its functional connections with the tactical and strategic objectives

of crisis management. We cannot, however, do this as long as we cling to time-worn formulae left in the dust by the renovated thrust of the world system. We need, therefore, here and now, to seize the progressive, democratic issues now given a high profile because of the waning of post-war models, in order to give the attention and the thinking focused on them a radical spin.

Failing that, which is to say, if the intelligentsia flunks the test in these domains, the cycle of spontaneous and inadequate reactions from peoples crushed by the new world-wide polarization is bound to continue, and the energies generated will just as surely be harnessed by the dominant regimes in their determination to manage the crisis. I have in mind here the various centrifugal ethnic and communal forces, the nostalgic cultural revivalists, and especially the religious antiquarians active these days, whose devastating impact, notably in the disillusioned Fourth World, has taken on such tragic dimensions.

In the face of these crisis-management ideologies and strategies, the intelligentsia ought to respond with a positive contribution to the crystallization of alternative proposals offering real solutions to the crisis. I have no intention of proffering ready-made nostrums. Still, I think it useful to outline in recapitulative form a few basic concepts that could help to reshape effective strategies for resolving the crisis while at the same time preparing the ground for a people's international robust enough to deal effectively with the world-devouring appetite of capital. These suggestions would presuppose inputs from all levels from the grassroots to the levels of States, regions and the world system as a whole.

Their implementation would require the creation, perhaps in gradual stages, of anti-comprador fronts in the peripheral societies, since comprador-based social alliances are precisely those that fit into the capitalist design for a new world order. It would also call for programmes aimed at the restructuring of States capable of meeting the challenge. For there is no way the five monopolies identified earlier can be broken without the creation, in a major regional environment, of an economic, political, cultural and military power strong enough to meet the challenge. The objectives of democratisation linked with social advancement for the ordinary classes, of respect for ethnic, religious and other differences coupled with the promotion of freedom and diversity in these areas, could provide a starting point for such a necessary reconstruction. In Africa and the Middle East, it is time to breathe new life into the concepts of pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism, pushed off centre stage by the earlier successes of the "development" process, now that the hollowness of those past successes is so clear.

Lastly, at the level of the world system, the struggle should aim at a reconstruction based on the negotiated creation of major regional blocs strong enough to meet current challenges. This reconstruction would of course cover the economic sphere: trade, the definition of operational modalities for new monetary, financial, scientific, technological commercial and environmental institutions designed to replace the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation, the Agreement on Patents and Copyright, etc. It would also be involved in political organization. For that reason there would have to be a renegotiation of the role of the United Nations, in a process that I see as a new multipolar strategy of delinking. (Cf. *Whither the United Nations?*; in, Amy Bartholomew, ed, *Empire's law*, Pluto, 2006).

These proposals will no doubt be glibly dismissed as utopian. Utopian they certainly are, in the common acceptance of the term, meaning that they look forward to changes to which current trends are not necessarily set to lead. In other words, the really existing social,

political and ideological forces of the moment are not headed in the directions indicated. But there is a sense in which they are far from utopian: for the first steps in this direction would trigger off a virtuous cycle of changes snowballing into a major movement. In other words, the utopia under discussion here is a positive, creative one, and it has my wholehearted commitment. In any case, in the absence of such positive utopias, the peoples of the world invariably react to their desperate circumstances by reviving other types of utopia. Hence the surge of enthusiasm for fundamentalist religious movements. The difference is that those other utopias are dangerous on account of their inherently backward orientations. Worse still, the religious utopias are ineffective in the sense that their basic culture-bound focus makes them perfectly compatible with a supine capitulation to the imperatives of the emerging capitalist world order as far as economic management is concerned.

The same critics who will dismiss my proposals as utopian will, as usual, keep intoning the refrain “*There Is No Alternative*”, now so predictable it has been encapsulated in an acronym, the TINA Syndrome. We should combat this syndrome as absurd and criminal. In all situations there are alternatives. That is the very meaning of the concept of human freedom. It is rather amusing to see managerial types who dismiss Marxism, for example, as unduly deterministic, proffering this other vulgar, absolute kind of determinism. Moreover, the social design they seek to defend with this argument – the market – based management of the world system – is utopian in the worst sense of the term, a reactionary, criminal utopia, doomed in any case to fall apart under the pressure of its own highly explosive charge.

6. In the current state of the world, the intelligentsia faces a new set of daunting responsibilities. In previous phases of contemporary history, during the national liberation struggle, and later, in the “development decades”, it fulfilled its mission quite honourably. Admittedly, their work then was made easier by the fact that the intelligentsia could count on support from national liberation parties or from progressive forces making constructive contributions in the period after the retrieval of independence. In other words, they were backed by real, organized social and political forces. Unfortunately, there were times when such connections engendered dangerous illusions, leading to subsequent back-sliding.

We live now under a different configuration. The ruling classes, misnamed the “elite”, rationalize their collaboration with the scheme for the world-wide expansion of capitalism, which makes their peoples underdogs, a set of negative attitudes they affect in common with the managerial functionaries of the world system. Cut adrift from these false elites, the ordinary classes try to cope as best they can, sometimes coming up with creative feats in their daily struggles for survival. Meanwhile the intelligentsia seems absent from the fray. It is high time it took back its rightful position.

Clearly, the crisis will not be resolved until popular, democratic forces capable of dominating the society get together again. But all effective hegemony depends on the presence of ideological and strategic instruments. In the creation of these tools the intelligentsia has a huge responsibility. It is the mission of the intelligentsia to establish, between its own productive thinking and the aspirations and actions of the popular classes, bonds making them social partners, and without which each is doomed to endure social isolation. This is precisely what Third World Forum and the World Forum for Alternatives, are committed to (Cf. *The Bamako Appeal*; on the website <http://thirdworldforum.net>)