

MRZINE INTERVIEWS SAMIR AMIN
June 9th, 2005

MRZINE. In your essay in the November 2004 *Monthly Review* entitled, “U.S. Imperialism Europe and the Middle East,” you conclude that, “Europe will be of left, the term ‘left’ being taken seriously, or will not be at all.” As opposed to the views of almost all U.S. and U.K. commentators, are not then the “non” in France and the “nee” in the Netherlands, a giant step *towards* Europe, and what are the critical factors for further positive developments?

SAMIR AMIN: Yes, I believe that the “non” and the “nee” is a step towards Europe, probably not a giant step, a first step. It opens possibilities. It doesn’t guarantee it. Why is that so?

Because the so-called European Project has been until now and is still a project based on two fundamental choices: One, liberalism, economic liberalism, even neoliberalism, even extreme neoliberalism in the present circumstances, and second, Atlantacism, that is solidarity, full solidarity, between the ruling class of Europe and the ruling class of the United States.

Now, that being so, this project is, of course, not able to meet the demands of the working classes, nowhere in Europe, neither in Western Europe or in new Eastern Europe.

Therefore, this project had to be challenged and challenged really fundamentally. It is shameful that the electoral majority of the left as it has been until now has accepted the project as it is, that is a liberal and Atlantacist project.

But there is now a reaction of the people of Europe and this first reaction was, for the first time in the long time since the beginning of the project, expressed very, very clearly.

The French “non” is clearly anti-liberal and to a large extent also, even if a little less, anti-Atlantacist. And, therefore, it opens indeed the road to rebuilding another Europe.

The European social movement in its demands have been questioning “Europe” and saying that we want *another* Europe, a social Europe, a democratic Europe, etc., but all that was very vague. They did not until now have a very clear stand about the conditions for having another Europe, a better Europe, one that is moving out from liberalism and then completely out of it.

I’m not saying out of capitalism. It’s much more complicated, but out of liberalism; that is moving towards a regulated and strongly regulated capitalism based on a new balance of power between the working classes and capital.

Now, this is would be a giant step forward towards another Europe. I have been following it closely and only yesterday evening I was attending a very important European meeting in Paris where representatives of a very large and wide variety of life, including a majority of social democrats and socialists, expressed very enthusiastically that conditions are being now created for the coming together of the left in Europe, or part of the left at least, towards another

Europe.

Now, the critical factors, there are many, and it's not going to be easy, it's going to be a long struggle, a long rough struggle. It's not something which is going to change within the coming weeks; because I do not expect anything from the ruling classes in Europe, whether west or east and whether they are the traditional right or the majority of the electoral left as it presently exists. I do not expect from them that they would move towards contributing to building another Europe. They are the enemies.

They are the opponents to it and they will maneuver with efficiency to a certain extent. Moreover, the various objective interests of the various segments of the working classes, whether within each of the European countries or between the European countries are not so similar that it is easy to bring together a common front.

That is going to take long time.

MRZINE: In the same essay you mention that the current moment of the reunification of the world market, extended to the whole planet with the Soviet collapse, is unlikely to have a better fate than the 1860-1880 moment of global free trade under British hegemony.

So do you think that today the high tide of the imperialism of the liberal virus has been reached? And if it has been reached, why does it seem to still have such power among the East Asian, particularly the Chinese, intelligentsia?

SAMIR AMIN: Yes, I don't know really if we have reached the level of the high tide being over but I feel so; and I think that at least we are not far from it.

The proof of it is, indeed, for instance, the "non" in Europe because it's not only "non" and "nee" in France and the Netherlands. The "yes" which was from Germany, Italy, Spain and so on was without any democratic debate and it is now clear that with *any* democratic debate, it would have been rather "no".

And so that is an indication that the high tide of the neo-liberal, the liberal virus, has been reached. Now, does it really exercise a large, such a large power among the East Asian ruling classes and particularly, the Chinese one?

I don't know. There is a lot of hypocrisy in that. Indeed, for a variety of reasons, internal and international—internal, that is to offer a common front vis-a-vis their own working classes--they need to continue to say that, well, capitalism is the only road for serious development, and also because they are so-called emergent powers in the global system, they have high hopes and goals and so on. They feel that they can negotiate within that global system more or less as it is to a better position. So they have to continue to make as if they are believing.

But I don't think that they are so deeply believing . . . they are very pragmatic people but, but in the good and the bad sense of the word, eh?

MRZINE. Right.

SAMIR AMIN: Which means that they are more nationalist in fact that they are neo-liberal. They are, in a way I would say they are closer to the U.S. ruling class which apparently is neo-liberal for the others but can be very

nationalistic when their own interests are in question.

So they are very nationalistic. Whether they will move out of neo-liberalism, I think they will have to, they will move gradually out of it for two reasons.

One is that they will find more and more difficulties with the global system as it is and second, because they will be unable to get strong internal support of the working people, of the industrial working class and of the majority of the peasants.

And, therefore, they will be compelled in one way or another to make concessions and to move gradually out of the, of the high tide of the liberal virus.

MRZINE: Speaking of the Chinese, the current situation, the status quo between the U.S. and China and Japan --which are the two largest creditors of the United States, Japan in particular is a gigantic creditor—shows some strains.

Many people have pointed out that extending the current trends results in absurdity. The U.S. would absorb the entire savings of the world in a few years if you extend the trends.

How do you see the likely possible developments of this increasing tension?

SAMIR AMIN: Yes. I think that this position cannot be maintained for a long time, meaning that countries which are lending money to the U.S. on such a large scale will be compelled to revise their policies and to, to stop this outflow of capital to the benefit of the U.S.

Now, in the past, Japan was more or less compelled to do so because Japan needed in the past the U.S. protection against China and the Soviet Union and because it had no capacity to negotiate the conditions for that, that protection, but things are different today.

China has moved into this position of a large creditor, including creditor of the U.S., not because it was compelled to do so, it has chosen to do so. It has chosen to do so because it's a way for them to have, or so they think, to have a say in the global system, to have means of pressure over the major player in the global system, the U.S. But I think it has moved too far now for them, and they will not continue to do so.

But they are not the only one. Europe also to a certain extent is a lender to the United States and even the poorest countries, even the countries of the south in general and particularly the oil-rich countries.

Well, all those people put their excess money, I would say, in the U.S. because they in one way or another believe that the U.S. is in the last resort the protector of capitalism at the global level and it's the safest country.

But I think that they will realize more and more that this has limits and it's not the safest country for their own money. For instance, the oil countries, which are politically and militarily weak countries in the global system, I'm thinking particularly of the countries of the Gulf of course, they will realize that their money put in the U.S. is completely lost for them.

And so I think this is bound to lead to an increasing tension between the

United States on the one hand and I would say the rest of the world to various extent on the other hand.

Now, it is precisely because of an awareness of this coming, growing, tension that the ruling class of the U.S. have decided to try to establish a military control over the planet and particularly over these resources of oil in the Middle East--the expanded Middle East, including Central Asia, etc—because this ruling class thinks that this is the way of putting themselves in such a dominant position through military control that they would “compel” the rest of the world to continue supporting--covering the deficit of the--trade balance of the U.S.

But I think that this military plan is starting to fail. The proof of it is in Iraq, of course, and therefore that this is bound to lead, indeed, to an increasing tension.

This, associated with what is happening in Europe, that is Europe or tendencies within the Europe left and peoples to move out of Atlantacism, of liberalism and Atlantacism, will lead to an increasing tension and will compel the U.S. ruling class at some point in time to accept, to be a partner in the global system but not the hegemonic one.

MRZINE: Speaking of Iraq then, there’s a problem that’s been posed again and again for opponents of the U.S. war on Iraq, even the best-intentioned ones.

They are very frequently intimidated or silenced by the charge that supporting the Iraqi resistance means giving support to the most reactionary elements of political Islam.

What advice would you give to opponents of the U.S. war on Iraq when they’re faced with this contradiction?

SAMIR AMIN: Well, I believe just exactly the opposite. It is by *not* supporting the Iraqi resistance that one is giving more chance to the most reactionary elements, political Islam; because as long as the victims of the U.S. aggression and particularly the Iraqi ones, feel that they are alone, that is that they are not supported, strongly supported by everybody in the world, including by the people of the United States, then that reinforces the reactionary tendencies within Iraq and elsewhere to say: “Look, they are always all against us. There is no chance of being understood and, and, therefore, we must fight on a radical cultural stand.”

I hear that every day in the Arab countries. On the other hand, if the support to the Iraqi resistance, as it is, is complete unconditional support; that is condemning and asking the U.S. to go home, asking for the U.S. to leave the country, that would give *more* chance to the democratic forces which do exist in Iraq and elsewhere in the Arab world because they would say, look, we are not alone, people are understanding what we are demanding, etc.

So I think that one should not accept this intimidation, in fact it’s the opposite, as I just said.

MRZINE: So at this moment, with some hope of global response to the neoliberal dominance, to the “pensée unique,” to the black night that we went

through in the last decade, what do you see as the possibilities and the limits of using the Internet and the Web to begin a return to anti-imperialist global politics on a larger scale, and do you have any advice for us at MR as we begin this MR Webzine with daily comment and daily new material, as if it were a, a journal or a daily paper?

We do need some advice, I'm afraid, so I'd just really like to know what you'd have to say.

SAMIR AMIN: Well, I have to say I support the initiative. I think it's very important because I feel more and more that a growing number of youth, particularly youth and not only in the rich countries but also in other countries, in poorer country, I see it in Africa, in the Arab world and so on, are using the Internet a lot.

They are reading more on Internet than reading newspapers, magazines and so on. And there are other examples for action. I mean there was the famous example of Seattle, which was organized through networking over the Internet, but that was in North America basically.

Now there was also this campaign for the "non" in France. Because the media were awful and the media of course were totally on the side of the "yes," so it is to a large extent through the web, through the websites, that a lot of arguments have been developed and were reproduced, distributed and so on, so it's a very, very, very strong and important tool.

Of course I think that first the site must be different from the magazine with its long arguments. It's just as we had now in this chat, short answers to simple questions or to direct questions.

But this does not do away with the need also for in-depth analysis, of course, which can only be done as in MR magazine and books and so on; but it is a very powerful complimentary tool.

I'm saying it's more important today than newspapers. The youth and many of the people do not read newspapers anymore or just the headlines, if there are headlines, for important news, but they are surfing over the net.

Now, I think that it can be a tool for organizing or for contributing to the organization of wider campaigns. I can see that precisely because you are based in the U.S. and that's very important. An anti-imperialist initiative starting from there, from your place, would have an enormous echo and a favorable and strong one and everywhere.

I mean a demand for, as I'm labeling it, "U.S. go home" from *our* point of view is "U.S. come back home" for *your* own people. Giving the arguments and giving the facts, there are so many facts for this argument, that it can be put strongly and easily. But also giving the arguments in short sentences, and not repeating the same thing everyday but renewing the message and establishing through it contacts who would provide you with more information, more analysis, more views and so on.

That is very, very important. I can see also other campaigns, of course. I

can see, for instance, a campaign in Europe. It will start on websites in Europe, many websites, because there are many languages for the campaign for another Europe that is clearly anti-liberal and clearly anti-Atlantacist. That's very important. So you could be connected with that because, of course, the campaign for an anti-Atlantacist Europe is not "anti-American", it's not against the American people. It's in fact the opposite. It's in favor of the American people but clearly against the ruling class of the U.S. as well as against their own European ruling classes.

So there can be a lot of initiatives which would find the websites, such as the new MRZINE, a good tool, a strong tool.

MRZINE: Well, thanks very much. This is exactly the message we hope to send. So it's perfect, and thanks for taking the time.