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THIRD WORLD FORUM

REGIONALISATIONS

I. PATTERNS OF REGIONALISATIONS

Regionalisation is an ambiguous concept but its status can be defined only if it is viewed from the angle of the concerned countries' strategic objectives and the challenges they feel capable of meeting through their collective action.

To the majority of contemporary Third World Countries, regionalisation appears to have become one of the major requirements of any effective response to the polarisation challenge as a result of the increasing dimension of contemporary capitalist globalisation. This response therefore entails appropriate strategies for inward-looking development and delinking (cf. The paradigm of development) simultaneously at national levels and in the regions concerned, since regionalisation in a way comes to support the associated countries' effort.

The dogmatic liberal condemns in advance any form of regionalisation because the preferences it creates constitute an impediment to the absolute advantage offered by infinite globalisation. The American establishment, and of course the World Bank behind it, have long been opposed to regionalisation. Their adhesion is therefore a recent phenomenon. Henceforth, the ideology and strategy of the dominant system propose another concept and another practice of regionalisation envisaged as the creation of subsets integrated into the entity formed by the proposed liberal globalisation. Regionalisation is therefore viewed as a communication channel for liberal globalisation.

This fundamental distinction is the criterion from which the various institutionalised forms and regionalisation projects in Europe, America, Africa and Asia can be evaluated.

The expansion of capitalism world-wide inevitably paved the way for a constant polarisation that found expression in the ever-increasing contrast between the wealth and power of its centres on the one hand, and the poverty and vulnerability of its peripheries on the other hand. This polarisation has assumed successive historical forms closely connected with the dominant logic of capital accumulation peculiar to each of the stages of its development.

The “classical” model of polarisation from the generalisation of the industrial revolution to all centres during the 19th Century was based on a simple contrast between industrialised countries and regions (the current triad) and non-industrialised countries and regions (Asia, except-Japan, Africa and Latin America).

On the other hand, in the course of this stage spanning one and a half centuries (1800-1950) the modern economic system of the developed nations had been gradually established on “national” bases. The inward-looking national productive systems of each of these central capitalist States acquired their specific character from the nature of social alliances formed by the bourgeoisie in order to entrench and stabilise its hegemony. Once established on such bases, these dominant social entities of the global system in turn shaped the world economy. This world economy then appeared as a really international economy ; in other words, it appeared like a unit comprising central sets relatively autonomous and operating concurrently with one another, as well as a nebulous outlying entity - the peripheries - the arena for conflicting interventions of the metropolitan centres.

It is therefore realised that the national liberation movements in Asia and Africa (and in Latin America, the “developmentalist” movement – known as “desarrollista” in Spanish - of the post-Second World War era), just like the socialist revolutions in the late countries (Russia and China), defined their response to the polarisation challenge on the basis of a twofold objective which consisted in (i) initiating and completing an industrialisation process synonymous with liberating progress and a catching-up process and (ii) constructing a Nation-State and an inward-looking national productive system inspired by central models. That is how the ideology of modernity took shape.

In the course of this “Bandung” stage for Africa and Asia (1955 – 1975), the efforts of such a development produced a new Third World henceforth engaged in industrialisation even though of uneven dimensions and therefore highly differentiated (cf. Polarisation, Central Capitalism, Peripheral Capitalism). On the other hand, the strategies deployed to this effect remained exclusively “national”; in other words, they were formulated on the basis and in the framework of the Nation-State. The major institutions affiliated to the set or group of Third World Countries had either political objectives (resisting pressure from the Western powers – cf. the Non-Aligned Movement) or the economic objective of defending common interests against the dominant capital rather than that of contributing towards regional economic integration.

This strategy exhausted its possibilities and attained its historic limits more or less rapidly for various reasons, thereby revealing the illusion of an impossible scheme for “catching up through interdependence”. The then Third World’s joint attempts to extend this national phase by negotiating better international conditions (the Non-Aligned group’s proposal of a “New International Economic Order” in 1975) came up against the refusal by the Western countries as a prelude to their counter-offensive as from the 1980s.

The post-war period (1945-1990), which is now over, was not only marked by the entry of the outlying entities into the era of industrialisation, urbanisation and modernity. At the same time, the progress of capitalist accumulation in the centres themselves triggered off the progressive and partial dismantling of the

national productive systems (without their being necessarily substituted by a globalised productive system – cf. New Phase of Capitalism?). This is a chaotic transition from an international economy to a potentially global economy.

Does this evolution offer a “chance” to the Third World Countries, as purported by the liberal school of thought ? A chance that would enable those who got integrated "faster and more deeply" into the globalisation process to get out of their historic under-development. The new monopolies on which the advantages of the centres (the triad) are based exclude this possibility and in fact inaugurate new forms of an aggravated polarisation (Cf. Polarisation...)

The fact remains that, today, it might appear almost obvious that it is impossible for societies of the periphery to meet the challenges enshrined in the new monopolies of the centres by means of strictly national policies, whether in terms of the economic dimensions of the given challenge (including technological development) or its political dimensions (regional security, the necessary complement to national security). This is the nature of the challenges that the regionalisation projects have to meet in order to become contributory factors for the construction of another world system that will really be multicentric.

The experience of the European construction

This experience is always referred to by various people as the model par excellence that should inspire other projects in the regions of the Third World.

Certainly, the European system presents by far the most advanced standards, with regard to the achievements of the European Common Markets, the institutionalised economic and monetary integration processes in the European Union and initiation of its political construction.

Nevertheless, the historical conditions peculiar to this advanced region of the world, which clearly attest to such successes, have little to do with those conditions that characterise the peripheries of the system.

The European construction was inspired by an initiative of the United States – The Marshall Plan – aimed at supporting the restoration of intra-European trade as an essential element in the reconstruction of an open world economy and not as an alternative to the world economy. Even later on, when Europe accomplished its reconstruction process and made up for its lateness behind the United States, it did not consider itself (or has not yet considered itself) as being “delinked” from the world system.

More specifically, the politicians of the European communities practised selective delinking. The joint agricultural policies, for instance, were actually based on a delinking of domestic agricultural prices from those on the world market. This option is moreover behind the success of Europe that managed by this means to guarantee its food self-sufficiency to subsequently become the principal rival to the United States in terms of world foodstuff exports. The United States itself has always dissociated its domestic agricultural market

from the world market. That practice is a good example of the gap between practices of the really existing capitalism and the dogmatic views about liberal economy under imaginary capitalism (Cf. Imaginary capitalism and the really existing capitalism). Nevertheless, in other fields like those of the manufacturing industry in general, the European construction was oriented towards gradually reconciling conditions of the European market and those of the so-called world market. At the same time, Europe (like the United States), condemns any delinking policy adopted by others (Third World Countries) even if it was selective. Do what I tell you and not what I do!

The European construction was also facilitated by the fact that it concerned a group of already advanced countries whose established productive systems were therefore capable of being adjusted to one another without the difficulties encountered in these processes becoming insurmountable. The problem is quite the opposite for the Third World regions because it is a question of creating non-existent productive structures. One can therefore imagine the possibility of accelerating this creation process by taking advantage of the vast area effect enshrined in regionalisation ; in other words, by planning (the word is not too strong) the establishment of complementarities between the various associated countries. In Europe, the late countries (Portugal, Greece, etc.) stuck around the group of more advanced countries and regions. The European Union's financial affluence certainly facilitated the transfer of (public) capital to these poor regions which eventually felt that the European construction favoured them. It is not stated that this was the sole or the best possible option for these countries. However, other options would have met with hostility from the dominant powers including those of Europe and therefore appeared to be politically impossible such that, today, the die is cast and the European option appears now without any alternatives for these countries. They can only nurture the hope that the European system itself evolves in better directions, socially and economically, for the benefit of all of its peoples.

The European construction also took the necessary time to progress with precaution. It took no less than fifteen years for Europe to achieve the convertibility of its currencies. Moreover, this measured and controlled progression formed part of a general – global – phase of increased expansion (“the glorious thirty”). This general expansion (every partner sees its productions and exports increase relatively easily) obviously facilitates the adjustments that are becoming painful in a difficult global economic situation as witnessed for some twenty years.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the Western Europeans are not particularly interested in transferring their experience to countries of Eastern Europe and to those of the former Soviet Union. In this domain, the European options, modelled on those of Washington, rather aim at dismantling elements of regional co-operation established during the Soviet era. At the same time, there is a demand for an immediate opening of concerned countries to the violent winds of liberal globalisation (for instance, they are expected to ensure the free convertibility of their currency within one year or two!). The consequences of these options that are poles apart from the lessons of the European construction – can only be chaotic and tragic. Those of the concerned countries that appear capable of being integrated in the extended European construction, despite everything, are actually relegated to the status of dominated regions (the case of Czech, Poland, the Baltic

States and Hungary). Those countries that cannot somersault (such as Romania and Bulgaria) or that continue to resist (like Yugoslavia) are marginalised, excluded or even combated ! There is a striking analogy with practices developed by the United States in their relations with Latin America and that is why it can be stated that, in this regard, the “Pan-European regionalisation” is seeking to “latin-americanise” Eastern Europe. It is therefore a regionalisation model of the North-South type (here, West-East geographically), based on unequal relations reproducing and deepening the polarisation within the overall system, and not of the intra-North type (as in the case of the European project before its extension was envisaged) or the intra-South type.

In Africa, regionalisation appears as a window-dressing

In Africa, there is a proliferation of regional co-operation (or even integration)-oriented institutions that can be classified under different headings.

First, there is the Organisation of African Unity (created in 1963) with a primarily political vocation, whose real major functions consisted in supporting liberation struggles in the Portuguese colonies, in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa on the one hand, and in containing and arbitrating in intra-state conflicts. In this context, OAU constituted an insipid substitute for Pan Africanism, which nevertheless remains a potentially powerful ideological and political aspiration.

During the so-called “development decades” (1960s and 1970s) the tasks assigned to OAU were relatively facilitated by the fact that the member States actually enjoyed some degree of legitimacy among their peoples. The real achievements of the forms of development permitted by the trans-ethnic – populist – national base inherited from the liberation movements that eventually became ruling parties justified this legitimacy. The said legitimacy was justified among other things and perhaps mainly by the continual increase in the number of beneficiaries of the development in question that constituted the social base of the authority in power. This social base was composed of a core group of “middle classes” (enlarged through educational progress) and around this group was a nebulous clientele active among the popular classes.

The political situation is tragically different today. The erosion of populist development models and the diktat from the liberal globalisation imposed through structural adjustment plans brutally delegitimised the majority of African States without the forms of sham democracy that took over from the autocratic populist nationalist powers succeeding in restoring the legitimacy of governments unable to offer their peoples anything acceptable in terms of social progress. Africa then entered an involution phase characterised by what is improperly referred to as “internal tribal wars”. It is because these conflicts were not really caused by hostilities between ethnic groups ; instead, they were orchestrated by warlords seeking to control their countries’ resources (oil, diamond, etc.) who used ethnic affinity as a means to that end. Once the local authorities lost their legitimacy, they were unable to face up to the explosion of such criminal ambitions. When called upon for help, OAU – or even UNO -- proved to be equally powerless under such conditions, as attested by the tragic outcome of the ECOMOG operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone (cf. Ethnicism, Culturalism). Under these circumstances, the very idea of regionalisation is meaningless.

For its part, the economic component of OAU's functions was actually limited to active contribution in Africa (within the Non-Aligned Movement and among the Group of 77 at UNO) towards the establishment of a "common front" presenting claims tendered by countries of the South in their interface with the North counterparts in the new international economic order.

Under these conditions, OAU did not play an active role in the establishment of regional (Pan African) or sub-regional co-operation/integration – even in the initial stages. To say the least, the numerous institutions established in this regard remained inactive.

On the other hand, the co-operation system adopted under the partnership agreements between the European Union and African States (along with those of the Caribbean and the Pacific) presents a different format. However, this refers to a North-South regionalisation system that has so far functioned as a communication channel for the capitalist globalisation that has now become neo-liberal (cf. the Lomé-Cotonou Agreements and E.U. – A.C.P. partnership).

Also noteworthy are the remaining numerous sub-regional institutions of which the leading ones are ECOWAS in West Africa, SADC (after the SADCC) and COMESA (after PTA) in East and Southern Africa, CEAO – UMOA and UDEAC for countries of the Franc Area, SACU and CMA for countries of the Rand Area, agencies of the major world institutions (such as ADB, a quasi-branch of the World Bank) and other minor institutions (like the Mano River Union, the Great Lakes Community, the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel / CILSS, etc.)

In this regard, it will be observed that the most viable regional institutions are those linked to France or to South Africa (before and after the apartheid system).

Soon after the attainment of independence by its African colonies, France undertook to negotiate the possibility of maintaining the States in the Franc Area in concrete forms that virtually excluded any room for autonomy in monetary management and placed the regional issuing institutions (superficially designated as central banks – whereas they are not) under the authority of the French Treasury and the Bank of France. This system has survived to date, in spite of its vicissitudes (withdrawal and reintegration of some of its members) and has even enlisted new members. A system of this nature does not deserve to be considered as promoting a form of genuine regional co-operation. It is only a vestige of the colonial system that is now on the verge of extinction under the triple effect of the substitution of the Euro for the Franc, liberal globalisation and African involutions. At any rate, if the system happened to break up, there is nothing in perspective to prepare an effective substitute for it, neither in the countries concerned nor in those of the regions of which they are members. Some provisional reforms to that effect were put forward between 1960 and 1970. These reforms were aimed at making the local currency/Franc ratio more flexible, a gradual substitution of a mix of currencies defined for their management (a mix that could have facilitated an acceptable and effective association with the Euro Area), the extension of the monetary zones concerned by

integrating the anglophone countries. France rejected all these measures without discussion, indicating that its main concern was to preserve the exclusive control of its client states. Nigeria, whose resources and potential far exceed those of the African member countries of the Franc Area, lobbied among African authorities to make its voice heard about these considerations through sustained and constant efforts, in spite of its characteristic political instability. France has categorically rejected all these approaches and reportedly supports, on the contrary, centrifugal forces trying to ruin this country.

In Southern Africa, the conventions organising customs and monetary unions between South Africa on the one hand, and Lesotho and Swaziland on the other hand, do not deserve any more to be ranked under "regional co-operation" in view of the glaring inequality between the dominant partner and the countries in question, that it has always dominated. SADCC, which was created in the apartheid era so that the Southern African countries stopped depending on Pretoria, actually assisted in providing these countries with some transport facilities to enable them to avoid South African ports. However, soon after the liberation of South Africa, this organisation was itself transformed into a new co-operation institution (SADC) with South Africa as one of its member countries. At any rate, the new South Africa intends to pursue the same policy adopted by the former one towards countries of the region that it dominates by virtue of its industrial lead. Will the partners indefinitely accept to endure this unequal relationship? It is not certain whether they will.

Certainly, African sub-regional co-operation/integration organisations are credited with meagre, not to say, no achievements. Trade has been negligible, and intra-regional capital flow, non-existent. That was more than foreseeable. In fact, so long as their economies are almost exclusively dependent on exported primary products, the member countries can have nothing to exchange among themselves. The removal of customs barriers and creation of common markets do not suffice to integrate economies of this kind. The sole effect of these measures consists in legitimising trade in foreign products substituting for smuggled goods at the countries' borders. The African States' subsequent adhesion to the free trade principles formulated by the new WTO that took over from GATT can only worsen the disappointing effects of the "commercial opening". A co-operation/integration project is meaningless if the member States do not collectively commit themselves to active industrialisation policies necessarily promoted by the States. In principle, however, the dominant liberal ideology is hostile to any idea of State intervention and planning that would substitute for it the myth whereby private capital (foreign) must spontaneously fulfil the functions of development and diversification.

OAU did take some initiatives -- and persists -- in proposing to African States development "plans" involving their sub-regional or even regional integration. The Lagos Plan of Action (1980) and the Abuja Treaty (1991) are good examples of this organisation's approach. In strictly "technical" terms, these initiatives are far from being devoid of interest or even from being devoid of force and the proposals put forward are far from being absurd, with particular regard to the branches and sectors of new activities suggested for creation, as well as the notions pertaining to their macro-economic linkage and to the distribution of specialisations between the States. The World Bank did perceive their inherent danger : for one thing, the famous Berg Report (1981) produced as an immediate reaction to the Lagos Plan of Action, which has ever since become the Bible of the

World Bank, international co-operation institutions and most governments, proposes as a counterpoint, nothing other than pursuing in Africa, specialisations based on "natural" advantages and therefore keeping within the limits of the age-long specialisation in agriculture and mining sectors. To be consistent, the World Bank does not even mention in its Report the potential advantages of an absolutely unnecessary regional integration in the context of the "liberal" strategies it recommends.

The weaknesses inherent in OAU's proposals reside in the fact that their implementation entails active motivation by the States. However, the ruling classes created in the context of the African States in question lack resources or the very will required to engage in a course of action other than specialisation in agriculture and mining from which they derive their revenues. "Regionalisation" under such conditions is outside their real concerns and those of the dominant forces in the global system. It is sheer window-dressing.

In the world system (in which it is completely integrated), Africa occupies only the most subordinate positions that prevent the continent from being an active agent instrumental in shaping the system as a whole. Africa no longer has any national development project nor a fortiori a regional one, in its capacity as a passive subject of the globalisation process (and that is the meaning befitting the term "marginalisation", which does not denote "non-integrated" but rather "integrated as a passive agent").

The Arab world fossilised in its powerlessness

In the Arab world, the popular feeling of belonging to one cultural community if not to one "nation", in the strict sense of the word, is a reality that has assumed strong dimensions in the course of the last few decades. One might therefore have expected this sentiment to also serve as the foundation for serious co-operation between the Arab States, or even to motivate these States to embark on the establishment of a kind of political unity (confederate, federal or unitary). Such is not the case ; in practice, co-operation/integration is as insignificant in the Arab world as it is in Sub-Saharan Africa, for relatively the same reasons and despite the advantage conferred by the Arab linguistic unity.

The Arab League, whose actual designation is the League of Arab States, was modelled on the UNO pattern as an inter-state organisation whose members preserve their full sovereignty that is never renounced, even if partially, for the benefit of supranational powers. In this sense, the League is similar to OAU and to the Organisation of American States, but not to the European Union.

Should the creation of the League also be viewed as an insipid substitute of Pan Arabism ? In the course of its history, the League has established a series of inter-state specialised Arab organisations modelled on the pattern of the United Nations family, but with modest operational results : many surveys, reports and projects, most of which are of standard quality, but few concrete achievements.

Integration efforts in the region thus assumed other dimensions. In a first phase marked by the triumph of Pan-Arabism in the mid-1950s, as well as the outbreak of the Algerian liberation war until the defeat suffered

in the third Israeli-Arab war of 1967, these efforts consisted in attempts to fulfil this unity - even if partially in the beginning - by mobilising powerful political inputs, one of the landmarks being the creation of the United Arab Republic (1957-1961) from a merger between Egypt and Syria. However, the failure of this form of Arab unification certainly tolled the death-knell of the Nasser-Baathist strategy and gave free rein to the exacerbation of animosity, and even of conflicts, between governments of immediate neighbours (Algeria-Morocco, Syria-Iraq, Saudi Arabia-Yemen and Iraq-Kuwait).

At the same time, as from 1973, the oil manna for some time appeared to replace the radical political will of the Pan-Arab populism. This manna was actually accompanied by a large-scale movement of internal migrants from the poor countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen) to the rich oil countries (Libya, Irak and the Gulf countries). Then, when they felt threatened by such "invasion", the Gulf countries reacted, as already known, by gradually substituting an immigrant labour force from Pakistan, India and the Philippines. In other respects, the oil manna financed substantial public remittances. However, far from being perceived as the condition sanctioned by the integrative projects, such remittances were generally wasted in the private consumer needs of the ruling classes' and in the public consumer needs of the subsidised States. That outcome was completely foreseeable. The ultra conservative authorities of the Gulf countries act as communication channels of the exigencies of liberal globalisation and the hegemonism of the United States which they have never thought of calling into question. On the contrary, the governments in question have become quasi-protectorates of the United States, in the wake of America's permanent military establishment in the region after the 1990-1991 Gulf war. The financial support provided concurrently with the dominant movements associated with political Islam that swear allegiance to the United States gives a negative picture of the effects of the "oil manna", because political Islam has no interest in Arab unity, hence the call for "Muslim Ummah" as a substitute for it. In Arabic, there is an untranslatable play on words about this manna with the assertion that the manna (*al fawra*) has taken the place of the revolution (*al thawra*). Finally, the oil manna has managed to finance some private investments here and there. But here too, the investments absolutely formed part of policies aimed at strengthening parasitic compradores of the middle classes who also do not envisage any future prospects outside liberal globalisation.

Under the circumstances, regionalisation/integration in the Arab world has failed to make any progress worthy of the name in the course of the last three decades.

Like Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab world occupies only subordinate positions in the world system. The volume of its oil exports cannot actually constitute a real substitute for an effective industrialisation that can satisfy domestic needs and assist in shaping world markets. Like the case of Sub-Saharan Africa (Gabon), there are some "marginalised rich" countries in the Arab world (the Gulf countries) just as there are many "marginalised poor" ones. Both groups of countries lack the means to impose themselves as active agents helping to shape the world system. They remain as passive agents compelled to unilaterally adapt to the system even though the region's oil supply might be of vital importance to western consumers.

The Arab world is therefore living through a phase of its history marked by lack of projects specific to them. It is therefore not surprising that the others take the initiative in making "proposals" which they impose on their Arab partners.

Thus, the United States of America, which considers the Middle East as a priority region under its exclusive authority (the Europeans being invited just to support its presence in the region) ever since the defunct Soviet Union was discarded, has concocted the Middle East "common market project", together with Israel and Turkey, its two allies (and with the unconditional support of governments of the Gulf countries). Not only does this project legitimise Israel's expansionist practices in the occupied Palestine relegated to the status of a Bantustan ; it also offers the Zionist State the advantage of serving as the indispensable financial and technological intermediary between the multinationals and countries in the region. In this context, one can talk of "regionalisation" only in the sense of a North-South project (United States, Israel, Middle East region) operating in the framework and for the benefit of liberal globalisation and American hegemonism.

For its part, Europe made qualified proposals for "Euro-Mediterranean partnership" that fell within the same logic (Cf. The Euro-Mediterranean partnership). Even though this project would already have failed, it did help to deepen the Maghreb-Mashrek cleavage. In fact, by virtue of the agreements on their association with the European Union, the Maghreb countries are more integrated into the European productive system (to which they supply poorly paid sub-contracted products) than the Mashrek countries.

The "sharing of the burden", in the American political jargon, finds expression here in a division of labour that assigns to the United States, the Middle East and its oil resources, and to the Europeans, the Maghreb and its emigrants (to Europe).

Latin America and the Caribbean

(Contribution required from the regional group)

Issues to be considered (among others)

Motivated by the Monroe doctrine, and, with Washington as the mainspring, is the Organisation of American States (OAS) not a kind of Ministry of United States Colonies (as purported in Latin America) ?

Is Mercosur envisaged in the spirit of liberal globalisation ? On what conditions can it evolve in another direction ?

The NAFTA (Canada-United States-Mexico) foreshadows the new North American project for "Free Trade in the Americas, from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego (ALCA)". Results and prospects. Possible conflict with Mercosur and the Andin Pact. Evaluation of the Caribbean Community.

Prospects of the American monetary system : the progress of dollarisation in Latin America.

Asia

(Contribution required from the regional group)

Issues to be considered (among others)

Specific feature of the region : two giants (China, India)

ASEAN - Evolution of the organisation, initially envisaged as an association for joint political defence "against communism". Conflicts between "protectionist" policies of the member States and the possible requirements of a regionalisation.

The major U.S. -Japan-Asia projects (APEC)

Can an alternative to regionalisation centred on China be defined ?

II. THE LOME - COTONOU CONVENTIONS AND THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC COUNTRIES

Even though the EEC-ACP association occupies just a minor position in the world system, its importance in matters concerning the analysis of Africa's position in the world system calls for an analysis of its particular aspects.

- (i) Do the European Union and the ACP countries want to establish their relations within an original regionalism formed by two groups, composed of a developed and an underdeveloped set respectively, with the ultimate objective of fighting the system's natural tendencies towards polarisation ?
- (ii) In this plan, what is the position of the Europeans' concern to guarantee their security in commodities if, following the fourfold increase in oil price decided by the OPEC countries in 1973, the ruling classes of the South at one point appeared willing to put their natural resources in the service of their industrialisation ?
- (iii) In the case of the weak Third World States, does this not pre-eminently mean subscribing to a context guaranteeing a rent needed for reproducing and expanding their ruling and middle classes ?

Eventually, is the ultimate objective to create within the world system a "region" that can face the neo-liberal challenge and participate in the construction of a multicentric global system whereby the economy would be put in the service of the peoples, or does it consist in limited arrangements in the service of oligopolies and dominant classes ?

Initially, the objectives of the Lomé agreements was not to put external relations in the service of positive economic, political and cultural changes for African people but rather to strengthen Europe's economic and geopolitical position in the world system. In other words, the developmental dimension was a secondary element less important than the political one. It was pre-eminently a question of supporting the so-called "moderate" States and strengthening tendencies in this direction elsewhere, or undermining the populist developmental aspirations experimented and mobilising to their advantage the geopolitical competition of the two super-powers involved in the cold war.

In the new neo-liberal perspective, the reorganisation of Euro-African relations comes within the framework outlined by WTO, thereby consolidating the centres' monopolies in decisive sectors including control of access to natural resources, generating new technologies and organisation of the monetary and financial system.

In this spirit, the regionalisations derive their rationality from their capacity to create areas for the optimal deployment of activities of the multinational oligopolies.

Efforts should be made to develop the forms of resistance to this notion in Africa for the following reasons :

- (i) Regions and countries that are not interested in this perspective are actually excluded from the potential benefits of regionalisation.
- (ii) Increased polarisation and exclusion will result in migratory movements that will be difficult to manage especially since neo-liberalism ignores free movement of workers.
- (iii) The plan implicitly integrates military alliances that make the recalcitrant South countries vulnerable.

Envisaged in this fashion, the regionalisation of Euro-African relations would be totally compatible with the management of internal conflicts created in the Africa marginalised by social disintegration.

As a counterpoint, the alternative can be established only on the following principles :

- (i) The main objective of this regionalised co-operation associating industrial countries and fourth world countries must be to promote an international division of labour compatible with the exigencies of the modern world that should not be a priori excluded for the mere reason that it might not be of economic interest to the multinationals or of strategic interest to the States.
- (ii) Measures must be taken to encourage the emergence and development of democratic forces of change and the civil society's participation in the debate on modalities for regionalised co-operation should be organised systematically.

Reading between the lines, one could discern behind the partnership between EEC and African countries, Europe's concern to obtain during the 1960s and 1970s, a constant supply of tropical agricultural products, minerals and petroleum products. Neo-liberal fundamentalism deliberately ignores the objectives of this nature as the market itself has to resolve such problems and development is nothing other than the outcome of the action of private enterprise. However, the States actually continue to be concerned about all these problems which the handbooks of economics ignore. The gap between the neo-liberal rhetoric and the reality therefore accounts for a confusion of the divided, shapeless and contradictory views to an extreme degree.

Now modelled on the simple rhetoric of the World Bank, IMF and WTO, Europe has unreservedly subscribed to the universal medical prescription for the structural adjustment programmes for the moment and to the illusion that private foreign investment would provide solutions to development problems in the longer term.

The local authorities sometimes tried to hold out against Structural Adjustment Programmes that ended the expansion of their social base (or even bluntly imposed its shrinkage) thereby making them lose all

legitimacy. The external debt burden and corruption in government circles were bound to annihilate their leeway, and at the same time prevent them from embarking on self-adjustment, in addition to forcing the authorities to comply with the daily orders issued by international institutions assigned to manage their crisis directly.

However, the greatest confusion characterises these injunctions, which are often governed by the transient methods and moods of the G7. In this mood, there is a succession of views and fashions about poverty alleviation, respect for human rights, sustainable development, plural democracy, etc., without the least desire to analyse the contradictions between these noble objectives and stagnation or even the involutions engendered by the implementation of neo-liberal deregulations.

Is it possible today to assess the EEC-ACP partnership agreements in question ? Certainly, one should be careful not to hold these agreements alone responsible for the evolution of the continent during the last few decades. The reality lies in the combined effect of typically internal processes and the influence of external factors (in this case, including these agreements). The fact remains that the radical African regimes had at their time qualified the 1961 Conventions of Yaoundé as << neo-colonial >> and they did not join the Lomé group until much later, for fear of being denied access to the financial markets. A rigorous analysis of responsibilities in the region's development therefore necessitates the reflection, as clearly as possible, of the positive and negative tendencies operating within the region's societies strengthened by the logic of the Lomé Conventions.

In any case, the result is not impressive. The per capita product in Sub-Saharan Africa increased just at an average rate of 0.40 % annually between 1962 and 1992, as compared to 2.3 % for all the developing countries. This figure reflects a much lower economic growth (3.3 % annually) as well as higher population growth rates (3.9 % per annum). Consequently, the difference between per capita product of Sub-Saharan Africa and that of the other developing countries only widened : it is now established around 1 to 4 and could increase from 1 to 6 in about fifteen years' time.

This already unfavourable result simply in terms of growth rates will certainly appear even worse if one takes into account the reversal of financial flow balance, capital transfers abroad from Africa (to countries of the North, particularly European countries) that now prevail over the inverse capital public and private flows. This reversal, which is not specific to Africa, since it also concerns the entire Third World (China being the unique exception) virtually nullifies all views that can be expressed about a "developmental revival" based on the principles of the dominant neo-liberalism. If truly desired, the revival entails distancing oneself from the absurd dogmatic concept of "pure" economy. European authorities are not willing to review this dogmatic aspect.

The assessment presented this way will be incomplete so long as the trend of income distribution accompanying the implementation of the strategies in question is not taken into consideration. For one thing, this income distribution has developed and is developing in a negative direction, the type marked by

increased inequality which, in turn, results in waste of investments (priority being actually given to expensive investments intended to meet requirements of the privileged classes). Income distribution is not unrelated to strategic development options. On the contrary, they are closely associated. Far from guaranteeing an optimal allocation of resources, as purported by the neo-liberal discourse, the neo-liberal options of uncontrolled globalisation results in a disastrous allocation of particularly scarce resources (capital, technologies and skilled labour).

We will continue to examine the reasons for this development fiasco by highlighting the following points :

- (i) The close relationship between the general poor growth and the failure of agricultural development : the agricultural potential is so poorly exploited that food production does not provide adequately for the population's needs and the structural deficit is likely to be aggravated.
- (ii) The marginalisation of Africa in world trade : the region's share of imports from the European Union dropped from 3.9 % in 1976 to 2.8 % in 1994, while that of Asia increased from 9 % to 13 %. These poor results have been so, especially since the oil-rich countries of the group alone account for 67 % of the region's total exports and that the decrease in the region's exports to the European Union has not been compensated by an opening onto other world markets, once the level of dependence on the European market has not been reduced.

In this context then, are these partnership agreements not responsible - at least partially - since, by virtue of their privileged intervention in favour of primary commodities (through the Stabex and Sysmin mechanisms), they encouraged Africa to remain in this type of international division of labour that is being overtaken by events elsewhere, as illustrated by the success of the new industrial countries whose exports in the form of manufactured goods have had a stimulating effect ? How can one hope for successes in terms of global growth if development is based on so-called comparative advantages enshrined in low-productivity products that are moreover destined to be affected by the deteriorating terms of trade ?

- (iii) The marginalisation of Africa in international investment : although the European Union provides half of ACP's external financial resources, it was thanks to the continued increase in the flow of public assistance that this proportion was maintained, while the opening of the economies ended in the withdrawal of private capital investments.

The partnership agreements also deal with matters concerning regionalisation within the ACP group. In this domain, however, they manage with ordinary systems that merely take account of what really exists (such as the CFA monetary zone) or in the rhetoric of inactive institutions (ECOWAS and others). There is nothing comparable with the logic of the Marshall Plan that had imposed a constraining intra-European co-operation as a condition for United States' support. In reality then, the decades considered (from 1960 to date) have not

brought about an intensification of intra-African trade. At this level too, Africa is overtaken by Asia and Latin America. Once more, this unfavourable trend certainly cannot be attributed to the partnership agreements alone. It is the outcome of the overall development strategy considered, that has mainly been "nationalistic" in the sense that it envisaged only strictly national economic policies, without giving importance to a necessary perspective of regionalisation - except, in fact, in the rhetoric concerning "regional co-operation". The radical populists alone could not be held responsible for this "nationalism" since the "moderate liberals" also acted similarly.

Finally, the European Union does not appear to have defined an environmental policy that takes account of environmental degradation in Africa.

Despite their inherent inadequacies, the partnership agreements comprise a potentially positive aspect from the perspective of the principle : that of asserting a joint responsibility of the developed States (those of the European Union) and the so-called developing States (the ACP countries) in the development process. In fact, the principle remained asserted, even though in its progressive potential, the actual implementation of the principle was greatly impeded by the nature and options of the dominant forces in the European States themselves and by those of the associated African ruling classes. This constituted an exception because neither the United States nor the international instruments unreservedly loyal to them (the World Bank, IMF and WTO) ever agreed to subscribe to the principle.

Certainly, behind the Lomé agreements loomed "particular interests" inherited from colonial history, which is gradually losing momentum. However, this situation was also due to the phenomenon referred to as the "cold war". At that time, USSR and China actively supported the Non - Aligned Movement which was eventually adopted by all the African States, including even the most moderate ones (the pro-Western or even anti-Soviet elements). Europe was tempted to respect - at least officially - the independence of the ACP States and accept the principle of (financial) support to strategies freely decided by their partners. No conditionality of the compulsory privatisation type or abrogation of exchange control was conceivable at that time. In renouncing this principle to place Euro-African relations henceforth in the framework of the liberal globalisation dubbed "without alternative", the European Union took a great step back. The European Union has substituted a new principle for the one it abandoned. In fact, the Union claims that it hopes to strengthen its economic co-operation with the ACP countries through a "political dialogue" and has adopted, in this perspective, the theme of democratisation. However pleasant the principle governing this option may be, the said option runs the risk of getting bogged down in rhetoric and manipulation if the debate does not dare to tackle firmly the issues concerning the content and social conditions of the democracy in question as well as those pertaining to the exigencies of economic policy that it implies.

III. THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

Europe and the Arab world are two regions which have maintained complex relations throughout their history on account of their geographic proximity and their common Hellenistic ancestry from which originated Christianity and Islam. However, the North-South demarcation between "developed" Europe and the "under-developed" Arab world, such as we know, was definitively established only belatedly, with the capitalist expansion reinforced by the colonisation of the South segment that ended only recently (the British left Egypt only in 1954 and even tried to return there in 1956 and the French did not recognise Algeria's independence until 1962).

In the post-Second World War period, the relations between Europe and the Arab world came within the dominant logic of the United States' geopolitics and geo-strategy. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) actually considered the Arab world as an opponent while the Soviet Union supported the Arab world's attempts at autonomous development. Having withdrawn from the region, Europe allowed the United States to operate there alone, the support of their loyal allies, such as Turkey, Israel and the governments of the Gulf and thus guaranteed the vital oil supply to Europe.

Was the disappearance of the Soviet opponent going to open new prospects for genuine co-operation between the European Union and the Arab world ? One could have thought so at one point when Europe took the initiative in formulating in Barcelona in 1995 a proposal designated as "Euro-Mediterranean" partnership. Today, it can only be noticed that this process is not just "at a standstill" but that it has collapsed.

The reason is that the project itself had been designed on the basis of an unacceptable and incredible principle and could therefore not be implemented, even if some of its promoters must have been well-intentioned partners.

The European partner rallies not only the Mediterranean Europeans but all countries of the European Union. It is a right for Europeans, which, in fact, nobody can call into question (the right to think of sharing common interests and of having to contemplate a common future). That is an indisputable right for all Europeans, even if those in each of the concerned countries also have the right to criticise (as done by some people) the European project as it stands today.

The other partner is curious ; it is composed of all the riparian entities along the South and East coast of the Mediterranean. However, the majority of these riparian elements happen to be Arab countries that also belong to a distinct world : the Arab world. Whether a nationalistic Arab or not, this world exists and it should therefore be recognised that the Arab world could have certain common tendencies, a certain sense of common interest and a common vision of its integration into the contemporary world. Separating the Mediterranean Arab countries from the non-Mediterranean Arab countries is actually unacceptable. What is needed is therefore a Euro-Arab agreement -- in other words, an agreement between all the European

countries and all the Arab, regardless of whether they are Mediterranean or not. The Mediterranean concept is meaningful only if entails rallying all the riparian countries around problems concerning the common sea, for instance in the area of pollution. It is not on this narrow basis that one can contemplate the future of relations between Europe and this small portion of the South known as the Arab world.

On the other hand, the era of the Barcelona Conference (1995) was also that of the Madrid and Oslo Conferences, that is a period when a certain type of peace between Arabs and Israel was being promoted under the leadership of the Americans. In this way, the Europeans implemented a strategy complementary to that of the United States and Israel, aimed at dictating the content of the said peace. A kind of peace imagined on a basis that should have been perceived in advance as unacceptable, since it was equivalent to the establishment of a *Bantustan* - there could not be a better term - in the occupied territories of Palestine.

It is at this moment and in this geographical context that the Euro-Mediterranean project was contemplated. It consisted in using the new international economic situation to impose on the Arabs Israel's integration into the region and posing as a condition for co-operation between Europe and the Arab countries, a similar co-operation between the Arab countries themselves and Israel... By comparison, it is a little as if, in the apartheid era, Europe had forced the African States to regularise their diplomatic and other relations with South Africa as a condition for the support and co-operation that the Europeans were offering them.

As an apartheid country, Israel has been implementing a policy of systematic ethnic purge. It is unacceptable to put up with Israel, let alone supporting it. Israel should be boycotted by all civilised countries of the world.

At present, the tragedy developing in Palestine call for a strong international political intervention accompanied by effective measures for a serious boycott of Israel until this State recognises the State of Palestine. Europe intervened clamorously in Kosovo to defend a lesser cause than that of Palestine, but it tolerates that the government of Israel be entrusted to a real war criminal who, in fact, has personally proclaimed his rejection of the Madrid and Oslo agreements ! It is true that in the case of Yugoslavia, Europe only stood by a decision previously taken in Washington. On the contrary, in taking an autonomous stand on Palestine, Europe has to distance itself from the United States, which is obviously difficult. It also proves that political Europe does not exist.

The so-called European proposals for "Euro-Mediterranean partnership" also include an economic component about which the European institutions claimed to have made "new efforts" in qualifying their proposals as coming within the framework of "mutual development", "partnership" and "joint development", in place of "aid", the devalued term.

An analysis of these proposals shows that it is nothing of the sort. All these proposals absolutely come within the exclusive logic of globalised neo-liberalism (opening markets, creating "enabling" conditions for foreign investment, deregulating and defusing protections, etc.) as formulated by the United States, WTO, the World Bank and IMF. Submission to the rules defined by these authorities, including the so-called "structural

adjustment" plans is moreover formulated as a pre-condition for implementation of the European proposals. Here too, the real position of Europe is not different from that of the United States. In both its political and economic dimensions Europe's proposals currently form part of a dominant twofold alignment: liberal globalisation and United States' hegemonism. The two elements are interrelated. Accepting the exclusive logic of liberal globalisation means accepting to give priority or the very exclusive importance to the interests of the dominant capital. At any rate, the interests of the European dominant capital are not fundamentally different from the interests of the North American dominant capital. Of course, there are conflicts, but they are common mercantile conflicts of the same kind as the conflicts that can crop up between multinationals of a given country. Europe's possible autonomy vis-à-vis the United States cannot be assumed on this basis.

Other conditions are also imposed by the European partner. Is the reference to respect for human rights as a theoretical condition of the partnership agreements desirable ? Certainly, even if signed by governments that do not intend to implement its provisions, a charter can become a lever that can be utilised by victims of a system. However, this instrument will at best remain marginal because the struggle for democracy is pre-eminently the peoples' affair that must be managed in the concerned country itself. Internationalism in this field is very useful, but it is mainly through internal struggles and mobilisation of democratic forces within the societies that the change can be fostered. What the external entity can do is precisely to support them and not to fight them.

However, the use that the Great Powers (Europe in this case) intend to make of such interventions in the name of democracy remains dubious. The examples of "double standards" - which are numerous and obvious - show that this type of utilisation is absolutely cynical : the tool is mobilised against an opponent to be weakened but it is put away in the face of an ally. Moreover, the dominant concept at present is that of *good governance*, to use the jargon in fashion ; in other words, the concept of acceptable governability. Alas, this is a poor concept that limits democracy to multiparty systems, formal elections and respect for a number of individual elementary rights, without recognising social, individual and collective rights, the right to work, education, health and freedom of movement within and outside one's own country. Yet the rights constitute a whole set comprising inseparable elements. If they are not accompanied by the other rights, then political rights become instruments that can be and are manipulated and therefore undermine the cause of democracy since they destroy its credibility among the peoples themselves.

IV. THE DESIRABLE ALTERNATIVE IN TERMS OF REGIONALISATION

Africa and the Arab world are not really on course for any effective regionalisation, apart from those ordered from outside and dominated by the North, despite the proliferation of institutions that finally constitute a mere window-dressing.

However, the region needs appropriate and effective forms of regionalisation. These should be thought up by analysing challenges of the contemporary world (especially the great trends shaping tomorrow's world) and the requirements for authentic development, as a counterpoint. Authentic development is meaningful provided it is popular in the sense that its benefits are immediately shared by all the popular classes and are not the prerogative of a minority group. Moreover, that is the necessary condition for associating development with a democratisation process likely to be entrenched. The model of this type of development that could be deployed simultaneously at national or sub-regional levels or in the large region representing the continent as a whole would then occupy its position in the construction of a multipolar globalisation, the sole alternative to the unbalanced and polarising globalisation implemented by the dominant forces of the moment.

What we are proposing here is just a plan of the regional response to these challenges, and not a "detailed" project on any account. This plan therefore emphasises the proposed principles ignored quite obviously, as will eventually be discovered, in current practices and in the rhetoric of the dominant discourse about regionalisation.

Regions of the Third World in general, and Africa in particular, must design forms of regionalisation that could enhance their capacity to resist the new forms of polarisation operating in the global system. The term "new" should be strongly emphasised.

This element is desirable because the polarisation in the world system no longer operates the way it did in the course of the last two centuries.

The polarisation of the "classical" period was virtually synonymous with the contrast between industrialised and non-industrialised countries. The monopoly of centres, which allowed for the reproduction and intensification of unbalanced accumulation worldwide, was that of industrialisation. This contrast established the forms whereby the law of globalised value operated at this stage of globalisation ; forms whose expressions gave food for thought during the major debates of that period ("unequal exchange" in particular).

At that time, the response to the challenge could obviously be summed up in one word : industrialisation. Another observation was that it was then not absurd to think that a large entity was less difficult to industrialise than a small one so regionalisation could be an appropriate means of overcoming the difficulty. Hence, the large regional zone could be designed as a place for sectorised and selective planning of complementarities between the national productive systems to be established. At the same time, it could be designed as a "common market", even though the latter had to be considered as an area for collective protection from the developed centres.

Even in the absence of effective achievements, the regionalisation projects in Africa and in the Arab world already could not meet the exigencies of the period. They were based on the simple idea of creating "common markets" in imitation of the European model, without assessing the actual exigencies inherent in facing the challenge. In fact, the social challenge demanded at least that two sets of measures be taken beyond the mere establishment of common markets. The first concerns the motivation from States and regional authorities, necessary for the creation of non-existent productive systems (whereas in Europe the common market operated in a universe of already developed industrial systems). The second pertains to protection of the new integrated zone. The African common markets proposed at that time were silent about the first set and shy of the second.

Today, it is even no longer a question of conceptualising the possible common markets as protected areas. That is formally prohibited by WTO rules, regionalisation being tolerated only insofar as it comes in the framework of an open globalisation. In this context, protection is not acceptable unless it is moderated and especially "provisional" since it must only render the local activities rapidly "competitive" on an open world market. There is something ridiculous here : requesting an African country to become competitive in any field of economic activity in some years or even within twenty years is meaningless. A productive mine (based on a rich natural endowment) or an ordinary subcontracting industrial establishment (whose "advantage" is therefore comparable to that of cheap labour and slight taxation) could certainly be "competitive" in this sense, whereas the national productive system could not. Under the circumstances, the possible increase in "competitive activities" could only replicate the polarisation to which the given country fell victim.

The polarisation operating within the world system today is no longer based on the sole industrial monopoly of the centres. It is because the major peripheries in turn have now entered the industrial era (even though Africa has actually not done so). The industrial monopoly of the past is now substituted by what I proposed to classify under one of the headings of the "five monopolies" of the centres : technological initiative, access to world natural resources, control of financial globalisation, communications and weapons of mass destruction. If taken together, these five monopolies define one form and a new context of the law of globalised value on the basis of which accumulation at the world level replicates and intensifies the polarisation process.

Under these new conditions, the national development strategies and regionalisation structures destined to enhance their efficiency should be perceived as the means of facing these five challenges.

A regionalisation project in the Third World today is meaningless if it does not constitute the mechanism for establishing adequate facilities for effectual scientific and technological research capable of developing appropriate technologies and promoting their diffusion and effective use - through protection - in any given regional entity. For example, promoting pharmaceutical research and establishing a pharmaceutical industry to combat AIDS (and other no less destructive pandemic diseases) in Africa. Doing so means entering into conflict (and it must be admitted) with the rules of the so-called protection of intellectual and industrial property, in this case, those of the pharmaceutical oligopolies of countries of the North which are not interested in AIDS eradication in Africa (which entails the use of less expensive products) but rather defending the substantial proceeds they realise from the sale of their expensive products. Is that impossible ? Cuba has created a remarkable medical and pharmaceutical industry. Why could Africa not do the same ? Many examples could be cited among others in the fields of agriculture and irrigation.

A regionalisation project in the Third World today is meaningless if it does not envisage ways and means of using the region's natural resources primarily for the development of the region instead of world consumption (in this case, consumption by countries of the North). In other words, exploiting such resources (minerals and oil in particular) only in proportion to the needs of the region and its exports in demand to pay for the necessary imports. The principles of liberal globalisation call for the opposite : exporting at the maximum capacity, even if it means sacrificing the future of Third World peoples to accommodate the immediate waste of resources by countries of the North... One of the priority objectives of regionalisation must be to break the centres' monopoly of access to world resources. A taxation system in respect of income from exploitation of natural resources could be imagined at the regional level as a means of sharing its proceeds among the States and regional institutions (to facilitate, for instance, the coverage of their technological research expenditures outlined in the previous paragraph). A global taxation system would thus be initiated and this would compel consumers in the North to pay a higher price for access to world resources than the implicit cost of their waste.

A regionalisation project in the Third World is meaningless if it does not allow for the establishment of a regional financial system capable of resisting the financial globalisation implemented by the dominant capital. A system of national currencies correctly managed (while capital flow is still controlled) and articulated at the regional level by a Monetary Fund with responsibility to ensure a relative stability of exchanges within the region, can be imagined if there is a bold attempt to be liberated from the IMF diktat. The region could then refuse collectively what financial globalisation imposes on it, including the opening of capital accounts.

The implementation of regional communication systems, destined to confer on each region some relative autonomy vis-à-vis the globalised system that does not only serve as a vehicle for dominant cultures and sub-cultures but also operates as a powerful instrument of political manipulation, entails not only the solution to

technological problems (which should therefore appear in the list of priorities of the research outlined above). It also implies a difficult consensus on the political and cultural options of countries of the region, nevertheless conceivable if the national and regional structures are based on the principles of the best democracy. Some regional formations of this kind would also pave the way for the democratisation of the global system.

The monopoly of weapons of mass destruction should also be broken. There too, the responses to the challenge - national and regional - entail not only difficult but conceivable agreements, for example, those for the creation of collective task forces (OAU would definitely need them !), not only - alas - the creation of efficient arms industries (pending the time when the North will renounce its "right" to interfere... and to bomb recalcitrant parties) but also and, of course, the sharing of a common vision of regional security as a complement to that of the singular Nations.

It could be objected that what has just been said about responses to the challenge posed by the "five monopolies" is probably valid for the giant countries (China, India and Brazil) which have the advantage of doing without "regionalisations" (and moreover, these three countries are to some extent not insensitive to the challenges posed by the "five monopolies", which they have been facing, at least partially, through their specific national policies) or perhaps for the regions of Asia and Latin America that are already advanced in the field of industrialisation. However, the fact that the forms of regionalisation devised for the previous phase of global development are still valid for Africa, since the continent has not really entered the era of industrialisation, is partly true, provided that it be a question of regional protection from an industrialisation to be realised seriously and at the maximum rather than the minimum level. That is partly true because, Africa, indisputably, is also part parcel of the world today and should therefore participate in the fight against the new forms of domination by the North and the related polarisation.

The principles of regionalisation outlined above naturally come within the perspective of a democratic and multi-centric globalisation.

The principles of this form of regionalisation are reasonable and efficient means of combating the polarising effects of the five monopolies of the triad. From that premise, the world order could be reviewed so as to propose the central themes and objectives of the high-level negotiations on at least the following topical issues likely to organise a supervised interdependence between countries and regions committed to the service of the populations :

- Renegotiating "market shares" and their access rules. Of course, this project calls into question the rules of WTO which, under the pretext of a discourse on "fair competition", applies itself solely to defending privileges of the active oligopolies worldwide.

- Renegotiating financial market systems, with a view to stemming the domination of operations for financial speculation and channelling investments towards productive activities in the North and South alike. This project calls into question the functions, and no doubt, the very existence of the World Bank.
- Renegotiating monetary systems so as to establish agreements and regional mechanisms guaranteeing a relative stability of foreign exchange transactions that should be completed by organising their interdependence. This project calls into question, IMF, the dollar standard and the principle of free and fluctuating foreign exchange transactions.
- Initiating a global taxation system by establishing taxes on income realised from the exploitation of natural resources and redistributing them at national, regional and international levels on the basis of appropriate criteria and for specified uses. The Greens (Ecologists) should support such an idea if they are serious and consistent with the principles they proclaim to be theirs.
- Demilitarising the Planet, by first reducing weapons of mass destruction at the disposal of the major Powers.
- Democratising UNO and international law.

In this perspective reconciling globalisation and local and regional autonomies (which I call delinking consistent with the new challenges), there is provision for a serious review of the concepts of "aid", and for problems connected with democratisation of the United Nations system, that could therefore concentrate efficiently on certain objectives of disarmament (rendered possible by the national and regional security systems associated with regional reconstruction), initiate the establishment of a globalised taxation (in relation with the management of national resources of the Planet), accomplish the functions of UNO as an inter-state organisation by initiating the creation of a "World Parliament" that can reconcile the exigencies of universalism (individual, community and peoples' rights, political and social rights, etc.) and the diversity of the historical and cultural heritage.

The programme outlined here is not solely aimed at modulating market regulation systems to protect the weak (classes and nations). Its political component is no less important. The central ideas that guided the writing of the paper pertain to disarmament and the need to formulate a new international law governing individuals, peoples and States.

As regards disarmament, the dominant discourse hackneyed by the media, in light of the dangers inherent in the "proliferation" of nuclear weapons and others, is truly out of place because, as a military power, America has opted for terrorist bombing and would obviously not hesitate to use nuclear weapons if it found that strategy necessary. Faced with this major threat, the other countries of the world can only react by resolving to build up military forces capable of dissuading imperialist aggression by rendering it expensive. That is the price to pay for peace.

Can one also hope to develop a new substantive law that will guarantee for all human beings on this earth a dignified treatment, as a condition for their active and inventive participation in the construction of the future ? A substantive and multi-dimensional law that will treat the rights of human beings (men and women of course, as perfectly equal beings), political rights, social rights (work and security), community and peoples' rights and eventually, the rights governing inter-state relations. That is certainly an agenda to span decades of reflection, debates, actions and decisions.

The principle of respect for national sovereignty must remain the cornerstone of international law. Indeed, if the Charter of the United Nations chose to proclaim that principle, it was precisely because the principle had been denied by fascist powers. In his poignant speech delivered in 1935 before the SDN, Emperor Haile Selassie clearly indicated that the violation of this principle – cowardly abandoned by the then democracies - tolled the death knell of this organisation. The fact that this fundamental principle is again violated today with so much brutality by the democracies themselves does not constitute a mitigating circumstance but rather an aggravating circumstance. Incidentally, this situation already launched the far-from-glorious end of a UNO viewed as a registration room for decisions taken elsewhere and implemented by others. The official adoption of the principle of national sovereignty in 1945 was logically accompanied by the prohibition of recourse to war. States were authorised to defend themselves against whoever violated their sovereignty through aggression, but condemned in advance if they were aggressors. Today, it is the powers associated in NATO which must be condemned in this regard in conformity with the law in force.

No doubt, the United Nations Charter had given an absolute interpretation of the principle of sovereignty. The fact that today the democratic opinion no longer accepts that this principle authorise governments to do as they choose with human beings placed under their jurisdiction constitutes an undeniable progress of universal conscience. How can these two potentially conflicting principles be reconciled ? Certainly, not by suppressing one of their terms - sovereignty of States or human rights. It is because apart from the fact that the option made by the United States and its trailing subordinated European allies is certainly not the good one, it conceals the real objectives of the operation which have nothing to do with respect for human rights despite the media hype intended to make it credible.

UNO is the place where international law should be developed. There can be no other respectable places. Whether this entails organisational reforms, a review of the ways and means (including institutional innovation) of ensuring the representation of real social forces in the system alongside the governments (that, at best, represent them so imperfectly), whether it be a question of assigning oneself the objective of incorporating into a coherent entity the rules of international law (respect for sovereignty), those concerning economic and social rights neglected in the liberal vulgate, which necessarily call for regulation of markets -- these offer enough material to pad out an agenda full of questions to which I will not seek to provide, in this paper, answers that would inevitably be too brief. It certainly constitutes a long process without a short cut ; for one thing, the history of mankind has not ended and will continue to progress according to its possibilities.

The multi-centric and democratic global system advocated here does not constitute the "end of history" ; it is only a stage in the long progress of social values towards the constitution of a world society based on human solidarity rather than the selfishness of individuals and nations.

In this transition, emphasis is actually laid on three principles mostly neglected in the 20th Century experiences which moreover reflect the underlying trends in the global transformation. It primarily concerns the principle of a democratisation perceived as an endless multidimensional process, which helps to initiate the raising of awareness about the nature of the economist alienation to be combated. This process therefore involves a gradual transition from projects and visions about the progress from liberation in capitalism to those concerning liberation from capitalism. In the second place, the humanistic vision of the world, which advocates the establishment of individual and community rights in positions of responsibility (in place of commercial law, in other words, the law in the service of capital) helps to promote a people's internationalism, which acts as a counterbalance to the trans-nationalism of capital. Finally, in the third place, regionalisations are viewed from a perspective that makes them efficient tools for reducing the polarising effects of capital flow.

We can now consider the questions concerning a possible North-South partnership, distinguished by a new type of co-operation "project" associating Europe, Africa and the Arab world.

The dominant Europe on the one hand, and the dominated Africa and the Arab world on the other hand, have been closely associated by geography - and perhaps history - for better and especially for worse (imperialism). Can one imagine a new type of "cooperation" between these three regions for the construction of the democratic multipolar and regionalised world outlined above ? What are the conditions for such a project ?

The objectives of a project with such an ambition must be clarified. They could only consist in : (i) bridging the gap between the various partners of the region : Western Europe, Eastern Europe and the former USSR, poor semi-industrialised Arab countries, rich oil-producing countries, Sub-Saharan African countries and South Africa ; (ii) ensuring a sufficient degree of autonomy for the concerned regions and sub-regions in order to take account of the disparities between the various parties that could provide effective solutions to their social problems ; and (iii) guaranteeing the supervised open policy of countries of the region in their international relations and in their relations with other regions of the world.

It is more than obvious that the realisation of these objectives would necessitate a deep transformation of the structures of the powers that be. More precisely, this transformation is unbelievable without imagining : (i) that a hegemony of labour is replacing that of capital ; (ii) that popular social alliance is taking shape in Russia and in the member countries of the former USSR (as in the countries of Eastern Europe), thereby taking over from the political bureaucracies and the confused, ambiguous populist and nationalist forces ; and

(iii) that some popular national alliances are developing in Africa and in the Arab world in place of the existing compradore hegemonies.

To Europe, in the broad sense of the word, even though it is vague, the concept of "common house" might certainly correspond to the exigencies of the envisaged construction, for it implies a margin of relative autonomy necessary for the deployment of appropriate specific policies of all the parties among the partners. The system does not exclude the more comprehensive forms of integration between the more advanced countries. The European Union might form this unit if it could be re-established on the basis of the hegemony of labour, a concept that does not exist in the current state of its institutionalisation. The outcome of this form of European regionalisation at several stages would be African Unity and Arab Unity, which will also be conceptualised at various stages. The construction of the Europe - Africa - Arab World entity might obviously require that the three regions agree to strengthen one another and operate in a direction that would consolidate their respective units. That is not the case because Europe has not yet expressed its desire to deal with the group composed of Africans and Arabs. The European Union does not recognise OAU and the Arab League and it only accepts to deal individually with the countries forming these organisations. It is therefore incumbent on the Africans and Arabs to impose their recognition.

On the other hand, the present state of social power struggles certainly does not make it possible to imagine that the upheavals of this scope are of topical interest. The social agents who would objectively have benefited from such an outcome are merely potential agents, and are far from crystallising into political forces capable of proposing revolutions of this magnitude. Those in the forefront of the scene operate in directions that do not converge on the objectives defined earlier in this paper. It is quite the opposite.

Under the circumstances, behind the current "Euro-African" and "Euro-Arab" projects is a looming collective neo-imperialist project with Western Europe dominating "its" African and Arab South and "its" latin-americanised East to its advantage.

This project can still inspire the nostalgic daydreams of the colonial past. Is it necessarily realistic under the present global circumstances ? No. Even the Gulf War has shown that United States of America alone wanted to control the Middle East and its oil (with the support of its ardent Israeli and Turkish allies). Europe itself has no collective political vision of the world. Since 1945, Great Britain has made an apparently definitive option of siding unreservedly with the big brother of North America and reliving its imperialist past by proxy through the big brother. For its part, Germany, having renounced its wildest Nazi-specific dream about global hegemony, has opted to resume its traditional expansion towards Eastern Europe, to content itself with the "latin-americanisation" of this Eastern segment to its advantage and to conform in other areas to the positions of the United States' hegemonic project. On the other hand, France, having renounced the Gaullist principle of refusing to blend its own interests with those of Washington, is being marginalised.

Under the circumstances, it can only be concluded that, at present, no Euro-Arab--African regionalisation project worthy of this name exists.

Many are the critical readers who might describe the principles of the propositions in this paper as “unrealistic” and therefore refuse to engage in the discussion they may consider unnecessary. Their “realism” consists in believing that “the fiddling within the system”, as it stands now, however that may be, constitutes the sole option possible allowing for progress”. History seldom justifies this type of fiddling. In fact, the “realistic” politicians of colonial Africa behaved that way and refused to follow the minority avant-garde that boldly proclaimed independence as the only prospect that could motivate their engagement in the struggle. History has proved this avant-garde right. Whereas politicking is probably the art of acting intelligently in the context of well-defined power balances, authentic politics is the art of modifying such power balances.

Intellectuals must dare to think, speak out and make proposals. It is on this condition that creative utopia helps to discover the sole prospect that is truly realistic ; in other words, the type that can rapidly mobilise powerful social forces that eventually impose its logic once the social movement begins to be aware of it. If there be a utopia, in the plain and negative sense of the term, it is actually that of "realists" who do not think they must and can pull out of the dominant theories. Their interventions have no impact. If intellectuals give up the idea of fulfilling their critical function, they become puppets, worthless parasites.

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Samir AMIN
THIRD WORLD FORUM

REGIONALISATIONS

I. PATTERNS OF REGIONALISATIONS

Regionalisation is an ambiguous concept but its status can be defined only if it is viewed from the angle of the concerned countries' strategic objectives and the challenges they feel capable of meeting through their collective action.

To the majority of contemporary Third World Countries, regionalisation appears to have become one of the major requirements of any effective response to the polarisation challenge as a result of the increasing dimension of contemporary capitalist globalisation. This response therefore entails appropriate strategies for inward-looking development and delinking (cf. The paradigm of development) simultaneously at national levels and in the regions concerned, since regionalisation in a way comes to support the associated countries' effort.

The dogmatic liberal condemns in advance any form of regionalisation because the preferences it creates constitute an impediment to the absolute advantage offered by infinite globalisation. The American establishment, and of course the World Bank behind it, have long been opposed to regionalisation. Their adhesion is therefore a recent phenomenon. Henceforth, the ideology and strategy of the dominant system propose another concept and another practice of regionalisation envisaged as the creation of subsets integrated into the entity formed by the proposed liberal globalisation. Regionalisation is therefore viewed as a communication channel for liberal globalisation.

This fundamental distinction is the criterion from which the various institutionalised forms and regionalisation projects in Europe, America, Africa and Asia can be evaluated.

The expansion of capitalism world-wide inevitably paved the way for a constant polarisation that found expression in the ever-increasing contrast between the wealth and power of its centres on the one hand, and the poverty and vulnerability of its peripheries on the other hand. This polarisation has assumed successive historical forms closely connected with the dominant logic of capital accumulation peculiar to each of the stages of its development.

The "classical" model of polarisation from the generalisation of the industrial revolution to all centres during the 19th Century was based on a simple contrast between industrialised countries and regions (the current triad) and non-industrialised countries and regions (Asia, except-Japan, Africa and Latin America).

On the other hand, in the course of this stage spanning one and a half centuries (1800-1950) the modern economic system of the developed nations had been gradually established on "national" bases. The inward-looking national productive systems of each of these central capitalist States acquired their specific character from the nature of social alliances formed by the bourgeoisie in order to entrench and stabilise its hegemony. Once established on such bases, these dominant social entities of the global system in turn shaped the world economy. This world economy then appeared as a really international economy ; in other words, it appeared like a unit comprising central sets relatively autonomous and operating concurrently with one another, as well as a nebulous outlying entity - the peripheries - the arena for conflicting interventions of the metropolitan centres.

It is therefore realised that the national liberation movements in Asia and Africa (and in Latin America, the “developmentalist” movement – known as “desarrollista” in Spanish - of the post-Second World War era), just like the socialist revolutions in the late countries (Russia and China), defined their response to the polarisation challenge on the basis of a twofold objective which consisted in (i) initiating and completing an industrialisation process synonymous with liberating progress and a catching-up process and (ii) constructing a Nation-State and an inward-looking national productive system inspired by central models. That is how the ideology of modernity took shape.

In the course of this “Bandung” stage for Africa and Asia (1955 – 1975), the efforts of such a development produced a new Third World henceforth engaged in industrialisation even though of uneven dimensions and therefore highly differentiated (cf. Polarisation, Central Capitalism, Peripheral Capitalism). On the other hand, the strategies deployed to this effect remained exclusively “national”; in other words, they were formulated on the basis and in the framework of the Nation-State. The major institutions affiliated to the set or group of Third World Countries had either political objectives (resisting pressure from the Western powers – cf. the Non-Aligned Movement) or the economic objective of defending common interests against the dominant capital rather than that of contributing towards regional economic integration.

This strategy exhausted its possibilities and attained its historic limits more or less rapidly for various reasons, thereby revealing the illusion of an impossible scheme for “catching up through interdependence”. The then Third World’s joint attempts to extend this national phase by negotiating better international conditions (the Non-Aligned group’s proposal of a “New International Economic Order” in 1975) came up against the refusal by the Western countries as a prelude to their counter-offensive as from the 1980s.

The post-war period (1945-1990), which is now over, was not only marked by the entry of the outlying entities into the era of industrialisation, urbanisation and modernity. At the same time, the progress of capitalist accumulation in the centres themselves triggered off the progressive and partial dismantling of the national productive systems (without their being necessarily substituted by a globalised productive system – cf. New Phase of Capitalism?). This is a chaotic transition from an international economy to a potentially global economy.

Does this evolution offer a “chance” to the Third World Countries, as purported by the liberal school of thought ? A chance that would enable those who got integrated “faster and more deeply” into the globalisation process to get out of their historic under-development. The new monopolies on which the advantages of the centres (the triad) are based exclude this possibility and in fact inaugurate new forms of an aggravated polarisation (Cf. Polarisation...)

The fact remains that, today, it might appear almost obvious that it is impossible for societies of the periphery to meet the challenges enshrined in the new monopolies of the centres by means of strictly national policies, whether in terms of the economic dimensions of the given challenge (including technological development) or its political dimensions (regional security, the necessary complement to national security). This is the

nature of the challenges that the regionalisation projects have to meet in order to become contributory factors for the construction of another world system that will really be multicentric.

The experience of the European construction

This experience is always referred to by various people as the model par excellence that should inspire other projects in the regions of the Third World.

Certainly, the European system presents by far the most advanced standards, with regard to the achievements of the European Common Markets, the institutionalised economic and monetary integration processes in the European Union and initiation of its political construction.

Nevertheless, the historical conditions peculiar to this advanced region of the world, which clearly attest to such successes, have little to do with those conditions that characterise the peripheries of the system.

The European construction was inspired by an initiative of the United States – The Marshall Plan – aimed at supporting the restoration of intra-European trade as an essential element in the reconstruction of an open world economy and not as an alternative to the world economy. Even later on, when Europe accomplished its reconstruction process and made up for its lateness behind the United States, it did not consider itself (or has not yet considered itself) as being “delinked” from the world system.

More specifically, the politicians of the European communities practised selective delinking. The joint agricultural policies, for instance, were actually based on a delinking of domestic agricultural prices from those on the world market. This option is moreover behind the success of Europe that managed by this means to guarantee its food self-sufficiency to subsequently become the principal rival to the United States in terms of world foodstuff exports. The United States itself has always dissociated its domestic agricultural market from the world market. That practice is a good example of the gap between practices of the really existing capitalism and the dogmatic views about liberal economy under imaginary capitalism (Cf. Imaginary capitalism and the really existing capitalism). Nevertheless, in other fields like those of the manufacturing industry in general, the European construction was oriented towards gradually reconciling conditions of the European market and those of the so-called world market. At the same time, Europe (like the United States), condemns any delinking policy adopted by others (Third World Countries) even if it was selective. Do what I tell you and not what I do!

The European construction was also facilitated by the fact that it concerned a group of already advanced countries whose established productive systems were therefore capable of being adjusted to one another without the difficulties encountered in these processes becoming insurmountable. The problem is quite the opposite for the Third World regions because it is a question of creating non-existent productive structures. One can therefore imagine the possibility of accelerating this creation process by taking advantage of the vast area effect enshrined in regionalisation ; in other words, by planning (the word is not too strong) the

establishment of complementarities between the various associated countries. In Europe, the late countries (Portugal, Greece, etc.) stuck around the group of more advanced countries and regions. The European Union's financial affluence certainly facilitated the transfer of (public) capital to these poor regions which eventually felt that the European construction favoured them. It is not stated that this was the sole or the best possible option for these countries. However, other options would have met with hostility from the dominant powers including those of Europe and therefore appeared to be politically impossible such that, today, the die is cast and the European option appears now without any alternatives for these countries. They can only nurture the hope that the European system itself evolves in better directions, socially and economically, for the benefit of all of its peoples.

The European construction also took the necessary time to progress with precaution. It took no less than fifteen years for Europe to achieve the convertibility of its currencies. Moreover, this measured and controlled progression formed part of a general – global – phase of increased expansion (“the glorious thirty”). This general expansion (every partner sees its productions and exports increase relatively easily) obviously facilitates the adjustments that are becoming painful in a difficult global economic situation as witnessed for some twenty years.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the Western Europeans are not particularly interested in transferring their experience to countries of Eastern Europe and to those of the former Soviet Union. In this domain, the European options, modelled on those of Washington, rather aim at dismantling elements of regional co-operation established during the Soviet era. At the same time, there is a demand for an immediate opening of concerned countries to the violent winds of liberal globalisation (for instance, they are expected to ensure the free convertibility of their currency within one year or two!). The consequences of these options that are poles apart from the lessons of the European construction – can only be chaotic and tragic. Those of the concerned countries that appear capable of being integrated in the extended European construction, despite everything, are actually relegated to the status of dominated regions (the case of Czech, Poland, the Baltic States and Hungary). Those countries that cannot somersault (such as Romania and Bulgaria) or that continue to resist (like Yugoslavia) are marginalised, excluded or even combated ! There is a striking analogy with practices developed by the United States in their relations with Latin America and that is why it can be stated that, in this regard, the “Pan-European regionalisation” is seeking to “latin-americanise” Eastern Europe. It is therefore a regionalisation model of the North-South type (here, West-East geographically), based on unequal relations reproducing and deepening the polarisation within the overall system, and not of the intra-North type (as in the case of the European project before its extension was envisaged) or the intra-South type.

In Africa, regionalisation appears as a window-dressing

In Africa, there is a proliferation of regional co-operation (or even integration)-oriented institutions that can be classified under different headings.

First, there is the Organisation of African Unity (created in 1963) with a primarily political vocation, whose real major functions consisted in supporting liberation struggles in the Portuguese colonies, in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa on the one hand, and in containing and arbitrating in intra-state conflicts. In this context, OAU constituted an insipid substitute for Pan Africanism, which nevertheless remains a potentially powerful ideological and political aspiration.

During the so-called “development decades” (1960s and 1970s) the tasks assigned to OAU were relatively facilitated by the fact that the member States actually enjoyed some degree of legitimacy among their peoples. The real achievements of the forms of development permitted by the trans-ethnic – populist – national base inherited from the liberation movements that eventually became ruling parties justified this legitimacy. The said legitimacy was justified among other things and perhaps mainly by the continual increase in the number of beneficiaries of the development in question that constituted the social base of the authority in power. This social base was composed of a core group of “middle classes” (enlarged through educational progress) and around this group was a nebulous clientele active among the popular classes.

The political situation is tragically different today. The erosion of populist development models and the diktat from the liberal globalisation imposed through structural adjustment plans brutally delegitimised the majority of African States without the forms of sham democracy that took over from the autocratic populist nationalist powers succeeding in restoring the legitimacy of governments unable to offer their peoples anything acceptable in terms of social progress. Africa then entered an involution phase characterised by what is improperly referred to as “internal tribal wars”. It is because these conflicts were not really caused by hostilities between ethnic groups ; instead, they were orchestrated by warlords seeking to control their countries’ resources (oil, diamond, etc.) who used ethnic affinity as a means to that end. Once the local authorities lost their legitimacy, they were unable to face up to the explosion of such criminal ambitions. When called upon for help, OAU – or even UNO -- proved to be equally powerless under such conditions, as attested by the tragic outcome of the ECOMOG operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone (cf. Ethnicism, Culturalism). Under these circumstances, the very idea of regionalisation is meaningless.

For its part, the economic component of OAU’s functions was actually limited to active contribution in Africa (within the Non-Aligned Movement and among the Group of 77 at UNO) towards the establishment of a “common front” presenting claims tendered by countries of the South in their interface with the North counterparts in the new international economic order.

Under these conditions, OAU did not play an active role in the establishment of regional (Pan African) or sub-regional co-operation/integration – even in the initial stages. To say the least, the numerous institutions established in this regard remained inactive.

On the other hand, the co-operation system adopted under the partnership agreements between the European Union and African States (along with those of the Caribbean and the Pacific) presents a different format. However, this refers to a North-South regionalisation system that has so far functioned as a communication

channel for the capitalist globalisation that has now become neo-liberal (cf. the Lomé-Cotonou Agreements and E.U. – A.C.P. partnership).

Also noteworthy are the remaining numerous sub-regional institutions of which the leading ones are ECOWAS in West Africa, SADC (after the SADCC) and COMESA (after PTA) in East and Southern Africa, CEAO – UMOA and UDEAC for countries of the Franc Area, SACU and CMA for countries of the Rand Area, agencies of the major world institutions (such as ADB, a quasi-branch of the World Bank) and other minor institutions (like the Mano River Union, the Great Lakes Community, the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel / CILSS, etc.)

In this regard, it will be observed that the most viable regional institutions are those linked to France or to South Africa (before and after the apartheid system).

Soon after the attainment of independence by its African colonies, France undertook to negotiate the possibility of maintaining the States in the Franc Area in concrete forms that virtually excluded any room for autonomy in monetary management and placed the regional issuing institutions (superficially designated as central banks – whereas they are not) under the authority of the French Treasury and the Bank of France. This system has survived to date, in spite of its vicissitudes (withdrawal and reintegration of some of its members) and has even enlisted new members. A system of this nature does not deserve to be considered as promoting a form of genuine regional co-operation. It is only a vestige of the colonial system that is now on the verge of extinction under the triple effect of the substitution of the Euro for the Franc, liberal globalisation and African involutions. At any rate, if the system happened to break up, there is nothing in perspective to prepare an effective substitute for it, neither in the countries concerned nor in those of the regions of which they are members. Some provisional reforms to that effect were put forward between 1960 and 1970. These reforms were aimed at making the local currency/Franc ratio more flexible, a gradual substitution of a mix of currencies defined for their management (a mix that could have facilitated an acceptable and effective association with the Euro Area), the extension of the monetary zones concerned by integrating the anglophone countries. France rejected all these measures without discussion, indicating that its main concern was to preserve the exclusive control of its client states. Nigeria, whose resources and potential far exceed those of the African member countries of the Franc Area, lobbied among African authorities to make its voice heard about these considerations through sustained and constant efforts, in spite of its characteristic political instability. France has categorically rejected all these approaches and reportedly supports, on the contrary, centrifugal forces trying to ruin this country.

In Southern Africa, the conventions organising customs and monetary unions between South Africa on the one hand, and Lesotho and Swaziland on the other hand, do not deserve any more to be ranked under “regional co-operation” in view of the glaring inequality between the dominant partner and the countries in question, that it has always dominated. SADCC, which was created in the apartheid era so that the Southern African countries stopped depending on Pretoria, actually assisted in providing these countries with some transport facilities to enable them to avoid South African ports. However, soon after the liberation of South

Africa, this organisation was itself transformed into a new co-operation institution (SADC) with South Africa as one of its member countries. At any rate, the new South Africa intends to pursue the same policy adopted by the former one towards countries of the region that it dominates by virtue of its industrial lead. Will the partners indefinitely accept to endure this unequal relationship? It is not certain whether they will.

Certainly, African sub-regional co-operation/integration organisations are credited with meagre, not to say, no achievements. Trade has been negligible, and intra-regional capital flow, non-existent. That was more than foreseeable. In fact, so long as their economies are almost exclusively dependent on exported primary products, the member countries can have nothing to exchange among themselves. The removal of customs barriers and creation of common markets do not suffice to integrate economies of this kind. The sole effect of these measures consists in legitimising trade in foreign products substituting for smuggled goods at the countries' borders. The African States' subsequent adhesion to the free trade principles formulated by the new WTO that took over from GATT can only worsen the disappointing effects of the "commercial opening". A co-operation/integration project is meaningless if the member States do not collectively commit themselves to active industrialisation policies necessarily promoted by the States. In principle, however, the dominant liberal ideology is hostile to any idea of State intervention and planning that would substitute for it the myth whereby private capital (foreign) must spontaneously fulfil the functions of development and diversification.

OAU did take some initiatives -- and persists -- in proposing to African States development "plans" involving their sub-regional or even regional integration. The Lagos Plan of Action (1980) and the Abuja Treaty (1991) are good examples of this organisation's approach. In strictly "technical" terms, these initiatives are far from being devoid of interest or even from being devoid of force and the proposals put forward are far from being absurd, with particular regard to the branches and sectors of new activities suggested for creation, as well as the notions pertaining to their macro-economic linkage and to the distribution of specialisations between the States. The World Bank did perceive their inherent danger : for one thing, the famous Berg Report (1981) produced as an immediate reaction to the Lagos Plan of Action, which has ever since become the Bible of the World Bank, international co-operation institutions and most governments, proposes as a counterpoint, nothing other than pursuing in Africa, specialisations based on "natural" advantages and therefore keeping within the limits of the age-long specialisation in agriculture and mining sectors. To be consistent, the World Bank does not even mention in its Report the potential advantages of an absolutely unnecessary regional integration in the context of the "liberal" strategies it recommends.

The weaknesses inherent in OAU's proposals reside in the fact that their implementation entails active motivation by the States. However, the ruling classes created in the context of the African States in question lack resources or the very will required to engage in a course of action other than specialisation in agriculture and mining from which they derive their revenues. "Regionalisation" under such conditions is outside their real concerns and those of the dominant forces in the global system. It is sheer window-dressing.

In the world system (in which it is completely integrated), Africa occupies only the most subordinate positions that prevent the continent from being an active agent instrumental in shaping the system as a whole. Africa no longer has any national development project nor a fortiori a regional one, in its capacity as a passive subject of the globalisation process (and that is the meaning befitting the term "marginalisation", which does not denote "non-integrated" but rather "integrated as a passive agent").

The Arab world fossilised in its powerlessness

In the Arab world, the popular feeling of belonging to one cultural community if not to one "nation", in the strict sense of the word, is a reality that has assumed strong dimensions in the course of the last few decades. One might therefore have expected this sentiment to also serve as the foundation for serious co-operation between the Arab States, or even to motivate these States to embark on the establishment of a kind of political unity (confederate, federal or unitary). Such is not the case ; in practice, co-operation/integration is as insignificant in the Arab world as it is in Sub-Saharan Africa, for relatively the same reasons and despite the advantage conferred by the Arab linguistic unity.

The Arab League, whose actual designation is the League of Arab States, was modelled on the UNO pattern as an inter-state organisation whose members preserve their full sovereignty that is never renounced, even if partially, for the benefit of supranational powers. In this sense, the League is similar to OAU and to the Organisation of American States, but not to the European Union.

Should the creation of the League also be viewed as an insipid substitute of Pan Arabism ? In the course of its history, the League has established a series of inter-state specialised Arab organisations modelled on the pattern of the United Nations family, but with modest operational results : many surveys, reports and projects, most of which are of standard quality, but few concrete achievements.

Integration efforts in the region thus assumed other dimensions. In a first phase marked by the triumph of Pan-Arabism in the mid-1950s, as well as the outbreak of the Algerian liberation war until the defeat suffered in the third Israeli-Arab war of 1967, these efforts consisted in attempts to fulfil this unity - even if partially in the beginning - by mobilising powerful political inputs, one of the landmarks being the creation of the United Arab Republic (1957-1961) from a merger between Egypt and Syria. However, the failure of this form of Arab unification certainly tolled the death-knell of the Nasser-Baathist strategy and gave free rein to the exacerbation of animosity, and even of conflicts, between governments of immediate neighbours (Algeria-Morocco, Syria-Iraq, Saudi Arabia-Yemen and Iraq-Kuwait).

At the same time, as from 1973, the oil manna for some time appeared to replace the radical political will of the Pan-Arab populism. This manna was actually accompanied by a large-scale movement of internal migrants from the poor countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen) to the rich oil countries (Libya, Irak and the Gulf countries). Then , when they felt threatened by such "invasion", the Gulf countries reacted, as already known, by gradually substituting an immigrant labour force from Pakistan,

India and the Philippines. In other respects, the oil manna financed substantial public remittances. However, far from being perceived as the condition sanctioned by the integrative projects, such remittances were generally wasted in the private consumer needs of the ruling classes' and in the public consumer needs of the subsidised States. That outcome was completely foreseeable. The ultra conservative authorities of the Gulf countries act as communication channels of the exigencies of liberal globalisation and the hegemonism of the United States which they have never thought of calling into question. On the contrary, the governments in question have become quasi-protectorates of the United States, in the wake of America's permanent military establishment in the region after the 1990-1991 Gulf war. The financial support provided concurrently with the dominant movements associated with political Islam that swear allegiance to the United States gives a negative picture of the effects of the "oil manna", because political Islam has no interest in Arab unity, hence the call for "Muslim Ummah" as a substitute for it. In Arabic, there is an untranslatable play on words about this manna with the assertion that the manna (*al fawra*) has taken the place of the revolution (*al thawra*). Finally, the oil manna has managed to finance some private investments here and there. But here too, the investments absolutely formed part of policies aimed at strengthening parasitic compradores of the middle classes who also do not envisage any future prospects outside liberal globalisation.

Under the circumstances, regionalisation/integration in the Arab world has failed to make any progress worthy of the name in the course of the last three decades.

Like Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab world occupies only subordinate positions in the world system. The volume of its oil exports cannot actually constitute a real substitute for an effective industrialisation that can satisfy domestic needs and assist in shaping world markets. Like the case of Sub-Saharan Africa (Gabon), there are some "marginalised rich" countries in the Arab world (the Gulf countries) just as there are many "marginalised poor" ones. Both groups of countries lack the means to impose themselves as active agents helping to shape the world system. They remain as passive agents compelled to unilaterally adapt to the system even though the region's oil supply might be of vital importance to western consumers.

The Arab world is therefore living through a phase of its history marked by lack of projects specific to them. It is therefore not surprising that the others take the initiative in making "proposals" which they impose on their Arab partners.

Thus, the United States of America, which considers the Middle East as a priority region under its exclusive authority (the Europeans being invited just to support its presence in the region) ever since the defunct Soviet Union was discarded, has concocted the Middle East "common market project", together with Israel and Turkey, its two allies (and with the unconditional support of governments of the Gulf countries). Not only does this project legitimise Israel's expansionist practices in the occupied Palestine relegated to the status of a Bantustan ; it also offers the Zionist State the advantage of serving as the indispensable financial and technological intermediary between the multinationals and countries in the region. In this context, one can talk of "regionalisation" only in the sense of a North-South project (United States, Israel, Middle East region) operating in the framework and for the benefit of liberal globalisation and American hegemonism.

For its part, Europe made qualified proposals for "Euro-Mediterranean partnership" that fell within the same logic (Cf. The Euro-Mediterranean partnership). Even though this project would already have failed, it did help to deepen the Maghreb-Mashrek cleavage. In fact, by virtue of the agreements on their association with the European Union, the Maghreb countries are more integrated into the European productive system (to which they supply poorly paid sub-contracted products) than the Mashrek countries.

The "sharing of the burden", in the American political jargon, finds expression here in a division of labour that assigns to the United States, the Middle East and its oil resources, and to the Europeans, the Maghreb and its emigrants (to Europe).

Latin America and the Caribbean

(Contribution required from the regional group)

Issues to be considered (among others)

Motivated by the Monroe doctrine, and, with Washington as the mainspring, is the Organisation of American States (OAS) not a kind of Ministry of United States Colonies (as purported in Latin America) ?

Is Mercosur envisaged in the spirit of liberal globalisation ? On what conditions can it evolve in another direction ?

The NAFTA (Canada-United States-Mexico) foreshadows the new North American project for "Free Trade in the Americas, from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego (ALCA)". Results and prospects. Possible conflict with Mercosur and the Andin Pact. Evaluation of the Caribbean Community.

Prospects of the American monetary system : the progress of dollarisation in Latin America.

Asia

(Contribution required from the regional group)

Issues to be considered (among others)

Specific feature of the region : two giants (China, India)

ASEAN - Evolution of the organisation, initially envisaged as an association for joint political defence "against communism". Conflicts between "protectionist" policies of the member States and the possible requirements of a regionalisation.

The major U.S. -Japan-Asia projects (APEC)

Can an alternative to regionalisation centred on China be defined ?

II. THE LOME - COTONOU CONVENTIONS AND THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC COUNTRIES

Even though the EEC-ACP association occupies just a minor position in the world system, its importance in matters concerning the analysis of Africa's position in the world system calls for an analysis of its particular aspects.

- (iv) Do the European Union and the ACP countries want to establish their relations within an original regionalism formed by two groups, composed of a developed and an underdeveloped set respectively, with the ultimate objective of fighting the system's natural tendencies towards polarisation ?
- (v) In this plan, what is the position of the Europeans' concern to guarantee their security in commodities if, following the fourfold increase in oil price decided by the OPEC countries in 1973, the ruling classes of the South at one point appeared willing to put their natural resources in the service of their industrialisation ?
- (vi) In the case of the weak Third World States, does this not pre-eminently mean subscribing to a context guaranteeing a rent needed for reproducing and expanding their ruling and middle classes ?

Eventually, is the ultimate objective to create within the world system a "region" that can face the neo-liberal challenge and participate in the construction of a multicentric global system whereby the economy would be put in the service of the peoples, or does it consist in limited arrangements in the service of oligopolies and dominant classes ?

Initially, the objectives of the Lomé agreements was not to put external relations in the service of positive economic, political and cultural changes for African people but rather to strengthen Europe's economic and geopolitical position in the world system. In other words, the developmental dimension was a secondary element less important than the political one. It was pre-eminently a question of supporting the so-called "moderate" States and strengthening tendencies in this direction elsewhere, or undermining the populist developmental aspirations experimented and mobilising to their advantage the geopolitical competition of the two super-powers involved in the cold war.

In the new neo-liberal perspective, the reorganisation of Euro-African relations comes within the framework outlined by WTO, thereby consolidating the centres' monopolies in decisive sectors including control of

access to natural resources, generating new technologies and organisation of the monetary and financial system.

In this spirit, the regionalisations derive their rationality from their capacity to create areas for the optimal deployment of activities of the multinational oligopolies.

Efforts should be made to develop the forms of resistance to this notion in Africa for the following reasons :

- (iv) Regions and countries that are not interested in this perspective are actually excluded from the potential benefits of regionalisation.
- (v) Increased polarisation and exclusion will result in migratory movements that will be difficult to manage especially since neo-liberalism ignores free movement of workers.
- (vi) The plan implicitly integrates military alliances that make the recalcitrant South countries vulnerable.

Envisaged in this fashion, the regionalisation of Euro-African relations would be totally compatible with the management of internal conflicts created in the Africa marginalised by social disintegration.

As a counterpoint, the alternative can be established only on the following principles :

- (iii) The main objective of this regionalised co-operation associating industrial countries and fourth world countries must be to promote an international division of labour compatible with the exigencies of the modern world that should not be a priori excluded for the mere reason that it might not be of economic interest to the multinationals or of strategic interest to the States.
- (iv) Measures must be taken to encourage the emergence and development of democratic forces of change and the civil society's participation in the debate on modalities for regionalised co-operation should be organised systematically.

Reading between the lines, one could discern behind the partnership between EEC and African countries, Europe's concern to obtain during the 1960s and 1970s, a constant supply of tropical agricultural products, minerals and petroleum products. Neo-liberal fundamentalism deliberately ignores the objectives of this nature as the market itself has to resolve such problems and development is nothing other than the outcome of the action of private enterprise. However, the States actually continue to be concerned about all these problems which the handbooks of economics ignore. The gap between the neo-liberal rhetoric and the reality therefore accounts for a confusion of the divided, shapeless and contradictory views to an extreme degree.

Now modelled on the simple rhetoric of the World Bank, IMF and WTO, Europe has unreservedly subscribed to the universal medical prescription for the structural adjustment programmes for the moment and to the illusion that private foreign investment would provide solutions to development problems in the longer term.

The local authorities sometimes tried to hold out against Structural Adjustment Programmes that ended the expansion of their social base (or even bluntly imposed its shrinkage) thereby making them lose all legitimacy. The external debt burden and corruption in government circles were bound to annihilate their leeway, and at the same time prevent them from embarking on self-adjustment, in addition to forcing the authorities to comply with the daily orders issued by international institutions assigned to manage their crisis directly.

However, the greatest confusion characterises these injunctions, which are often governed by the transient methods and moods of the G7. In this mood, there is a succession of views and fashions about poverty alleviation, respect for human rights, sustainable development, plural democracy, etc., without the least desire to analyse the contradictions between these noble objectives and stagnation or even the involutions engendered by the implementation of neo-liberal deregulations.

Is it possible today to assess the EEC-ACP partnership agreements in question ? Certainly, one should be careful not to hold these agreements alone responsible for the evolution of the continent during the last few decades. The reality lies in the combined effect of typically internal processes and the influence of external factors (in this case, including these agreements). The fact remains that the radical African regimes had at their time qualified the 1961 Conventions of Yaoundé as << neo-colonial >> and they did not join the Lomé group until much later, for fear of being denied access to the financial markets. A rigorous analysis of responsibilities in the region's development therefore necessitates the reflection, as clearly as possible, of the positive and negative tendencies operating within the region's societies strengthened by the logic of the Lomé Conventions.

In any case, the result is not impressive. The per capita product in Sub-Saharan Africa increased just at an average rate of 0.40 % annually between 1962 and 1992, as compared to 2.3 % for all the developing countries. This figure reflects a much lower economic growth (3.3 % annually) as well as higher population growth rates (3.9 % per annum). Consequently, the difference between per capita product of Sub-Saharan Africa and that of the other developing countries only widened : it is now established around 1 to 4 and could increase from 1 to 6 in about fifteen years' time.

This already unfavourable result simply in terms of growth rates will certainly appear even worse if one takes into account the reversal of financial flow balance, capital transfers abroad from Africa (to countries of the North, particularly European countries) that now prevail over the inverse capital public and private flows. This reversal, which is not specific to Africa, since it also concerns the entire Third World (China being the unique exception) virtually nullifies all views that can be expressed about a "developmental revival" based on the principles of the dominant neo-liberalism. If truly desired, the revival entails distancing oneself from the absurd dogmatic concept of "pure" economy. European authorities are not willing to review this dogmatic aspect.

The assessment presented this way will be incomplete so long as the trend of income distribution accompanying the implementation of the strategies in question is not taken into consideration. For one thing, this income distribution has developed and is developing in a negative direction, the type marked by increased inequality which, in turn, results in waste of investments (priority being actually given to expensive investments intended to meet requirements of the privileged classes). Income distribution is not unrelated to strategic development options. On the contrary, they are closely associated. Far from guaranteeing an optimal allocation of resources, as purported by the neo-liberal discourse, the neo-liberal options of uncontrolled globalisation results in a disastrous allocation of particularly scarce resources (capital, technologies and skilled labour).

We will continue to examine the reasons for this development fiasco by highlighting the following points :

- (iii) The close relationship between the general poor growth and the failure of agricultural development : the agricultural potential is so poorly exploited that food production does not provide adequately for the population's needs and the structural deficit is likely to be aggravated.
- (iv) The marginalisation of Africa in world trade : the region's share of imports from the European Union dropped from 3.9 % in 1976 to 2.8 % in 1994, while that of Asia increased from 9 % to 13 %. These poor results have been so, especially since the oil-rich countries of the group alone account for 67 % of the region's total exports and that the decrease in the region's exports to the European Union has not been compensated by an opening onto other world markets, once the level of dependence on the European market has not been reduced.

In this context then, are these partnership agreements not responsible - at least partially - since, by virtue of their privileged intervention in favour of primary commodities (through the Stabex and Sysmin mechanisms), they encouraged Africa to remain in this type of international division of labour that is being overtaken by events elsewhere, as illustrated by the success of the new industrial countries whose exports in the form of manufactured goods have had a stimulating effect ? How can one hope for successes in terms of global growth if development is based on so-called comparative advantages enshrined in low-productivity products that are moreover destined to be affected by the deteriorating terms of trade ?

- (iii) The marginalisation of Africa in international investment : although the European Union provides half of ACP's external financial resources, it was thanks to the continued increase in the flow of public assistance that this proportion was maintained, while the opening of the economies ended in the withdrawal of private capital investments.

The partnership agreements also deal with matters concerning regionalisation within the ACP group. In this domain, however, they manage with ordinary systems that merely take account of what really exists (such as

the CFA monetary zone) or in the rhetoric of inactive institutions (ECOWAS and others). There is nothing comparable with the logic of the Marshall Plan that had imposed a constraining intra-European co-operation as a condition for United States' support. In reality then, the decades considered (from 1960 to date) have not brought about an intensification of intra-African trade. At this level too, Africa is overtaken by Asia and Latin America. Once more, this unfavourable trend certainly cannot be attributed to the partnership agreements alone. It is the outcome of the overall development strategy considered, that has mainly been "nationalistic" in the sense that it envisaged only strictly national economic policies, without giving importance to a necessary perspective of regionalisation - except, in fact, in the rhetoric concerning "regional co-operation". The radical populists alone could not be held responsible for this "nationalism" since the "moderate liberals" also acted similarly.

Finally, the European Union does not appear to have defined an environmental policy that takes account of environmental degradation in Africa.

Despite their inherent inadequacies, the partnership agreements comprise a potentially positive aspect from the perspective of the principle : that of asserting a joint responsibility of the developed States (those of the European Union) and the so-called developing States (the ACP countries) in the development process. In fact, the principle remained asserted, even though in its progressive potential, the actual implementation of the principle was greatly impeded by the nature and options of the dominant forces in the European States themselves and by those of the associated African ruling classes. This constituted an exception because neither the United States nor the international instruments unreservedly loyal to them (the World Bank, IMF and WTO) ever agreed to subscribe to the principle.

Certainly, behind the Lomé agreements loomed "particular interests" inherited from colonial history, which is gradually losing momentum. However, this situation was also due to the phenomenon referred to as the "cold war". At that time, USSR and China actively supported the Non - Aligned Movement which was eventually adopted by all the African States, including even the most moderate ones (the pro-Western or even anti-Soviet elements). Europe was tempted to respect - at least officially - the independence of the ACP States and accept the principle of (financial) support to strategies freely decided by their partners. No conditionality of the compulsory privatisation type or abrogation of exchange control was conceivable at that time. In renouncing this principle to place Euro-African relations henceforth in the framework of the liberal globalisation dubbed "without alternative", the European Union took a great step back. The European Union has substituted a new principle for the one it abandoned. In fact, the Union claims that it hopes to strengthen its economic co-operation with the ACP countries through a "political dialogue" and has adopted, in this perspective, the theme of democratisation. However pleasant the principle governing this option may be, the said option runs the risk of getting bogged down in rhetoric and manipulation if the debate does not dare to tackle firmly the issues concerning the content and social conditions of the democracy in question as well as those pertaining to the exigencies of economic policy that it implies.

III. THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

Europe and the Arab world are two regions which have maintained complex relations throughout their history on account of their geographic proximity and their common Hellenistic ancestry from which originated Christianity and Islam. However, the North-South demarcation between "developed" Europe and the "under-developed" Arab world, such as we know, was definitively established only belatedly, with the capitalist expansion reinforced by the colonisation of the South segment that ended only recently (the British left Egypt only in 1954 and even tried to return there in 1956 and the French did not recognise Algeria's independence until 1962).

In the post-Second World War period, the relations between Europe and the Arab world came within the dominant logic of the United States' geopolitics and geo-strategy. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) actually considered the Arab world as an opponent while the Soviet Union supported the Arab world's attempts at autonomous development. Having withdrawn from the region, Europe allowed the United States to operate there alone, the support of their loyal allies, such as Turkey, Israel and the governments of the Gulf and thus guaranteed the vital oil supply to Europe.

Was the disappearance of the Soviet opponent going to open new prospects for genuine co-operation between the European Union and the Arab world ? One could have thought so at one point when Europe took the initiative in formulating in Barcelona in 1995 a proposal designated as "Euro-Mediterranean" partnership. Today, it can only be noticed that this process is not just "at a standstill" but that it has collapsed.

The reason is that the project itself had been designed on the basis of an unacceptable and incredible principle and could therefore not be implemented, even if some of its promoters must have been well-intentioned partners.

The European partner rallies not only the Mediterranean Europeans but all countries of the European Union. It is a right for Europeans, which, in fact, nobody can call into question (the right to think of sharing common interests and of having to contemplate a common future). That is an indisputable right for all Europeans, even if those in each of the concerned countries also have the right to criticise (as done by some people) the European project as it stands today.

The other partner is curious ; it is composed of all the riparian entities along the South and East coast of the Mediterranean. However, the majority of these riparian elements happen to be Arab countries that also belong to a distinct world : the Arab world. Whether a nationalistic Arab or not, this world exists and it should therefore be recognised that the Arab world could have certain common tendencies, a certain sense of common interest and a common vision of its integration into the contemporary world. Separating the Mediterranean Arab countries from the non-Mediterranean Arab countries is actually unacceptable. What is needed is therefore a Euro-Arab agreement -- in other words, an agreement between all the European countries and all the Arab, regardless of whether they are Mediterranean or not. The Mediterranean concept is meaningful only if entails rallying all the riparian countries around problems concerning the common sea,

for instance in the area of pollution. It is not on this narrow basis that one can contemplate the future of relations between Europe and this small portion of the South known as the Arab world.

On the other hand, the era of the Barcelona Conference (1995) was also that of the Madrid and Oslo Conferences, that is a period when a certain type of peace between Arabs and Israel was being promoted under the leadership of the Americans. In this way, the Europeans implemented a strategy complementary to that of the United States and Israel, aimed at dictating the content of the said peace. A kind of peace imagined on a basis that should have been perceived in advance as unacceptable, since it was equivalent to the establishment of a *Bantustan* - there could not be a better term - in the occupied territories of Palestine.

It is at this moment and in this geographical context that the Euro-Mediterranean project was contemplated. It consisted in using the new international economic situation to impose on the Arabs Israel's integration into the region and posing as a condition for co-operation between Europe and the Arab countries, a similar co-operation between the Arab countries themselves and Israel... By comparison, it is a little as if, in the apartheid era, Europe had forced the African States to regularise their diplomatic and other relations with South Africa as a condition for the support and co-operation that the Europeans were offering them.

As an apartheid country, Israel has been implementing a policy of systematic ethnic purge. It is unacceptable to put up with Israel, let alone supporting it. Israel should be boycotted by all civilised countries of the world.

At present, the tragedy developing in Palestine call for a strong international political intervention accompanied by effective measures for a serious boycott of Israel until this State recognises the State of Palestine. Europe intervened clamorously in Kosovo to defend a lesser cause than that of Palestine, but it tolerates that the government of Israel be entrusted to a real war criminal who, in fact, has personally proclaimed his rejection of the Madrid and Oslo agreements ! It is true that in the case of Yugoslavia, Europe only stood by a decision previously taken in Washington. On the contrary, in taking an autonomous stand on Palestine, Europe has to distance itself from the United States, which is obviously difficult. It also proves that political Europe does not exist.

The so-called European proposals for "Euro-Mediterranean partnership" also include an economic component about which the European institutions claimed to have made "new efforts" in qualifying their proposals as coming within the framework of "mutual development", "partnership" and "joint development", in place of "aid", the devalued term.

An analysis of these proposals shows that it is nothing of the sort. All these proposals absolutely come within the exclusive logic of globalised neo-liberalism (opening markets, creating "enabling" conditions for foreign investment, deregulating and defusing protections, etc.) as formulated by the United States, WTO, the World Bank and IMF. Submission to the rules defined by these authorities, including the so-called "structural adjustment" plans is moreover formulated as a pre-condition for implementation of the European proposals. Here too, the real position of Europe is not different from that of the United States. In both its political and

economic dimensions Europe's proposals currently form part of a dominant twofold alignment: liberal globalisation and United States' hegemonism. The two elements are interrelated. Accepting the exclusive logic of liberal globalisation means accepting to give priority or the very exclusive importance to the interests of the dominant capital. At any rate, the interests of the European dominant capital are not fundamentally different from the interests of the North American dominant capital. Of course, there are conflicts, but they are common mercantile conflicts of the same kind as the conflicts that can crop up between multinationals of a given country. Europe's possible autonomy vis-à-vis the United States cannot be assumed on this basis.

Other conditions are also imposed by the European partner. Is the reference to respect for human rights as a theoretical condition of the partnership agreements desirable ? Certainly, even if signed by governments that do not intend to implement its provisions, a charter can become a lever that can be utilised by victims of a system. However, this instrument will at best remain marginal because the struggle for democracy is pre-eminently the peoples' affair that must be managed in the concerned country itself. Internationalism in this field is very useful, but it is mainly through internal struggles and mobilisation of democratic forces within the societies that the change can be fostered. What the external entity can do is precisely to support them and not to fight them.

However, the use that the Great Powers (Europe in this case) intend to make of such interventions in the name of democracy remains dubious. The examples of "double standards" - which are numerous and obvious - show that this type of utilisation is absolutely cynical : the tool is mobilised against an opponent to be weakened but it is put away in the face of an ally. Moreover, the dominant concept at present is that of *good governance*, to use the jargon in fashion ; in other words, the concept of acceptable governability. Alas, this is a poor concept that limits democracy to multiparty systems, formal elections and respect for a number of individual elementary rights, without recognising social, individual and collective rights, the right to work, education, health and freedom of movement within and outside one's own country. Yet the rights constitute a whole set comprising inseparable elements. If they are not accompanied by the other rights, then political rights become instruments that can be and are manipulated and therefore undermine the cause of democracy since they destroy its credibility among the peoples themselves.

IV. THE DESIRABLE ALTERNATIVE IN TERMS OF REGIONALISATION

Africa and the Arab world are not really on course for any effective regionalisation, apart from those ordered from outside and dominated by the North, despite the proliferation of institutions that finally constitute a mere window-dressing.

However, the region needs appropriate and effective forms of regionalisation. These should be thought up by analysing challenges of the contemporary world (especially the great trends shaping tomorrow's world) and the requirements for authentic development, as a counterpoint. Authentic development is meaningful provided it is popular in the sense that its benefits are immediately shared by all the popular classes and are

not the prerogative of a minority group. Moreover, that is the necessary condition for associating development with a democratisation process likely to be entrenched. The model of this type of development that could be deployed simultaneously at national or sub-regional levels or in the large region representing the continent as a whole would then occupy its position in the construction of a multipolar globalisation, the sole alternative to the unbalanced and polarising globalisation implemented by the dominant forces of the moment.

What we are proposing here is just a plan of the regional response to these challenges, and not a "detailed" project on any account. This plan therefore emphasises the proposed principles ignored quite obviously, as will eventually be discovered, in current practices and in the rhetoric of the dominant discourse about regionalisation.

Regions of the Third World in general, and Africa in particular, must design forms of regionalisation that could enhance their capacity to resist the new forms of polarisation operating in the global system. The term "new" should be strongly emphasised.

This element is desirable because the polarisation in the world system no longer operates the way it did in the course of the last two centuries.

The polarisation of the "classical" period was virtually synonymous with the contrast between industrialised and non-industrialised countries. The monopoly of centres, which allowed for the reproduction and intensification of unbalanced accumulation worldwide, was that of industrialisation. This contrast established the forms whereby the law of globalised value operated at this stage of globalisation ; forms whose expressions gave food for thought during the major debates of that period ("unequal exchange" in particular).

At that time, the response to the challenge could obviously be summed up in one word : industrialisation. Another observation was that it was then not absurd to think that a large entity was less difficult to industrialise than a small one so regionalisation could be an appropriate means of overcoming the difficulty. Hence, the large regional zone could be designed as a place for sectorised and selective planning of complementarities between the national productive systems to be established. At the same time, it could be designed as a "common market", even though the latter had to be considered as an area for collective protection from the developed centres.

Even in the absence of effective achievements, the regionalisation projects in Africa and in the Arab world already could not meet the exigencies of the period. They were based on the simple idea of creating "common markets" in imitation of the European model, without assessing the actual exigencies inherent in facing the challenge. In fact, the social challenge demanded at least that two sets of measures be taken beyond the mere establishment of common markets. The first concerns the motivation from States and

regional authorities, necessary for the creation of non-existent productive systems (whereas in Europe the common market operated in a universe of already developed industrial systems). The second pertains to protection of the new integrated zone. The African common markets proposed at that time were silent about the first set and shy of the second.

Today, it is even no longer a question of conceptualising the possible common markets as protected areas. That is formally prohibited by WTO rules, regionalisation being tolerated only insofar as it comes in the framework of an open globalisation. In this context, protection is not acceptable unless it is moderated and especially “provisional” since it must only render the local activities rapidly “competitive” on an open world market. There is something ridiculous here : requesting an African country to become competitive in any field of economic activity in some years or even within twenty years is meaningless. A productive mine (based on a rich natural endowment) or an ordinary subcontracting industrial establishment (whose “advantage” is therefore comparable to that of cheap labour and slight taxation) could certainly be “competitive” in this sense, whereas the national productive system could not. Under the circumstances, the possible increase in “competitive activities” could only replicate the polarisation to which the given country fell victim.

The polarisation operating within the world system today is no longer based on the sole industrial monopoly of the centres. It is because the major peripheries in turn have now entered the industrial era (even though Africa has actually not done so). The industrial monopoly of the past is now substituted by what I proposed to classify under one of the headings of the “five monopolies” of the centres : technological initiative, access to world natural resources, control of financial globalisation, communications and weapons of mass destruction. If taken together, these five monopolies define one form and a new context of the law of globalised value on the basis of which accumulation at the world level replicates and intensifies the polarisation process.

Under these new conditions, the national development strategies and regionalisation structures destined to enhance their efficiency should be perceived as the means of facing these five challenges.

A regionalisation project in the Third World today is meaningless if it does not constitute the mechanism for establishing adequate facilities for effectual scientific and technological research capable of developing appropriate technologies and promoting their diffusion and effective use - through protection - in any given regional entity. For example, promoting pharmaceutical research and establishing a pharmaceutical industry to combat AIDS (and other no less destructive pandemic diseases) in Africa. Doing so means entering into conflict (and it must be admitted) with the rules of the so-called protection of intellectual and industrial property, in this case, those of the pharmaceutical oligopolies of countries of the North which are not interested in AIDS eradication in Africa (which entails the use of less expensive products) but rather defending the substantial proceeds they realise from the sale of their expensive products. Is that impossible ? Cuba has created a remarkable medical and pharmaceutical industry. Why could Africa not do the same ? Many examples could be cited among others in the fields of agriculture and irrigation.

A regionalisation project in the Third World today is meaningless if it does not envisage ways and means of using the region's natural resources primarily for the development of the region instead of world consumption (in this case, consumption by countries of the North). In other words, exploiting such resources (minerals and oil in particular) only in proportion to the needs of the region and its exports in demand to pay for the necessary imports. The principles of liberal globalisation call for the opposite : exporting at the maximum capacity, even if it means sacrificing the future of Third World peoples to accommodate the immediate waste of resources by countries of the North... One of the priority objectives of regionalisation must be to break the centres' monopoly of access to world resources. A taxation system in respect of income from exploitation of natural resources could be imagined at the regional level as a means of sharing its proceeds among the States and regional institutions (to facilitate, for instance, the coverage of their technological research expenditures outlined in the previous paragraph). A global taxation system would thus be initiated and this would compel consumers in the North to pay a higher price for access to world resources than the implicit cost of their waste.

A regionalisation project in the Third World is meaningless if it does not allow for the establishment of a regional financial system capable of resisting the financial globalisation implemented by the dominant capital. A system of national currencies correctly managed (while capital flow is still controlled) and articulated at the regional level by a Monetary Fund with responsibility to ensure a relative stability of exchanges within the region, can be imagined if there is a bold attempt to be liberated from the IMF diktat. The region could then refuse collectively what financial globalisation imposes on it, including the opening of capital accounts.

The implementation of regional communication systems, destined to confer on each region some relative autonomy vis-à-vis the globalised system that does not only serve as a vehicle for dominant cultures and sub-cultures but also operates as a powerful instrument of political manipulation, entails not only the solution to technological problems (which should therefore appear in the list of priorities of the research outlined above). It also implies a difficult consensus on the political and cultural options of countries of the region, nevertheless conceivable if the national and regional structures are based on the principles of the best democracy. Some regional formations of this kind would also pave the way for the democratisation of the global system.

The monopoly of weapons of mass destruction should also be broken. There too, the responses to the challenge - national and regional - entail not only difficult but conceivable agreements, for example, those for the creation of collective task forces (OAU would definitely need them !), not only - alas - the creation of efficient arms industries (pending the time when the North will renounce its "right" to interfere... and to bomb recalcitrant parties) but also and, of course, the sharing of a common vision of regional security as a complement to that of the singular Nations.

It could be objected that what has just been said about responses to the challenge posed by the “five monopolies” is probably valid for the giant countries (China, India and Brazil) which have the advantage of doing without “regionalisations” (and moreover, these three countries are to some extent not insensitive to the challenges posed by the “five monopolies”, which they have been facing, at least partially, through their specific national policies) or perhaps for the regions of Asia and Latin America that are already advanced in the field of industrialisation. However, the fact that the forms of regionalisation devised for the previous phase of global development are still valid for Africa, since the continent has not really entered the era of industrialisation, is partly true, provided that it be a question of regional protection from an industrialisation to be realised seriously and at the maximum rather than the minimum level. That is partly true because, Africa, indisputably, is also part parcel of the world today and should therefore participate in the fight against the new forms of domination by the North and the related polarisation.

The principles of regionalisation outlined above naturally come within the perspective of a democratic and multi-centric globalisation.

The principles of this form of regionalisation are reasonable and efficient means of combating the polarising effects of the five monopolies of the triad. From that premise, the world order could be reviewed so as to propose the central themes and objectives of the high-level negotiations on at least the following topical issues likely to organise a supervised interdependence between countries and regions committed to the service of the populations :

- Renegotiating "market shares" and their access rules. Of course, this project calls into question the rules of WTO which, under the pretext of a discourse on "fair competition", applies itself solely to defending privileges of the active oligopolies worldwide.
- Renegotiating financial market systems, with a view to stemming the domination of operations for financial speculation and channelling investments towards productive activities in the North and South alike. This project calls into question the functions, and no doubt, the very existence of the World Bank.
- Renegotiating monetary systems so as to establish agreements and regional mechanisms guaranteeing a relative stability of foreign exchange transactions that should be completed by organising their interdependence. This project calls into question, IMF, the dollar standard and the principle of free and fluctuating foreign exchange transactions.
- Initiating a global taxation system by establishing taxes on income realised from the exploitation of natural resources and redistributing them at national, regional and international levels on the basis of appropriate criteria and for specified uses. The Greens (Ecologists) should support such an idea if they are serious and consistent with the principles they proclaim to be theirs.

- Demilitarising the Planet, by first reducing weapons of mass destruction at the disposal of the major Powers.
- Democratising UNO and international law.

In this perspective reconciling globalisation and local and regional autonomies (which I call delinking consistent with the new challenges), there is provision for a serious review of the concepts of "aid", and for problems connected with democratisation of the United Nations system, that could therefore concentrate efficiently on certain objectives of disarmament (rendered possible by the national and regional security systems associated with regional reconstruction), initiate the establishment of a globalised taxation (in relation with the management of national resources of the Planet), accomplish the functions of UNO as an inter-state organisation by initiating the creation of a "World Parliament" that can reconcile the exigencies of universalism (individual, community and peoples' rights, political and social rights, etc.) and the diversity of the historical and cultural heritage.

The programme outlined here is not solely aimed at modulating market regulation systems to protect the weak (classes and nations). Its political component is no less important. The central ideas that guided the writing of the paper pertain to disarmament and the need to formulate a new international law governing individuals, peoples and States.

As regards disarmament, the dominant discourse hackneyed by the media, in light of the dangers inherent in the "proliferation" of nuclear weapons and others, is truly out of place because, as a military power, America has opted for terrorist bombing and would obviously not hesitate to use nuclear weapons if it found that strategy necessary. Faced with this major threat, the other countries of the world can only react by resolving to build up military forces capable of dissuading imperialist aggression by rendering it expensive. That is the price to pay for peace.

Can one also hope to develop a new substantive law that will guarantee for all human beings on this earth a dignified treatment, as a condition for their active and inventive participation in the construction of the future ? A substantive and multi-dimensional law that will treat the rights of human beings (men and women of course, as perfectly equal beings), political rights, social rights (work and security), community and peoples' rights and eventually, the rights governing inter-state relations. That is certainly an agenda to span decades of reflection, debates, actions and decisions.

The principle of respect for national sovereignty must remain the cornerstone of international law. Indeed, if the Charter of the United Nations chose to proclaim that principle, it was precisely because the principle had been denied by fascist powers. In his poignant speech delivered in 1935 before the SDN, Emperor Haile Selassie clearly indicated that the violation of this principle – cowardly abandoned by the then democracies - tolled the death knell of this organisation. The fact that this fundamental principle is again violated today with so much brutality by the democracies themselves does not constitute a mitigating circumstance but

rather an aggravating circumstance. Incidentally, this situation already launched the far-from-glorious end of a UNO viewed as a registration room for decisions taken elsewhere and implemented by others. The official adoption of the principle of national sovereignty in 1945 was logically accompanied by the prohibition of recourse to war. States were authorised to defend themselves against whoever violated their sovereignty through aggression, but condemned in advance if they were aggressors. Today, it is the powers associated in NATO which must be condemned in this regard in conformity with the law in force.

No doubt, the United Nations Charter had given an absolute interpretation of the principle of sovereignty. The fact that today the democratic opinion no longer accepts that this principle authorise governments to do as they choose with human beings placed under their jurisdiction constitutes an undeniable progress of universal conscience. How can these two potentially conflicting principles be reconciled ? Certainly, not by suppressing one of their terms - sovereignty of States or human rights. It is because apart from the fact that the option made by the United States and its trailing subordinated European allies is certainly not the good one, it conceals the real objectives of the operation which have nothing to do with respect for human rights despite the media hype intended to make it credible.

UNO is the place where international law should be developed. There can be no other respectable places. Whether this entails organisational reforms, a review of the ways and means (including institutional innovation) of ensuring the representation of real social forces in the system alongside the governments (that, at best, represent them so imperfectly), whether it be a question of assigning oneself the objective of incorporating into a coherent entity the rules of international law (respect for sovereignty), those concerning economic and social rights neglected in the liberal vulgate, which necessarily call for regulation of markets -- these offer enough material to pad out an agenda full of questions to which I will not seek to provide, in this paper, answers that would inevitably be too brief. It certainly constitutes a long process without a short cut ; for one thing, the history of mankind has not ended and will continue to progress according to its possibilities.

The multi-centric and democratic global system advocated here does not constitute the "end of history" ; it is only a stage in the long progress of social values towards the constitution of a world society based on human solidarity rather than the selfishness of individuals and nations.

In this transition, emphasis is actually laid on three principles mostly neglected in the 20th Century experiences which moreover reflect the underlying trends in the global transformation. It primarily concerns the principle of a democratisation perceived as an endless multidimensional process, which helps to initiate the raising of awareness about the nature of the economist alienation to be combated. This process therefore involves a gradual transition from projects and visions about the progress from liberation in capitalism to those concerning liberation from capitalism. In the second place, the humanistic vision of the world, which advocates the establishment of individual and community rights in positions of responsibility (in place of commercial law, in other words, the law in the service of capital) helps to promote a people's internationalism, which acts as a counterbalance to the trans-nationalism of capital. Finally, in the third place,

regionalisations are viewed from a perspective that makes them efficient tools for reducing the polarising effects of capital flow.

We can now consider the questions concerning a possible North-South partnership, distinguished by a new type of co-operation "project" associating Europe, Africa and the Arab world.

The dominant Europe on the one hand, and the dominated Africa and the Arab world on the other hand, have been closely associated by geography - and perhaps history - for better and especially for worse (imperialism). Can one imagine a new type of "cooperation" between these three regions for the construction of the democratic multipolar and regionalised world outlined above ? What are the conditions for such a project ?

The objectives of a project with such an ambition must be clarified. They could only consist in : (i) bridging the gap between the various partners of the region : Western Europe, Eastern Europe and the former USSR, poor semi-industrialised Arab countries, rich oil-producing countries, Sub-Saharan African countries and South Africa ; (ii) ensuring a sufficient degree of autonomy for the concerned regions and sub-regions in order to take account of the disparities between the various parties that could provide effective solutions to their social problems ; and (iii) guaranteeing the supervised open policy of countries of the region in their international relations and in their relations with other regions of the world.

It is more than obvious that the realisation of these objectives would necessitate a deep transformation of the structures of the powers that be. More precisely, this transformation is unbelievable without imagining : (i) that a hegemony of labour is replacing that of capital ; (ii) that popular social alliance is taking shape in Russia and in the member countries of the former USSR (as in the countries of Eastern Europe), thereby taking over from the political bureaucracies and the confused, ambiguous populist and nationalist forces ; and (iii) that some popular national alliances are developing in Africa and in the Arab world in place of the existing compradore hegemonies.

To Europe, in the broad sense of the word, even though it is vague, the concept of "common house" might certainly correspond to the exigencies of the envisaged construction, for it implies a margin of relative autonomy necessary for the deployment of appropriate specific policies of all the parties among the partners. The system does not exclude the more comprehensive forms of integration between the more advanced countries. The European Union might form this unit if it could be re-established on the basis of the hegemony of labour, a concept that does not exist in the current state of its institutionalisation. The outcome of this form of European regionalisation at several stages would be African Unity and Arab Unity, which will also be conceptualised at various stages. The construction of the Europe - Africa - Arab World entity might obviously require that the three regions agree to strengthen one another and operate in a direction that would consolidate their respective units. That is not the case because Europe has not yet expressed its desire to deal with the group composed of Africans and Arabs. The European Union does not recognise OAU and the Arab

League and it only accepts to deal individually with the countries forming these organisations. It is therefore incumbent on the Africans and Arabs to impose their recognition.

On the other hand, the present state of social power struggles certainly does not make it possible to imagine that the upheavals of this scope are of topical interest. The social agents who would objectively have benefited from such an outcome are merely potential agents, and are far from crystallising into political forces capable of proposing revolutions of this magnitude. Those in the forefront of the scene operate in directions that do not converge on the objectives defined earlier in this paper. It is quite the opposite.

Under the circumstances, behind the current "Euro-African" and "Euro-Arab" projects is a looming collective neo-imperialist project with Western Europe dominating "its" African and Arab South and "its" latin-americanised East to its advantage.

This project can still inspire the nostalgic daydreams of the colonial past. Is it necessarily realistic under the present global circumstances ? No. Even the Gulf War has shown that United States of America alone wanted to control the Middle East and its oil (with the support of its ardent Israeli and Turkish allies). Europe itself has no collective political vision of the world. Since 1945, Great Britain has made an apparently definitive option of siding unreservedly with the big brother of North America and reliving its imperialist past by proxy through the big brother. For its part, Germany, having renounced its wildest Nazi-specific dream about global hegemony, has opted to resume its traditional expansion towards Eastern Europe, to content itself with the "latin-americanisation" of this Eastern segment to its advantage and to conform in other areas to the positions of the United States' hegemonic project. On the other hand, France, having renounced the Gaullist principle of refusing to blend its own interests with those of Washington, is being marginalised.

Under the circumstances, it can only be concluded that, at present, no Euro-Arab--African regionalisation project worthy of this name exists.

Many are the critical readers who might describe the principles of the propositions in this paper as "unrealistic" and therefore refuse to engage in the discussion they may consider unnecessary. Their "realism" consists in believing that "the fiddling within the system", as it stands now, however that may be, constitutes the sole option possible allowing for progress". History seldom justifies this type of fiddling. In fact, the "realistic" politicians of colonial Africa behaved that way and refused to follow the minority avant-garde that boldly proclaimed independence as the only prospect that could motivate their engagement in the struggle. History has proved this avant-garde right. Whereas politicking is probably the art of acting intelligently in the context of well-defined power balances, authentic politics is the art of modifying such power balances.

Intellectuals must dare to think, speak out and make proposals. It is on this condition that creative utopia helps to discover the sole prospect that is truly realistic ; in other words, the type that can rapidly mobilise powerful social forces that eventually impose its logic once the social movement begins to be aware of it. If there be a utopia, in the plain and negative sense of the term, it is actually that of "realists" who do not think

they must and can pull out of the dominant theories. Their interventions have no impact. If intellectuals give up the idea of fulfilling their critical function, they become puppets, worthless parasites.

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THIRD WORLD FORUM

REGIONALISATIONS

I. PATTERNS OF REGIONALISATIONS

Regionalisation is an ambiguous concept but its status can be defined only if it is viewed from the angle of the concerned countries' strategic objectives and the challenges they feel capable of meeting through their collective action.

To the majority of contemporary Third World Countries, regionalisation appears to have become one of the major requirements of any effective response to the polarisation challenge as a result of the increasing dimension of contemporary capitalist globalisation. This response therefore entails appropriate strategies for inward-looking development and delinking (cf. The paradigm of development) simultaneously at national levels and in the regions concerned, since regionalisation in a way comes to support the associated countries' effort.

The dogmatic liberal condemns in advance any form of regionalisation because the preferences it creates constitute an impediment to the absolute advantage offered by infinite globalisation. The American establishment, and of course the World Bank behind it, have long been opposed to regionalisation. Their adhesion is therefore a recent phenomenon. Henceforth, the ideology and strategy of the dominant system propose another concept and another practice of regionalisation envisaged as the creation of subsets integrated into the entity formed by the proposed liberal globalisation. Regionalisation is therefore viewed as a communication channel for liberal globalisation.

This fundamental distinction is the criterion from which the various institutionalised forms and regionalisation projects in Europe, America, Africa and Asia can be evaluated.

The expansion of capitalism world-wide inevitably paved the way for a constant polarisation that found expression in the ever-increasing contrast between the wealth and power of its centres on the one hand, and the poverty and vulnerability of its peripheries on the other hand. This polarisation has assumed successive historical forms closely connected with the dominant logic of capital accumulation peculiar to each of the stages of its development.

The "classical" model of polarisation from the generalisation of the industrial revolution to all centres during the 19th Century was based on a simple contrast between industrialised countries and regions (the current triad) and non-industrialised countries and regions (Asia, except-Japan, Africa and Latin America).

On the other hand, in the course of this stage spanning one and a half centuries (1800-1950) the modern economic system of the developed nations had been gradually established on "national" bases. The inward-looking national productive systems of each of these central capitalist States acquired their specific character from the nature of social alliances formed by the bourgeoisie in order to entrench and stabilise its hegemony. Once established on such bases, these dominant social entities of the global system in turn shaped the world economy. This world economy then appeared as a really international economy ; in other words, it appeared like a unit comprising central sets relatively autonomous and operating concurrently with one another, as well as a nebulous outlying entity - the peripheries - the arena for conflicting interventions of the metropolitan centres.

It is therefore realised that the national liberation movements in Asia and Africa (and in Latin America, the “developmentalist” movement – known as “desarrollista” in Spanish - of the post-Second World War era), just like the socialist revolutions in the late countries (Russia and China), defined their response to the polarisation challenge on the basis of a twofold objective which consisted in (i) initiating and completing an industrialisation process synonymous with liberating progress and a catching-up process and (ii) constructing a Nation-State and an inward-looking national productive system inspired by central models. That is how the ideology of modernity took shape.

In the course of this “Bandung” stage for Africa and Asia (1955 – 1975), the efforts of such a development produced a new Third World henceforth engaged in industrialisation even though of uneven dimensions and therefore highly differentiated (cf. Polarisation, Central Capitalism, Peripheral Capitalism). On the other hand, the strategies deployed to this effect remained exclusively “national”; in other words, they were formulated on the basis and in the framework of the Nation-State. The major institutions affiliated to the set or group of Third World Countries had either political objectives (resisting pressure from the Western powers – cf. the Non-Aligned Movement) or the economic objective of defending common interests against the dominant capital rather than that of contributing towards regional economic integration.

This strategy exhausted its possibilities and attained its historic limits more or less rapidly for various reasons, thereby revealing the illusion of an impossible scheme for “catching up through interdependence”. The then Third World’s joint attempts to extend this national phase by negotiating better international conditions (the Non-Aligned group’s proposal of a “New International Economic Order” in 1975) came up against the refusal by the Western countries as a prelude to their counter-offensive as from the 1980s.

The post-war period (1945-1990), which is now over, was not only marked by the entry of the outlying entities into the era of industrialisation, urbanisation and modernity. At the same time, the progress of capitalist accumulation in the centres themselves triggered off the progressive and partial dismantling of the national productive systems (without their being necessarily substituted by a globalised productive system – cf. New Phase of Capitalism?). This is a chaotic transition from an international economy to a potentially global economy.

Does this evolution offer a “chance” to the Third World Countries, as purported by the liberal school of thought ? A chance that would enable those who got integrated "faster and more deeply" into the globalisation process to get out of their historic under-development. The new monopolies on which the advantages of the centres (the triad) are based exclude this possibility and in fact inaugurate new forms of an aggravated polarisation (Cf. Polarisation...)

The fact remains that, today, it might appear almost obvious that it is impossible for societies of the periphery to meet the challenges enshrined in the new monopolies of the centres by means of strictly national policies, whether in terms of the economic dimensions of the given challenge (including technological development) or its political dimensions (regional security, the necessary complement to national security). This is the

nature of the challenges that the regionalisation projects have to meet in order to become contributory factors for the construction of another world system that will really be multicentric.

The experience of the European construction

This experience is always referred to by various people as the model par excellence that should inspire other projects in the regions of the Third World.

Certainly, the European system presents by far the most advanced standards, with regard to the achievements of the European Common Markets, the institutionalised economic and monetary integration processes in the European Union and initiation of its political construction.

Nevertheless, the historical conditions peculiar to this advanced region of the world, which clearly attest to such successes, have little to do with those conditions that characterise the peripheries of the system.

The European construction was inspired by an initiative of the United States – The Marshall Plan – aimed at supporting the restoration of intra-European trade as an essential element in the reconstruction of an open world economy and not as an alternative to the world economy. Even later on, when Europe accomplished its reconstruction process and made up for its lateness behind the United States, it did not consider itself (or has not yet considered itself) as being “delinked” from the world system.

More specifically, the politicians of the European communities practised selective delinking. The joint agricultural policies, for instance, were actually based on a delinking of domestic agricultural prices from those on the world market. This option is moreover behind the success of Europe that managed by this means to guarantee its food self-sufficiency to subsequently become the principal rival to the United States in terms of world foodstuff exports. The United States itself has always dissociated its domestic agricultural market from the world market. That practice is a good example of the gap between practices of the really existing capitalism and the dogmatic views about liberal economy under imaginary capitalism (Cf. Imaginary capitalism and the really existing capitalism). Nevertheless, in other fields like those of the manufacturing industry in general, the European construction was oriented towards gradually reconciling conditions of the European market and those of the so-called world market. At the same time, Europe (like the United States), condemns any delinking policy adopted by others (Third World Countries) even if it was selective. Do what I tell you and not what I do!

The European construction was also facilitated by the fact that it concerned a group of already advanced countries whose established productive systems were therefore capable of being adjusted to one another without the difficulties encountered in these processes becoming insurmountable. The problem is quite the opposite for the Third World regions because it is a question of creating non-existent productive structures. One can therefore imagine the possibility of accelerating this creation process by taking advantage of the vast area effect enshrined in regionalisation ; in other words, by planning (the word is not too strong) the

establishment of complementarities between the various associated countries. In Europe, the late countries (Portugal, Greece, etc.) stuck around the group of more advanced countries and regions. The European Union's financial affluence certainly facilitated the transfer of (public) capital to these poor regions which eventually felt that the European construction favoured them. It is not stated that this was the sole or the best possible option for these countries. However, other options would have met with hostility from the dominant powers including those of Europe and therefore appeared to be politically impossible such that, today, the die is cast and the European option appears now without any alternatives for these countries. They can only nurture the hope that the European system itself evolves in better directions, socially and economically, for the benefit of all of its peoples.

The European construction also took the necessary time to progress with precaution. It took no less than fifteen years for Europe to achieve the convertibility of its currencies. Moreover, this measured and controlled progression formed part of a general – global – phase of increased expansion (“the glorious thirty”). This general expansion (every partner sees its productions and exports increase relatively easily) obviously facilitates the adjustments that are becoming painful in a difficult global economic situation as witnessed for some twenty years.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the Western Europeans are not particularly interested in transferring their experience to countries of Eastern Europe and to those of the former Soviet Union. In this domain, the European options, modelled on those of Washington, rather aim at dismantling elements of regional co-operation established during the Soviet era. At the same time, there is a demand for an immediate opening of concerned countries to the violent winds of liberal globalisation (for instance, they are expected to ensure the free convertibility of their currency within one year or two!). The consequences of these options that are poles apart from the lessons of the European construction – can only be chaotic and tragic. Those of the concerned countries that appear capable of being integrated in the extended European construction, despite everything, are actually relegated to the status of dominated regions (the case of Czech, Poland, the Baltic States and Hungary). Those countries that cannot somersault (such as Romania and Bulgaria) or that continue to resist (like Yugoslavia) are marginalised, excluded or even combated ! There is a striking analogy with practices developed by the United States in their relations with Latin America and that is why it can be stated that, in this regard, the “Pan-European regionalisation” is seeking to “latin-americanise” Eastern Europe. It is therefore a regionalisation model of the North-South type (here, West-East geographically), based on unequal relations reproducing and deepening the polarisation within the overall system, and not of the intra-North type (as in the case of the European project before its extension was envisaged) or the intra-South type.

In Africa, regionalisation appears as a window-dressing

In Africa, there is a proliferation of regional co-operation (or even integration)-oriented institutions that can be classified under different headings.

First, there is the Organisation of African Unity (created in 1963) with a primarily political vocation, whose real major functions consisted in supporting liberation struggles in the Portuguese colonies, in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa on the one hand, and in containing and arbitrating in intra-state conflicts. In this context, OAU constituted an insipid substitute for Pan Africanism, which nevertheless remains a potentially powerful ideological and political aspiration.

During the so-called “development decades” (1960s and 1970s) the tasks assigned to OAU were relatively facilitated by the fact that the member States actually enjoyed some degree of legitimacy among their peoples. The real achievements of the forms of development permitted by the trans-ethnic – populist – national base inherited from the liberation movements that eventually became ruling parties justified this legitimacy. The said legitimacy was justified among other things and perhaps mainly by the continual increase in the number of beneficiaries of the development in question that constituted the social base of the authority in power. This social base was composed of a core group of “middle classes” (enlarged through educational progress) and around this group was a nebulous clientele active among the popular classes.

The political situation is tragically different today. The erosion of populist development models and the diktat from the liberal globalisation imposed through structural adjustment plans brutally delegitimised the majority of African States without the forms of sham democracy that took over from the autocratic populist nationalist powers succeeding in restoring the legitimacy of governments unable to offer their peoples anything acceptable in terms of social progress. Africa then entered an involution phase characterised by what is improperly referred to as “internal tribal wars”. It is because these conflicts were not really caused by hostilities between ethnic groups ; instead, they were orchestrated by warlords seeking to control their countries’ resources (oil, diamond, etc.) who used ethnic affinity as a means to that end. Once the local authorities lost their legitimacy, they were unable to face up to the explosion of such criminal ambitions. When called upon for help, OAU – or even UNO -- proved to be equally powerless under such conditions, as attested by the tragic outcome of the ECOMOG operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone (cf. Ethnicism, Culturalism). Under these circumstances, the very idea of regionalisation is meaningless.

For its part, the economic component of OAU’s functions was actually limited to active contribution in Africa (within the Non-Aligned Movement and among the Group of 77 at UNO) towards the establishment of a “common front” presenting claims tendered by countries of the South in their interface with the North counterparts in the new international economic order.

Under these conditions, OAU did not play an active role in the establishment of regional (Pan African) or sub-regional co-operation/integration – even in the initial stages. To say the least, the numerous institutions established in this regard remained inactive.

On the other hand, the co-operation system adopted under the partnership agreements between the European Union and African States (along with those of the Caribbean and the Pacific) presents a different format. However, this refers to a North-South regionalisation system that has so far functioned as a communication

channel for the capitalist globalisation that has now become neo-liberal (cf. the Lomé-Cotonou Agreements and E.U. – A.C.P. partnership).

Also noteworthy are the remaining numerous sub-regional institutions of which the leading ones are ECOWAS in West Africa, SADC (after the SADCC) and COMESA (after PTA) in East and Southern Africa, CEAO – UMOA and UDEAC for countries of the Franc Area, SACU and CMA for countries of the Rand Area, agencies of the major world institutions (such as ADB, a quasi-branch of the World Bank) and other minor institutions (like the Mano River Union, the Great Lakes Community, the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel / CILSS, etc.)

In this regard, it will be observed that the most viable regional institutions are those linked to France or to South Africa (before and after the apartheid system).

Soon after the attainment of independence by its African colonies, France undertook to negotiate the possibility of maintaining the States in the Franc Area in concrete forms that virtually excluded any room for autonomy in monetary management and placed the regional issuing institutions (superficially designated as central banks – whereas they are not) under the authority of the French Treasury and the Bank of France. This system has survived to date, in spite of its vicissitudes (withdrawal and reintegration of some of its members) and has even enlisted new members. A system of this nature does not deserve to be considered as promoting a form of genuine regional co-operation. It is only a vestige of the colonial system that is now on the verge of extinction under the triple effect of the substitution of the Euro for the Franc, liberal globalisation and African involutions. At any rate, if the system happened to break up, there is nothing in perspective to prepare an effective substitute for it, neither in the countries concerned nor in those of the regions of which they are members. Some provisional reforms to that effect were put forward between 1960 and 1970. These reforms were aimed at making the local currency/Franc ratio more flexible, a gradual substitution of a mix of currencies defined for their management (a mix that could have facilitated an acceptable and effective association with the Euro Area), the extension of the monetary zones concerned by integrating the anglophone countries. France rejected all these measures without discussion, indicating that its main concern was to preserve the exclusive control of its client states. Nigeria, whose resources and potential far exceed those of the African member countries of the Franc Area, lobbied among African authorities to make its voice heard about these considerations through sustained and constant efforts, in spite of its characteristic political instability. France has categorically rejected all these approaches and reportedly supports, on the contrary, centrifugal forces trying to ruin this country.

In Southern Africa, the conventions organising customs and monetary unions between South Africa on the one hand, and Lesotho and Swaziland on the other hand, do not deserve any more to be ranked under “regional co-operation” in view of the glaring inequality between the dominant partner and the countries in question, that it has always dominated. SADCC, which was created in the apartheid era so that the Southern African countries stopped depending on Pretoria, actually assisted in providing these countries with some transport facilities to enable them to avoid South African ports. However, soon after the liberation of South

Africa, this organisation was itself transformed into a new co-operation institution (SADC) with South Africa as one of its member countries. At any rate, the new South Africa intends to pursue the same policy adopted by the former one towards countries of the region that it dominates by virtue of its industrial lead. Will the partners indefinitely accept to endure this unequal relationship? It is not certain whether they will.

Certainly, African sub-regional co-operation/integration organisations are credited with meagre, not to say, no achievements. Trade has been negligible, and intra-regional capital flow, non-existent. That was more than foreseeable. In fact, so long as their economies are almost exclusively dependent on exported primary products, the member countries can have nothing to exchange among themselves. The removal of customs barriers and creation of common markets do not suffice to integrate economies of this kind. The sole effect of these measures consists in legitimising trade in foreign products substituting for smuggled goods at the countries' borders. The African States' subsequent adhesion to the free trade principles formulated by the new WTO that took over from GATT can only worsen the disappointing effects of the "commercial opening". A co-operation/integration project is meaningless if the member States do not collectively commit themselves to active industrialisation policies necessarily promoted by the States. In principle, however, the dominant liberal ideology is hostile to any idea of State intervention and planning that would substitute for it the myth whereby private capital (foreign) must spontaneously fulfil the functions of development and diversification.

OAU did take some initiatives -- and persists -- in proposing to African States development "plans" involving their sub-regional or even regional integration. The Lagos Plan of Action (1980) and the Abuja Treaty (1991) are good examples of this organisation's approach. In strictly "technical" terms, these initiatives are far from being devoid of interest or even from being devoid of force and the proposals put forward are far from being absurd, with particular regard to the branches and sectors of new activities suggested for creation, as well as the notions pertaining to their macro-economic linkage and to the distribution of specialisations between the States. The World Bank did perceive their inherent danger : for one thing, the famous Berg Report (1981) produced as an immediate reaction to the Lagos Plan of Action, which has ever since become the Bible of the World Bank, international co-operation institutions and most governments, proposes as a counterpoint, nothing other than pursuing in Africa, specialisations based on "natural" advantages and therefore keeping within the limits of the age-long specialisation in agriculture and mining sectors. To be consistent, the World Bank does not even mention in its Report the potential advantages of an absolutely unnecessary regional integration in the context of the "liberal" strategies it recommends.

The weaknesses inherent in OAU's proposals reside in the fact that their implementation entails active motivation by the States. However, the ruling classes created in the context of the African States in question lack resources or the very will required to engage in a course of action other than specialisation in agriculture and mining from which they derive their revenues. "Regionalisation" under such conditions is outside their real concerns and those of the dominant forces in the global system. It is sheer window-dressing.

In the world system (in which it is completely integrated), Africa occupies only the most subordinate positions that prevent the continent from being an active agent instrumental in shaping the system as a whole. Africa no longer has any national development project nor a fortiori a regional one, in its capacity as a passive subject of the globalisation process (and that is the meaning befitting the term "marginalisation", which does not denote "non-integrated" but rather "integrated as a passive agent").

The Arab world fossilised in its powerlessness

In the Arab world, the popular feeling of belonging to one cultural community if not to one "nation", in the strict sense of the word, is a reality that has assumed strong dimensions in the course of the last few decades. One might therefore have expected this sentiment to also serve as the foundation for serious co-operation between the Arab States, or even to motivate these States to embark on the establishment of a kind of political unity (confederate, federal or unitary). Such is not the case ; in practice, co-operation/integration is as insignificant in the Arab world as it is in Sub-Saharan Africa, for relatively the same reasons and despite the advantage conferred by the Arab linguistic unity.

The Arab League, whose actual designation is the League of Arab States, was modelled on the UNO pattern as an inter-state organisation whose members preserve their full sovereignty that is never renounced, even if partially, for the benefit of supranational powers. In this sense, the League is similar to OAU and to the Organisation of American States, but not to the European Union.

Should the creation of the League also be viewed as an insipid substitute of Pan Arabism ? In the course of its history, the League has established a series of inter-state specialised Arab organisations modelled on the pattern of the United Nations family, but with modest operational results : many surveys, reports and projects, most of which are of standard quality, but few concrete achievements.

Integration efforts in the region thus assumed other dimensions. In a first phase marked by the triumph of Pan-Arabism in the mid-1950s, as well as the outbreak of the Algerian liberation war until the defeat suffered in the third Israeli-Arab war of 1967, these efforts consisted in attempts to fulfil this unity - even if partially in the beginning - by mobilising powerful political inputs, one of the landmarks being the creation of the United Arab Republic (1957-1961) from a merger between Egypt and Syria. However, the failure of this form of Arab unification certainly tolled the death-knell of the Nasser-Baathist strategy and gave free rein to the exacerbation of animosity, and even of conflicts, between governments of immediate neighbours (Algeria-Morocco, Syria-Iraq, Saudi Arabia-Yemen and Iraq-Kuwait).

At the same time, as from 1973, the oil manna for some time appeared to replace the radical political will of the Pan-Arab populism. This manna was actually accompanied by a large-scale movement of internal migrants from the poor countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen) to the rich oil countries (Libya, Irak and the Gulf countries). Then , when they felt threatened by such "invasion", the Gulf countries reacted, as already known, by gradually substituting an immigrant labour force from Pakistan,

India and the Philippines. In other respects, the oil manna financed substantial public remittances. However, far from being perceived as the condition sanctioned by the integrative projects, such remittances were generally wasted in the private consumer needs of the ruling classes' and in the public consumer needs of the subsidised States. That outcome was completely foreseeable. The ultra conservative authorities of the Gulf countries act as communication channels of the exigencies of liberal globalisation and the hegemonism of the United States which they have never thought of calling into question. On the contrary, the governments in question have become quasi-protectorates of the United States, in the wake of America's permanent military establishment in the region after the 1990-1991 Gulf war. The financial support provided concurrently with the dominant movements associated with political Islam that swear allegiance to the United States gives a negative picture of the effects of the "oil manna", because political Islam has no interest in Arab unity, hence the call for "Muslim Ummah" as a substitute for it. In Arabic, there is an untranslatable play on words about this manna with the assertion that the manna (*al fawra*) has taken the place of the revolution (*al thawra*). Finally, the oil manna has managed to finance some private investments here and there. But here too, the investments absolutely formed part of policies aimed at strengthening parasitic compradores of the middle classes who also do not envisage any future prospects outside liberal globalisation.

Under the circumstances, regionalisation/integration in the Arab world has failed to make any progress worthy of the name in the course of the last three decades.

Like Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab world occupies only subordinate positions in the world system. The volume of its oil exports cannot actually constitute a real substitute for an effective industrialisation that can satisfy domestic needs and assist in shaping world markets. Like the case of Sub-Saharan Africa (Gabon), there are some "marginalised rich" countries in the Arab world (the Gulf countries) just as there are many "marginalised poor" ones. Both groups of countries lack the means to impose themselves as active agents helping to shape the world system. They remain as passive agents compelled to unilaterally adapt to the system even though the region's oil supply might be of vital importance to western consumers.

The Arab world is therefore living through a phase of its history marked by lack of projects specific to them. It is therefore not surprising that the others take the initiative in making "proposals" which they impose on their Arab partners.

Thus, the United States of America, which considers the Middle East as a priority region under its exclusive authority (the Europeans being invited just to support its presence in the region) ever since the defunct Soviet Union was discarded, has concocted the Middle East "common market project", together with Israel and Turkey, its two allies (and with the unconditional support of governments of the Gulf countries). Not only does this project legitimise Israel's expansionist practices in the occupied Palestine relegated to the status of a Bantustan ; it also offers the Zionist State the advantage of serving as the indispensable financial and technological intermediary between the multinationals and countries in the region. In this context, one can talk of "regionalisation" only in the sense of a North-South project (United States, Israel, Middle East region) operating in the framework and for the benefit of liberal globalisation and American hegemonism.

For its part, Europe made qualified proposals for "Euro-Mediterranean partnership" that fell within the same logic (Cf. The Euro-Mediterranean partnership). Even though this project would already have failed, it did help to deepen the Maghreb-Mashrek cleavage. In fact, by virtue of the agreements on their association with the European Union, the Maghreb countries are more integrated into the European productive system (to which they supply poorly paid sub-contracted products) than the Mashrek countries.

The "sharing of the burden", in the American political jargon, finds expression here in a division of labour that assigns to the United States, the Middle East and its oil resources, and to the Europeans, the Maghreb and its emigrants (to Europe).

Latin America and the Caribbean

(Contribution required from the regional group)

Issues to be considered (among others)

Motivated by the Monroe doctrine, and, with Washington as the mainspring, is the Organisation of American States (OAS) not a kind of Ministry of United States Colonies (as purported in Latin America) ?

Is Mercosur envisaged in the spirit of liberal globalisation ? On what conditions can it evolve in another direction ?

The NAFTA (Canada-United States-Mexico) foreshadows the new North American project for "Free Trade in the Americas, from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego (ALCA)". Results and prospects. Possible conflict with Mercosur and the Andin Pact. Evaluation of the Caribbean Community.

Prospects of the American monetary system : the progress of dollarisation in Latin America.

Asia

(Contribution required from the regional group)

Issues to be considered (among others)

Specific feature of the region : two giants (China, India)

ASEAN - Evolution of the organisation, initially envisaged as an association for joint political defence "against communism". Conflicts between "protectionist" policies of the member States and the possible requirements of a regionalisation.

The major U.S. -Japan-Asia projects (APEC)

Can an alternative to regionalisation centred on China be defined ?

II. THE LOME - COTONOU CONVENTIONS AND THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC COUNTRIES

Even though the EEC-ACP association occupies just a minor position in the world system, its importance in matters concerning the analysis of Africa's position in the world system calls for an analysis of its particular aspects.

- (vii) Do the European Union and the ACP countries want to establish their relations within an original regionalism formed by two groups, composed of a developed and an underdeveloped set respectively, with the ultimate objective of fighting the system's natural tendencies towards polarisation ?
- (viii) In this plan, what is the position of the Europeans' concern to guarantee their security in commodities if, following the fourfold increase in oil price decided by the OPEC countries in 1973, the ruling classes of the South at one point appeared willing to put their natural resources in the service of their industrialisation ?
- (ix) In the case of the weak Third World States, does this not pre-eminently mean subscribing to a context guaranteeing a rent needed for reproducing and expanding their ruling and middle classes ?

Eventually, is the ultimate objective to create within the world system a "region" that can face the neo-liberal challenge and participate in the construction of a multicentric global system whereby the economy would be put in the service of the peoples, or does it consist in limited arrangements in the service of oligopolies and dominant classes ?

Initially, the objectives of the Lomé agreements was not to put external relations in the service of positive economic, political and cultural changes for African people but rather to strengthen Europe's economic and geopolitical position in the world system. In other words, the developmental dimension was a secondary element less important than the political one. It was pre-eminently a question of supporting the so-called "moderate" States and strengthening tendencies in this direction elsewhere, or undermining the populist developmental aspirations experimented and mobilising to their advantage the geopolitical competition of the two super-powers involved in the cold war.

In the new neo-liberal perspective, the reorganisation of Euro-African relations comes within the framework outlined by WTO, thereby consolidating the centres' monopolies in decisive sectors including control of

access to natural resources, generating new technologies and organisation of the monetary and financial system.

In this spirit, the regionalisations derive their rationality from their capacity to create areas for the optimal deployment of activities of the multinational oligopolies.

Efforts should be made to develop the forms of resistance to this notion in Africa for the following reasons :

- (vii) Regions and countries that are not interested in this perspective are actually excluded from the potential benefits of regionalisation.
- (viii) Increased polarisation and exclusion will result in migratory movements that will be difficult to manage especially since neo-liberalism ignores free movement of workers.
- (ix) The plan implicitly integrates military alliances that make the recalcitrant South countries vulnerable.

Envisaged in this fashion, the regionalisation of Euro-African relations would be totally compatible with the management of internal conflicts created in the Africa marginalised by social disintegration.

As a counterpoint, the alternative can be established only on the following principles :

- (v) The main objective of this regionalised co-operation associating industrial countries and fourth world countries must be to promote an international division of labour compatible with the exigencies of the modern world that should not be a priori excluded for the mere reason that it might not be of economic interest to the multinationals or of strategic interest to the States.
- (vi) Measures must be taken to encourage the emergence and development of democratic forces of change and the civil society's participation in the debate on modalities for regionalised co-operation should be organised systematically.

Reading between the lines, one could discern behind the partnership between EEC and African countries, Europe's concern to obtain during the 1960s and 1970s, a constant supply of tropical agricultural products, minerals and petroleum products. Neo-liberal fundamentalism deliberately ignores the objectives of this nature as the market itself has to resolve such problems and development is nothing other than the outcome of the action of private enterprise. However, the States actually continue to be concerned about all these problems which the handbooks of economics ignore. The gap between the neo-liberal rhetoric and the reality therefore accounts for a confusion of the divided, shapeless and contradictory views to an extreme degree.

Now modelled on the simple rhetoric of the World Bank, IMF and WTO, Europe has unreservedly subscribed to the universal medical prescription for the structural adjustment programmes for the moment and to the illusion that private foreign investment would provide solutions to development problems in the longer term.

The local authorities sometimes tried to hold out against Structural Adjustment Programmes that ended the expansion of their social base (or even bluntly imposed its shrinkage) thereby making them lose all legitimacy. The external debt burden and corruption in government circles were bound to annihilate their leeway, and at the same time prevent them from embarking on self-adjustment, in addition to forcing the authorities to comply with the daily orders issued by international institutions assigned to manage their crisis directly.

However, the greatest confusion characterises these injunctions, which are often governed by the transient methods and moods of the G7. In this mood, there is a succession of views and fashions about poverty alleviation, respect for human rights, sustainable development, plural democracy, etc., without the least desire to analyse the contradictions between these noble objectives and stagnation or even the involutions engendered by the implementation of neo-liberal deregulations.

Is it possible today to assess the EEC-ACP partnership agreements in question ? Certainly, one should be careful not to hold these agreements alone responsible for the evolution of the continent during the last few decades. The reality lies in the combined effect of typically internal processes and the influence of external factors (in this case, including these agreements). The fact remains that the radical African regimes had at their time qualified the 1961 Conventions of Yaoundé as << neo-colonial >> and they did not join the Lomé group until much later, for fear of being denied access to the financial markets. A rigorous analysis of responsibilities in the region's development therefore necessitates the reflection, as clearly as possible, of the positive and negative tendencies operating within the region's societies strengthened by the logic of the Lomé Conventions.

In any case, the result is not impressive. The per capita product in Sub-Saharan Africa increased just at an average rate of 0.40 % annually between 1962 and 1992, as compared to 2.3 % for all the developing countries. This figure reflects a much lower economic growth (3.3 % annually) as well as higher population growth rates (3.9 % per annum). Consequently, the difference between per capita product of Sub-Saharan Africa and that of the other developing countries only widened : it is now established around 1 to 4 and could increase from 1 to 6 in about fifteen years' time.

This already unfavourable result simply in terms of growth rates will certainly appear even worse if one takes into account the reversal of financial flow balance, capital transfers abroad from Africa (to countries of the North, particularly European countries) that now prevail over the inverse capital public and private flows. This reversal, which is not specific to Africa, since it also concerns the entire Third World (China being the unique exception) virtually nullifies all views that can be expressed about a "developmental revival" based on the principles of the dominant neo-liberalism. If truly desired, the revival entails distancing oneself from the absurd dogmatic concept of "pure" economy. European authorities are not willing to review this dogmatic aspect.

The assessment presented this way will be incomplete so long as the trend of income distribution accompanying the implementation of the strategies in question is not taken into consideration. For one thing, this income distribution has developed and is developing in a negative direction, the type marked by increased inequality which, in turn, results in waste of investments (priority being actually given to expensive investments intended to meet requirements of the privileged classes). Income distribution is not unrelated to strategic development options. On the contrary, they are closely associated. Far from guaranteeing an optimal allocation of resources, as purported by the neo-liberal discourse, the neo-liberal options of uncontrolled globalisation results in a disastrous allocation of particularly scarce resources (capital, technologies and skilled labour).

We will continue to examine the reasons for this development fiasco by highlighting the following points :

- (v) The close relationship between the general poor growth and the failure of agricultural development : the agricultural potential is so poorly exploited that food production does not provide adequately for the population's needs and the structural deficit is likely to be aggravated.
- (vi) The marginalisation of Africa in world trade : the region's share of imports from the European Union dropped from 3.9 % in 1976 to 2.8 % in 1994, while that of Asia increased from 9 % to 13 %. These poor results have been so, especially since the oil-rich countries of the group alone account for 67 % of the region's total exports and that the decrease in the region's exports to the European Union has not been compensated by an opening onto other world markets, once the level of dependence on the European market has not been reduced.

In this context then, are these partnership agreements not responsible - at least partially - since, by virtue of their privileged intervention in favour of primary commodities (through the Stabex and Sysmin mechanisms), they encouraged Africa to remain in this type of international division of labour that is being overtaken by events elsewhere, as illustrated by the success of the new industrial countries whose exports in the form of manufactured goods have had a stimulating effect ? How can one hope for successes in terms of global growth if development is based on so-called comparative advantages enshrined in low-productivity products that are moreover destined to be affected by the deteriorating terms of trade ?

- (iii) The marginalisation of Africa in international investment : although the European Union provides half of ACP's external financial resources, it was thanks to the continued increase in the flow of public assistance that this proportion was maintained, while the opening of the economies ended in the withdrawal of private capital investments.

The partnership agreements also deal with matters concerning regionalisation within the ACP group. In this domain, however, they manage with ordinary systems that merely take account of what really exists (such as

the CFA monetary zone) or in the rhetoric of inactive institutions (ECOWAS and others). There is nothing comparable with the logic of the Marshall Plan that had imposed a constraining intra-European co-operation as a condition for United States' support. In reality then, the decades considered (from 1960 to date) have not brought about an intensification of intra-African trade. At this level too, Africa is overtaken by Asia and Latin America. Once more, this unfavourable trend certainly cannot be attributed to the partnership agreements alone. It is the outcome of the overall development strategy considered, that has mainly been "nationalistic" in the sense that it envisaged only strictly national economic policies, without giving importance to a necessary perspective of regionalisation - except, in fact, in the rhetoric concerning "regional co-operation". The radical populists alone could not be held responsible for this "nationalism" since the "moderate liberals" also acted similarly.

Finally, the European Union does not appear to have defined an environmental policy that takes account of environmental degradation in Africa.

Despite their inherent inadequacies, the partnership agreements comprise a potentially positive aspect from the perspective of the principle : that of asserting a joint responsibility of the developed States (those of the European Union) and the so-called developing States (the ACP countries) in the development process. In fact, the principle remained asserted, even though in its progressive potential, the actual implementation of the principle was greatly impeded by the nature and options of the dominant forces in the European States themselves and by those of the associated African ruling classes. This constituted an exception because neither the United States nor the international instruments unreservedly loyal to them (the World Bank, IMF and WTO) ever agreed to subscribe to the principle.

Certainly, behind the Lomé agreements loomed "particular interests" inherited from colonial history, which is gradually losing momentum. However, this situation was also due to the phenomenon referred to as the "cold war". At that time, USSR and China actively supported the Non - Aligned Movement which was eventually adopted by all the African States, including even the most moderate ones (the pro-Western or even anti-Soviet elements). Europe was tempted to respect - at least officially - the independence of the ACP States and accept the principle of (financial) support to strategies freely decided by their partners. No conditionality of the compulsory privatisation type or abrogation of exchange control was conceivable at that time. In renouncing this principle to place Euro-African relations henceforth in the framework of the liberal globalisation dubbed "without alternative", the European Union took a great step back. The European Union has substituted a new principle for the one it abandoned. In fact, the Union claims that it hopes to strengthen its economic co-operation with the ACP countries through a "political dialogue" and has adopted, in this perspective, the theme of democratisation. However pleasant the principle governing this option may be, the said option runs the risk of getting bogged down in rhetoric and manipulation if the debate does not dare to tackle firmly the issues concerning the content and social conditions of the democracy in question as well as those pertaining to the exigencies of economic policy that it implies.

III. THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

Europe and the Arab world are two regions which have maintained complex relations throughout their history on account of their geographic proximity and their common Hellenistic ancestry from which originated Christianity and Islam. However, the North-South demarcation between "developed" Europe and the "under-developed" Arab world, such as we know, was definitively established only belatedly, with the capitalist expansion reinforced by the colonisation of the South segment that ended only recently (the British left Egypt only in 1954 and even tried to return there in 1956 and the French did not recognise Algeria's independence until 1962).

In the post-Second World War period, the relations between Europe and the Arab world came within the dominant logic of the United States' geopolitics and geo-strategy. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) actually considered the Arab world as an opponent while the Soviet Union supported the Arab world's attempts at autonomous development. Having withdrawn from the region, Europe allowed the United States to operate there alone, the support of their loyal allies, such as Turkey, Israel and the governments of the Gulf and thus guaranteed the vital oil supply to Europe.

Was the disappearance of the Soviet opponent going to open new prospects for genuine co-operation between the European Union and the Arab world ? One could have thought so at one point when Europe took the initiative in formulating in Barcelona in 1995 a proposal designated as "Euro-Mediterranean" partnership. Today, it can only be noticed that this process is not just "at a standstill" but that it has collapsed.

The reason is that the project itself had been designed on the basis of an unacceptable and incredible principle and could therefore not be implemented, even if some of its promoters must have been well-intentioned partners.

The European partner rallies not only the Mediterranean Europeans but all countries of the European Union. It is a right for Europeans, which, in fact, nobody can call into question (the right to think of sharing common interests and of having to contemplate a common future). That is an indisputable right for all Europeans, even if those in each of the concerned countries also have the right to criticise (as done by some people) the European project as it stands today.

The other partner is curious ; it is composed of all the riparian entities along the South and East coast of the Mediterranean. However, the majority of these riparian elements happen to be Arab countries that also belong to a distinct world : the Arab world. Whether a nationalistic Arab or not, this world exists and it should therefore be recognised that the Arab world could have certain common tendencies, a certain sense of common interest and a common vision of its integration into the contemporary world. Separating the Mediterranean Arab countries from the non-Mediterranean Arab countries is actually unacceptable. What is needed is therefore a Euro-Arab agreement -- in other words, an agreement between all the European countries and all the Arab, regardless of whether they are Mediterranean or not. The Mediterranean concept is meaningful only if entails rallying all the riparian countries around problems concerning the common sea,

for instance in the area of pollution. It is not on this narrow basis that one can contemplate the future of relations between Europe and this small portion of the South known as the Arab world.

On the other hand, the era of the Barcelona Conference (1995) was also that of the Madrid and Oslo Conferences, that is a period when a certain type of peace between Arabs and Israel was being promoted under the leadership of the Americans. In this way, the Europeans implemented a strategy complementary to that of the United States and Israel, aimed at dictating the content of the said peace. A kind of peace imagined on a basis that should have been perceived in advance as unacceptable, since it was equivalent to the establishment of a *Bantustan* - there could not be a better term - in the occupied territories of Palestine.

It is at this moment and in this geographical context that the Euro-Mediterranean project was contemplated. It consisted in using the new international economic situation to impose on the Arabs Israel's integration into the region and posing as a condition for co-operation between Europe and the Arab countries, a similar co-operation between the Arab countries themselves and Israel... By comparison, it is a little as if, in the apartheid era, Europe had forced the African States to regularise their diplomatic and other relations with South Africa as a condition for the support and co-operation that the Europeans were offering them.

As an apartheid country, Israel has been implementing a policy of systematic ethnic purge. It is unacceptable to put up with Israel, let alone supporting it. Israel should be boycotted by all civilised countries of the world.

At present, the tragedy developing in Palestine call for a strong international political intervention accompanied by effective measures for a serious boycott of Israel until this State recognises the State of Palestine. Europe intervened clamorously in Kosovo to defend a lesser cause than that of Palestine, but it tolerates that the government of Israel be entrusted to a real war criminal who, in fact, has personally proclaimed his rejection of the Madrid and Oslo agreements ! It is true that in the case of Yugoslavia, Europe only stood by a decision previously taken in Washington. On the contrary, in taking an autonomous stand on Palestine, Europe has to distance itself from the United States, which is obviously difficult. It also proves that political Europe does not exist.

The so-called European proposals for "Euro-Mediterranean partnership" also include an economic component about which the European institutions claimed to have made "new efforts" in qualifying their proposals as coming within the framework of "mutual development", "partnership" and "joint development", in place of "aid", the devalued term.

An analysis of these proposals shows that it is nothing of the sort. All these proposals absolutely come within the exclusive logic of globalised neo-liberalism (opening markets, creating "enabling" conditions for foreign investment, deregulating and defusing protections, etc.) as formulated by the United States, WTO, the World Bank and IMF. Submission to the rules defined by these authorities, including the so-called "structural adjustment" plans is moreover formulated as a pre-condition for implementation of the European proposals. Here too, the real position of Europe is not different from that of the United States. In both its political and

economic dimensions Europe's proposals currently form part of a dominant twofold alignment: liberal globalisation and United States' hegemonism. The two elements are interrelated. Accepting the exclusive logic of liberal globalisation means accepting to give priority or the very exclusive importance to the interests of the dominant capital. At any rate, the interests of the European dominant capital are not fundamentally different from the interests of the North American dominant capital. Of course, there are conflicts, but they are common mercantile conflicts of the same kind as the conflicts that can crop up between multinationals of a given country. Europe's possible autonomy vis-à-vis the United States cannot be assumed on this basis.

Other conditions are also imposed by the European partner. Is the reference to respect for human rights as a theoretical condition of the partnership agreements desirable ? Certainly, even if signed by governments that do not intend to implement its provisions, a charter can become a lever that can be utilised by victims of a system. However, this instrument will at best remain marginal because the struggle for democracy is pre-eminently the peoples' affair that must be managed in the concerned country itself. Internationalism in this field is very useful, but it is mainly through internal struggles and mobilisation of democratic forces within the societies that the change can be fostered. What the external entity can do is precisely to support them and not to fight them.

However, the use that the Great Powers (Europe in this case) intend to make of such interventions in the name of democracy remains dubious. The examples of "double standards" - which are numerous and obvious - show that this type of utilisation is absolutely cynical : the tool is mobilised against an opponent to be weakened but it is put away in the face of an ally. Moreover, the dominant concept at present is that of *good governance*, to use the jargon in fashion ; in other words, the concept of acceptable governability. Alas, this is a poor concept that limits democracy to multiparty systems, formal elections and respect for a number of individual elementary rights, without recognising social, individual and collective rights, the right to work, education, health and freedom of movement within and outside one's own country. Yet the rights constitute a whole set comprising inseparable elements. If they are not accompanied by the other rights, then political rights become instruments that can be and are manipulated and therefore undermine the cause of democracy since they destroy its credibility among the peoples themselves.

IV. THE DESIRABLE ALTERNATIVE IN TERMS OF REGIONALISATION

Africa and the Arab world are not really on course for any effective regionalisation, apart from those ordered from outside and dominated by the North, despite the proliferation of institutions that finally constitute a mere window-dressing.

However, the region needs appropriate and effective forms of regionalisation. These should be thought up by analysing challenges of the contemporary world (especially the great trends shaping tomorrow's world) and the requirements for authentic development, as a counterpoint. Authentic development is meaningful provided it is popular in the sense that its benefits are immediately shared by all the popular classes and are

not the prerogative of a minority group. Moreover, that is the necessary condition for associating development with a democratisation process likely to be entrenched. The model of this type of development that could be deployed simultaneously at national or sub-regional levels or in the large region representing the continent as a whole would then occupy its position in the construction of a multipolar globalisation, the sole alternative to the unbalanced and polarising globalisation implemented by the dominant forces of the moment.

What we are proposing here is just a plan of the regional response to these challenges, and not a "detailed" project on any account. This plan therefore emphasises the proposed principles ignored quite obviously, as will eventually be discovered, in current practices and in the rhetoric of the dominant discourse about regionalisation.

Regions of the Third World in general, and Africa in particular, must design forms of regionalisation that could enhance their capacity to resist the new forms of polarisation operating in the global system. The term "new" should be strongly emphasised.

This element is desirable because the polarisation in the world system no longer operates the way it did in the course of the last two centuries.

The polarisation of the "classical" period was virtually synonymous with the contrast between industrialised and non-industrialised countries. The monopoly of centres, which allowed for the reproduction and intensification of unbalanced accumulation worldwide, was that of industrialisation. This contrast established the forms whereby the law of globalised value operated at this stage of globalisation ; forms whose expressions gave food for thought during the major debates of that period ("unequal exchange" in particular).

At that time, the response to the challenge could obviously be summed up in one word : industrialisation. Another observation was that it was then not absurd to think that a large entity was less difficult to industrialise than a small one so regionalisation could be an appropriate means of overcoming the difficulty. Hence, the large regional zone could be designed as a place for sectorised and selective planning of complementarities between the national productive systems to be established. At the same time, it could be designed as a "common market", even though the latter had to be considered as an area for collective protection from the developed centres.

Even in the absence of effective achievements, the regionalisation projects in Africa and in the Arab world already could not meet the exigencies of the period. They were based on the simple idea of creating "common markets" in imitation of the European model, without assessing the actual exigencies inherent in facing the challenge. In fact, the social challenge demanded at least that two sets of measures be taken beyond the mere establishment of common markets. The first concerns the motivation from States and

regional authorities, necessary for the creation of non-existent productive systems (whereas in Europe the common market operated in a universe of already developed industrial systems). The second pertains to protection of the new integrated zone. The African common markets proposed at that time were silent about the first set and shy of the second.

Today, it is even no longer a question of conceptualising the possible common markets as protected areas. That is formally prohibited by WTO rules, regionalisation being tolerated only insofar as it comes in the framework of an open globalisation. In this context, protection is not acceptable unless it is moderated and especially “provisional” since it must only render the local activities rapidly “competitive” on an open world market. There is something ridiculous here : requesting an African country to become competitive in any field of economic activity in some years or even within twenty years is meaningless. A productive mine (based on a rich natural endowment) or an ordinary subcontracting industrial establishment (whose “advantage” is therefore comparable to that of cheap labour and slight taxation) could certainly be “competitive” in this sense, whereas the national productive system could not. Under the circumstances, the possible increase in “competitive activities” could only replicate the polarisation to which the given country fell victim.

The polarisation operating within the world system today is no longer based on the sole industrial monopoly of the centres. It is because the major peripheries in turn have now entered the industrial era (even though Africa has actually not done so). The industrial monopoly of the past is now substituted by what I proposed to classify under one of the headings of the “five monopolies” of the centres : technological initiative, access to world natural resources, control of financial globalisation, communications and weapons of mass destruction. If taken together, these five monopolies define one form and a new context of the law of globalised value on the basis of which accumulation at the world level replicates and intensifies the polarisation process.

Under these new conditions, the national development strategies and regionalisation structures destined to enhance their efficiency should be perceived as the means of facing these five challenges.

A regionalisation project in the Third World today is meaningless if it does not constitute the mechanism for establishing adequate facilities for effectual scientific and technological research capable of developing appropriate technologies and promoting their diffusion and effective use - through protection - in any given regional entity. For example, promoting pharmaceutical research and establishing a pharmaceutical industry to combat AIDS (and other no less destructive pandemic diseases) in Africa. Doing so means entering into conflict (and it must be admitted) with the rules of the so-called protection of intellectual and industrial property, in this case, those of the pharmaceutical oligopolies of countries of the North which are not interested in AIDS eradication in Africa (which entails the use of less expensive products) but rather defending the substantial proceeds they realise from the sale of their expensive products. Is that impossible ? Cuba has created a remarkable medical and pharmaceutical industry. Why could Africa not do the same ? Many examples could be cited among others in the fields of agriculture and irrigation.

A regionalisation project in the Third World today is meaningless if it does not envisage ways and means of using the region's natural resources primarily for the development of the region instead of world consumption (in this case, consumption by countries of the North). In other words, exploiting such resources (minerals and oil in particular) only in proportion to the needs of the region and its exports in demand to pay for the necessary imports. The principles of liberal globalisation call for the opposite : exporting at the maximum capacity, even if it means sacrificing the future of Third World peoples to accommodate the immediate waste of resources by countries of the North... One of the priority objectives of regionalisation must be to break the centres' monopoly of access to world resources. A taxation system in respect of income from exploitation of natural resources could be imagined at the regional level as a means of sharing its proceeds among the States and regional institutions (to facilitate, for instance, the coverage of their technological research expenditures outlined in the previous paragraph). A global taxation system would thus be initiated and this would compel consumers in the North to pay a higher price for access to world resources than the implicit cost of their waste.

A regionalisation project in the Third World is meaningless if it does not allow for the establishment of a regional financial system capable of resisting the financial globalisation implemented by the dominant capital. A system of national currencies correctly managed (while capital flow is still controlled) and articulated at the regional level by a Monetary Fund with responsibility to ensure a relative stability of exchanges within the region, can be imagined if there is a bold attempt to be liberated from the IMF diktat. The region could then refuse collectively what financial globalisation imposes on it, including the opening of capital accounts.

The implementation of regional communication systems, destined to confer on each region some relative autonomy vis-à-vis the globalised system that does not only serve as a vehicle for dominant cultures and sub-cultures but also operates as a powerful instrument of political manipulation, entails not only the solution to technological problems (which should therefore appear in the list of priorities of the research outlined above). It also implies a difficult consensus on the political and cultural options of countries of the region, nevertheless conceivable if the national and regional structures are based on the principles of the best democracy. Some regional formations of this kind would also pave the way for the democratisation of the global system.

The monopoly of weapons of mass destruction should also be broken. There too, the responses to the challenge - national and regional - entail not only difficult but conceivable agreements, for example, those for the creation of collective task forces (OAU would definitely need them !), not only - alas - the creation of efficient arms industries (pending the time when the North will renounce its "right" to interfere... and to bomb recalcitrant parties) but also and, of course, the sharing of a common vision of regional security as a complement to that of the singular Nations.

It could be objected that what has just been said about responses to the challenge posed by the “five monopolies” is probably valid for the giant countries (China, India and Brazil) which have the advantage of doing without “regionalisations” (and moreover, these three countries are to some extent not insensitive to the challenges posed by the “five monopolies”, which they have been facing, at least partially, through their specific national policies) or perhaps for the regions of Asia and Latin America that are already advanced in the field of industrialisation. However, the fact that the forms of regionalisation devised for the previous phase of global development are still valid for Africa, since the continent has not really entered the era of industrialisation, is partly true, provided that it be a question of regional protection from an industrialisation to be realised seriously and at the maximum rather than the minimum level. That is partly true because, Africa, indisputably, is also part parcel of the world today and should therefore participate in the fight against the new forms of domination by the North and the related polarisation.

The principles of regionalisation outlined above naturally come within the perspective of a democratic and multi-centric globalisation.

The principles of this form of regionalisation are reasonable and efficient means of combating the polarising effects of the five monopolies of the triad. From that premise, the world order could be reviewed so as to propose the central themes and objectives of the high-level negotiations on at least the following topical issues likely to organise a supervised interdependence between countries and regions committed to the service of the populations :

- Renegotiating "market shares" and their access rules. Of course, this project calls into question the rules of WTO which, under the pretext of a discourse on "fair competition", applies itself solely to defending privileges of the active oligopolies worldwide.
- Renegotiating financial market systems, with a view to stemming the domination of operations for financial speculation and channelling investments towards productive activities in the North and South alike. This project calls into question the functions, and no doubt, the very existence of the World Bank.
- Renegotiating monetary systems so as to establish agreements and regional mechanisms guaranteeing a relative stability of foreign exchange transactions that should be completed by organising their interdependence. This project calls into question, IMF, the dollar standard and the principle of free and fluctuating foreign exchange transactions.
- Initiating a global taxation system by establishing taxes on income realised from the exploitation of natural resources and redistributing them at national, regional and international levels on the basis of appropriate criteria and for specified uses. The Greens (Ecologists) should support such an idea if they are serious and consistent with the principles they proclaim to be theirs.

- Demilitarising the Planet, by first reducing weapons of mass destruction at the disposal of the major Powers.
- Democratising UNO and international law.

In this perspective reconciling globalisation and local and regional autonomies (which I call delinking consistent with the new challenges), there is provision for a serious review of the concepts of "aid", and for problems connected with democratisation of the United Nations system, that could therefore concentrate efficiently on certain objectives of disarmament (rendered possible by the national and regional security systems associated with regional reconstruction), initiate the establishment of a globalised taxation (in relation with the management of national resources of the Planet), accomplish the functions of UNO as an inter-state organisation by initiating the creation of a "World Parliament" that can reconcile the exigencies of universalism (individual, community and peoples' rights, political and social rights, etc.) and the diversity of the historical and cultural heritage.

The programme outlined here is not solely aimed at modulating market regulation systems to protect the weak (classes and nations). Its political component is no less important. The central ideas that guided the writing of the paper pertain to disarmament and the need to formulate a new international law governing individuals, peoples and States.

As regards disarmament, the dominant discourse hackneyed by the media, in light of the dangers inherent in the "proliferation" of nuclear weapons and others, is truly out of place because, as a military power, America has opted for terrorist bombing and would obviously not hesitate to use nuclear weapons if it found that strategy necessary. Faced with this major threat, the other countries of the world can only react by resolving to build up military forces capable of dissuading imperialist aggression by rendering it expensive. That is the price to pay for peace.

Can one also hope to develop a new substantive law that will guarantee for all human beings on this earth a dignified treatment, as a condition for their active and inventive participation in the construction of the future ? A substantive and multi-dimensional law that will treat the rights of human beings (men and women of course, as perfectly equal beings), political rights, social rights (work and security), community and peoples' rights and eventually, the rights governing inter-state relations. That is certainly an agenda to span decades of reflection, debates, actions and decisions.

The principle of respect for national sovereignty must remain the cornerstone of international law. Indeed, if the Charter of the United Nations chose to proclaim that principle, it was precisely because the principle had been denied by fascist powers. In his poignant speech delivered in 1935 before the SDN, Emperor Haile Selassie clearly indicated that the violation of this principle – cowardly abandoned by the then democracies - tolled the death knell of this organisation. The fact that this fundamental principle is again violated today with so much brutality by the democracies themselves does not constitute a mitigating circumstance but

rather an aggravating circumstance. Incidentally, this situation already launched the far-from-glorious end of a UNO viewed as a registration room for decisions taken elsewhere and implemented by others. The official adoption of the principle of national sovereignty in 1945 was logically accompanied by the prohibition of recourse to war. States were authorised to defend themselves against whoever violated their sovereignty through aggression, but condemned in advance if they were aggressors. Today, it is the powers associated in NATO which must be condemned in this regard in conformity with the law in force.

No doubt, the United Nations Charter had given an absolute interpretation of the principle of sovereignty. The fact that today the democratic opinion no longer accepts that this principle authorise governments to do as they choose with human beings placed under their jurisdiction constitutes an undeniable progress of universal conscience. How can these two potentially conflicting principles be reconciled ? Certainly, not by suppressing one of their terms - sovereignty of States or human rights. It is because apart from the fact that the option made by the United States and its trailing subordinated European allies is certainly not the good one, it conceals the real objectives of the operation which have nothing to do with respect for human rights despite the media hype intended to make it credible.

UNO is the place where international law should be developed. There can be no other respectable places. Whether this entails organisational reforms, a review of the ways and means (including institutional innovation) of ensuring the representation of real social forces in the system alongside the governments (that, at best, represent them so imperfectly), whether it be a question of assigning oneself the objective of incorporating into a coherent entity the rules of international law (respect for sovereignty), those concerning economic and social rights neglected in the liberal vulgate, which necessarily call for regulation of markets -- these offer enough material to pad out an agenda full of questions to which I will not seek to provide, in this paper, answers that would inevitably be too brief. It certainly constitutes a long process without a short cut ; for one thing, the history of mankind has not ended and will continue to progress according to its possibilities.

The multi-centric and democratic global system advocated here does not constitute the "end of history" ; it is only a stage in the long progress of social values towards the constitution of a world society based on human solidarity rather than the selfishness of individuals and nations.

In this transition, emphasis is actually laid on three principles mostly neglected in the 20th Century experiences which moreover reflect the underlying trends in the global transformation. It primarily concerns the principle of a democratisation perceived as an endless multidimensional process, which helps to initiate the raising of awareness about the nature of the economist alienation to be combated. This process therefore involves a gradual transition from projects and visions about the progress from liberation in capitalism to those concerning liberation from capitalism. In the second place, the humanistic vision of the world, which advocates the establishment of individual and community rights in positions of responsibility (in place of commercial law, in other words, the law in the service of capital) helps to promote a people's internationalism, which acts as a counterbalance to the trans-nationalism of capital. Finally, in the third place,

regionalisations are viewed from a perspective that makes them efficient tools for reducing the polarising effects of capital flow.

We can now consider the questions concerning a possible North-South partnership, distinguished by a new type of co-operation "project" associating Europe, Africa and the Arab world.

The dominant Europe on the one hand, and the dominated Africa and the Arab world on the other hand, have been closely associated by geography - and perhaps history - for better and especially for worse (imperialism). Can one imagine a new type of "cooperation" between these three regions for the construction of the democratic multipolar and regionalised world outlined above ? What are the conditions for such a project ?

The objectives of a project with such an ambition must be clarified. They could only consist in : (i) bridging the gap between the various partners of the region : Western Europe, Eastern Europe and the former USSR, poor semi-industrialised Arab countries, rich oil-producing countries, Sub-Saharan African countries and South Africa ; (ii) ensuring a sufficient degree of autonomy for the concerned regions and sub-regions in order to take account of the disparities between the various parties that could provide effective solutions to their social problems ; and (iii) guaranteeing the supervised open policy of countries of the region in their international relations and in their relations with other regions of the world.

It is more than obvious that the realisation of these objectives would necessitate a deep transformation of the structures of the powers that be. More precisely, this transformation is unbelievable without imagining : (i) that a hegemony of labour is replacing that of capital ; (ii) that popular social alliance is taking shape in Russia and in the member countries of the former USSR (as in the countries of Eastern Europe), thereby taking over from the political bureaucracies and the confused, ambiguous populist and nationalist forces ; and (iii) that some popular national alliances are developing in Africa and in the Arab world in place of the existing compradore hegemonies.

To Europe, in the broad sense of the word, even though it is vague, the concept of "common house" might certainly correspond to the exigencies of the envisaged construction, for it implies a margin of relative autonomy necessary for the deployment of appropriate specific policies of all the parties among the partners. The system does not exclude the more comprehensive forms of integration between the more advanced countries. The European Union might form this unit if it could be re-established on the basis of the hegemony of labour, a concept that does not exist in the current state of its institutionalisation. The outcome of this form of European regionalisation at several stages would be African Unity and Arab Unity, which will also be conceptualised at various stages. The construction of the Europe - Africa - Arab World entity might obviously require that the three regions agree to strengthen one another and operate in a direction that would consolidate their respective units. That is not the case because Europe has not yet expressed its desire to deal with the group composed of Africans and Arabs. The European Union does not recognise OAU and the Arab

League and it only accepts to deal individually with the countries forming these organisations. It is therefore incumbent on the Africans and Arabs to impose their recognition.

On the other hand, the present state of social power struggles certainly does not make it possible to imagine that the upheavals of this scope are of topical interest. The social agents who would objectively have benefited from such an outcome are merely potential agents, and are far from crystallising into political forces capable of proposing revolutions of this magnitude. Those in the forefront of the scene operate in directions that do not converge on the objectives defined earlier in this paper. It is quite the opposite.

Under the circumstances, behind the current "Euro-African" and "Euro-Arab" projects is a looming collective neo-imperialist project with Western Europe dominating "its" African and Arab South and "its" latin-americanised East to its advantage.

This project can still inspire the nostalgic daydreams of the colonial past. Is it necessarily realistic under the present global circumstances ? No. Even the Gulf War has shown that United States of America alone wanted to control the Middle East and its oil (with the support of its ardent Israeli and Turkish allies). Europe itself has no collective political vision of the world. Since 1945, Great Britain has made an apparently definitive option of siding unreservedly with the big brother of North America and reliving its imperialist past by proxy through the big brother. For its part, Germany, having renounced its wildest Nazi-specific dream about global hegemony, has opted to resume its traditional expansion towards Eastern Europe, to content itself with the "latin-americanisation" of this Eastern segment to its advantage and to conform in other areas to the positions of the United States' hegemonic project. On the other hand, France, having renounced the Gaullist principle of refusing to blend its own interests with those of Washington, is being marginalised.

Under the circumstances, it can only be concluded that, at present, no Euro-Arab--African regionalisation project worthy of this name exists.

Many are the critical readers who might describe the principles of the propositions in this paper as "unrealistic" and therefore refuse to engage in the discussion they may consider unnecessary. Their "realism" consists in believing that "the fiddling within the system", as it stands now, however that may be, constitutes the sole option possible allowing for progress". History seldom justifies this type of fiddling. In fact, the "realistic" politicians of colonial Africa behaved that way and refused to follow the minority avant-garde that boldly proclaimed independence as the only prospect that could motivate their engagement in the struggle. History has proved this avant-garde right. Whereas politicking is probably the art of acting intelligently in the context of well-defined power balances, authentic politics is the art of modifying such power balances.

Intellectuals must dare to think, speak out and make proposals. It is on this condition that creative utopia helps to discover the sole prospect that is truly realistic ; in other words, the type that can rapidly mobilise powerful social forces that eventually impose its logic once the social movement begins to be aware of it. If there be a utopia, in the plain and negative sense of the term, it is actually that of "realists" who do not think

they must and can pull out of the dominant theories. Their interventions have no impact. If intellectuals give up the idea of fulfilling their critical function, they become puppets, worthless parasites.

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