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LAYING NEW FOUNDATIONS FOR SOLIDARITY AMONG PEOPLES OF THE SOUTH

No doubt, the pattern of integration of Southern countries by three international institutions entrusted with that mission (WTO, the World Bank and IMF) mainly accounts for the weakening of the G-77, the Tri-continental group (that no longer exists) and the Non-Aligned Movement (which is nevertheless showing signs of a possible rebirth). Also contributing to this trend is the widening developmental inequalities in the G-77 system, with the emergence of countries seriously engaged in a process of industrialisation and competing on the world market with both the triad countries (United States, Europe and Japan) and some Southern countries in the same group, on the one hand, and the drifts plaguing countries now referred to as the Fourth World, on the other hand.

The Southern countries might no longer have the same interests in putting up a collective defence. This certainly applies to parties solely concerned with the short run and the immediate conditions governing the “benefits” that any party anticipates – or think they can derive -- from the liberal globalisation. But that is not true in the long run, because the existing capitalist system does not have much to offer to popular classes of the South nor even to the Nations it does not help to “catch up”, in other words, to assert themselves as equal partners, positioned like the central entities (the triad) in shaping the world system.

But it is again from the political angle that the awareness of the need for solidarity among Southern countries begins. United States’ arrogance and the implementation of their plan “to control the globe militarily” by fabricating interminable wars “made in USA”, unilaterally planned and decided by Washington, are the root cause of the positions taken in the recent Non-Aligned Summit (Kuala Lumpur, February 2003).

1. A glance over the past – the Bandung era (1955-1981)

Heads of State of Asian and African countries that had attained political independence met for the first time in Bandung in 1955.

The Asian and African leaders were far from being identical with one another. The political and ideological movements that they represented, their visions of the future of the society to be constructed or reconstructed and its relations with the West, were among the themes that underscored the difference. Nevertheless, a common project brought them closer and gave a meaning to their reunion. The completion of the political decolonisation of Asia and Africa featured in their joint basic programme. Moreover, they all understood that the recovered political independence constituted only the means, because the end lay in the conquest of economic, social and cultural liberation.

Despite their differences, the Non Aligned thought that building a developed and independent economy and society (even if within a framework of global interdependence) implied a

certain degree of «conflict» with the dominant West (the radical wing felt that it had to stem the control of national economy with capital from foreign monopolies).

Moreover, in their anxiety to preserve the recovered independence, they refused to enter into the global military game and serve as a base for encircling the socialist countries tentatively imposed through America's hegemonic tendencies. However, they also thought that refusing to join the Atlanticist military camp did not imply the necessity to be placed under the protection of USSR, the latter's enemy. The result was «neutralism» or «non - alignment », the name of the group and of the organisation that emerged from the spirit of Bandung.

- From Summit to Summit during the 1960s and 1970s decades, «non-alignment» was expected to rally almost all the countries of Asia and Africa plus Cuba and gradually smooth out the positions of on the one hand political solidarity based on support to liberation struggles and rejection of military pacts and on the other hand of putting up a kind of «trade union» organizing common economic claims to the North». In this regard, the Non Aligned rallied around the peoples if not the States of Latin America (that had never joined the Tri-continental body). The Group of 77 (the entire Third World) expressed this new broad Southern alliance. The battle for a «new international economic order», initiated in 1975, after the October 1973 war and the revision of oil prices crowned this evolution to sound the knell, as accomplished in Cancun (1981) by the diktat of Reagan, supported by his European allies.

Although it was often implicit and vague, the political economy of the non-aligned movement may be defined by the following elements:

- the will to develop productive forces and to diversify productions (particularly to industrialise),
- the will to entrust the conduct and monitoring of the process to the nation-state,
- the belief that the «technical» models constitute «neutral» data that can only be reproduced if it meant mastering them,
- the belief that the process does not primarily call for popular initiative but rather the popular support to State actions,
- the belief that the process is not basically in conflict with participation in exchanges within the world capitalist system, even if it creates momentary conflicts with this system.

The circumstances of capitalist expansion during the 1955-1970 period somewhat facilitated the success of this project. The page of this history of non-alignment appears to have been turned ever since the global system entered – as from 1980 – into a redeployment phase on the basis of a neo-liberal globalisation. But is it really turned? The forms of resistance to the current globalised vision are being intensified throughout the world, in the North and South. It is in this context that one can situate a possible revival of the Non-Aligned Movement, so that it becomes «non alignment with liberal globalisation and US hegemonic tendencies».

1. Rebirth of a Southern Front ?

- *The Kuala Lumpur Summit*

The recent Non-Aligned Summit (Kuala Lumpur, February 2003) probably surprised some lethargic chanceries, which were convinced that the South was no longer a factor to reckon with in the new liberal globalisation. Subjected to the devastating schemes of structural adjustment, strangled by debt service levies and governed by comprador bourgeoisies, the Southern countries seem to be no longer in a position to challenge the international capitalist order, as they tried to do between 1955 and 1981.

The general surprise consisted in the Non-Aligned Movement's condemnation of the imperialist strategy adopted by Washington, its inordinate and criminal ambition to assume the military control of the planet, its deployment through the perpetual spearheading of wars «made in USA», unilaterally planned and decided by the United States.

The Southern countries are becoming aware of the fact that the neo-liberal globalised management has nothing to offer to them and that being the case, the neo-liberal system had to use military violence in order to be established, thereby playing the game enshrined in the American project. The Movement is becoming – as suggested -- that of «non alignment with liberal globalisation and US hegemony».

The collapse of Soviet « socialism », the course taken by China, and the drift of the populist regimes of the Third World had created the hollow impression that “there might be no alternative”. Adhere to the exigencies of the globalised neo-liberalism, play the game and try to draw some benefit from it, if possible. No alternative. Within a few years, the practical experience shattered the naïve hopes placed in this so-called «realistic» logic.

- *Guidelines for a far-reaching alliance as a basis for the eventual reconstruction of solidarity among peoples and States of the South*

The positions taken by certain Southern States and the ideas propounded suggest the guidelines for the eventual revival of a «South Front». These positions concern the political sphere as well as the economic management of the globalisation process.

a) In the political sphere : denunciation of the new principle of United States' policy (« preventive war ») and the demand for evacuation of all foreign military bases in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The choice made by Washington in respect of its zone for military interventions uninterrupted since 1990 is the Arab Middle East – Iraq and Palestine (for the latter, through the unconditional support of Israel) – the Balkan States (Yugoslavia, new US installations in Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria), Central Asia and the Caucasian region (Afghanistan, the former Soviet Central Asia and Caucasian region).

The objectives pursued by Washington comprise several aspects : (i) controlling the world's most important oil-producing region, and exerting pressure in the process, with a view to relegating Europe and Japan to the status of subordinate allies; (ii) establishing permanent American military bases in the heart of the Old World (Central Asia equidistant from Paris, Johannesburg, Moscow, Peking and Singapore) and thus preparing other future “preventive wars” primarily against the powerful countries likely to impose themselves as partners with which “one would have to negotiate” (China in the first place, but also Russia and India). This

goal may be achieved by establishing in the countries of the region concerned, puppet regimes imposed by United States' armed forces. From Peking to Delhi and Moscow, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the wars "made in USA" ultimately constitute a threat to China, Russia and India more than to their immediate victims, such as Iraq.

Coming back to Bandung, the policy of "no American military bases in Asia and Africa" is now a topical issue, even though, under the present circumstances, the non-aligned have remained silent over the attitudes of American protectorates in the Gulf region on the subject.

At Kuala Lumpur, the non-aligned members took positions akin to those defended by France and Germany at the UN Security Council, thereby helping to intensify the diplomatic and moral isolation of the aggressor. For its part, the Franco-African Summit strengthened the eventual alliance taking shape between Europe and the South. For one thing, this Summit was not a «Francafrica» meeting, in view of the presence of English-speaking African countries».

b) Also taking shape, in terms of economic management of the world system, are guidelines for an alternative that the South could defend collectively, since the constituent countries share common interests in these respects.

(i) The idea that international capital transfers must be controlled has assumed topical dimensions again.

In fact, only one goal is targeted by the opening of capital accounts, which is imposed by IMF as a new dogma of «liberalism»: facilitating substantial transfer of capital to the United States to offset the growing deficits incurred by America – which are at the same time the product of economic deficiencies in the United States' economy and of the deployment of its strategy for the military control of the planet.

The Southern countries have no interest in facilitating in that way the siphoning of their capital and possibly the devastations caused by the speculative raids.

As a result, the subjection to all the uncertainties inherent in the system of flexible rates of exchange, which comes as a logical deduction from the requirements for opening capital accounts, should be called into question. Systems of regional organisations guaranteeing the relative stability of exchanges should be established instead and this could be examined through research and systematic negotiations within the Non-Aligned Movement and the G-77.

Incidentally, in the course of Asia's financial crisis of 1997, Malaysia took the initiative in restoring exchange control and did win the battle. IMF itself was compelled to recognise that fact.

(ii) The idea of regulating foreign investments has resurfaced.

Certainly, the Third world countries do not envisage closing their doors to all forms of foreign investment, as some of them did in the past. On the contrary, direct investments are solicited. But the procedure for hosting such investments are again subjected to critical reflections to which certain governmental sectors of the Third World have remained sensitive.

In relation to this regulation, the notion of intellectual and industrial property rights, which the World Trade Organisation (WTO) wants to impose, is henceforth contested. It is understood that, far from promoting “fair” competition on open markets, this notion was rather intended to strengthen the monopolies of multinational companies.

(iii) Many of the Southern countries have realised again that they cannot do without a national agricultural development policy that takes account of the need to protect peasants from the devastating consequence of their accelerated integration under the influence of the “new competition” that the World Trade Organisation wants to promote in this domain and to preserve food security at the national level.

In fact, the opening of agricultural commodity markets, which allows the United States, Europe and a few Southern countries (those of the Southern cone of America) to export their surpluses to the Third World does threaten in that way the objectives of national food security, without providing compensation, as productions of the Third world peasantry encounter unbearable difficulties on the Northern markets. And yet this liberal strategy disintegrating such peasants and accentuating their migration from the rural areas to urban slums accounts for the reappearance of peasant struggles in the South, which now constitutes a source of anxiety among the public authorities.

The agricultural issue is often discussed in the WTO arena in particular, from the sole angle of subsidies granted by Europe and the United States not only to their farmers produce but also to their farmers’ agricultural exports. This focus on the sole question of world trade in agricultural commodities eclipses straightaway the major concerns mentioned above. It also creates strange ambiguities, because it urges the Southern countries to defend positions that are even more liberal than those actually adopted by the Northern governments amid the World Bank’s applause (but since when has the World Bank been defending the interests of the southern countries against those of their Northern counterparts ?). Nothing makes it impossible to separate the subsidies granted to farmers by their governments (after all, if we defend the principle of income redistribution in the South, the Northern countries also have that right !) from those intended to sustain the dumping of agricultural exports from the North.

(iv) Debt is no longer solely considered as economically unbearable. Its legitimacy is now being called into question. A claim currently taking shape is designed to enforce the unilateral renunciation of odious and illegitimate debts, as if to pave the way for an international law on debt – worthy of this term – which does not yet exist.

A generalised debt audit would actually make it possible to present a significant proportion of illegitimate, odious and sometimes even criminal debts. And yet the sole interests paid on these debts have reached such levels that the legally justified demand for their refund might actually help to cancel the current debt and reveal the entire transaction as a really primitive form of plunder. To that effect, the idea that external debts should be regulated by a normal and civilised legislation, like domestic debts, should be sustained through a campaign aimed at promoting international law and enforcing its legitimacy. Obviously, it is precisely because the law is silent in this sector so the question is resolved only through brutal balance of power. Such relationships therefore make it possible to legitimise international debts which would bring debtor and creditor to court “for criminal conspiracy” if they were domestic debts (and the creditor and debtor hailed from the same nation and are governed by its legal system).

3. New international perspectives

In terms of its basic structures, the world system today is too different from that of the post Second World War to allow for a “remake” of Bandung. The Non Aligned were situated in a militarily bipolar world that prohibited, as such, the brutal intervention of imperialist countries in their affairs. Moreover, this bipolarity cemented the partners of the capitalist centres – United States Western, Europe and Japan – in a unified camp. The political and economic struggle for liberation and development therefore brought Asia and Africa into confrontation with a unified imperialist group. The concept of self centered development and delinking and the strategies they inspired addressed this challenge under the circumstances.

The world today is militarily unipolar. At the same time, there seems to be latent dissensions between the United States and certain European countries over the political management of a globalised system that now adheres to the tenets of liberalism, at least in principle. Are such cleavages solely linked to economic circumstances and of limited scope or do they herald lasting changes ? The hypotheses forming the basis of the strategic proposals situated in this context must be explained so as to facilitate discussions on their possible validity.

First hypothesis : *Imperialism has now become a collective imperialism (of the triad).*

In the course of the previous phases of deployment of capitalist globalisation, the centres were always conjugated in the plural. These centres maintained among themselves relations marked by constant violent competition even to the extent that the conflict of imperialisms was at the centre of the historical scene. The return to globalised liberalism as from 1980 compels the structural review of the contemporary centre of the system For one thing, at least in terms of the liberal economic management, the states forming the central triad constitute an apparently solid bloc.

The indisputable question to be answered is therefore to know whether the said evolutions portray a lasting qualitative change - since the centre is no longer conjugated in the plural but has become definitively “collective” – or that they are only attributed to economic circumstances.

This evolution could be attributed to the change in the conditions of competitiveness. A few decades ago, the big firms waged their battle for competitiveness mainly on the national markets, and these could include that of the United States (the world’s largest national market) or even those of the European States (in spite of their modest size, which put them at a disadvantage in relation to the United States). The winners of the national “rounds” could occupy ideal position on the world market. Today, the market size needed to be a winner of the first round of matches is estimated around 500 – 600 millions “potential consumers”. The battle must therefore be waged straightaway on the world market and won in that arena. And it is those who win the match on this market that will impose themselves then and afterwards on their respective national grounds. Extensive globalisation is becoming the primary operational framework for the big firms. In other words, in the national, world couple, the terms of causality are reversed. Formerly, the national power dictated presence at the world level but today, it is the opposite. As a result, the multinational firms, regardless of their nationality, have common interests in the management of the world market. Such interests are superimposed on the ordinary market conflicts that define all the forms of competition peculiar to capitalism, irrespective of what they are.

Second hypothesis : *In the collective system of imperialism, the United states has no conclusive economic advantages.*

The current opinion is that United States' military strength is just the tip of the iceberg prolonging this country's superiority in all fields, particularly in the economic or even political and cultural spheres. The subjection to hegemonic tendencies which it claims might therefore be inevitable.

In fact, the United States' productive system is far from being "the most efficient in the world". On the contrary, none of its segments might be sure of defeating its rivals on really open world market, as purported by liberal economists. A typical testimony is United States' trade deficit that is worsening from year to year, increasing from 100 billion dollars in 1989 to 450 in 2000. Moreover, this deficit concerns virtually all the segments of the productive system. Even the surplus that the United States boasted in high technology goods, which stood at 35 billion in 1990, has now given way to a deficit. The competition between Ariane and the NASA space rockets, Airbus and Boeing, attest to the vulnerability of America's advantage. If faced with Europe and Japan in terms of high technology products, with China, Korea and other industrialised Asian and Latin American countries for ordinary manufactured goods, and with Europe and the Southern cone of Latin America in the area of agriculture, United states of America would probably not win any match without resorting to "extraeconomic" schemes that violate the principles of liberalism and on rivals !

In fact, the United States does enjoy comparative advantages exclusively in the arms sector precisely because this field amply gets round the rules governing the market and also receives state support. Certainly this advantage has some repercussions on the civil sector (Internet is a well known example, but it is also the root cause of the distortions that constitute handicaps to many productive sectors.

The North American economy operates as a parasite at the expense of its partners in the world system "The United States of America covers 10 % of its industrial consumption through imports which are not covered by national commodity exports". The world produces for consumption by United States of America (whose national savings are virtually zero).

The United States "advantage" is comparable to that of a predator whose deficit is covered by inputs from others, granted by consent or by force. The means employed by Washington to compensate for its deficiencies are of diverse kinds : repeated unilateral violation of the principles of liberalism, arms exports, the search for oil rents (which entail the brutal control of producers, the actual motive for the wars in Central Asia and Irak).

It remains that the bulk of America's deficits is covered by capital inflows from Europe and Japan, and from the South (rich oil-producing countries and compradore classes in all of the Third World countries, including the poor ones) to which will be added the debt service levy imposed on almost all the peripheral countries of the world system.

3rd Hypothesis: *The purported military control of the planet is intended to compensate for the United States' economic deficiencies. This phenomenon poses a threat to all peoples of the Third World*

This hypothesis logically follows from the previous one. Washington's strategic decision to take advantage of its military superiority and resort, in this context, to «preventive wars»

decided and planned by the country alone, is calculated to dash all hopes of a great nation (like China, India, Russia and Brazil) or of a regional coalition in the Third World to acquire the status of a real partner helping to shape the world system, be it capitalist.

4th Hypothesis: *The South must and can be liberated from the liberal illusions to embark on renewed forms of self-centred development.*

There is no doubt that, for the time being, governments of the Southern countries still seem to be fighting for a «true neo-liberalism» whose Northern partners, like those of the South, would agree «to play the game». The Southern countries can only realise that this hope is completely illusory.

They will then have to revert to the inevitable concept that development is necessarily self-centred. To develop oneself means defining, in the first place, national objectives allowing for the modernisation of productive systems and creating internal conditions that uses it to promote social progress, and then subjecting to the exigencies of such logic, the modalities governing relations between the nation and developed capitalist centres. This definition of delinking (formulated by Samir Amin) – which is not autarky – situates the concept miles away from the opposite principle of «structural adjustment» to the exigencies of globalisation, which is therefore necessarily subjected to the exclusive demands for expansion of the dominant multinational capital, thereby deepening inequalities at the global level.

5th Hypothesis: *The United States' option for militarised globalisation poses a serious threat to the interests of Europe and Japan.*

This hypothesis follows from the second one. Among other concerns, the United States' objective of controlling militarily all the important resources of the planet (oil in particular) is geared towards relegating the European and Japanese partners to the status of vassals. America's oil wars are “anti-European” wars.

Europe (and Japan) can partially react to this strategy by drawing closer to Russia, which is capable of supplying some oil and a few other essential raw materials.

6th Hypothesis : *Europe must and can be freed from the liberal virus; nevertheless, this initiative cannot be taken by segments of the dominant capital, but by the peoples.*

The dominant segments of capital, whose interests the European governments are still bent on defending at all costs, as an exclusive priority, are of course the defenders of the globalised neo-liberalism and that explains why they accept to pay the price of their subordination by the North American leader.

Peoples throughout Europe have a vision different from the European project that they want to assume social dimensions and from their relations with the rest of the world, which they want to be governed by law and justice, as they have recently been expressing in their overwhelming majority by denouncing the United States' drift. If this humanist and democratic culture of the «old Europe» prevails – which is possible – then an authentic cohesion between Europe, Russia, China, the whole of Asia and the entire Africa will constitute the foundation on which will be constructed a multi-centrist, democratic and pacific world.

The major contradiction between Europe and the United States is therefore not the contrast between the interests of the dominant capital here and there but rather the type identified in their political cultures.

The imminent conflict lies in the arena of political cultures. In Europe, one leftist alternative is still possible. It might simultaneously impose a break with neo-liberalism (and the shattering of the vain hope of subjecting the United States to its exigencies, thereby allowing the European capital to wage war on the mine-free field of economic competition), for instance, by conforming to the United States' political strategies. The surplus capital that Europe has so far opted to "invest" in the United States could therefore be assigned to economic recovery and social rehabilitation projects, without which the latter will be impossible. But since Europe might then choose to give priority to its economic and social progress, the artificial health of the United States' economy would decline and the American ruling class would be confronted with its own social problems. The meaning I give to my conclusion is that "Europe will go left or not be".

To that effect, Europeans must rid themselves of the illusion that the card of liberalism should – and could – be played "honestly" by all and that, in this case, things would get better. The United States cannot renounce its option for an asymmetrical practice of liberalism because this is the sole means whereby America can compensate for its own deficiencies. The price of America's «prosperity» is the stagnation of others.

The European question can be situated here. In fact, its impact cannot be ignored, and an in-depth discussion of what I refer to as the "quicksand in the European project" is indeed needed.

"European political cultures" are diverse, even if they somewhat contrast with that of the United States. There are political, social and ideological forces in Europe that lucidly support the vision of "another Europe" (social and friendly in its relations with the South). But there is also Great Britain, which has since 1945 made the historical option of enlisting unconditional support for the United States. There are the forces among the ruling classes of Eastern Europe moulded by a culture of servitude, bowing yesterday to Hitler, then to Stalin, and to Bush today. There are "pro-American" rightist populisms (style of those nostalgic for Francoism and Mussolinism in Spain and Italy respectively). Will the conflict between these cultures split Europe? Will it result in an alignment with Washington? Or in the victory of progressive humanist and democratic cultures?

7th Hypothesis: *The reconstruction of a strong Southern front entails the participation of its peoples*

The political regimes set up in many of the Southern countries are not democratic, to say the least, and are sometimes really odious. These authoritarian power structures favour compradore groups whose interests consist in expanding the global imperialist capitalism.

The alternative - construction of a front comprising peoples of the South – can materialise through democratisation. This necessary democratisation will be a difficult and long process but it certainly cannot be realised by establishing puppet regimes to open their countries' resources to plunder by North American multinational companies, regimes that will consequently be even more fragile, less credible and less legitimate than those they succeeded

under protection by the American invader. Incidentally, the United States' goal is not to promote democracy in the world, despite its purely hypocritical discourse on that subject.

8th Hypothesis: *A new internationalism of peoples associating Europeans, Asians, Africans and Americans is therefore possible.*

This hypothesis emanates from and concludes the preceding one. This means that there exist conditions capable of promoting closer relations between at least all the peoples of the ancient world. This union could be given concrete expression at the international diplomatic level by thickening the Paris – Berlin – Moscow – Peking axis, that could be strengthened by developing friendly relations between this axis and the reconstituted Afro-Asian front.

Obviously, initiatives in this direction reduce the United States' inordinate and criminal ambition to nothing. Washington would therefore be compelled to accept coexistence with nations determined to defend their own interests.

At present, this objective must absolutely be considered as a priority. The deployment of the American project over-determines the stake inherent in all struggles: there will be no social and democratic progress so long as the American is not smashed.

9th Hypothesis: *Issues concerning cultural diversity should be discussed as part of the new international perspectives outlined here.*

Cultural diversity is a fact. But it is complex and ambiguous. The forms of diversity inherited from the past, however legitimate they might be, are not necessarily synonymous with diversity in the construction of the future, which should not only be admitted but also advocated.

Dwelling exclusively on diversities inherited from the past (political Islam, Hindutva, Confucianism, Negritude, chauvinistic ethnicity, etc.) often constitutes a demagogic formula of autocratic and compradore powers that enables the latter to dodge the challenge of universalising civilisation and actually submitting to the diktat of the dominant trans-national capital. Moreover, the exclusive emphasis on such legacies divides the Third World in setting political Islam and Hindutva in Asia, Muslims, Christians and followers of other religions in Africa against one another. Such divisions sustained by American imperialism can be surmounted through new foundations for a united political Southern Front. But what are and may be the «universal values» on which the future can be founded? The Western-centrist and restrictive interpretation of these values legitimises unequal development, the immanent product of the past and present-day globalised capitalist expansion. It must be rejected. But in what way can authentically universal concepts enriched with inputs from all parties be put forward? At any rate, it can by no means be ignored.