

## **LIST OF ISSUES FOR ALTERNATIVE RESEARCH**

### **I. Democratization and people's power**

- Democratization is a process which could not be reduced to a static and definitive formula, like the one evoked by “representative democracy” (multiparty-ism, election, human rights).
- Democratization – synonym of people's power – concerns all aspects of social life, and not exclusively the management of its politics. It concerns all relations between individuals, within the family, in places of work, in their relations with the economic, administrative and political decision-makers. These relations are both individual and collective (class relations which are by nature unequal in the capitalist society, founded on the private appropriation of the means of production by a minority, excluding the people). Those limits are limits of democracy – whenever it exists – in capitalism. Democratization implies that one surpasses those limits, and thereby going beyond capitalism along the road of building the socialist alternative.
- The ruling ideology and the democratic “blueprints” proposed in its spirit separate “political” democracy from social demands, of which expressions are the struggles of the ruled and exploited classes against the unilateral logic of capital. Democratization implies that political democracy be associated with and not dissociated from social progress.
- Democratization concerns practice in all segments of social life: the family (and hence gender issues, ref. Prog. 6), the enterprise (place of work), political parties, trade unions, peasant and women's organizations, local and neighboring communities, and all other organizations of civil society.
- Democratization implies the recognition and definition of human rights, their formulation in terms of juridical rights, the institutional guarantee of their genuine respect. Individual freedom and the emancipation of the human being from all forms of oppression are inseparable from people's empowerment. There is no advanced socialism without the integration of human rights in those of working collectives and the people.
- Political ideologies and projects should be analyzed and discussed from the angle of their positive or negative contribution to democratization as defined here, based on the universal values depicted in diverse cultures.
- Democracy building at all levels of social reality constitutes the objective of democratic and progressive people's movements concerned and associated with the South South Solidarity Network.

## **II. Alternatives to the capitalist market and the present global economic order**

- Capitalism is not a “market economy” but a capitalist market economy. Here, the market is regulated by the domination of the capitalist interests, which prevail over those of the exploited and ruled classes, whose members are reduced to the status of labor force providers and conditioned and passive consumers. The capitalist market, efficient though it may be by certain of its aspects, remains guided by the capitalists’ individual searches for profit. The people’s alternative requires that the market be put at the service of the people’s social and democratic aims, other forms of regulation based on the objectives of socialism in the making, and particularly the effective realization of the largest equality possible.
- The centralization of capital in contemporary capitalism has come to such a degree that a few hundred financial groups are dominating most national economies as a globalized economy and shaping markets in their exclusive interest. This capitalism of oligopolies concentrates real power, economic, social and political, in the hands of an oligarchy, enemy of humanity as a whole.
- In its expansion, the capitalist market is trying to appropriate new spheres of social life with a view to turning them into places to extract profit for capital. Programs for the privatization of State enterprises and of collectives of producers or citizens, the commodification of essential public services (education, health, housing, access to water and electricity, transportation) respond to that objective, by nature running counter to people’s power of which it is reducing the fields of action. In its expansion, the capitalist market is also trying to appropriate the disposal of all renewable and non-renewable natural resources of the planet, thus aggravating the long-term perspectives concerning the survival of humanity (ref. Prog. 8). The privatization of land should be recognized as a particularly serious danger for the survival of the peasant half of humankind (ref. Prog. 4).
- An alternative development matching the satisfaction of human needs should not be limited to “poverty reduction”, itself largely generated by the logics commanding the expansion of capitalist markets. A genuine alternative development should help transform livelihoods in the direction of the real emancipation of the popular masses and of individuals. “Indicators” of the progress achieved in that direction should be identified and determined.
- On a world scale, the capitalist market economy is founded on the inequality of national partners. The logic of its expansion tends to aggravate and not to reduce those inequalities, unacceptable to and rejected by the peoples of the South. To the current practices and projects (in the fields of trade, foreign investment and capital flows, debt) proposed by the institutions

of the prevailing capitalist globalization (IMF, World Bank, WTO, European Community, and others), the people's movements should put up positive alternatives responding to their own objectives.

### **III. Alternatives to the present international political order**

- Peoples need peace, nations and individuals need security. Neither of these is permitted by the imperialist nature of the capitalist system. On the contrary, because it is fundamentally unjust, the maintenance of the international order necessary to the expansion of the oligopolistic capitalist market requires the deployment of violence, including military threat and its effective implementation, against all movements, peoples and nations repudiating submission. That's State terrorism.
- The program for "military control of the planet" by the armed forces of the United States and its junior allies (NATO in particular), the deployment for that purpose of 600 US military bases over the five continents, the "preventive wars", already under way (Iraq) or being threatened (Iran), are expressions of this militarization of globalization.
- The execution of such programs of the imperialist powers, particularly of the first among them, scorns the aspirations of all peoples of the South for peace and security. It lies directly or indirectly at the roots of the squandering represented by the arms race. It inspires directly or indirectly numerous so-called "local" conflicts, often instrumentalized.
- The people's alternative requires recognition of the equal rights of peoples and nations in globalization. It requires respect for the sovereign independence of nations. The people's struggles also aim at orienting the sovereignty of States toward the effective sovereignty of peoples, by means of democratization of the society (ref. Prog. 1).

### **IV. Land and agriculture**

- Access to land is a question of survival for the three billion peasants of Asia, Africa and Latin America, i.e. nearly half of humanity. No form of development is acceptable if it sacrifices the lot of those human beings. Yet, the capitalist path of development, based on private appropriation of land, which is treated as a commodity similar to others, sacrifices precisely the rural population "surplus" on the altar of increase of the "profitability" of the capital invested in agricultural production (modern equipment and "value" of land). The obvious result of this option is the transformation of the planet into one of slums, from Sao Paulo to Mumbai, from Mexico to Bangkok, from Cairo to Casablanca and Johannesburg.
- The people's alternative – that of socialist oriented development – rests on the judicious principle that land is a basic natural resource, and the property of the peoples, particularly the peasantries living off it. The two great Asian

revolutions have confirmed the performance of that principle and thereby avoided the uncontrolled rural exodus which has struck at the rest of the three continents. The pursuit of this alternative implies total respect for that principle at all the stages of the long socialist transition. Certainly, the urbanization accompanying a necessary industrialization (even in specific modalities not confined to the unlimited technological imitation of capitalist models, ref. Prog. 5) would require a transfer of rural inhabitants to urban centers. But this should be regulated in accordance with the pace of the absorption capacities of productive urban activities; and the formulas of agricultural management should take this into consideration.

- There is no question of keeping the “overpopulated” rural areas in immobilism. There could have been mistakes by thinking that an accelerated collectivization, ahead of technological possibilities and requirements, could overcome the related contradiction. Experience has shown that an access to land, guaranteed to the peasantry as a whole in formulas linking small-scale family production with the market, is conducive to a rapid and big increase of agricultural production, in terms of peasant self-consumption rations and commercialized surpluses alike. Continuation of this progress would certainly require the invention of new forms adapted to every stage of the path of socialist oriented development. But, such forms should never be based on any abandonment of the principle of access to land for all to the benefit of eventual illusions about private appropriation of land.

A systematic reflection on popular peasant development programs is necessary more than ever. This reflection could not propose the same formula for all, for the diversity of situations created by the capitalist expansion is extreme. Wherever this expansion has already promoted gigantic inequalities in the form of Latin American, Southern African and Indian latifundias, radical land reforms will be a must.

The capitalist expansion program runs nowadays through partial “modernizations” (qualified as “green revolutions”), of which beneficiaries are only a minority of wealthy farmers and agrarian capitalists and which make agriculture as a whole utterly dependent on agrobusiness. The alternative formulas of a gradually modernized rural development to the benefit of all cannot be the same. Theoretical research and practice should help invent their modalities.

- Access to land should go along with making means for land exploitation available to peasants.

First among these means is water which, for that matter, cannot be any more than land a “commodity similar to others” (commodified). The peoples’ access to water raises the difficult question of regulations on international rivers, which is largely ignored by international law and governed –

whenever it is – by bi-national or multi-national treaties often subject to desirable negotiations.

Access to means of production necessary to the advancement of agriculture (credits, equipment, seeds, pesticides and fertilizers, commercialization institutions) could not be left to “market rules” alone. The people’s alternative and the socialist orientation require the intervention of adequate State policies in these fields and the opening up of action fields for peasant initiatives (cooperatives in diverse forms).

- Scientific and technological advances related to agricultural and food production could not be guided by immediate profitability requirements alone. The capitalist rationale is a short-term one (ref. Prog. 2, 7 and 8) and is therefore not always sustainable. The introduction of GMOs, for instance, leads to little-known risks for the reproduction of the productive capacity of the soil (as shown by the example of the destruction of the soil in Argentina), for the vital maintenance of the bio-diversity, as it leads to unknown risks for human health. Their introduction is dictated by the simple wish of agribusiness transnationals to subjugate thereby peasant producers and to regulate markets at their convenience alone. The people’s alternative requires that research criteria would be different.
- National policies should follow the objective of food sovereignty (basic self-sufficiency of nations) and reject that of simple “food security” (capacity to pay for imports aimed at balancing food deficit) which the World Bank and the WTO want to impose.
- National policies concerning the rural world cannot be reduced to the single component of agricultural production. Making available to rural communities essential services (education and health in the first place) similar to those enjoyed by city dwellers constitutes an essential objective of social justice.
- Structuring agricultural development policies and those concerning industrialization constitutes the backbone of the global development of society. The conception of these policies and their structure in the socialist oriented development obviously runs counter to the one resulting only from the functioning of oligopolistic markets of really existing capitalism. The former is founded on the principles and objectives of the “worker-peasant alliance”, the realization of which cannot be left to the sole responsibility of the central political power. The democratization of society requires that a large space should be opened to collective negotiations (between peasant organizations and workers’ trade unions, between the peasant rural world and consumers’ organizations), with the support of the people’s State (ref. Prog. 1).

- Agricultural production is, at the present time, subject to a globalized offensive from oligopolistic capital, promoted by WTO authorities. This offensive is part of a so-called “market opening up” strategy, in fact for the unilateral opening up of markets of the South to the expansion demands of the oligopolistic capital of the North. Thus, the battles waged within WTO (after the accession of almost all countries of the world to this institution conceived and constructed by the imperialist powers alone) now concern among other things the visible or disguised subsidies to agricultural exports from the North (the Doha Round). The views of the diplomatic circles of certain countries of the South, which initiated a challenge to “WTO rules” should be supported, and strengthened by concerted people’s initiatives capable of defining coherent coordinated alternatives and immediate objectives for the common struggle.

### **V. Alternatives to the capitalist exploitation of labor**

The liberal ideology in essence and in practice in the capitalist societies are based on the dissociation of the formulas of representative political democracy – whenever existent – from the fields related to the social progress of the exploited and oppressed classes. The extension of political rights themselves to the popular classes (universal balloting for instance) has been the fruit of the struggles and achievements of the peoples, and never “granted” from above. The labor rights (for workers’ organization, strike) and more generally social rights (education, health, social security, etc...) are also the fruits of these cultures. The list of demands is far from exhausted and constitutes the very object of current numerous popular struggles, in the South and the North, as the present time is that of an offensive by capital aiming at reducing them, under the pretext of “market opening up”. Here, the strategies of capital are targeting the extreme fragmentation of the “labor markets”, to put the countries of the South in positions of devastating competition by the race to lower salaries. To counter this, the building of coherent fronts linking these still largely fragmented fronts represents the unavoidable demand of the definition of paths of socialist oriented development.

- In particular, at the present stage of deployment of the imperialist capitalism of globalized oligopolies, the most urgent task for organizations of workers and the working people in general is to reconstruct “united labor fronts” capable of imposing full employment and the specification of its decent conditions.

The formulas of organization and action inherited from the previous period of history (trade unions in particular), effective in their times, have been eroded by the current transformations in the organization of work. These transformations do not result “spontaneously” and unavoidably from the new

technologies applied. They are mainly the product of the strategies of capital aiming to aggravate job insecurity, to create a reserve contingent of unemployed, to fragmentate conditions done to working people. In the capitalist countries of the South, linked to the rural exodus (ref. Prog. 4), this evolution has impoverished en masse the urban popular classes, of which a growing proportion is made up of “informals”.

The current people’s movements have already demonstrated their inventiveness in the organization of these struggles by applying real and advanced democratic practices. They still have to go a long way to turn from largely defensive strategies to coherent and offensive political projects capable of advancing the people’s alternative. The list of these struggles and the constitutive objectives of the people’s alternative are wide open to all aspects of the social life, in the places of work and in the cities (education, health, housing, essential services).

- The accentuated polarization between affluent “centers” (15% of the population of the planet) and “peripheries” (85% of the world’s population), always dominated and often empty-handed, sometimes to the extreme, which is peculiar to the capitalist expansion at all stages of its deployment, is at the roots of a migratory pressure from the South to the North, extension of the rural exodus in the South.

Here, the liberal logic is caught red-handed for incoherence. It recommends the worldwide opening up of markets to commodities and capital, but refuses it to labor! This incoherence reveals the real aim of its objectives: the fragmentation of labor fronts, the overexploitation of the “rightless” that are mainly emigrants, legal or illegal.

The objective of the fragmentation of the working classes is not new. Capitalism has always, for instance, picked up patriarchal ideologies to discriminate against women (ref. Prog. 6), as well as racist ones against migrants and eventual minorities (ref. Prog. 6). The success of the popular movements of discriminated minorities concerning the shaping of convergences between their own demands and those of other, apparently “favored”, segments of labor constitutes the only guarantee for a social progress linked to the genuine democratization of society.

## **VI. Alternatives to discrimination**

- Capitalism is a social system founded on the principle of discrimination. The discrimination putting the masters (often “owners”) of means of production against the popular majorities, who are deprived of such means, is fundamental, and it determines capitalism. There is no “market economy” (in the liberal sense of the term) which is not a market society. And the market discriminates and fragments.

- The most flagrant of these discriminations has always struck at women. Certainly, the societies prior to capitalist modernity did not ignore these discriminations. But, far from alleviating their violence, capitalism has integrated them into its practice of exploitation with a view to instrumentalizing them and putting them to its own objectives. When these objectives seem to allow some progress in the status of women, capitalism tries to limit the effects.

The struggles of the female half of humanity for the full juridical and real recognition of all their rights (in the statutes of family organization, at places of work, in the exercise of citizenship) are not just democratic struggles (of which they constitute a fundamental element, without which speaking of democratization of society is but empty talk); they are, and may increasingly be, constituent elements of the socialist alternative to capitalism.

- The list of segments of the popular classes subject to effects of discrimination is long: migrants, ethnic or religious minorities, patients suffering from AIDS and other pandemics, etc. Their respective demands will acquire still greater strength if they are linked to others in the struggle for a socialist oriented people's development.

## **VII. Knowledge and intellectual property**

- Knowledge is a common asset of humanity. It should not be treated as a “vulgar commodity”. Its private appropriation runs counter to the fundamental principles of humanist universalism.
- The financial oligopolies controlling the current world system pursue the objective of organizing monopolistic markets to their own benefit, contrary to the claim about “transparency” which is supposed to be the highest virtue of the market! To that end, they promote the fragmentation of the production of things completely alike in use value by abusing “registered trademarks”. The WTO – their instrument – promotes a “global legislation” which not only protects the technologies allegedly particular to each of those “trademarks”, but also overprotects those monopolies under the false pretext of defence of “intellectual and industrial property”, thus ensuring an abusive profit to those monopolies and raising an unsurmountable obstacle against countries of the South engaged in industrialization.
- At the same time, those imperialist monopolies try – with WTO protection – to rob the peoples of their often millenary traditional knowledge in the fields of agricultural production and pharmacopeia. Under the false pretext that their “laboratories” have indentified the specificities proper to peasant agricultural and pharmaceutical products, the imperialist monopolies intend to “ban” peasants of the South from pursuing their production



practices and compel them to “rebuy” the selected seeds and the products of the concerned peasant societies’ own knowledge!

### **VIII. Ecology and climate justice**

- The environment and ecology problems are diverse in nature, concerning the squandering and exhaustion of non-renewable and renewable natural resources, destruction of biodiversity, climate change, etc. Their “treatment” by the market rationale not only fails to produce any long-term solution, but also implies unacceptable social and international injustices. From that point of view, capitalism is henceforth an obsolete system and the socialist oriented path – to be shaped in the long process of transition from capitalism – constitutes the only humanistic alternative.
- Capitalism in particular and the market in general are founded on certainly rational but always short-term calculations, incapable of integrating the necessary long-term perspective. This objective limit, unsurmountable in spite of everything said about the subject, is particularly obvious as regards non-renewable (petroleum in particular) or renewable (water, forests) resources. The exchange of non-renewable natural resources exported by the South for the import of renewable goods is by nature unequal; it sacrifices the future of the peoples of the South to the benefit of the immediate consumption of the North. The avowed objective of the imperialist powers is to reserve for their exclusive benefit the use of those resources while banning access to and use of the latter by countries of the South – even by openly violating alleged market rules. Yet, it is by opening such an access for the peoples of the South that the North would be compelled to “adjust” itself to a better use of the resources of the planet. The people’s alternative requires control of these resources by the peoples, the invention of new criteria matching their economic usefulness on the basis of long-term respect for the social demands of justice, the opening of international negotiations guided by the proclamation of and genuine respect for those principles.
- The climate change constitutes henceforth a grave challenge to humanity. Due to squanderings by capitalism (greenhouse effect) or maybe by transformations of the universe beyond the reach of human beings, this change constitutes anyway a challenge requiring a long-term consideration when global strategies are chosen. Here again, the dominant imperialist system sacrifices the future of the South to the sole preservation of the privileged positions of the North. The socialist oriented alternative promoted by the people’s movements should be capable of compelling the governments of the South to integrate this aspect in the formulation of development strategies and compelling the international system (the World Trade Organization in particular) to respect its requirements.

### **IX. People-centered alternative regionalism and integration**

- The existing imperialist global system gives absolute priority to the globalization of the capitalist market and conceives the regional cooperation and integration systems as simply “sub-systems”, constituent blocks of the globalized system. That’s the way with the European Union, the North American Free Trade Area (United States, Canada, Mexico) as well as the “common markets” set up in various regions of the South (Africa, Southeast Asia). The projects concerning the groupings linking countries of the North with countries of the South, like the so-called “partnerships” between the European Union, Africa and others, are of the same nature and carry unacceptable forms of neo-colonialism. These formulas obviously run counter to the people-centered development perspectives of all peoples. The people’s movements should reflect on and promote regional perspectives that are different by nature in their objectives and the means deployed.
- The initiation of people- and nation-centered alternatives is perhaps already in progress in South America with the ALBA initiative, which has come to complete and correct the Mercosur. It is necessary to give this initiative, and others that may draw inspiration from it, a content defined by the peoples concerned.

### **General Conclusion**

- Each of the above-mentioned themes for research and action falls within the general perspective of elaboration of strategies of people’s struggles going “beyond capitalism”, and embarking on the long road of socialist oriented development, based on the interests and demands of the popular classes, subjecting the regulation of markets and the implementation of State policies to the objectif of progressive strengthening of the socialist orientation and not of weakening the movement. This option of fundamental principle requires a radical criticism of “really existing capitalism”, which is not the “market” praised by the ideologues of a ruling system founded on the inequality of classes (liquidating all real possibilities for people’s empowerment) and inequalities of nations (the really existing capitalism is imperialist by nature).
- The path of socialist oriented development should not be reduced to a “single formula” valid for all, similar to the one which the “Washington consensus” or “post-Washington consensus” tend to impose. The roads of this development are multiple and should be determined concretely by each people, proceeding from its own concrete conditions (in particular the heritage of the unequal development promoted by capitalism/imperialism) and its specific political culture. “Global non-consensus” should be the guiding principle for the rebuilding of a multipolar and negotiated globalization./.