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Internationalism

Samir Amin, or the raison d'être of a new internationalism

- Features -

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As if he wanted to make it his political testament, in the urgency of a specific “moment”, both for himself and a capitalist globalization in crisis, Samir Amin (re) published his call for the “indispensable reconstruction of an International of the workers and peoples of the whole world”, on the Afrique-Asie.fr site, a few days before his sudden death on August 12, 2018. [1]] Appended to this is a “Letter of intention” seeking to accelerate and concretize the process. [2]

His death gives a call such as this an impressive strength that inspires much respect and deserves the closest attention, despite and because of the immense loss and the fact we no longer have Samir Amin at our side to discuss and pursue this project.

Despite having read his work and met him at several meetings, in particular in the Balkans, I had the feeling that I did not know Samir Amin sufficiently – and had too many “viewpoints” that were distant from his (not sharing his Maoism) – to pay homage to him (properly). I thus preferred first to read and listen to those who had been closer to him – notably, the rich presentation by his and our friend and comrade Gustave Massiah, written in 2002 (for Amin’s 70th birthday) which has just been put on line with many other significant tributes. [3] Despite our, in many ways, very different trajectories – notably my own “anchorage” linked to the Left Opposition to Stalin and to “Trotskyism”, then to the study of the Yugoslav revolution literally “excluded” from the universe of Maoist thought – I experienced a feeling of great proximity during these last meetings. The discovery of this call – representing much more than that of a “Marxist of the south” (which Gus Massiah remembers was how he liked to present himself) confirmed this feeling.

It gave me the desire and the intellectual and political duty of knowing more about this, and not sticking in the polemics bequeathed by the “Cultural Revolution” and the 1960s, to enrich the various approaches of the past/present with updated “software”. In several recent presentations (2017 and 2018) Samir Amin outlined the continuities and evolutions in his approach to the world order. I note in particular the two videos “Samir Amin raconte Samir Amin” produced by RFI in May 2018. [4]

In the first of the 2018 videos he evokes his discovery of communism, in Egypt where he was born...Then the rooting of his analysis of globalized capitalism in the optic of the awakening of the “Third World”, notably in the “gang of four” (Emmanuel, Gunther-Frank, Wallerstein and himself) and his diversified approach to the “world system” and its relations of domination; the centrality and timeliness of Marx for thinking about capitalist globalization.

In the second video he focuses on African independence: its advances and social and political fragilities. We note the very important debates on “nationalism” and then the national bourgeoisie (and petty bourgeoisie): Samir evokes the mistrust of “nationalism” (and nationalist alliances) felt by Franz Fanon, Cabral, Sankara – assassinated, Amin tells us, because he had understood that the role of a progressive government was to aid the self-organization of the dominated peoples.

These presentations complete what Gus Massiah had stressed in 2002 concerning the long trajectory and overriding themes of Amin’s thought: after the crisis of 2008, then the contradictory logics and impasses of the uprisings in the Arab world, he insisted still more on the characteristics of the historic conjuncture in which we find ourselves, the background to his recent call. He combines analyses of the globalized character (on all continents) of the domination of the monopolies (and “chains of value”), of their privatization of states and big financial institutions, of their anti-social and anti-democratic attacks – to which it is necessary to integrate ecological disaster. But the analysis also integrates the crisis of the parties and the splintering and divisions of the radical left on all continents.

“Three defeats” weigh: that of “Sovietism” – a concept used to reject the idea of a defeat of socialism, that of social democracy, and that of the popular national movements of the Third World. The deepening of the analyses of the interpretation of these defeats is one of the great tasks conditioning the emergence of a socialist alternative. But debates and analyses are not independent of the framework of possible common action. The renewal of an “organic” internationalism faced with a global system is also dependent on a “reasoned” and politically organized choice. I support this project positively, not as a tribute to Samir Amin – although he deserves it – but through conviction and the practice of an analogous approach, both on an individual [\[5\]](#) and collective basis. [\[6\]](#)

It can be thought of as a process with several dimensions – associating moments of confrontation of analyses or complex, conflicting balance sheets, and common actions and campaigns creating confidence. It cannot be an “easy” and short-term process – and it is without guarantee of success. But is it not worth the trouble of tackling it head-on? We will consider some of the questions raised.

Towards the construction of a new International?

We can probably start from a broad consensus on the key characteristics stressed by Samir Amin as to the international “moment” of his appeal: he analyses it as the “autumn of capitalism”, unhappily “without the emergence of the ‘springtime of the peoples’ and the socialist perspective” hoped for: it is one of these phases where “the old is dying and the new cannot be born”, so well evoked by Gramsci often cited in such a conjuncture. Here he is very close in many aspects to what has been said by Gilbert Achcar, for example in his book *The Clash of Barbarisms*. Like him and many others today, Amin was conscious that it was a dangerous time, but one open to polarizations with, in fragile and fragmented forms, a diffuse anti-capitalist radicalization, indeed the emergence of new components of a radical left and the renewal of a recourse to Marxist and socialist analyses – without a “model” which is convincing and capable of becoming a united framework.

What are the fundamental “programmatic” bases that he highlights in the approach proposed?

“The question of popular sovereignty should not be avoided in our thinking on the manner of constructing the alliance of solidarities,” Amin writes in his presentation, against the diktats of this globalization and its institutions. But the meaning (or the scope) of this concept is immediately linked to a dual strategic demand which defines the orientation of his project: on the one hand, a firm basis in the mobilization of the working and subaltern classes (whether wage earners or not, workers and peasants, the precarious) in defence of their interests and social rights: he opposes ethnicist or nationalist approaches which tend to subordinate popular aspirations to the interest of the dominant classes (national and international). The videos referred to above concerning the defeats or limits of decolonization show that this judgement does not only apply to capitalist countries where the national bourgeoisie is strongest, but to the South also. In this respect, he stresses that a scenario of revolutionary “revival” in the countries of the South alone would in the 21st century be still more disastrous than in the 20th.

This imposes the rethinking of “delinking” in an articulated manner, transcontinental like capitalism itself. And it is the second strategic axis which underlies and defines an “internationalism” which is “organic” (different from the mere juxtaposition of “national” approaches or of moral solidarities): it is about concretely resisting the globalized effects and mechanisms of a “system” of oppression and exploitation – while resting on a national anchorage and continental relays and groupings (capable of weighing in a “multipolar” fashion, to any hegemonism, monetary, financial, political, or ideological logic). And it is also at this globalized scale that a concrete “counter- hegemony” and socialist alternative must emerge. This long and complex process faces immediate dangers; inasmuch as it is true that the “decadence” of a system can, he reminds us, be “secular” and aggressive.

In the “letter of intention” appended to this appeal of August 7 [7], Amin tells us:

“Globalized capitalism entered into its phase of decadence conjugates a quasi-totalitarian political and economic power with an increasingly intense aggressivity, coming worryingly closer to a risk of generalized war. In this paroxysmic crisis, the imperialist countries of the historic West (United States, Western Europe, Japan) do not intend to allow other emergent states to emancipate themselves from the framework they have imposed and to emerge from the status of dominated peripheries. The tension between the West and Russia, China, Iran is not a passing phenomenon, but indeed the epicentre of a new violent remodelling of the world to the profit of the western bourgeoisies.”

We see the concrete emergence of one of the necessary debates: what should be an updated interpretation of imperialism and its wars, and the relations of domination of the world system (I will return to this) and how can they effectively be fought in the new multipolar world?

In any event the multiple and current “hybrid wars” can degenerate into unambiguous wars and are accompanied by new and dangerous arms races and propaganda and counter-propaganda on several sides. Amin assumes an anti-imperialism turned against the great powers of the “triad” of the USA, central and Western Europe and Japan, under the hegemony of the first. Other than the need to analyse the developments internal to this “triad” formed with Trump, should we interpret what is opposed to it as “defensive” and progressive? The maintenance and expansion towards the East of NATO despite the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the opacity of the discourses, the evolving alliances and political and socio-economic changes at work since the 1980s are sources of profound disarray and divergences of interpretation.

Again, recently in Latin America as in the Ukrainian crisis or previously the Yugoslav wars, the anti-imperialist and anti-fascist political families have been divided and sometimes found on opposed “barricades”, amidst the worst violence. [8] What kind of anti-imperialist international can be built in this context? In any event, a free debate respecting legitimate questioning should be accompanied by an absolute independence in relation to any state power (and its state propaganda): the multiplicity of political links, trade unions with social movement, the crossing of sources of information are the sole protection against the traps of various forms of ‘campism’ in the different forms mentioned by Bernard Dréano [9] – which in no way implies a false “neutrality” or equivalence between various rejected reactionary currents. [10] One of the functions of an International Association of Workers and Peoples is precisely, by its independence in relation to existing powers and its plural anchorage, to have its own networks of information and criteria of judgement based on concrete analyses linked to autonomous movements of résistance.

But the past defeats and the deterioration of the relationship of forces has favoured the hope and stress on hypotheses of “changing the world without taking power” in John Holloway’s phrase [11] and the horizontalism of networks and forums. The crisis of the political parties imposes reflection. But horizontalism in no way excludes bureaucratic practices or hidden verticalist positions of power. And in the letter of intention mentioned, Samir Amin says: “the exhaustion of the process of Social Forums means they no longer serve as the place of elaboration of a real alternative” and concludes: “We cannot continue in this political impotence and we should rebuild an alliance in which we will dynamize and structure our common forces.” But it is necessary to demonstrate in practice that the very process of construction of a new “Organization” (as he puts it) does not reproduce the old “hegemonist” practices, the excluding sectarian stigmatizations, and other paralyses. Amin advocates the close examination of the experiences of previous or current Internationals. This indispensable process should integrate all the components of the movement for global justice wishing to go beyond the limits of forums and horizontalism without falling into a top-down verticalism.

This project, although “organized” and political in Amin’s view, does not only concern “parties”. In his letter of intention, he envisages a meeting of preparation bringing together “activists representative of movements, parties,

trade unions, networks of all continents and regions. The following will be defined as regions: Latin America, Africa, North Africa, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, East Asia, South Asia, South East Asia, Western and Central Asia, the United States", with the need for a plurality of representatives by "region".

It would obviously be necessary to add a feminist perspective to the procedures, but also an analysis and taking into account of the major role of racism and xenophobia in the functioning of the world order, the divisions which weaken resistance, including the political organizations and trade union associations. Positively, and essentially for the project of an International linked to the popular movements, it is necessary to stress the importance, faced with Trump in particular, but on all continents, of mobilizations of women for their rights. We must also stress the turning point represented by the victory in the Democratic primaries in New York's 14th district of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez on 26 June 2018, with her socialist discourse. The murder in Brazil of the city councillor defender of women's, black and LGBT rights, Marielle Franco, also expresses a major issue for a new International of the 21st century. Can the latter be conceived without Angela Davis, a long-time communist activist involved in every progressive and internationalist struggle? As a "sign of the times", she participated in May 2018 in the organization of a meeting called "Bandung of the North" of the racialized populations of the imperialist countries, advocated working towards a "Decolonial International", anti-capitalist, anti-racist and feminist – an autonomous approach which should speak to us and, reciprocally, which should be respond to the proposals of Samir Amin. [\[12\]](#)

The multipolar "territorialization" of this process in the different "regions" of the world also forms part of its strategic conception, as does the fact that it is addressed to trade union and political "networks" – aligning this project, from this point of view with its conception of what the First International was at the time of Marx. But the desire to protect the autonomy of trade unions and social movements from the hegemonism of political parties – and the accumulated negative experiences – also necessitates resuming and updating the debates (underway) on the conception of "political" action faced with a "decadent" capitalism: what conception of the role and bases of parties, trade unions, social movements (on different issues, ecological, against specific and intersecting oppressions)? What relations or alliances between them, at the national and international level? [\[13\]](#) Who, moreover, are the "workers" evoked? Amin clearly extends his analyses and approaches of popular struggles with an anti-capitalist dynamic, in the past and present, to peasants and precarious workers and the supposedly "self-employed" in fact subject to the diktats of globalization and multinational firms. [\[14\]](#)

We can estimate that we must go forward by walking. The most important is in reality the establishment from the beginning of common rules of debate and behaviour as well as criteria "defining" who is or can be concerned by the meetings associated with this project. We know thanks to experience and on the basis of reflections on the "commons", that the conviction of the importance of a "common good" (which a new International should be) to produce on democratic and egalitarian bases can be a powerful motive for the self-determination and self-management of rules to be applied mutually – and the democratic guarantee of viability of such a project.

Advancing by walking also means envisaging procedures for debate that seek the reciprocal exchange of experiences, contributions, setbacks with each other. The reduction of divergences, the enriched reformulation of interpretations of the past/present should be linked to concrete advances towards common initiatives and campaigns: on this plan of action, there should be no preconditions other than agreement on the goals and means of these present actions.

It is (happily) not necessary to be in agreement on the interpretation of the great phases of the world order to act together today. And understand that this action will aid overcoming of the prejudice and mistrust which also weighs on analyses and theorizations;

The past/present – towards which balance

sheets?

The fidelity of the different currents to this or that conviction on the past – not the same – can help to combat simplistic visions. But we must be convinced of the importance of appropriating the balance sheet of the defeats of the past in an autonomous fashion, against the specifically “counter-revolutionary” and anti-communist burials. In other words, it is about analysing the defeats in the same way as the advances, against the reduction of the revolutions of the 20th century to the gulag or to aberrant parentheses that have no meaning and interest in the modern world.

“Without October 1917”, said Samir Amin on his blog on the anniversary of the October revolution in 2017, “it is difficult to imagine that the Chinese revolution would have been able to go beyond the nationalism of the Kuo Min Tang; difficult to imagine Bandung and the rapid reconquest of their independence by the nations of Asia and Africa, the contemporary emergence of the countries of the South characterized as such. In other words, to ignore 1917, or worst regard it as an error and an aberration of history, is to abstain from understanding the contemporary world.”

I share this judgement on the impact of October, which did not stop with the defeat of the revolutions in western Europe, notably in Germany, nor with the Stalinist crystallization. It is nonetheless necessary to define the advances, setbacks, continuities and discontinuities. As I have already stressed in my own contributions, the “task of stock-taking” is incumbent on all political families – and each has the task of sharing that on which they have done the most work. [\[15\]](#)

In May 2018, RFI recorded another video with Samir Amin on the Marx Bicentenary Congress in China. He cites there the link that Xi Jinping establishes between the conditions of China’s current power and the Maoist past – without analysis from the viewpoint of accuracy, but also of the ideological and regime functions of this apology for Mao. He explicitly distinguishes the current China from Russia, where capitalism has been restored. And he thus considers valid Mao’s approach of a society emerging from a “popular revolution with socialist goals” (distinct from societies which remain capitalist): so, for him there has not been any capitalist restoration in China (even if it is possible and if pressures exist in this direction). It is then still a society which is “neither capitalist nor socialist” with the socialist goal maintained.

I do not wish to pursue here the debate on this appreciation. For all currents of Marxism, the frontiers of the “anti-capitalist” shift (in the revolutionary transition) and those of capitalist restoration are not simple to define – I discuss them in my “little red book”. The more specific analysis of the nature of the Stalinist shift in the USSR and the Comintern divides (in different ways) all the left political families, including those who identify with Marxism and indeed Trotskyism. [\[16\]](#) This question remains the blind spot and the basis for a series of divergences with Samir Amin. But, at least in my eyes, they are not more “frozen” and significant than those with various components of “anti-Stalinist” Marxism which deny the existence of the revolutions of the 20th century after October 1917 – indeed which bury October 1917.

It is certain that Amin incorporated in his historic and conceptual “panorama” all the Stalinist “excommunications” – from “Trotskyism” to “Titoism”: he supported a positive evaluation of the role of Stalin, whether in relation to forced collectivization or his support for the Chinese revolution.

He certainly ignored the analysis that Trotsky made in 1930 of the Chinese revolution of 1925-1927 in the imperialist context, but also of the orientations of the Comintern. Yet the Marxism of such a text was much closer to his own than the proclamation of the “realization of socialism” in the USSR by Stalin in the 1930s and his orientation of construction of socialism “in one country”.

But Mao defended Stalin (and his excommunications) against “Khrushchevite revisionism” of the 20th Congress of deStalinization. That is why Amin also ignored the Yugoslav revolution that the “Titoist” communists led, against the orientations advocated by Stalin and its Allies. He could not then perceive the common points of conflicts with Stalin of the Yugoslav and Chinese Communists not submitting to the disasters of the directives of the Stalinized and hegemonist USSR. Such a conflict with Maoist China would be different because in the immediate, it was “Titoism” which threatened the Stalinist policy on the European continent by rejecting any submission to its diktats. In the videos mentioned above, Amin says that the “great revolutions” anticipated on their time (in France in 1793, in Russia, in China). But the introduction of “workers’ control” transformed and legalized into rights to “self-management” (after the Yugoslav revolution), in a “peripheral” European society, was in advance on its time : it broke with statism and Soviet hegemonism as much as with imperialism, and it was this which motivated the major involvement of Tito in the “Non-Aligned Movement”, after he had noted the limits of “de-Stalinization” in Khrushchev’s USSR.

Ideological “exclusions” prevented Samir Amin from studying the evolutions, internal controversies, analyses and contributions of the “Trotskyist” and “Titoist” currents in their diversity. A diversity which in fact was as great as that of “Maoists”, or “anarchists” and in general, of the “pro-Soviet” or “pro-Chinese” Marxists, or quite simply all Marxists. Such an evolving diversity is characteristic of all “ists”, still wrongly essentialized in black or white (and we know that Marx did not wish to be “Marxist”). Amin is then not alone in being guilty of such ideological “excommunications”: notably, several components of “Trotskyism” deem that there were no Chinese, Yugoslav, Vietnamese or Cuban revolutions – and nothing to learn from their debates, reforms and experiences (inasmuch as there was no socialist democracy).

But were the October revolution and the USSR of Lenin and Trotsky “socialist”? In the video mentioned above, Amin stressed that Mao laughed when asked this question: the Chinese revolution was “popular – with socialist goals”, he said. In truth, the USSR of the 1920s was not analysed by the Bolsheviks as “socialist”, but “transitional” “already no longer” dominated by capitalist relations, but “not yet” socialist – and all the less “socialist” since no “book” and theory told them in advance how to organize a “socialist society” (at the political and socio-economic level). Even the place of the market (after challenging the domination of capitalist private ownership) was in no way clear, nor moreover clarified to this day.

But beyond the importance of not using in these societies the concepts elaborated by Marx for capitalism, I have stressed the major interest of the “impure”, non-stabilized categories, linked to the concept of the “transitional society”. [17] Contrary to the approach imposed by Stalin, deeming socialism realized on the basis of forced collectivization, the concept of transitional society was linked in the USSR (and later in Yugoslavia) to real debates and analyses of major internal/external conflicts, including threats of capitalist restoration – that is the return to a situation where capitalist logic is legitimated and protected as dominant by the state. This concept of “transitional society” was used (with variant analyses on the place of the market in particular) by Preobrazhensky and Bukharin, as well as by Mandel, Bettelheim, Che Guevara or Tito. The quotation that Amin takes from Mao is in fact broadly in line with such an approach – with all its uncertainties and experiments in the experience of construction of socialism, including tragic errors.

I regret that Samir Amin is no longer here to bring these debates up to date and note the proximities. The frontiers of “capitalist restoration” are not easy to establish – but require looking beyond the institutions, discourse and labels – including examining how the single party itself is transformed over time, what have been the choices and practices of its leaders in their evolution. There was no inevitable success for the external pressures in favour of capitalist restoration without internal conditions and choices. And it is possible to explain how capitalism did not dominate at the time of Lenin or Tito – as can surely be done for the China of Mao, or the Cuba of Fidel Castro. But this does not mean the absence of contradictory forces and pressures, including in the party. It is necessary to analyse how the phases of open conflicts at the social level have affected the composition of the party/state (in the different countries and contexts) and the choices of its main leaders. This means concrete and historical analysis.

From China to anti-imperialist resistance. Currency, investment and social orientations

In any event, disagreements on the diagnosis or concepts (has capitalism been restored in China?) should not prevent political discussions on the positions to be taken faced with social movements or precise international issues.

Amin's text of May 2018, published on 14 August by the site Defend Democracy, "Financial Globalization: Should China move in?" is important – without claiming to deal in a general fashion with China. [18] It is centred on a real strategic issue – how to resist US financial and military imperialist domination? It is correct to raise this even if one considers that China has become capitalist. Amin stresses (correctly) – contrary to what is often said – that China, while broadening the role of market mechanisms, is not subject to the framework of global financialized capitalism: it has maintained major monetary and statist protections.

This is true. But he does not specify the social content of this. Certainly, the subject of the text is elsewhere: he is concerned about the pressing injunctions exerted by the institutions of globalization on the Chinese authorities (without doubt relayed by a section of the apparatus and Chinese economists) to subject China to the dominant "rules", dictated by the USA. He thus addresses the Chinese authorities to convince them to hold firm by saying (in the same way as the US does in relation to the dollar): "the Yuan is our currency, and it's your problem!".

He then traces various hypotheses of world monetary systems (in the context of the 2000s, and reflected in the IMF's internal conflicts which he does not explicitly deal with here): the maintenance in essence of the hegemony of the dollar (he says that this is the viewpoint of the Stiglitz commission); an "ideal" alternative, linked to gold and multipolar, based on the big currencies expressing continental resistances, against all "hegemonism" (currently out of the question, he stresses); and then a third, non-ideal, situation, of resistance to US hegemonism notably through partial regroupments. If he clearly locates the EU as an instrument of capitalist globalization and the oppression of peoples, he evokes the euro as one of the great currencies liable (with the Yuan, a currency linked to the ALBA in Latin America, and other possibilities) to integrate with the dollar in an ideal "equilibrium". A debate to be pursued.

The interest of the text is its concern with real world financial and monetary strategic issues. But it cannot be disconnected from social struggles and the political positioning of existing governments, notably the Chinese in this case. [19] We need to have pertinent discussions of the different continental and national contexts – notably European. In any case everywhere it is necessary to discuss the tactical choices, the concrete analysis of the internal/external use of currencies at the ecological and socio-economic level.

It is certain that China is in a position to hold its own in relation to the historic imperialist powers. But in order to follow what internal policy? To help who at the international level? What is the effect of its investment in Greece, Africa or Latin America? The Yuan can be a support in a multilateral monetary system with the maintenance of a "sovereign" Chinese monetary policy – but to use the distinctions employed by Amin himself, is this a sovereignty which is "national" or in defence of the interests of the popular classes: what are its conditions and social effects?

The discussion should be the same, in different contexts, moreover – notably for the other components of the clearly "capitalist" BRICS. We must analyse their place (regional and international, autonomous and subaltern) both in relation to the dominant imperialisms and to the popular classes. "Non-alignment" of the "Bandung era" (which in Amin's view lasted until the end of the 1970s) was eclectic – and Amin distinguishes governments supporting liberation movements which were both national and social from those seeking to consolidate their class privileges. And he stresses how much the relationship of forces allowed the extension of the revolution during the Second World War gave the "Bandung reawakening" margins of non-alignment and an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist dynamic which no longer exist.

The BRICS do not offer progressive alternatives. That does not mean that we should not desire the development of a multipolar world and exploit its contradictions.

It is obviously one of the necessary debates inside the global radical left liable to be interested in the project of a new International. We should be conscious that in Russia social struggles and popular movements are stigmatized and repressed by the regime as “pawns” instrumentalized by imperialism in the perspectives of “coloured revolutions”. The reality of the attempts at corruption and instrumentalization by the USA of any movement against the corruption of regimes who are not “obeying the orders” of Washington should not mean that the internationalist radical left renounces the concrete analysis of these movements – or that it should not support their legitimate demands by linking with their progressive elements in an autonomous manner.

China is “a case apart” – of major importance for the future. A renewal of social struggles should be supported by all anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist currents around the world – if Amin is right, we should then surely see significant wings of the Chinese CP supporting the popular demands – as was still the case in 1980 of hundreds of thousands of Polish communists faced with the development of Solidarno??

History is not over. But a new International of the workers and peoples of the entire world should have a “reality” in China: for this we need to understand the past/present of a China (re) emerging as an effective great power. [\[20\]](#)

In the context of the great global capitalist crisis of 2008, Samir Amin no longer presented himself as a “Marxist of the South” – in a work on “the Bandung era, 1955-1980” presenting a personal perspective on this historic phase, he said he was an “activist in the cause of socialism and the liberation of peoples convinced that this cause is universal and that the battle is hence deployed on all continents” (my emphasis).

The North in the Souths and the Souths in the North ... the bases of a new internationalism

In 2008 there was a taking into account of the deep transformations affecting the new “capitalist world system” since the 1980s, with its different phases. That is also why the Marxist economist Claudio Katz proposes reviewing and updating the concepts used by theories of dependency. [\[21\]](#) Here we can combine, rather than oppose, the accent put on international relations and that concerning the social and political relations internal to states. Such an updating is necessary at the theoretical and political level to enrich resistance to the world order from the perspective of all its relations of domination, by incorporating the contributions of feminist, “subaltern” and decolonial studies (whether or not they identify with Marxism). [\[22\]](#) This means clarifying the debates between various currents of Marxism themselves and the dependency school (or inside this school).

The “holistic” and anti-colonial approach to world economic relations and economic history is vitally opposed to analyses supposing equal relations between juxtaposed states and advocating identical “paths of development” for all states, based on the supposed model of the “developed countries”. The dependency school would show that the “under-development” of the countries of South is not “backwardness”, but the result of policies imposed by the countries of the “North”: the “international division of labour” (IDL) corresponds in fact to the interests of the imperialist metropolises and not to “comparative advantages” as David Ricardo presented them when advocating “free trade”.

Against the supposed scientific “evidence” of Ricardo’s theses, the academic manuals on international relations, but also those who contest them often forget the criticism expressed against Ricardo, in his time, by Friedrich List,

defender of the interests of the rising German great power: he denounced Ricardo's theses of "free trade" as contradictory with the mercantilist centuries which had ensured England's domination. And he saw behind these theses the camouflage of a hegemonic great power position. So, he advocated the protection of Germany's "nascent industries" (as practices also by the United States). But it was a debate between defenders of the interests of rival bourgeois classes in the old and new industrialized countries – not applicable to colonies!

Paul Bairoch has for a long time denounced the "myths and paradoxes of economic history" and how much "free trade" was in Ricardo's time an "island" in a protectionist ocean for the countries who would consolidate as the "centre" of the globalized capitalist system, (western Europe, USA and Japan); for the others, the lifting of protection dominated (theorized by "free trade" and the IDL). [23] But it had been imposed by force of arms and debt. The industrial decline of India or China (as Amin correctly analyses) dates from then – whereas they were previously powers with higher capacities of production than those of western Europe. It was the combination of a new colonial expansion based on the force (both industrial and material) of gunboats and an imposed "IDL" which would mark their decline. This past remains very present.

Several authors have made their contribution to the theses of dependency. [24] The economist Raúl Prebisch who had analysed the degradation of the terms of trade linked to the "specializations" imposed by the IDL in the name of "comparative advantage", chaired the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Arghiri Emmanuel proposed an interpretation of "unequal exchange" of labour incorporated in commodities between dominant (exporting manufactured products) and dominated (specialized in raw materials) countries. Seeking to apply and update the Marxist "law of value" in the context where capital, but not labour power is mobile would strengthen the Marxian and Marxist (of the Trotskyist movement) approaches to the "labour aristocracy" and the integration of trade unions in the imperialist context. Immanuel Wallerstein's analyses are marked by his conceptualization of "world systems" and their internal relations of domination. Such an approach can be combined (or not) with a Marxist approach to imperialism and renew the latter. [25]

To properly clarify the polemics and consolidate the bases of internationalism, it is important to restate the fact that these approaches to capitalism as a world system break not only with the liberal schools, but in practice or explicitly with the currents of the worker's movement which, while identifying with Marxism, had adhered to a "linear" vision of "development" or "progress" subject to a "necessary" succession of modes of production – with capitalism "preceding" and preparing socialism/communism. They predominated in the Second International. Yet, as highlighted by many studies, Marx himself has broadly started the necessary "decentring" of his own analyses towards the "margins" and colonies (here including their extensions in the slavery of the US plantations). [26]

His prognostics on revolution were enriched by analyses of the collective experiences (and not only the "individualist" aspirations) of the peasantry, notably in Russia. Kautsky himself had extended such approaches at the beginning of the 20th century, inspiring Lenin's *April Theses* and Trotsky's analyses of the "combined and uneven development" of societies. [27] The latter covered the temporal (interpenetration of traits of past and present societies in the transformation of classes) and spatial (the different colonizations) dimensions – thus also the strategic ones: orientation of the Bolsheviks in support of the dominated classes and construction of the Comintern, theory of "permanent revolution", caricatured by Stalin who opposed to it the "construction of socialism in one country".

Marxist analyses of imperialism, notably that of Lenin, had obviously consolidated in the early 20th century these analyses of capitalism as "system" of globalized domination and its relations to spheres and societies not (yet) dominated by capitalism, involving also the comprehension of the socialist revolution as a world process inserted into the contradictions and crises of two imperialism: the two great world wars would illustrate this approach. [28]

It concerned not only the developed capitalist countries, but also the (semi)-peripheries, with their different socio-political conditions. The construction of the Communist International – as much as the organization of the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku – was based on this understanding of an articulated and inter-dependent process. The motor of new colonial expansions and inter-imperialist wars from the end of the 19th century was located in the countries of the “centre”: they attempted to resolve their crises of over-accumulation of capital and overproduction of commodities by the conquest of the world (hence the wars for the division of the planet). The world's new “creditors” (France and Britain for the 19th century, then the USA, Japan, and finally Germany) would use “debt” as a vector of (neo) colonial domination well before the IMF.

The need for an analysis “ascending” to the actual historical situation not reducible to the two basic classes of Capital is necessary, notably to develop a historicized Marxist approach to the different phases of capitalist globalization. [29] Trotsky had begun a Marxist appropriation of Kondratieff's theses on the different “long cycles” of its development. Ernest Mandel extended it and deepened it in his theses on the “Long Waves” of capitalist development, against any “automatic” and mechanical version of the “exits” from these great structural crises. [30] Their militant involvement in the construction of an International extending the initial objectives of the Comintern underlines the conviction that no structural crisis of globalized capitalism implies its spontaneous collapse.

The capacity for recovery of capitalism after the Second World War was accompanied by the extension of wars against national liberation movements with a socialist dynamic. I return here to the debates and analyses on the “1968 years” which have stressed here how much the so called “neoliberal” offensive was accompanied by targeted killings, coups, wars – in the semi-peripheries – and destruction of all social protections and collective rights acquired with other relationships of forces in the countries of the “centre”. This turn in the 1980s was radicalized by the dismantling of the USSR and the shift towards capitalist restoration which benefited a major part of the former “Communist” nomenklatura – under all “labels” possible. Only Russia (under Putin) and China have taken the resources inherited from a past military-industrial apparatus to aspire to be on the “playing field” of the great powers, with the other states becoming “compradors” or rapidly “peripherized” in the orbit of or inside the EU.

Such is the reality which a new International of workers and peoples of the whole world must face, without a “compass”. But the unprecedented, globalized social polarizations specifically affect women, youth, the elderly, the “others” seen as invaders, whether “Polish”, Muslim, black, Arab or Roma, racialized. The North and its dominant layers, enriched by privatization extends to the “South” including China, with its “Communist” label; the (“de-Communized”) East has been peripherized as a new “South”; meanwhile, the old North of the “classic” imperialism has attacked its old workers’ “bastions” and dismantled its welfare state, as begun by Margaret Thatcher: with or without the euro, these are the same policies which create the “working poor” and divide and rule.

The raison d'être of the new Internationalism is to oppose this, from the local to the planetary in defence of the rights of all, meaning also the dignity of a (finally) “human” status against all relations of oppression and domination.

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[1] See [“It is imperative to reconstruct the Internationale of workers and peoples”](#).

[2] The letter (in French) will be found here [“Pour une internationale des peuples – Une indispensable reconstruction”](#).

[3] See [“Samir Amin et la critique de l'économie politique de la mondialisation”](#).

[4] Besides these videos from RFI there is [“Une heure avec Samir Amin”](#), an interview by Christophe Ventura for Mémoires des Luttés, made when his memoirs came out in 2015. He presents in particular his approach to different reactionary currents since the end of the “Bandung era” (cf. *L'Eveil du Sud : l'ère du Bandung 1955-1980*, Ed. Le Temps des Cerises, 2008). Other [videos](#) recorded in 2011 at the summer university of the M'PEP are centred on the advances and setbacks of decolonization. He integrates the analysis of the “rent” appropriated by imperialism not only for an accumulation of capital, but the submission of whole societies; the accent on the present objective and historic conditions of an internationalism which is “necessary and possible”, but the extreme fragility and weakness of radical lefts everywhere in the world; the notion of comprador bourgeoisie; and – in conclusion the dilemmas of a more developed radical left.

[5] See, for a longer development in English see *Decolonial communism, Democracy and Commons*, Merlin, Resistance Books & IIRE, to be published in late 2018.

[6] The small Fourth International (known as “Mandelite”) of which I have been a member for more than half a century is the only one, as far as I know, to explicitly desire its own transcendence – by regroupment and creation of new organizations, without any predictable and united scenario – in the new phase opened by German unification and the end of the USSR. It would contribute to the new mass anti-capitalist International needed its own legacy of advances, setbacks and questions. See notably the text adopted at its last World Congress in *International Viewpoint* [“Role and party-building tasks of the Fourth International”](#).

[7] See at the end of the article in French [“Pour une internationale des peuples – Une indispensable reconstruction”](#).

[8] For example what I wrote on the Ukrainian crisis [“What internationalism in the context of the Ukrainian crisis? Wide open eyes against one-eyed à€“campisms”](#) or in French [“Quel internationalisme dans le contexte de la crise ukrainienne ? Les yeux grands ouverts contre les à€“campismes” borgnes”](#) on a question that is far from closed.

[9] See [Le À« campisme À» : une vision binaire et idéologique des questions internationales](#).

[10] Debates are needed on the “clash of barbarisms” defined by Achcar and on the global chaos and the new imperialist wars of “civilization” against “terrorism” – an arbitrary and englobing category applied also by the secondary powers allied or not to the USA, from Turkey to Russia via Israel.

[11] See for example the debate in *Take the power to change the world* by Daniel BensaÃd, John Holloway, Michael LÃwy, London Resistance Books, 2007.

[12] Read the presentation of this initiative on their site [Bandung of the North](#).

[13] See on this debate the very interesting text by Christian Mahieux and Pierre Zarka “Les vertus de l'Ãchec,” published in *Les utopiques* NÃ8 cited [here](#).

[14] It is clear that Via Campesina or the forces issued from its ranks should be a major component of these networks.

[15] See “Decolonial Communism”, mentioned above.

[16] In “Decolonial Communism” I stress how these arguments can be replied to and transcended by what the capitalist restoration has taught us. But I don't want to return here to these debates.

[17] See my *Plan, Market and Democracy – The Experience of the So-called Socialist Countries*, IIRE, 1988.

[18] See [“Financial Globalization : Should China move in ?”](#).

[19] On the current extension of class struggles in China [“Class Conflict Intensifies in China as it Heads into Uncertain Times”](#).

[20] I put into the discussion the approach of Pierre Rousset both from the geopolitical and social point of view, 4 April 2017, [OÃ¹ va la Chine ? Dynamiques internes et internationales](#). Read also P. Rousset: 'Chinese ambitions, an imperialism in formation', 2014 <http://my.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article3468>

[21] Claudio Katz :30 mai 2018, Cronicon Coyuntura, Entrevistas, <http://cronicon.net/wp/hacia-una-re...> ("For a renovation of the Theory of Dependence") <https://katz.lahaine.org/seccion/english/>, in particular: <https://katz.lahaine.org/imperialism-and-dependency-similarities-and-differences/>

[22] It is particularly important to integrate the feminist and Marxist insights of Nancy Fraser revisiting those of Rosa Luxemburg in her analysis of imperialism - see [here](#) or [here](#).

[23] Paul Bairoch, *Mythes et paradoxes de l'histoire économique*, La Découverte, 1993. Economics and World History: Myths and Paradoxes, Published September 1st 1995 by University of Chicago Press <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/2867586-economics-and-world-history>

[24] Beyond Immanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin or Paul Prebisch, mentioned above, there is Arghiri Emmanuel (and his analysis of "Unequal Exchange"), André Gunder Frank (on colonization), Pierre Salama and his multiple continuations until today to the Marxist analysis of the "dynamic of under-development" in the contradictions of phases of development revealed by crises.

[25] Unlike the great Empires, the world-system which developed on capitalist bases starting from western Europe imposed the domination of the ' core' countries on the (colonized) "peripheries" without a unified state at the centre. Wallerstein recommends that his approach should not be treated as a completed "theory". See [The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism](#) This is research open to controversies and updating on the different phases of globalization, in an optic of critique of all forms of (neo) colonialization. [I share some of the criticisms expressed notably by Robert Brenner on the insufficiency of commodity relations to impose a capitalist division of labour "[The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism](#)". On these controversies see also Claudio Katz, "Karl Marx, ["On the transition from feudalism to capitalism"<https://libcom.org/files/feudalism%20to%20capitalism.pdf>]">"Marx at the Margins" ; and Peter Worsley: "[One or three: A Critique of the World-System of Immanuel Wallerstein](#)". I expand this critique in the context of the "short 20th Century" (from the October Revolution to 1989/1991): a world capitalist environment and commodity exchanges with it were in no way sufficient to incorporate the USSR, the "Soviet world", Cuba or Maoist China into world capitalism. See "Decolonial Communism", op. cit.

[26] See Shanin T., *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the â€œPeripheries' of Capitalism*, Monthly Review Press, 1983 and more recently K.B. Anderson - see "[Marx at the Margins](#)".

[27] An approach applied by Trotsky in his *History of the Russian Revolution* but also, less well known, to the Chinese revolution of 1928: [The Chinese Revolution](#). See also the work of Lars Lih on Lenin.

[28] On the various Marxist approaches to imperialism, see notably Claudio Katz.

[29] This is the well-known formula of Marx (in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*). André Tosel stressed the concrete/abstract/concrete "circular" dimension of the Marxian analytical approach. Samir Amin privileged instead what he called "the descent into hell" towards the concrete in his presentation "Lire le Capital, lire les capitalismes historiques".

[30] Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, Verso, London 1999.