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by Dimitris Konstantakopoulos

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## ***The future of China, the danger of a collapse of human civilization and the need of a “5th International”***

Shortly before his death, in a series of writings, Samir Amin unfolded the two issues that were mainly of concern to him. The first was the non-subjection of China to financial globalization, that is, to the totalitarian power of world financial capital; also the non transformation of the Chinese land into merchandise. The second issue was the need to build a new, a “Fifth International.”

We had been in China together, invited to a congress on Marxism, at 2018, just before his death and I remember his immense anxiety about China and financial globalization. One day he woke me up and asked me to go urgently to his room, where he was interviewed on a Chinese television. He wanted me to talk also to them, to describe to the Chinese public what I had experienced in the former USSR, watching as a journalist the collapse of the Soviet regime and the restoration of capitalist relations of production and distribution in the ‘90s. He feared that Beijing might, in some turn of its so sui generis evolution, make a decisive turn towards capitalism and wanted to “inoculate ” somehow the Chinese in advance.

Samir did not believe that the Chinese regime is a socialist one. “I will not say China is socialist, I will not say China is capitalist,” he said in a speech at a prestigious University of Peking. Sometimes he hoped, he thought, that there might be a way to state capitalism, state socialism and finally socialism. He wanted to keep open such a possibility.

China has made enormous concessions to capitalism. Still the power in China is not in the hands of its capitalist class and the economy remains a planned one. Samir believed that should China make the qualitative leap to capitalism the USSR has made in 1991, this

would lead to a social catastrophe, reminiscent of the Yeltsin years in Russia and to the dismantling of China itself as it happened with the Soviet Union.

If China fully acceded to the global capitalist system and its hierarchy, on the one hand it would face enormous problems itself and on the other it would decisively reinforce a fast-integrating super-imperialist system, the one we all saw with the war in Ukraine. Today, all the states of the collective West, with the exception perhaps of Turkey and, in a very limited way, of Hungary and Slovakia, are acting in blatant opposition to their most elementary national interests by supporting the U.S. war against Russia in Ukraine. Turkey is an exception but it belongs half to the West and half to the periphery of the planet. It is not of course in any way an anti-imperialist force, still it disposes of a considerable degree of independence with Ankara using it in order to negotiate a privileged status in the ranks of western imperialism. The same is happening with the nearly unanimous support for Zionist Israel from all western states.

Western nation-states are rapidly being transformed into mere tools of this super-imperialism, while all democratic institutions now more and more controlled directly by the big international financial capital and devoid of any national and democratic character. In the principal capitalist countries there is still a remnant of the form of bourgeois democracy, but increasingly without much essential content.

It is the mere existence of relatively powerful alternative to the western power centers, like Russia, China or Iran, that remains now as the main obstacle to the establishment of a totalitarian dictatorship of Capital and America on the planet and on all forms of life.

### *The fight against totalitarian Capitalism and Imperialism*

As for how a road to socialism can be reopened, after the distortions and the defeats of the 20th century, it is certainly an open question. But in order for such a path to be opened, it is necessary at the same time to close the path to the further strengthening of the rapidly evolving totalitarian Western capitalism with the collusive possibilities offered to it by modern technological forces.

And this has become possible today thanks to the resistance of the peoples of Yugoslavia and the Middle East, thanks to the social struggles in Europe and Latin America, thanks to the return of Russia to world politics, thanks to the fantastic economic rise of China and, of course, the extraordinary resistance of Palestinians to Israeli Fascism, which has transformed Gaza into the “Stalingrad” of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As Western Capitalism is facing now one of the most important and multiple crises of its history, it tends to repeat its past, in particular its past of the intra-war period of the last

century. It is driven towards totalitarianism and even open forms of Fascism in the main western countries on the one hand and towards wars outside the West, like the war in Ukraine, the massacre of Palestinians, the threat of a war against China, the debt war against the global South, the war against Civilization and the war against Nature, the last one threatening to terminate even life on Earth.

That is why not only every revolutionary Marxist, but every democrat, every humanist, every ecologist, wherever he comes from, the South, the East or the West of our world, must be resolutely against the resurgence of Fascism in the West and against Western imperialist interventions and not be led astray by the humanitarian and “democratic” pretexts used by western imperialism. None of western interventions brought democracy, all of them led to social and national disasters in the countries where they took place. The first duty of every conscious militant of the Left and of every democrat today is the opposition to imperialist wars and sanctions.

This certainly does not mean unconditional support for the regimes that are attacked every time by imperialism, be it Serbia or Afghanistan, Iraq or Iran, Russia or China. It means an understanding of what the total domination of the West on the planet would mean for human civilization and for the very survival of the human species, including of western societies themselves. Because as world capitalism is moving to the direction of disaster capitalism, it is not able or willing to sustain the living standards and the democratic freedoms of its own citizens. When we speak of western domination on earth, we are speaking about the domination by an extremely tiny part of the western ruling social strata. Today, the emergence of the BRICS, the moves towards a multipolar world, the weakening of the role of the dollar are paving the way for a new, democratic world order. These are huge, historic steps. But such steps are a necessary, not a sufficient condition for a new, democratic world order. Our problem should not be a question of defeating the West in order to take its place, but of moving all of humanity towards a new civilization that can face the enormous threats that have appeared for the first time in human history, due to the productive forces and technologies we have developed and which, if not controlled, threaten very soon the very survival of humans.

#### *The West and the rest*

The West does not seem to have the means to defeat the emerging majority of humanity. But in its effort not to lose its global dominance, it can proceed with policies that can blow up humanity with the means of mass destruction, a danger inherent in its adventurist policies towards Russia, Iran or China.

But even if that doesn't happen, the climate crisis is fast-moving, with neither the West nor the alternative powers doing anything serious to confront the most serious threat that has appeared in the history of Mankind, even more dangerous than nuclear war.

Because nuclear war may or may not happen. But the climate change and other ecological disasters are coming with certainty, not with probability and humans will not survive them if they don't act now with all their power to stop and reverse them. They have to stop them but in order to stop them they will need, most probably, another social system and another civilization. That is, even if we avoid the catastrophe of a World War, we risk finding ourselves in an environment of destruction due to a prolonged stalemate and continuous conflicts. Rosa Luxemburg proclaimed a century ago "socialism or barbarism," today the question is "socialism or extermination."

Struggling to stop the climate change we struggle for socialism. Struggling for socialism we struggle to save the planet.

#### *The need for a 5<sup>th</sup> International*

No one of the big problems humanity is facing can be addressed now on a national or regional level. This is one of the reasons we badly need an International like the one Samir Amin was trying to create.

The problems I mentioned above and other such issues cannot be solved solely by the action of states which are opposed to the dominant Western powers. These states are, by the way, mostly conservative, and just aim at the west leaving them alone and not interfering in their affairs. But this is impossible in the long run because Imperialism is the very nature of Capitalism. Capitalism cannot survive without Imperialism and this for purely organic, economic reasons, known well already from the time of Hobson and of Lenin. Also, it is impossible to address the problems humanity is facing nowadays only by states, we need the conscious mobilization of vast popular masses in both North and South of the planet. We need also an alliance of western popular classes and the oppressed nations of the South and a mobilization of peoples all over the world.

Such an alliance means addressing simultaneously socio-economic, geopolitical and ecological problems in the direction of a nationally, regionally and globally planned and democratically controlled economy. This should be our strategic goal. You cannot nowadays address the ecological but not the social, the social but not the geopolitical, the geopolitical but not the social. We need a 5<sup>th</sup> International for a variety of reasons, to unite the regions of the world on the basis of a new socialist project—because without such unity war will become unavoidable. We need also to unite and coordinate the struggles

against capitalism, against imperialism, against totalitarianism, against climate change and degradation of nature. We cannot for example phase out the use of fossil fuels without taking into account the different position of different countries, etc. etc. The question of the planning becomes synonymous with any progress.

### *State ownership, social ownership and the market*

In the light of the experience of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it is obvious that we cannot contain ourselves with the state ownership of the productive forces. , but we need to seek social ownership and social control through also the extensive use of methods of self-management. Socialism does not mean merely state ownership, it means the exercise of power by the people at all levels. It also means that we must rethink if we need the pursuit of the constant perpetual development of the productive forces and what productive forces. In the light of the great and manifold problems of the Soviet and of all the ultra-centralized economic and political models, one cannot, of course, deny the usefulness of market mechanisms, at least for a very long period, both for economic and psychological—cultural reasons. However, the function of the market must be limited and controlled by the existence of the plan, where the “market” will be allowed to function insofar as it contributes to the increase of productivity, but, at the same time, it will be “corrected” and “limited” by the existence of general national, regional and global plans, which will give priority to the achievement of basic social needs, at the national and the international level, and to the protection of the natural environment without which, at the stage that the productive forces and the technology of humans have reached, there is no point in any discussion. Without humanity it makes no sense to discuss economics or politics. Therefore the markets and their propelling fuel, the profit and the perpetual accumulation of capital, must be replaced from the role of ruler, which they now enjoy and be reduced to that of conditional and limited supporter of humanity in the difficult and dangerous road ahead of us.

“Corrections” may also be made preferably by using economic tools. Administrative measures should be avoided as far as it is possible. For example, China is already experimenting with definitions of GDP that include the natural capital spent or created by a product or investment and also it is introducing the notion of quality productive forces.

To give an example, nowadays, when a plane is transporting salads from Chile to Norway, nobody takes into account the damage done to the Earth’s stratosphere while calculating costs and prices. By the way there are, of course, more and more economic activities that expose ecosystems to the risk of irreversible negative changes. When the risk from an

activity has very small chances to appear but enormous costs when it occurs, the ‘expected damage’ tends to Infinity. Such activities should be phased out gradually.

Private ownership of very large productive forces cannot be allowed. It is unacceptable for a handful of people/companies to be able to control critical productive forces or cutting-edge technologies as they are, for example those involving DNA and genetically modified organisms, the manufacture of viruses, the movement of information on the internet, cyber-weapons, large energy and money flows, artificial intelligence and many other economic or technological activities, or being able to influence in a decisive way the directions of human nutrition, education and medicine, or to control by means of monopolies or oligopolies the media (Press, television, Internet) and via the media human consciousness. State or social control is not enough, because the owners of these powers acquire such disproportionate influence that they prevail, as experience has shown, over any regulation, and this is why we need to go to a social ownership of such fields of the economy.

Ownership in these sectors must pass into the hands of the states and societies and, as far as possible, in perspective, in forms of international control. But also management itself must move away from the classic model of state control, which creates a class of managers who ultimately operate for their own and not for the social benefit. Moreover, the effectiveness—even at the purely economic level—of classical strict forms of state control has been shown to be limited by both the Soviet experience and the experience of the state sectors of capitalist states and former colonies.

In order to do this, the simultaneous application of methods of self-management and social control is necessary, in order to take into account the general interests of society as a whole and not only of workers in a production unit or industry. The management of new productive forces and technologies by a hyper-centralized system is neither possible or desirable, in the long run. The problems humanity is facing require and are better addressed in the long term by an overall raising of the level of diffuse intelligence in society, people who are increasingly conscious and also responsible, and to be conscious and responsible they have to be involved actively in decision-making at all levels.

It is also obvious that we need the gradual democratization of the international monetary system, perhaps by establishing regional monetary instruments, but also by the creation of a system of international exchanges that will try to overturn the law of “unequal exchange” as formulated by Arghiri Emmanuel, by taking into account both the need of raising the level of the poorest nations and the ecological problems. It is important to

remember at this point that the Soviet Union was, in contrast to the European Union, an organization which organized the transfer of surpluses from the richest to the poorest regions, an idea that Maynard Keynes, in different terms, had advocated for the functioning of the international economic system, by blaming also permanent surpluses. In regulating international economic exchanges it must be taken into account the need to address inequalities globally and the need to protect the environment which makes life and civilization possible.

Of course you can tell me at this point as Faust said: Show me the goal, but show me also the path to achieve it. It is not possible even to make a short allusion to it in the context of this paper. But it is also impossible for fundamental reasons to describe in detail such a path. There cannot be any prefabricated path for what Marx described once as the transition from pre-history to history. We are facing a non-deterministic question here and we can at a maximum describe possible ways ahead. Without underestimating the theoretical work in general, and, in particular, the extremely urgent need to work in the direction of a global Transitional Program, in the final analysis it will be Action itself which will provide us with the needed answers.

#### *The danger of a rapid collapse of human civilization*

The rise of fascism, the rise of the danger of use of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction, the rapidity of the ecological collapse make, among many other phenomena, more than urgent a political action to satisfy the needs we already described. We are moving too slowly if we are moving at all and the result may very well be the end of civilization and of humanity itself.

We are still a long way from being able to implement these ideas on a global scale. At present, and given the political and social trends currently prevailing in the West, a necessary transitional stage must include the struggle for a multipolar world and the attempt to form independent regional associations, for example in Latin America or Africa. It is appropriate, however, to introduce in this process elements that will contribute to the general reformation of the world system, elements that one hopes will help to induce in the West itself a brave radical tendency, without the timely appearance of which the chances of a global ecological or nuclear catastrophe are significantly increased.

This is why we badly need a new International, incorporating the successes and the strong points but also addressing the weaknesses of the first Four Internationals. And we need it now. We lack time as the situation around Ukraine, in the Middle East and regarding climate can show to every conscious human being and in the most dramatic way.

*Notes:*

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5th International Samir Amin

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