

# Building an Emancipatory Program Based on Social Movements

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**We have entered a period of fundamental rupture, a period of transition marked by strong contradictions. The various social, ecological, geopolitical, political and ideological institutions are entering into crisis and these crises are combining. This situation is reminiscent of the crisis of the 1930s with its economic and social crises, world wars, the rise of fascism, and socialist revolutions. To understand the new situation, we must start from the contradictions and their evolution.**

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This period of crises reinforces the hypothesis of a transition that concerns the dominant mode of production, capitalism. These transitions are generally long, with moments of acceleration. For example, the transition from feudalism to capitalism saw the bourgeoisie prevail over the aristocracy as the dominant class. Is this an internal transition of capitalism, such as those that saw industrial capitalism succeeding merchant capitalism or financial capitalism succeeding industrial capitalism, or is it a crisis that calls capitalism itself into question?

We are living in a period of deep uncertainty, a period of bifurcations between several possible futures. Social movements must define and adapt their strategy. If the general orientation is always that of emancipation and the defense of the interests of the oppressed classes, the short-term objectives and the alliances depend on the evolution of the situation and the balance of power. How to characterize the new situation and define social and ecological platforms? What strategy and what demands, in this situation, for citizen social movements?

The proposed approach puts forward five proposals: to deepen the analysis of the situation; to start from the new radicalities; to integrate the new radicalities into the class struggles; to reinvent the institutions of politics; to redefine internationalism.

## 1. Deepen the analysis of the situation

### *Evolution of capitalism*

The world is a capitalist space. Capitalism seems to have prevailed and does not seem to be called into question despite its contradictions. Even though capitalism is in crisis and perhaps exhausted, the question of how to transcend it remains to be defined and understood. The consequences of

ecology, visible with the change in climate, have only just begun. We are already witnessing various developments with unexpected links between neo-liberalism and forms of state capitalism as in China and Russia.

The crisis of neoliberalism has been ongoing since 2008, prolonged by the climate and pandemic crisis and by wars. It is a crisis of this phase of globalization, neoliberalism, and of the cycle of commodification - globalization - financialization. And probably a deeper crisis of capitalism itself and of the austeritarism response (austerity and security) to the financial crisis of 2008. This includes the ecological contradiction that is already reflected in contradictions within capital, such as those between extractivists and the digital sector.

The question of transcending capitalism is an open one. It opens the discussion on the definition of alternatives. It is part of the discussion on the ecological, social, democratic and geopolitical transition. These are the great contradictions at work, adding to them the ideological and cultural transition. It remains now to nourish each of these dimensions from the new proposals of construction of another world possible and necessary. It is also necessary to develop the alternatives, the new social relations of transcending capitalism in the current societies, as the capitalist market social relations developed in the feudal societies before the capitalist mode of production became dominant and the bourgeois political superstructures imposed themselves. Fernand Braudel had noted his interest in Samir Amin's proposal to differentiate between long transitions, such as the fall of the Roman Empire, and short transitions, such as the one that the bourgeoisie had led in the construction of capitalism.

Immanuel Wallerstein, in the long preface he wrote for the English version of the book *An alterglobalism strategy* (1), estimated that the period of transcending capitalism was underway and that in the next thirty years we would see new dominant modes of production emerge. Capitalism not being eternal, what new classes, what new social relations could succeed it? He specified that the transformation of capitalism was not necessarily socialism, that it would probably be a new unequal mode of production and that the issue at stake was the nature and the importance of the structural inequalities of the emerging world order and the new forms of property that would determine the new relations of production.

What would be the new social classes that would shape societies? Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy (2) remind us that the new social classes that defined capitalism were not the main social classes of feudal society, the aristocracy and the peasantry; they are new classes that were born in the process of the new capitalist mode of production: the bourgeoisie and the working class. They propose to recognize as a new dominant class the "cadre" born of the separation between shareholders and managers. In the same way, one can consider that the new proletariat would result from the "precariat" subjected to new forms of exploitation and which would succeed the role played by the wage-earner for the working class.

### *The mutations of imperialism*

Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin renewed the analysis of imperialism by linking imperialism to capitalism and defining it as the highest stage of capitalism. And today, capitalism determines, without any doubt, the dominant imperialism. In the possible hypothesis of a new dominant mode of production, imperialism could change its nature. New forms of domination, new forms of power, could replace subordination to capitalism.

The long period of unfinished decolonization is already changing the international system. Chou En Lai declared in Bandung, in 1955, "the States want their independence, the nations want their liberation, the peoples want the revolution". The independence of the States has been partially

achieved but remains unfinished; the international system needs to be redefined; the liberation of nations calls into question the model of the Nation-State. The new radicalisms are very marked by the new awareness, as can be seen in particular with the women's rights movement, the struggles against racism and discrimination, and the struggles of indigenous peoples.

The geopolitical situation has already changed profoundly. Power relations, alliances and blocs are being recomposed. (3) The hypothesis of inter-imperialist conflicts must be further explored. The three dominant powers are developing forms of imperialism that are different in nature, even if they all implement a neoliberal doctrine. The United States is still the dominant power and controls Europe and Japan in the dominant triad. Russia is an insistent reminder of its existence. China manages its rise to power quite skilfully. The BRICS alliance illustrates, with Brazil, India, and South Africa, the rise of regional powers. A new form of non-alignment is in the making. The hypothesis of a Global South remains to be defined.

The war in Ukraine illustrates the contradictions of the situation and the unpredictability of developments. It does not, in itself, sum up the situation. The Russian invasion is contrary to the right of peoples to self-determination under international law. By questioning Lenin's responsibility in asserting this right, Putin underlines the difference between the present Russia and the Soviet revolution. Of course, the American strategy and the role played by NATO are not negligible. However, they do not allow us to question the right to resist an occupation. The American strategy uses all means to safeguard its dominant position and prepare its responses to the rise of China. Europe has chosen to follow the American positions. A large part of the countries of the South have distanced themselves and are seeking a new international division of tasks and a non-alignment; this is the hypothesis of a "Bandung 2".

#### *The pandemic and the climate in the civilizational crisis*

Pandemics and climate are at the forefront. This is not the first time they have invited themselves into history. In an excellent book, Kyle Harper (4) discusses their role in the fall of the Roman Empire and shows how they revealed Rome's loss of resilience. This leads us to consider the loss of resilience and the likely fall of the American empire as well as the shift of the center of the world and the rise of Asia. This also leads us to consider that we are currently experiencing a crisis of civilization that will be long. It puts the goal of transcending capitalism on the horizon. This crisis leads us to re-examine the understanding of transitions between civilizations and to consider the collapse predicted by the ecological crisis, which is not necessarily the end of History, as a passage towards the emergence of new civilizations.

What we are experiencing is not a temporary break, but a rupture. First of all, because of the magnitude of the phenomenon. It is clear that we will live with pandemics. The one we have experienced is not an accident. The pandemic is only one facet of the rupture. The covid-19 is not the cause of the rupture and the great discontinuities. But it is more than an indicator. It has heightened the awareness of the ecological rupture. Ecology has become an essential element in the understanding of evolution. The climate, biodiversity, the cohabitation of species, question the relationship between the human species and Nature. It is a philosophical questioning, the end of infinite time; the finite time (5) and the emergence of urgency in relation to the possibility of a dignified life on this planet.

The climate and the pandemic indelibly mark several major contradictions. They call into question the way of thinking about all the dimensions of the transformation of societies, and in particular development, globalization, the international and geopolitical system, the relationship between the individual and the collective, the defense of freedoms and democracy, inequalities and discriminations, the relationship between species, the ways in which societies deal with death, the

place of work and income, the place of public action, of States, nations and peoples.

The convergence of the health crisis of covid-19 and the climate emergency is a revelation of the loss of resilience of the international system. The ecological contradictions call into question the relationship between the human species and Nature. The economic and social contradictions call into question the dominant system, that of neoliberal capitalism. The political contradictions call into question the institutions, the States and the democracy. Ideological and cultural contradictions challenge the understanding of the world. Geopolitical contradictions call into question the international system. The debates are open on all these aspects; the totality corresponds to a crisis of civilization.

The covid-19 health crisis highlighted the weakening of the United States as a dominant pole and the weakness of the organization of the international system in its inability to respond to a global crisis. The health crisis also demonstrated the inadequacy of the international system. Responses to a global crisis have been national, without much consultation. The United Nations has demonstrated its paralysis and inadequacy. After the bipolar balance until 1989 and an increasingly unstable unipolar episode, the possibility of multipolarity is open.

### *A decisive ideological crisis*

We are engaged in a violent battle for cultural hegemony in the sense that Antonio Gramsci understood it. It opposes two conceptions of the world: a vision of identity and security as expressed by the extreme right in the world, and an egalitarian vision of solidarity as expressed by the struggles and the new radicalities. This battle challenges freedoms and opposes a libertarian conception of individual egoism and a progressive conception of individual and collective freedoms.

The question of democracy is at the heart of these confrontations. It is the most challenging. On the major trends of transcending capitalism, we can see some reference points. On the social level, we can see that we must implement equality and refuse discrimination. For ecology, we understand that we can reject the productivism and defend other relationships with Nature. On the geopolitical level, we can advance international law in the face of business law. For democracy, the next step remains to be invented. It requires a critique of the American and European conception of democracy, of its limits and of its subordination to Western propaganda.

The last period of struggles did not allow to define proposals in this domain. However, since 2011, insurrectionary situations in more than 47 countries have put forward the will of the people for democracy and the refusal of corruptions. The questioning, in these movements, of delegating and representation and the rise of abstentions challenges representative democracy; forms of direct democracy are difficult to define. The question of democracy in the context of transcending capitalism is not new. The Communist Manifesto already affirmed, in 1848, that "the first step in the workers' revolution is the constitution of the proletariat as a ruling class, the conquest of democracy". And that "All historical movements have so far been accomplished by minorities or for the benefit of minorities. The proletarian movement is the spontaneous movement of the immense majority for the benefit of the immense majority."

## **2. Starting from new radical positions**

Being aware of the long time frame does not take away the freedom to write history, to invent new paths in relation to uncertainties and contradictions. What is likely to happen now? Two great possibilities will coexist and confront each other. The first is the attempt to take control. Those who, at some point, were forced to give up will try to regain economic, financial, political, including police

and military powers. This is what we already have, with the rise of regimes that rely on racist, xenophobic and security ideologies supported by a part of the population that accepts, in the face of the fear of change, conservative and reactionary proposals. Trump, Orban, Modi, Bolsonaro will continue to flourish. We are likely to see the multiplication of forms of this capitalism that appeared after the crisis of 2007-2008, an austeritarism neoliberalism, which risks becoming a dictatorial neoliberalism. The takeovers will be very brutal, the shock therapy described by Naomi Klein (6). They will not be limited to attacks on freedoms and increased police violence. Multiple conflicts will develop, as well as wars, which we know are a way to re-establish order.

On the other hand, resistance will also be powerful. We will see a multiplication of protests, demonstrations and revolts. These movements build on changes that were already underway before the pandemic. We will also see the emergence of new ideas and proposals. We find the situation described by Antonio Gramsci. In his Prison Notebooks, he wrote in 1937: "The old world is dying, the new world is slow to appear, and in this obscurity monsters are emerging. Here we are: the monsters are there, the old world is dying, where is the new world? It is the one that the new radical positions anticipate.

The radical postures of new ideas are carried by very aggressive movements (feminists, anti-racists, ecologists, digital actors, indigenous peoples, migrants, and those of decolonization). The ideas of the extreme right can be read as a reaction to the radical changes and upheavals that these movements have announced.

### *Women's rights and gender*

The question of women's emancipation has taken a central stage. It is a new stage in the long struggles of women for their liberation. It is a remarkable revolution. It is a major upheaval in the societies, which questions the relations between the sexes and the relations of gender. It questions the patriarchy and the male domination and questions the forms of precariousness. The depth of the questioning translates into forms of panic and arouses extremely violent reactions in some men. It is a radical revolution that is spreading in all countries and in all national or religious cultures.

The panic in the social relations is reflected by a panic in the theory. The assertion of the necessity to take into account gender relations and racism in order to understand class relations provokes a very violent reaction. Some people read in it a questioning of class relations rather than a necessity to deepen the understanding of their reality. But the reality is the opposite, as Angela Davis (7) so well demonstrates. Intersectionality is introduced as a choice for minorities in comparison to the understanding of class relations. Afrofeminism, in the countries where it manifests itself, shows the close link between the working classes, feminist demands and "racialized" groups.

### *Ecology*

The ecological question has become a central issue, particularly through the recognition of the modifications linked to climate change and the loss of biodiversity. Awareness of the ecological emergency has been very slow. The observations and warnings concerning the climate have not been listened to since the 1970s and until recent years. Although the ruling powers, such as the fossil fuel extractive companies, knew about the research at an early stage, they tried for decades to sow doubt and hide their responsibility. As a result, no serious measures have been implemented. The awareness of the importance of the necessary measures is beginning to grow. It should start with measures to correct greenhouse gas emissions in energy policies. It calls into question the logic of the policies implemented and the questioning of the development model. The very notion of development, and its subordination to productivist growth, is today basically criticized. (8) The question has become civilizational. It is a major cultural revolution.

The urgency is put forward by the people and this concern is reflected in the trends of opinion because the consequences are more and more visible. The young generations are more and more sensitive to it. The authorities claim to take this into account, but at the same time they continue to develop the same policies. In some areas, such as the debate on energy policies or urban policies for example, it often results in the search for technological solutions that would not call into question the dynamics of economic growth. Whereas ecological issues are directly linked to wealth inequalities!

Ecology is becoming an indispensable element in understanding the evolution of global geopolitical relations, but also in a more anthropological dimension. Climate, biodiversity, the cohabitation of species, question the relationship between the human species and Nature. It is a philosophical questioning, the end of the infinite time which always postpones the solutions to tomorrow, and of the infinite space which always discovers new territories to exploit.

### *The digital*

What are the fundamental changes that are building the new world and foreshadowing the contradictions of the future? Digital technology and biotechnology are not the only upheavals underway, but they are shaping many others. Digital technology is renewing language and writing, and biotechnology is questioning the limits of the human body. There are several upheavals in progress, unfinished and uncertain revolutions. They are shaking up the world; they also bring hope and are already marking the future and the present. For the moment, they provoke rejection and great violence.

The digital is a technological revolution that has strong interactions with social change without overdetermining it. Digital social movements are making their mark on new generations. (9) Social movement activists have played a role in the development of the digital world even if their contributions have been confiscated and diverted by GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft). There are also opponents inside the digital world who form a specific social movement that converges with and can strengthen social movements. They can play a leading role in the fight against GAFAM and against the exorbitant impunity and power of digital multinationals. They can oppose the counter-attack of the authorities on the very field of digital and information (mass surveillance, disinformation, infox...) and equip the movements with the digital tools that will allow them to resist the hegemonic platforms and to inscribe the movements in the determination of the strategies.

### *Racism and discrimination*

The issue of racism is, along with the feminist issue, the object of reactions that oppose it with great violence. The two most radical movements today in the United States, which have become references in a large part of the world, are #MeToo and Black Lives Matters. The question of racism in connection with the question of migration refers to the unfinished nature of decolonization.

The refusal of racism and discrimination is one of the major characteristics of the global situation. Contrary to what some people hope, it is not enough to turn the page on colonization. Racism has its sources in the course of history, and we see the resurgence of the question of slavery and the slave trade, the consequences of which still profoundly mark the organization of the world and the imagination of societies. It is not only a question of recognition and reparations. The refusal of racism is also a determining element of the future. It is the bearer of the definition of Humanity as the bearer of its own future. It reinforces the recognition of equality as a cardinal value and as a marker of the difference between progressive and reactionary values.

## *Indigenous Peoples*

The appearance of indigenous peoples on the scene is bringing about profound changes. Denied by colonization and slavery, victims of genocide, they have survived and are once again at the forefront of the world stage. Their presence reconstitutes the long history of humanity. They remind us that civilizations are nourished by their history and that progress is not the negation of the past. They remind us that civilizations have invented a plurality of answers and that the future is not built by denying History.

The indigenous peoples recall the values that capitalism has denied and suppressed. They demonstrate that the relationship with Nature is multiple and inscribe an ecological approach in the long history of Humanity. They remind us that culture is part of a historical process. We can take for example the meaning of a new value, that of “buen vivir”, which cannot be summarized as “good living”, and which translates the richness and depth of civilizations still alive and still necessary for the future of Humanity, its knowledge and its wisdom.

## *The issue of migration*

Migration has accompanied the history of mankind since its beginnings, starting with Neanderthal man and Homo sapiens. In each period, migrations adapt and take on new characteristics. (10) Today, with the phase of neo-liberalism as a phase of capitalist globalization, migrations take three forms: economic migrations that prolong and modify the labor migrations marked by the industrial evolution of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; political migrations linked to situations of wars and repressions; environmental migrations that will take a major importance.

Migration will take new forms with the evolution of world demography. Several demographers estimate that the world population will decrease. (11) We must return to the demographic question. Many countries are at or below the demographic replacement rate. It is estimated that the population will be decreasing in about thirty countries in 2050, compared to about twenty today. This is due to the emancipation of women and the evolution towards a fertility rate of 1.7 children per woman. In several regions of the world, social ageing is becoming an essential problem.

Several new elements will modify the issue of migration in the next period. The shock of demographic decline in many countries, particularly in the most industrialized countries, and the ecological breakthrough have already been mentioned. Let us also mention the reduction of the agricultural population in many countries. As in the industrialized countries, the agricultural population is decreasing from the majority of the population to about 5% of the population. This evolution may modify the relationship between nomads and sedentary people, which has been striking since the invention of agriculture in Mesopotamia. Other changes will accompany the evolution of the characteristics of the nation-states that have defined the forms of border management over the last three centuries. It is the countries that accept migrants and develop host cultures that will be the most promising.

What characterizes migrations today, at the level of migrants' mobilizations and also at the level of those who make them the cause of all the evils, are the references to slavery and colonization. This is because decolonization is not over and the imagination links the first colonization to the second, that of colonial empires and imperialism as the supreme stage of capitalism. The struggles against racism and discrimination refer to decolonization and extend it.

## *Unfinished decolonization and post-colonialism*

Three of the new radical postures, racism and discrimination, indigenous peoples, and migration

policies, refer directly to decolonization. And the other three cannot be understood if we ignore them. This is because we are in a period characterized by the reality of decolonization. The first phase of decolonization, that of the independence of States, is more or less over, but decolonization is far from being completed. It characterizes the current period in all its aspects, economic, social, ecological, geopolitical, ideological.

All the more so since, from 1980 onwards, the dominant countries, the United States, Europe and Japan, have regained control of globalization by imposing neoliberalism. They put an end to the attempts of the countries of the South to balance international trade by imposing on them debt and austerity programs known as structural adjustment. The second phase of decolonization (post colonialism) is beginning, that of the liberation of nations and peoples. It calls into question the form of nation-states, as can be seen in the attempts to create plurinational states on the one hand, and the evolving forms of globalization on the other. It also questions the role that large geo-cultural regions could play in the evolution of the international system.

Decolonization remains on the agenda as a response to inequalities in the world system and also in the awareness of the long history of forms of domination.

### **3. Integrating the new radical postures into class struggles**

The synthesis between the new radical postures and the class struggles is the central question; and it arouses contradictory and passionate debates. The new radical postures are not external to class struggles; they are part of them. They are part of the class struggles and they anticipate their evolution. Each of the new radical postures is incomprehensible if one does not situate it in relation to class affiliations. They prefigure the mutations of the social classes in the evolution of the capitalist mode of production. They prefigure the new social classes in the hypothesis of a more profound transition, in the hypothesis of the passage to a new mode of production that would succeed the capitalist mode of production.

The analysis must start from the two main classes, the bourgeoisie and the working class, and their evolution. The financial and globalized fraction of the bourgeoisie is for the moment the ruling class. It has succeeded in integrating, through shareholding, a part of the managerial staff, but it does not give an answer to the mass of managers who have multiplied with massive schooling and digitalization. It has succeeded in controlling training through the ideology of “management” and “business administration”. But it is encountering new contradictions from two new radicalities, that of ecology which questions productionism, and that of digital technology which modifies the very conception of management. It does not provide an answer to all managers as a class in training.

Globalization and the internationalization of the value chains have changed the conditions of workers. Precariousness in various forms characterizes today’s internationalized production processes. The nature of wage labor has changed, it no longer characterizes only the working class. Wage employment no longer defines a condition, it has become a status shared by many categories. Wage-earners’ unions no longer represent only the workers’ movement; they remain, however, marked by their history and constitute a form of organization that prolongs the workers’ memory and prepares the class alliances between producers.

The evolution of the peasant movement is significant for the nature and role of social movements. When Bernard Lambert, one of the founders of Paysan-travailleurs and the Confédération paysanne, declared at Larzac in 1973 that “the peasants will never again be Versailles”, recalling the way in which the French bourgeoisie had used the peasants against the Commune, he was relying on the work that he had carried out to define the “peasant-workers” by demonstrating that their



subordination to capital had transformed them into quasi-salaried workers. La Via Campesina is now one of the largest movements in the world. Its members have succeeded in persuading the world, and themselves, that peasant agriculture is more modern than agro-industry, compatible with ecological constraints, and have defined the demands made, notably food sovereignty and the refusal of GMOs. It indicates ways to think about the evolution of social classes, the relationship between social classes and the orientation of an international political project.

The new radical postures allow us to better understand the ongoing mutations of social classes and the relations between classes. They imply to situate the reflection on the scale of globalization. First, because each of the radicalities can only be understood on a global scale. Secondly, because some of the new radical postures imply that we take into account, in the analysis of the situation, a major development, that of decolonization. As we have indicated, three of the new radical postures stem directly from decolonization as a determining factor in the development: racism and discrimination, indigenous peoples, and the issue of migration. The other three (feminism, ecology, digital) cannot be understood without taking into account the unfinished decolonization as a major factor of the current situation.

### *The new radical postures transform class struggles*

Starting from the new radical postures is thus one of the ways to understand the evolutions of the class struggles and to include them in a common approach. It is not a question of considering them as subordinate to a superior entity, but on the contrary of structurally linking them to each other and integrating them into a common project.

It is first of all a question of strengthening the workers' and peasants' movement at all levels, local, national and global. It is not a question of considering them as mythical and abstract references but of starting from their complexities and the richness of their realities. It is the conditions of workers and peasants that best allow us to understand the situations of producers of surplus value and their evolution. By broadening our understanding to the different forms of precariousness, we can better grasp the evolution of the proletariat in the making. We can also better take into account the evolution of the emancipation projects they carry. The complementarity of the workers' and peasants' movements is also a way of taking into account the relations with Nature and the ecological openings.

The main benchmark is that of equality. It is the historical marker of the left (12) since the French Revolution, confirmed by the Commune. This value was confirmed by the refusal of inequalities and discriminations which became determining from the ideological and political point of view. The workers' movement and the peasant movement are bearers of this reference to equality and the refusal of inequalities. The refusal of inequalities has widened and now concerns social and ecological inequalities. Awareness calls into question oligarchies and inequalities are increasingly linked to the questioning of corruption.

The emphasis on equality as a reference value has taken concrete form in the demand for rights. This evolution has been confirmed by the pandemic and the responses to it, which has highlighted the importance of rights: the right to health, the right to education, the right to income, which until recently appeared completely utopian, the right to work, the right to housing and the right to the city, the right to public services. To this are added new proposals for obtaining rights: the right to a public action that is not only bureaucracy and the State, the right of the commons in relation to property. We have a sudden and extraordinary flowering of new ideas. Obviously, they are not going to impose themselves immediately. They prefigure what the new world could be.

A decisive project for the future is that of democracy in the business world. (13) The corporation

remains a hermetic space with respect to equal rights and democracy. The first priority is to free companies from the dictatorship of shareholders, mainly financial shareholders. Many proposals exist to give their place to the different stakeholders: the company's employees, workers, technicians and managers; researchers; subcontractors; suppliers; local authorities of the territories concerned; States, distributors; customers; etc.

The employee as a status facilitates the taking into account of rights. This leads to a reflection on the evolution of wage employment. Wages are not only an income, they also carry many rights. If wage employment is a social status and not the marker of a social condition, should it not be generalized to the whole population? There are many hypotheses surrounding this hypothesis.

There remains a question that is not secondary. If the refusal of inequalities is so prevalent and if equality can be a benchmark, how can we explain the rise of extreme right-wing ideas in the public debate? The reasons go back to the ideological crisis we have already discussed. The extreme right has evolved in its discourse; it no longer claims to be as concerned with inequality, and to appeal to the working classes, it sometimes talks about equality; but it is careful not to hold the richest and most powerful responsible for inequality. It stirs up fear of the poorest and of foreigners. We are in the battle for cultural hegemony that builds identity and security against equality and solidarity.

#### **4. Reinventing the institution of politics**

Politics is questioned by the changes in society at its different levels: local, national and global. Politics is marked by profound upheavals. The nature of production relationships has not changed, but we are experiencing mutations linked to the cultures brought about by new technologies, notably digital and biotechnologies. The thinking modes are turned upside down by the ecological revolution. The major revolution in women's rights, beyond the violent reactions that reject it, is just beginning to produce its effects and is leading to an incredible upheaval of societies. It is the reinvention of democracy that is at the heart of the changes and questioning. Economic and social democracy remains a necessity. It must be reinvented. It is clear that democracy cannot be reduced to the market, but it also appears that the State is not sufficient to define the opposite of the market and to guarantee democracy. Cultural and political democracy requires the reinvention of politics.

The electoral abstention calls for attention; it expresses the impression that the transformation of power no longer goes through elections. One of the questions raised is the relationship between movements, parties and governments. Politics is not restricted to parties. In all the movements, one demand is asserted: the rejection of corruption. The distrust of parties and traditional forms of politics is expressed by the systematic condemnation of systemic corruption. The fusion between politics and finance structurally corrupts the political class as a whole. The rejection of corruption goes beyond financial corruption; it is political corruption. It is visible in the policies imposed and in the blending of interests. How can we trust the same people, sometimes with a different face, who apply the same policies, those of financial capitalism. The subordination of politics to finance cancels politics. It calls into question the autonomy of the political class and the trust that can be placed in it.

Radical posturing does not automatically mean a progressive advance. We must take into account the right-wing bend of societies. The rise of fascist, far-right and reactionary populist currents is perceptible and sometimes borrows some of the forms of emancipatory movements. It takes different forms with libertarian neo-conservatism in the United States, various forms of national socialism in Europe, armed jihadism in the Middle East, extremist Hinduism in India, etc. In many of the new movements, the classical left is being undermined and right-wing currents sometimes appear to be

imposing their views. However, as a whole, the social movements carry the challenge of the dominant order and a desire for emancipation. The differentiation is relatively simple, after the initial surprise effects. What differentiates the movements is their strategic orientation: access to rights for all and equal rights.

The movements are spontaneous, radical and heterogeneous. This is the case of the movements that emerged from 2011 in reaction to the crisis of neoliberalism. Some argue that these movements failed because they had no perspective or strategy and did not have an organization. This criticism deserves to be explored further. It is not sufficient because it underestimates the repressions that followed these movements. The movements do not reject all forms of organization; they experiment with new ones. These have demonstrated their interest in the organization of mobilizations, the response to situations and the expression of new imperatives. The question of the forms of organization in relation to the powers that be is always on the agenda.

### *The change of representations*

For a very long time, perceptions of politics opposed two opposing poles: a right that claimed order and a conservative approach; a left that presented itself as the bearer of change and social progress. The right included a reactionary extreme right and the left included an extreme left that presented itself as revolutionary. This representation has given way to a new configuration with three poles of reference: a neoliberal right, leading capitalism and including a "government left"; a nationalist, identity-based and security-oriented right, polarized by the extreme right; a progressive and more radical left that claims to be equal. This configuration is not unique to France; it can be found in several countries. In France's electoral and ideological system, it makes it more difficult to define an electoral majority. It accompanies the rise of the extreme right on a global scale.

The neoliberal right refers to the dominant form of capitalism in the stage of neoliberal globalization. It characterizes the camp of the Triad (United States, Europe, Japan) and of the dominant imperialism. It has imposed debt, structural adjustment programs and wars on the new countries of the South. It thought it had won with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and that it could impose a new world order managed by the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO (World Trade Organization). But the crisis of 2007-2008, pandemics, climate and wars have put its model in crisis.

The nationalist right claims to defend the nation-state in the face of globalization, as opposed to the neoliberal right. It claims securitization and identitarianism. It claims colonial pride and is not afraid to assert its racism. It organizes itself in the extremist currents of the different religions and in the evangelist affirmations. It opposes these values to the values of equality and solidarity promoted by the left. It reacts very violently against the new radical positions that upset the world it would like to preserve. It wages war against foreigners and migrants.

The left is in the process of reorganization. It must build a common unified political project from the histories of its different components (communists, socialists, ecologists, revolutionaries). It must extend the first phase of decolonization which, from 1920 to 1955, led to the independence of states and to an unfinished international system. It must accept the perspectives opened up by the new radicalities. It must integrate these new radical positions into class struggles and strengthen the workers' and peasants' movements. It must lead the battle for cultural hegemony against the identity-based and security-based drifts of the extreme right and against the discrimination and inequalities brought about by neoliberal globalization.

The situations in the many countries that have experienced radical movements after 2011 have multiplied the examples of innovations and proposals for political renewal. These examples have been crushed by repression; but new ones are always emerging. This is what we see today in several

Latin American countries. This is what we have also seen in the United States with the proposals made by the four young women members of parliament, members of the DSA (Democratic Socialists of America), close to Bernie Sanders, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. They seek to build on the political extensions of #MeToo and Black Lives Matters. They advocate a vast investment plan, a Green New Deal, to stop global warming, while promoting social justice and public health. This is also what we find with the attempts to develop a Global South, heir to decolonization.

### *Social movements challenge political parties and the party format*

Social movements are political movements. They directly assume some of the organizational tasks traditionally performed by political parties, notably recognized leadership and negotiations. This traditional structuring is widely questioned because of the great mistrust of activists, and more generally of the public mobilized, with regard to political institutions and particularly with regard to political parties. In some cases, political parties of a relatively traditional form have emerged from the movements, or rather from a part of the movements. In other cases, structured forms of organization including some parties have been recognized. The insurgency movements since 2011 have produced numerous, often unsuccessful attempts, such as the “indignant”, the “occupy”, the Sudanese “Association of Professionals”, the “Algerian Hirak”... These extensions must be evaluated and deepened.

Social movements are also being redefined. We have already mentioned the peasant movement with La Via Campesina, which has supported mobilizations based on a radical renewal of its slogans around peasant agriculture, the refusal of GMOs, and food sovereignty. Moreover, social movements are confronted with the difficult negotiation with the powers that be and the risks of NGOization that accompany them.

The search for a new synthesis, or at least a better articulation between the movement form and the party form is on the agenda. It implies the questioning of the forms of organization of the parties, as well of the parliamentary parties as of the parties of vanguard. No movement accepts to be represented by parties in the institutional game, but for all that, victories within the institutions strengthen the global consciousness and the movements. How can this contradiction be maintained in the long term?

### *The strategic question of social transformation and power*

The questioning of the party form is directly linked to the strategic question. The fundamental question posed for the revolutionary movement is the strategic question, that of social transformation and power. Immanuel Wallerstein insisted a lot on the necessary renewal of the revolutionary strategy. He recalled that the bourgeoisie had defined a strategy, since Cromwell, in 1530: to create a party, to conquer the state, to change society. In the First International, the debate was about the adoption of this strategy to build socialism. After many debates, notably after the Commune, and the debate on the State, the workers’ movement renewed this strategy with the Second and Third Internationals. Today, the question is open. Creating a party to conquer the state translates into a party-state even before having conquered the state, and the state is not a neutral means of building a new society. This is what led the alterglobalism movement to seek the autonomy of society from the State and to deepen the distinction between the movement form and the party form. This questioning of the State puts the very definition of democracy back at the center of the debate, challenged by a profound cultural change in the new generations on the questions of representation and delegation. The conquest of the State has allowed the bourgeoisie to impose capitalism, and it is unlikely that it will allow it to escape. What is at stake is the definition of a new strategy of political transformation.

## **5. Reconstructing internationalism**

### *Inequalities and injustices have become unbearable*

One of the new and essential questions is that of the articulation between the movement-forms and the party-forms. It is about the renewal of politics. It is characterized by a strong change: social movements show that inequalities, discriminations and injustices have become unbearable. Social movements announce a new era on a global scale. An era similar to that of the affirmation of rights in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to that of nationalities in 1848, to the socialist revolutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to that of decolonization in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to that of the counter-culture and women's liberation of the 1960s and 1970s.

This revolution, still underground, but whose localized, massive and widespread movements form the main points of focus, is carried by the idea shared on a global scale that inequalities, discrimination, injustices, arbitrariness and corruption are unbearable. And that the revolt to reject them is legitimate. All the more legitimate as it concerns the future of humanity itself, confronted with a major climatic and ecological crisis that the powers that be refuse to take into account. Revolts are not only uprisings of refusal. Revolts become revolutions when outcomes appear possible. If inequalities and injustices have become unbearable and unacceptable, it is also because a world without inequalities and injustices appears possible.

### *Internationalism and alterglobalism*

The conjunction of the pandemic and the climate confirms in a certain way the alterglobalism movement; it also forces it to reinvent itself to take into account the changes in the situation. The alterglobalism movement affirms that the response to neoliberal globalization must be deployed at all scales: local, national, by large geocultural regions, and global. The reference is not nationalism, it is internationalism and alterglobalism. It is the construction of another possible and necessary world, in the true sense of the word, which must be the object of a global reflection.

The revolutionary movement of the next period is also confronted with the necessary redefinition of internationalism. Alterglobalism proposes itself as an extension of internationalism taking into account neoliberal globalization as a new phase of capitalism. Internationalism today is confronted with the necessary redefinition of the period that has not yet taken into account the rupture of decolonization. If we return to the formula of Chou En Lai in Bandoung, in 1955, the States have had their independence and we can see the limits of it, the nations want their liberation which will lead to a profound evolution of the States beyond the Nation-States, an evolution that is just beginning. And how can the world system be organized on the basis of the liberation of peoples?

The alterglobalism movement has asserted itself as the anti-systemic movement of neoliberalism. The alterglobalism movement must renew itself. It has known several periods in its opposition to neoliberalism. The name alterglobalist was imposed from 1980 onwards, while, as an anti-systemic movement, alterglobalism was constructed from 1980 onwards as a new stage in internationalism. From 1979 to 1989, it was driven by the struggles against debt and structural adjustment in the countries of the South. From 1990 to 1999, it organized major global demonstrations against the imposition of a new world order controlled by the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization) around the slogan: "international law must not be subordinated to business law". After the Seattle demonstrations in 1999, it pitted the World Social Forum against the World Economic Forum in Davos. From 2000, it organizes the World Social Forums. In 2007-2008, the financial crisis, is followed from 2011 by insurrections in several dozen countries. Neoliberalism begins an austerity mutation, combining austerity and securitarianism. Since 2008, the succession of

crises opens a new period: financial crisis, austeritarianism response of capitalism combining austerity and authoritarianism, popular insurrections since 2011, awareness of the climate and ecological crisis, pandemic crisis, ideological crisis, geopolitical and military crisis.

Reactionary, identitarian and extreme right-wing movements are growing in response to new forms of contestation by social, wage-earning and peasant, feminist and environmental movements. In the new movements, the anti-racist movements and the indigenous peoples refer directly to decolonization. The crisis of the pandemic and the climate opens a new crisis of civilization. The alterglobalism movement is faced with a necessary renewal.

### *The relationship between the local, the national and the global*

Social movements renew the relationship between the local, the national and the global. Social movements are always defined on a national scale; their demands are addressed to the powers of their state, of their country. They also have a local anchorage; they are movements of places, they are called by the name of the cities where they take place, sometimes even of the place or the street that they occupy. They also have a global dimension; it is on this scale that they take on their meaning. Movements give meaning to territories.

These movements are a response to capitalist globalization and its neoliberal phase. They can be considered as a new phase of alterglobalism. The alterglobalism movement reminds us that the transformation of each society cannot be envisaged outside of a change in the world. It relies on an international law built around the respect of fundamental rights. It proposes, instead of a definition of development based on productivist growth and forms of domination, a strategy of ecological, social, democratic and geopolitical transition. As proposed by Edouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau (14), we oppose globalization and multiple identities to capitalist globalization.

The strategy calls for the articulation of the local and the global. The local level implies the connection between the territories and the democratic institutions of proximity. The national level implies the redefinition of politics, representation and empowerment in democracy, the strengthening of public action and the democratic control of state power. The large regions are the spaces of environmental and geocultural policies and of multipolarity. The global level is that of the ecological emergency, of international institutions, of international law, which must prevail over business law, and of freedom of movement and settlement, especially the rights of migrants.

### *Let's be attentive to the unexpected*

The future is part of the long story. To what historical situations does the current situation refer us? The situation of the 1930s could serve as a reference with the coexistence of world wars, fascism, socialism and decolonization. However, there is a difference, there is no socialist power and capitalism, in different forms, reigns everywhere, even if it is in crisis everywhere.

Another period is of great interest, that of the First International, during which there were many movements for socialism but no established socialist power. In this period, a great historical moment, with the Commune, will upset the positions and re-launch the debate on the State, notably with Marx and the anarchists. We are in a period of profound upheaval. In these periods, contradictions lead to new paths and create the unexpected. Let us be attentive to the unexpected that will change situations and allow us to redefine perspectives.

29 August 2022

**Gustave Massiah**

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