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Struggles in Africa from independence to the current crisis

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Paul Martial

1. Outline of the lecture
2. CLR James, "Imperialism in Africa" 1941
3. Jean Nanga, "After fifty years of "independence"", 2010
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ECOSOCIALIST SCHOOL

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Outline of the lecture

1. Economic point of view

1.1.A short economic history
1.1.1. Slavery destroys economic development in Africa
- demographic drain
- prevents agricultural activities
- allows on the contrary the economic growth of Europe
(triangular trade, expansion of costal cities, expansion of naval activities, expansion of trade)
1.1.2. Colonialism contributes to the economic formatting of the Continent
The economic activities in Africa are only in function of the needs of the imperialist countries.
Export oriented agriculture.

1.2. The place of Africa in globalisation: a paradox
1.2.1. A small part of the world economy
1.2.2. Export products are decisive (oil, mineral ores)
1.2.3. Attacks by imperialism
- The debt
- Economic partnership agreements
- Land grabbing

1.3. Which alternative economic solutions
1.3.1. The importance of this question (proves that other roads are possible)
1.3.2. Self centred development answering to the needs of the people
1.3.3. Development of family farming

2. The political genesis of the Continent

2.1. Before independence
2.1.1. Differentiation of communities confronted with slavery
2.1.2. Slavery generates racism
2.1.3. Resistances to colonialism

2.2. Independence of the African countries
2.2.1. Importance of the first world war
2.2.2. The growth of national struggles
2.2.3. Second world war
2.2.4. The decolonisation process
- France
- Great Britain
- Portugal
- Belgium

2.3. The game of the different powers in Africa
2.3.1. France and the concept of “Françafrique”
2.3.2. The United States of America
2.3.3. The arrival of the emerging countries

3. Overview of the social and political situation
3.1. Farmers struggles
3.1.1. Against land grabbing
3.1.2. For food sovereignty

3.2. Urban struggles
3.2.1. On trade-unions
3.2.2. Fights against austerity
3.2.3. Food crisis

3.3. The situation of the forces of the left
3.3.1. The policies of the liberation fronts in power
3.3.2. The weakness of the African left
3.3.3. The prospective of building alternative forces

Imperialism in Africa
CLR James

Source: New International, Volume VII No.5, June 1941, pp. 110-114, C L R James under the name of J.R.Johnson;
Transcribed and Marked up: by Damon Maxwell.

THE GREAT WAR for democracy (or, from Hitler’s point of view, the great war for fascism) is being fought out in Africa as fiercely as anywhere else. It is not only a question of strategy. The competing imperialisms want Africa, first and foremost for the sake of Africa, a fact which the democratic propagandists disregard with the Olympian sublimity of complete ignorance or complete hypocrisy. Hitler at any rate says plainly that he wants his living space. But let that pass. What we want to do here is to state a few facts about Africa and its role in imperialist economy, and its future in a socialist world. So tightly knit is the world market which capitalism has created that we shall find ourselves dealing with the fundamental problems of modern society and the solution of the permanent crisis not only in Africa but on a world scale.

Up to 1914 the British bourgeoisie had not the faintest idea of the revolutionary violence which capitalism was nursing in its bosom, particularly in the colonies. An obscure Russian revolutionary exile named Lenin wrote confidently about the inevitable emergence of the proletariat in India and China, as the leaders of the coming nationalist revolutions. But which British politician or world publicist worried himself about that? It is almost valuable to re-read what these wise men of thirty years ago used to say about the world and what we used to say. But first the Russian revolution and then the wave of nationalist revolutions which swept through the British and French Empires after the war gave the British bourgeoisie a fright which goes far to explain their unsatiable desire for appeasement. All the cunning, all the lies, the violence, the sanctimonious cruelty, which have so distinguished the British ruling class through the centuries, proved power-less to stifle the great Indian revolution, and though Churchill says little in public about India, he thinks about it only less than he thinks about Germany.

India and Africa

The Indian revolution took British imperialism by surprise, but, as the full disintegration of capitalist society and its colonial consequences began to force itself upon the British bourgeoisie, a very distinctly enunciated current of thought took shape: We have been taken by surprise in India; if we do not act in Africa, we shall be taken by surprise there also. The climax was the formation of an African research society under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the disguise the British government assumes when it wants to investigate economic and political questions without official responsibility. A powerful commission was appointed, consisting of the ablest men who could be found in England for the task. An economic adviser to the Bank of England, an Oxford professor of colonial history, the editor of Nature, Julian Huxley, Arthur Salter, Lord Lugard, after Cecil Rhodes the greatest of African pro-consuls, and some others, all under the chairmanship of that well known liberal, admirer of fascism, and defender of the British and American way of life. We refer to the late Lord Lothian. The committee decided to make a complete survey of colonial Africa and appointed Lord Hailey, the governor of the United provinces in India, to carry it out. Special researches were commissioned preparatory to the actual work in Africa, the most important being a study of capitalist investment in Africa, by Professor Frankel of Johannesburg. But the survey (1837 pages), and Frankel's volume (487 pages) were published in 1938 by the Royal Institute. They constitute an indictment of capitalist civilization impossible to find outside of the pages of Marxist writers.

Frankel writes with the freedom of one without official responsibility. Hailey has the caution of an old civil servant, with the understatement of the Englishman and the evangelical mode of expression which is part of the British imperialist burden. Both, however, come to the identical conclusion. Imperialism in Africa is bankrupt. There is only one way to save the situation, and that is to raise the standard of living, culture and productivity of the native Africans. The full significance of this economic conclusion can only be understood against the political background of Africa, for it is the first law of existence and self-preservation of every European in Africa, that the existence of European civilization in Africa (and by European civilization these people men, of course, European imperialism) depends upon one fact, the maintenance of the African in the position of inferiority, segregation and backwardness in which he is at present. In this bourgeois thought, by the process of separating what is dialectically inseparable, has reached the conclusion that, in Africa, to save itself it must destroy itself.

What Is Africa?

Lord Hailey's survey comprises all of Africa south of the Sahara and was not confined to the British colonies, for the British wanted to find out officially all that there was to be found out about Africa. The African population of this territory is estimated at 100,000,000. Of this, the European population is about 2,250,000. Of these, over 2,000,000 are in the Union of South Africa alone. For the rest, you can find figures like these: French West Africa, population in round figures, 14 million, white population 19,000; Belgian Congo, population 10 million, white population 18,000. In Kenya, which is supposed to have areas particularly suited to white colonization, African population three million, white population 18,000. In Nigeria, African population 19 million, white population, 5,000. North of the Zanibes the white population is barely 100,000. The area of the territories is about 8,260,000 square miles, three times the size of the United States of America. Colonial Africa is for the most part one vast concentration camp, with a few thousand white slave drivers. In India there is an Indian industrial and landowning class, in China the same. In Africa there are just slaves and overseers. The British government three years ago awoke (theoretically) to the fact that this cannot go on, for it does not pay.

The Railway Fiasco

The mercantilist system had exploited Africa as a field of commerce, first, slaves, and secondly, pacotille, the beads, colored cotton and other rubbish for which Negro slaves were exchanged. With the decline of the mercantile system, after the American war of independence, Africa receded out of the picture of European imperialism until the period for capital export. By 1935, the total capital investments from abroad amounted to $6,111,000,000. Of this amount, 77 per cent, or $4,705,000,000, is in British territories and British investors have supplied 75 per cent of this total. In trade it is the same. In 1935 the total trade of British territories formed 85 per cent of the total trade of Africa. In 1907 it was 84 per cent and for years it has never fallen below 80 per cent.

Britain dominates the whole of native Africa, the French, Belgian and Portuguese colonies being merely satellites of this swollen imperialist monster. Of the total of over six billion dollars invested from abroad in Africa, nearly one-half consists of loans and grants to governments, while a little less than a quarter of the whole, $1,335,000,000, to be exact, has been invested in railways, which hang like a weight of chains on European capitalists and black labor in Africa. Africa did not need them. Railways must serve flourishing industrial areas, or densely populated agricultural regions, or they must open up new land (as in the United States) along which a thriving population develops and provides the railways with traffic. Except in the mining regions of South Africa, all these conditions are absent. Yet railways were needed, for the benefit of European investors and heavy industry, for some vague purpose known as the "opening up" of the continent, and for the all-important strategic purposes. The result is that in nearly every colony today railways have been developed by the governments and, up to today, only governments can afford to operate them. Most of them have been overbuilt. As a result of this expenditure the railways have been burdened with large interest obligations which cause excessively heavy rates on imported or local traffic.

Capital and Slavery

In the attempt to improvise the production for export which is necessary to meet these heavy interest charges, various types of uneconomic production have been embarked upon. Uneconomic in themselves, chiefly of the one-crop type, and subjected to the fluctuations of the world market, some of these have now become burdens upon the territories concerned. As a result, Frankel comes to the following remarkable conclusion: " Governments have been brought up time and again against the fundamental difficulty that capital in-vestment in itself cannot lead to economic development, but requires a concomitant expansion of the other factors of production. Capital alone cannot solve the economic problem." In other words, capital cannot expect to flourish if the African native remains a slave. In colony after colony the complaints are the same. In 1934 the general manager of the Nigeria Government Railways reported: "The trade of the colony is not yet developed to anything like the transport capacity of its railway route mileage. No private railway company could have constructed so much mileage, and the whole colony has greatly benefitted from the transport facilities. . . . Were the annual capital charges of the railway to be set alongside the aggregate income of the population which it serves, it would be clear that, short of a valuable bulk mineral discovery, the main direction in which the annual capital charges could be met year by year from railway earnings must be the carriage by it of a very large volume of agricultural products, and the whole of that volume wherever the railway can reach it. A sufficient volume of export products does not now exist. ..."

Nigeria is one of the most prosperous of the colonies, and this chiefly because it has a large native peasantry. The rail reports from French Congo and Belgian Congo say exactly the same, only they say it in French and with more despair, because the native peasantry is absent from both these huge colonies. Frankel concludes: "In general, African rail-ways have been constructed on the basis of a too optimistic view of the rate of economic development in the territories they serve…. Failing the development of new mineral re sources, considerable further railway construction in the near that both in industry a future will not be warranted from an economic point of view." In other words, good-bye to railways.

PART II
The Mining Merry Go-Round

IN 1935 THE EXPORT of gold was 47.6 per cent of the total export of Africa. Most of this gold has been produced in the Union of South Africa. This fabulously "wealthy" African state, with 90 per cent of the white population of colonial Africa, and the envy of all other African colonies, is in reality one of the most unstable economies in the world, and none knows it better than the South Africans themselves. Until the discovery of diamonds in 1857, the economic development of South Africa had been almost exclusively agricultural, and South Africa was of no importance. With the development of the diamond fields and afterwards of gold, the whole economy gradually grew dependent upon the income from these industries. For 25 years the legislature and the electorate have declared that the country must, for its own future salvation, find some ways and means of gaining income other than from mining. They have failed completely. With the exception of wool, today, in that vast country, there is not one important agricultural commodity which does not depend on protection or on the maintenance of an artificial price structure based on direct subsidy.

Exactly the same situation exists in industry, half of which would collapse but for the mining industry. Upon this un-healthy basis is grafted another vicious economic malformation. In 1934 and 1935, 41 per cent of the workers employed in private industrial undertakings were Europeans. They took 74 per cent of the wages and salaries paid, equivalent to $1,010 per head. The remaining 59 per cent of the workers were non-Europeans, who obtained 26 per cent of the wages and salaries, equivalent to $245 per head. In government undertakings, Europeans, consisting of 66.3 per cent of the employees, took 91 per cent of the total wages and salaries paid. The remaining 9 per cent of wages was divided among the 33.7 per cent of non-Europeans employed.

The organized labor movement, i.e., the aristocracy of labor, shortly after the First World War, forced through the Color Bar Act, which prohibited skilled labor to Africans. It is joined by the reactionary South African farmers, who keep the majority of natives on their farms in a state of peonage and slavery. Thus, the distinguishing characteristics of South African labor are: 1) a low average productivity, 2) an artificial wage structure based on revenue from gold and diamonds, and 3) the literal pauperization and degradation of six million blacks by less than one-half the white population of two million; less than one-half because there is a huge poor white population. In the mining industry itself the ratio reaches incredible proportions. The average pay of the European employee in the mines is in round figures $155 a month. That of the native is about $20. The official title for this discrimination is the "civilized labor" policy.

A Ruinous Policy

Lord Hailey sees that this is a ruinous business. He knows that both in industry and agriculture, ultimately the equally efficient and less costly producer would be the liberated African. As he states it, "... the accumulating weight of evidence would seem to inspire doubts . . ." as to whether European agriculture could every do more than make a very modest living as a return for hard work even in good times and be a constant recurrent charge upon the revenues of governments, even in bad. He admits that "though there may be both political and theoretical justifications for the adoption of a 'civilized labor' policy, its necessity must nevertheless be regretted." Hailey should be given the task of explaining to the labor aristocrats and Boer farmers exactly how beneficial a change would be. No amount of understatement would save him from being lynched.

The significance of South Africa is this: Most of the other colonies in Africa are either built on the same model or wish to heaven they could be. That is why they sigh for the discovery of some bulk mineral. They could then pay the interest on the railways and live on the rest, while the native does the work in the mines. Where there are no unions to subsidize him, the European is staring in the face the fact that he cannot compete with the native African. He can prevent the African from cultivating coffee, as in Kenya ("owing to physical and mental incapability") but the world market, such as it is, refuses to pay both the African for doing the work and the European farmer for living like a gentleman, drinking whiskey and playing polo. "Everywhere, therefore," says Hailey, "the progress of the European system of economy is likely in the future to be linked up with the exploitation of mines, with commerce and with certain specialized forms of agricultural production generally requiring capital for their development." Everywhere, in both Rhodesias, French and Belgian Congo, French and British West Africa everywhere except in South Africa (and Southern Rhodesia). We have seen upon what these areas depend. Their "ideal" is the ruthless suppression of the native.

Hailey murmurs deprecatingly that the "possibility of a complete fulfillment of this ideal depends on economic factors (such, tor instance, as the continuance of gold production) which may themselves be subject to modification." It certainly looks today, three years after Hailey wrote, as if South African gold export may soon be "subjected to modification.." For the other non-mining communities, their "future economic prosperity . . . depends more upon the general development of native economic activity than on the results of European enterprise." Most important of all for British imperialism, he says flatly that there is no further field for cap-ital export except for mining. After a little over 50 years, and the degradation of a population without parallel in the history of modern capitalism, this is where the imperialists have reached.

Condition of the Workers

Hailey had to be careful. Frankel had no cause to be. In his work, packed with statistical tables, Frankel has one theme. He states it on page 7. The task is "to broaden the ideas and heighten the creative possibilities of the citizen in a wider society. To realize this is the key to colonial statesmanship." In South Africa, and all over East Africa, the African is bound by a series of pass-laws to particular employers, virtual slavery. Says Frankel, "it is no exaggeration to say that a basic cause of the low average income of the inhabitants of the Union is the lack of 'economic mobility' of its workers, both black and white. We are back again at the starting point of this study – progress involves change; inhibit change and inhibit progress."

Unlike Hailey, he calls for capital investment, if even not immediately profit producing; but on one condition: "In the last resort, however, the future of capital investment, like the future of all African economic progress, will depend on freeing the African peoples from the factors which have checked their progress in the past, and the artificial restrictions which in some territories still prevent the unfolding of their abilities. . . .

"If twentieth century experience in Africa has proved anything at all, it is that the wealth of Africa has, as yet, hardly been discovered, simply because it lies deep in the soil of Africa itself. Only by the co-operant efforts of Africans and Europeans will it be unearthed.. . .. The curtain has only just risen on the African scene. . . .

"Indeed the twentieth century opens the era of constructive and creative activity by western powers in Africa." Frankel has stumbled on a tremendous conclusion here. He does not talk about "raising the standard of living," and such like primitive panaceas for the contradictions of capitalism. He has left the field of distribution and tackled the problem at its root – at the point of production.

Marxism and the Colonies

What is happening in Africa and what the British imperialists think about it, concerns every American worker, not only Negroes. The contradictions of capitalist production express themselves in a concentration of wealth at one end of society and of misery at the other. Every thinking American worker knows the fact. But these contradictions also express themselves in the concentration of wealth in rich nations like America, Britain, France and Belgium, and the concentration of misery in poor ones like India, China and Africa. There are a hundred million Africans living in destitution; over four hundred million Chinese, nearly four hundred million Indians. Roosevelt talks about a third of a nation. These people constitute half of the world. It is capitalism which is destroying them as it is destroying the world. It has now confessed that in Africa it is bankrupt. They must therefore rid themselves of capitalism – for the same reason that the worker in the western world must rid himself of capitalism, to use "capital" and not be used by it.

Frankel has hit upon a discovery but he has made a pro-found mistake in calling what Africa needs "capital." Nearly a hundred years ago, in Wage-Labor and Capital Marx defined capital. It is accumulated labor. And land, not accumulated labor, was the chief means of material production in all societies previous to capitalist society. Capital, however, is accumulated labor in a definite social relation.. "It is only the dominion of past accumulated materialized labor over immediate living labor that stamps the accumulated labor with the character of capital."

"Capital does not consist in the fact that accumulated labor serves living labor as a means for new production. It consists in the fact that living labor serves accumulated labor as the means of preserving and multiplying its exchange value." As Marx expresses it in the Communist Manifesto "In bourgeois society living labor is but a means to increase accumulated labor. In Communist society accumulated labor is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the laborer." Frankel wants to promote, widen and enrich the existence of the Africans, not to save his immortal soul but to save African economy. Thus, what Frankel is really calling for is not capital, but communism. Hailey, however, merely observes: for that, no more accumulated labor. As usual, it is the Marxist and the bourgeois who face realities.

The inherent unworkability of the capital relation is seen very starkly in Africa. This is due to the advance stage of European capital development when capitalism began to penetrate into Africa, the primitive character of African labor, and the added sharpness of race differentiation. What Frankel does not know is that what he sees so clearly in Africa was seen by Marx three generations ago in relation not to Africa, but to all capitalist society. Marx had little to say about socialist society, particularly about its basis, the socialist organization of labor. That new organization of labor would be accomplished by the proletariat and, as Lenin said most emphatically, the proletariat alone could accomplish it. But, for Marx, Africa's problem was the problem of capitalist society and only socialism could solve it. "The actual wealth of society, and the possibility of continual expansion of its processes of reproduction, do not depend upon the surplus labor, but upon its productivity and upon the more or less fertile conditions of production under which it is performed" (Capital Vol. II, p. 954). But from start to finish he emphasized that this productivity was to be achieved by the development of man as an individual. Under socialism, man's consumption was to be governed by "the social productivity of his own individual labor in its capacity as a truly social one" and to the extent "required by the full development of his individuality" (Capital, Vol. Ill, p. 1021). He rarely spoke of socialism without coming back to this and perhaps his most emphatic statement to the same effect is found in his chapter on "Machinery and Modern Industry," " Modern industry, on the other hand, through its catastrophes imposes the necessity of recognizing, as a fundamental law of production, variation of work, consequently fitness of the laborer for varied work, consequently the greatest possible development of his varied aptitudes. It becomes a question of life and death for society to adapt the mode of production to the normal functioning of this law. Modern industry, indeed, compels society, under penalty of death, to replace the detail-worker of today, crippled by lifelong repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to the mere fragment of a man, by the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labors, ready to face any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers." (Capital, Vol. I, p. 534).

The Only Solution

It is the only solution to the permanent crisis. Marx did not use phrases like life and death lightly. Let living labor use accumulated labor to develop itself. The problem of expansion will be solved. Let accumulated labor use living labor only for the sake of expanding accumulated labor and it automatically ruins its capacity to expand. No need to point out here the monumental researches and scientific exactness with which Marx demonstrated the inevitability of his conclusions. It is to Frankel's credit that he came to the same conclusion after the most thorough examination ever made of capitalist investment in

Africa. His mistake is to believe that this accumulated labor can ever be at the disposal of the African unless by means of the socialist revolution in Africa and in Europe.

One more word remains to be said. All the great communists have known that man is the greatest of all productive forces. In the general collapse of revolutionary ideology which has kept pace with the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, there has grown up a pseudo-Marxism or "economic" analysis which sees all sorts of possibilities in the technical and institutional reorganization of society, without the slightest consideration for the role of labor. The most recent is Mr. Burnham, who informs us that the managerial society will solve the problems of expansion in colonial countries which "capitalism" could not solve. How? He does not say. Hitler, however, tells us that "The free choice of trades and professions by the Negroes leads to social assimilation, which in turn produces racial assimilation.. The occupations of the black colonial peoples and their function in the labor process of the 'new order' will therefore be entirely determined by the Germans." And again, "... [Negroes] will have no active or passive electoral rights in the German colonial empire; [they] are forbidden access to railways, street cars, restaurants, motion pictures and all public establishments." In other words, Hitler proposes to expand African economy by continuing to degrade African labor, the same old bankrupt policy of British imperialism. It is a contradiction that can be solved by social-ism and not by Hitler's Panzer divisions, the race propaganda of Goebbels, nor the theoretical evasions of Burnham.

After fifty years of "independence"

Jean Nanga

Thursday 12 August 2010

At the start of the second decade of the 21st century, numerous states in sub- Saharan Africa which once belonged to the British and French colonial empires are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of their creation or the independence of the colonial territories. This article is a modest contribution to the appreciation of the African situation on the occasion of this anniversary.

This anniversary falls in a period marked by a crisis of the neoliberal economy, which has not affected the African economies to the same extent as those of the capitalist centre. Meanwhile, in what can be seen as a practical critique of the economic "cooperation" between the former colonies and the western powers of the first five neo-colonial decades, we see the development of partnerships between Africa and the so-called emergent economies in general, the Chinese in particular.

Adjustment to neoliberalism

A half century after the first wave of independence, sub Saharan Africa remains fairly specialised in supplying the industries of the capitalist centre with agricultural, energetic and mining raw materials, often strategic and sometimes at the price of neo-colonial wars which are often presented as ethnic or confessional. This capital and bloody participation in the development of the capitalist economy is often hidden by the habitual evocation of Africa's 2% rate of participation of Africa in world trade, an undeniable expression of its marginality. The mission of the developers is then seen as inserting or integrating Africa in globalisation. A good intention which is unhappily based firstly on a falsification of the history of the world economy, and secondly on ignorance of the fact that Africa is the continent most connected to the world economy, with only 15% of exchanges being conducted between the different states of the continent. The most significant share is realised with the rest of the world (whereas intra-European exchanges of commodities represent more than 60%). The claimed African marginality is moreover, very particular with respect to what it contributes to the rest of the world – raw materials, which are one of the conditions, indeed the condition sine qua non for certain performances by the most powerful companies of Western capital. Thus the quantitative expression of African marginality, by its weakness, can also be interpreted as the expression of the persistence of unequal exchange on the world market which remains controlled by the economic powers of the Centre.

A situation of inequality and not of marginality, which has accentuated with the neoliberalisation of the so called African economies organised from the 1980s onwards by the international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank and so on), through structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), considered as the appropriate response to the structural crisis of the neo-colonialism of the first two decades, manifested by the critical indebtedness of the African states — at the same time as those of Latin America and Asia. Thus, since the 1980s, this region of the world has been permanently readjusted or restructured for the consolidation of the neoliberal version of neo-colonial domination. An operation carried out with the active support of the states of developed capitalism, whose multinational companies appropriate formerly state owned African companies, in the sectors considered the most profitable [1].

The African continent is considered by the technocrats, those of UNCTAD for example, as that where foreign capital realises the best return on investment (an average of 24-30% since the 1990s, against 16-18% in the centres of capitalism). This is the consequence of the success, among other things, of the mission confided to the international financial institutions, including African ones like the African Development Bank (ADB, which includes non African public institutions among its shareholders) and of adaptation, by local governors, of national legislations to the neoliberal demands of capitalist accumulation. Thus, the second half of the first fifty years (1980-2000) proved to be one of neoliberal "recolonisation", through the reduction to the minimum of the margin of autonomy — already very relative — acquired with the declarations of independence and favoured by the climate of the “Cold War”. With the disappearance of the so called “Communist” bloc in Europe, the margin of negotiation of the petty bourgeois nationalist elites with imperialism was reduced. In other words we have seen the quasi disappearance of any progressive nationalist project, based on the development of a state economic sector and a less restricted redistribution of the national wealth. That is, the collapse of what some observers had hastily classed as socialist experiences in Africa (from Nasser’s Egypt to Thomas Sankara’s Burkina Faso, by way of the Congo of Marien Ngouabi and the Madagascar of Didier Ratsiraka), forgetting that they were effected always in a capitalist context, taking account of the structural mechanisms of the so-called neo-colonialism of cooperation with the former metropolises.

But with the neoliberalisation of the world economy, Africa is no longer considered as the exclusive province of the old colonial metropolises. Since December 1998 (Saint-Malo Accords), these metropolises, the France of Chirac-Jospin and the Britain of Tony Blair, have decided to dominate Africa in a concerted manner. Since the end of the last century, Africa is also one of the areas of the new restructuring of the imperial order and the US has reconsidered its African policy and strengthened its economic presence. Thus the main European neo-colonial mechanism, the European Union/Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Agreement (EU-ACP, formerly EEC-ACP) and the traditional agreements of bilateral “cooperation" between European and African states, have been joined by the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA, 2000) introduced under the presidency of Bill Clinton. The main reason for the installation of this so called preferential market is the search by the United States for better access to the energy resources (long under-valued) of Africa, indeed with the intention of controlling them, at a time when the US supply coming from the Middle East became insufficient and indeed threatened. However, the strategic interest in oil (92.3% of US African imports in 2008) on the West African coast, from Nigeria to Angola, was accompanied by an interest in other African productions (minerals, metals, transport equipment, textiles) and the export of US products (18.6 billion dollars in 2008, against 86.1 billion in imports) from genetically modified seeds (Bt cotton and so on) to military equipment.

Military imperialism

The US oil supply relates to national security, and is accompanied by a direct military presence of the army, a change after a long period of indirect interference, during the Cold War, for example by providing logistic support, via South Africa and Mobutu’s Zaire, to the UNITA of Jonas Savimbi in its long war against the government in Luanda. France thus lost its monopoly in terms of a direct military presence on the continent, with its bases inherited from colonisation, whose maintenance as favoured by the Cold War and which served as a means of pressure, intimidation and worse, against certain political and economic orientations in its former coloies.

For a decade, the US army has been multiplying its joint military operations with African national armies, including those of the traditional French fiefdoms. Under George W. Bush’s presidency it was decided to give the African continent a US military command, like other continents — an exclusivity of the global hegemon — by instituting, in 2007, the United States Africa Command (Africom). Which makes the US an African military power, even if the US army has been present for decades off the coast of Africa, on the giant base at Diego Garcia — Mauritian territory which the United Kingdom kept among its last colonial possessions [2]. But, with the drunkenness of power, very manifest under the presidency of Bush junior, there was no question of the administration requesting the opinion of African “partners” concerning the continental accommodation of the said command. Thus, the latter could find no land of welcome on the continent, which is however well known for the hospitality of its governors with regard to everything opposed to the interests of the peoples. The African Union (AU) seems, for the moment, determined to dissuade any irresolute state — like the Liberia of Ellen Sirleaf Johnson (newly elected) — from going against its resolution to rid the continent and islands of foreign military bases. Even Morocco, which is outside the AU and indecisive — according to persistent rumours — seems unable to escape the pressure of its peers. Thus the US military command in Africa remains based in Stuttgart (Germany).The only open and permanent US military presence on the continent is then, for the moment, that (subsequent to the creation of Africom) at Camp Lemonnier, one of the French camps in Djibouti. Declaring independence late, in 1977, Djibouti has remained the main French military base in Africa.

While awaiting a breach in the pan-African consensus which could give it the benefit of a site on the continent, Africom contents itself with regular missions of training, joint exercises and so-called humanitarian actions (health interventions and so on) in different African countries. Which is not negligible, for with these military manoeuvres and so-called humanitarian interventions, the US army consolidates, inside the local armies, indeed certain African élites, the tenacious myth of its effectiveness, which seems unaffected by its historic misadventures of the 20th and 21st centuries, from Vietnam to Afghanistan by way of Somalia (Restore Hope and Continue Hope, 1992-1993), characterised by ongoing human rights violations. Like the US army everywhere, Africom is integrated in private multinational military missions, with their mercenaries of sinister reputation. The industry of death is traditionally, it should be remembered, one of the most lucrative sectors of actually existing capitalism, that of the US above all.

This African activism of the US army has its economic dimension. The missions and other activities of Africom are also an opportunity for unabashed advertising campaigns for the national military-industrial complex. Indeed, in spite of the growth of military expenditure for a decade, the continent does not appear among the main clients of the US arms industry. Apart from Egypt (9th), the main African importer, the other African states appearing in the top 50 of importers — Algeria (15th), South Africa (27th), Angola (36th), Sudan (43th) — get less than 4% of their supply from the US. Algeria (the main importer in recent years) and Sudan prefer Russian arms (more than 65%), while South Africa supplies itself more from Europe, mainly Germany (more than 65%). As for the other African states, some minor clients remain still, in this area, very linked to the colonial metropolis. Post colonial military cooperation agreements, signed between France and its former colonies, limit again the diversification of training and military equipment of the latter. But in offering more training grants to African trainee officers destined for command positions in the near future, Africom can scarcely conceal a certain competition with its European partners, who, while being members of NATO, are developing a common European defence policy, the European Force (Eufor). It seems that it is Africa where Eufor is most deployed (Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Central Africa), under French leadership (by recognition of its colonial and neo-colonial experience on the ground), shared with Germany, with the regular participation of other European states, like Sweden, which is in the top 10 of European arms merchants [3]. However, US supremacy inside NATO plays in favour of Africom, as agency of the military-industrial complex.

Nonetheless, this competition between the traditional imperial powers should not make us forget their permanent complicity, which is currently manifested particularly in the face of the ambitions of some emergent economy states (China, India, Brazil and so on) for access to African resources.

The Chinese ogre

The growth of Chinese economic power presents a serious threat to Western hegemony in Africa. A share of the resources it needs to feed the exceptional growth of its economy is drawn from Africa. Hence the development by China over the past decade of an economic partnership with the African states: 56 billion dollars of Chinese imports (71% in oil products) against 50.8 billion in exports in 2008 and an exponential growth in direct investment, which has gone from 10 billion dollars in 2000 to 106 billion in 2008, with more than 100 billion anticipated for 2010. Among Chinese exports there are the products of its workshops, considered more accessible to African mass purchasing power, affected as it is by two decades of structural adjustment.

This Sino-African partnership attracts the ire of a fraction of the organic intelligentsia of Western capital, not because of its unbalanced character in China's favour — even if the main African capital, that of South Africa, has been able to invest 1 billion dollars in China (against 6 billion for China in South Africa) — or the environmental consequences of the intensive exploitation of minerals over the medium and long terms. Because in these areas, China has done nothing new in Africa and those who worry about it are being selectively critical in favour of the practices of Western firms and their states. Nor because of the risks of a new explosion of external public debt which will be generated by the loans granted by China to its African partners (on conditions preferable to those of the international market), as IMF director general Dominique Strauss-Kahn would have us believe, to justify the mobilisation of the neoliberal technocracy against a recent contract between China and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

In exchange for the exploitation by Chinese enterprises (private and public) of a little more than a million tons of copper and more than a half million tons of cobalt, China was to grant the DRC 9 billion dollars (including 6 in construction of road, steel, health and educational infrastructures, and 3 as financing of Congolese participation in a Sino-Congolese mining enterprise). According to the Chinese ambassador to the DRC: "We from the beginning avoided any situation which could lead to an increase in the debt" [4], by making the guarantor the Chinese bank Eximbank, rather than the Congolese state. Thus, after several exchanges, in Kinshasa, with the IMF experts, "the Chinese party finds the recriminations of the IMF fantastic and unsustainable" [5]. The IMF's only remaining weapon was blackmail: revision of the Sino-Congolese contract (including the suppression of 3 billion dollars in construction of infrastructures) in exchange for relief on the Congolese debt by the Paris Club and the early qualification to the point of completion of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. Sino-African cooperation cannot for now absolutely overcome the traditional neo-colonial mechanisms which can still deprive the DRC of infrastructural improvements for its people.

The construction of infrastructures (road, steel, hydro-electric, health, education and so on), which has been neglected in Africa through five decades of neo-colonial "cooperation" and "development aid" — is part of the charm offensive China is waging. Certainly, the visibility of the said infrastructures serves the electoralist interests of the African leaders, interested also by the Chinese rejection of conditionality with respect to human rights (demanded hypocritically and with variable geometry by the Western states) and the receipt of Chinese equipment for repression and war. But these new infrastructures also contribute to the development of a certain Sinophilia — more significant than Sinophobia [6] — in the countries concerned, including in the élite considered as pro-Western, but which is rather pro-capitalist. In the style of the patented technocrats of neo-liberalism: the Beninese Abdoulaye Bio-Tchané (former Africa director of the IMF and current director of the West African Development Bank), who considers that "China is not a threat to our economies" [7], or the Zambian Dambisa Moyo (responsible for economic strategy at Goldman Sachs and an iconoclastic, but neoliberal critic of "development aid") according to whom " it is time for Africa to look the situation in the face and move on — time for it to sit at another table with other players ready to give it better cards. China is today a player of this type." [8].

The impact of "Sino-African realist cooperation" [9] is such that it has fairly rapidly aroused some realism among the traditional actors of the development of Africa: the World Bank and the British government's Department For International Development have opted for partnership with China for the development of Africa. In 2007, China contributed to Africa 9 billion dollars of investment against 2.5 of co-financing of projects in Africa by the World Bank. During the World Economic Forum on Africa in June 2009 in South Africa the Director General of the World Bank and former Nigerian Finance Minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, renewed the support given by the Bank to Chinese investment in Africa. Such a partnership expresses well China's status as an African power which moreover, seems to no longer to contain its annoyance concerning the cries of alarm from the analysts subtly concerned with the fate of Africa. During a press conference in March 2010, Chinese foreign minister, Yang Jiechi pointed out that "Chinese oil imports from Africa represent only 13% of African oil exports, whereas US and European imports each represent more than 30%. Chinese investment in African oil fields is only one sixteenth of total oil investment in the continent while US and European investment represents a much higher proportion". Thus China does not consider itself as having supplanted the traditional imperial powers in Africa, whose paternalism it denounces: "I would like to specify that Africa belongs to the African people, that the African people is the master of the African continent and that the other peoples are only its guests. The guests should respect the points of view of their hosts, namely the African peoples, as well as their freedom to choose their partners of cooperation and their friends." [10].

However, Chinese diplomacy has omitted to point out the significance of the economic exchanges between China and the West, which can be considered as vital or complicit concerning the reproduction of the international capitalist system: China is the banker to the US which in return provides its main market. And European enterprises have escaped the crisis thanks to their exchanges with China. Thus, although China's sustained growth — one could say the same of Malaysia — is a practical invalidation of the precepts of the Washington Consensus, Sino-African cooperation participates fully in the dynamic of perpetuation of the capitalist system, indeed its neoliberal form.

If the Sino-African partnership is so well appreciated by Abdoulaye Bio-Tchané, Dambisa Moyo and company, it is because these sectors of the African bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie conceive this partnership as a factor in the development of African capitalism, above all at a time when the Western economies prove more fragile than China before the effects of the crisis of neoliberal capitalism. The same is true of the apologetic attitudes on the partnership of the African economies with respect to the other so called emergent capitalisms of the South, whether India, Brazil, Malaysia, or indeed Iran or elsewhere. It is the concretisation of another type of relationship between capitalist states of the South, which has a certain attraction for African rulers and economic élites and allows them to think that "another capitalist world is possible", stimulating thus the economic dimension of their project of "African Renaissance", the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad).

Nepad or the neoliberalism of the African neo-bourgeoisie

Since the beginning of the new millennium the states organised in the African Union (AU) — born from the ashes of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) — have had the common economic framework of Nepad, drawn up according to the principles of the Washington Consensus, yet already disqualified concretely by the Asian crisis. Thus, the motor role of the said development of Africa is there attributed to private investment, mainly that of the Western multinational firms. The latter were invited to Dakar for the presentation of Nepad. African rulers thus recognised officially their subordination to imperialist capital and their adhesion to the new economic carve up of the continent. But, with respect to the capital accumulated during the first four postcolonial decades, it is with the hope this time of a more effective participation as private minority partners to the multinational firms in the formerly public strategic enterprises, privatised in the context of structural adjustment. With the liberalisation of the markets, the African capitalists have in principle the possibility of entering locally into competition with the Western multinational firms. Certainly, the principle is not often concretised. In addition, these Africans had the possibility of appropriating the formerly public enterprises or controlling the economic sectors which did not particularly interest the so called strategic investors. This African bourgeoisie being composed in great part by those responsible for the waste of resources, those jointly responsible for the overbilling of public contracts of states and other criminal practices which have contributed, at the end of the first neo-colonial period, for critical public indebtedness, a factor in structural adjustment. Classical primitive accumulation or reproduction of capital at the expense of the public economy, which is not an African exclusivity.

Thus, for some years, in addition to direct foreign investment, there is a certain African private economic activism, of local investment, in intra-African investment (services: 36%, manufacture: 30%, agriculture: 19%). As one of the partisans of this neoliberal pan-Africanism puts it, it is "More than a third of the investment in Africa is African." [11]. Some of these investors are as much African as Total is French, because they are institutions which also have non-African shareholders.

Indeed one notes — without any claim to being exhaustive — Mauritian capital in Madagascar and Mozambique, Kenyan in Uganda, Egyptian in Algeria, Nigeria, Tunisia, or Zimbabwe, Libyan in the Ivory Coast, Niger, Uganda, and Rwanda. The Moroccan banks Attijarifawa Bank and the Banque marocaine du commerce extérieur are expanding into west and central Africa. A product of the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry, in the 1980s, which declared itself pan-African, Ecobank Transnational Incorporated (based in Lomé) is currently present in 27 countries across Africa.

In this African capitalist dynamic, South African capital, heir to the accumulation realised under the apartheid regime and exploiting the arrival in power of governments identified with the black majority, since the presidency of Nelson Mandela, is in a position of continental leadership. This is what the enlightened fraction of the white bourgeoisie which became hostile in the 1980s to the apartheid regime hoped for. Immediately following the election of Nelson Mandela up until 2005, South African capital outweighed all the traditional investors on the continent (14 billion dollars, against around 10 billion for the United States, 6 billion for France, 4.5 billion for the United Kingdom). From Mauritius to Morocco, it is present in different sectors, like that of mines, its favoured sector (where South Africa is nearly as well provided as the DRC) or others, like agriculture, brewing, port management, telecommunications, petrochemicals and so on. To such a point that a debate has opened on the continental status of post-apartheid South Africa: imperialism? Or sub-imperialism? However South Africa does not only export capital, it also receives — in addition to the labour (qualified and unqualified) the countries of the region affected by structural adjustment — as the main regional financial market for capital coming from certain economies, less developed certainly, like Nigeria, Kenya, principally in the banking sector.

Africa's mode of insertion in the world economy (mainly as purveyor of raw materials to the economies of the centre) seems to have sheltered it relatively from some of the direct impact of the economic crisis, manifested from the financial sector in which it is, in truth, weakly inserted. Nonetheless, like other regions of the world, Africa has not been spared from it. The continent's role as purveyor of raw materials has suffered from a fall of production in the centres of capitalism, in the form of the fall in demand for some raw materials (copper, cobalt, coltan, diamonds, tin, oil and so on) and prices are down -25% to – 50 %, indeed more in the case of oil which has gone from 140 dollars per barrel in summer 2008 to 55 dollars in spring 2009. Other sectors have also been affected, like that of tourism (Mauritius for example). One of the consequences of this crisis has been the significant reduction of exchange reserves of some national currencies. Thus Africa, which has known a sustained average growth for a dozen years, has experienced a fairly pronounced fall in 2009: 2.5% against 5.1% in 2008 and 6% in 2007, according to the least pessimistic estimates which take into account the increase in Chinese investment (+81%) noted over one year (1st half 2008-1st half 2009). Africa —say the technocrats of African capitalism — is at the end of the day better defended against the crisis and has emerged from it better than the continents of developed capitalism, with regard also to the predictions for growth in 2010.

However, behind the appreciable growth rates, from the capitalist viewpoint, there are the structural development of inequalities to the benefit of foreign investors (attracted by the high return on investment of the continent) and the leading layers (economic and political entrepreneurs, including oppositionists, mixed together). Because, in spite of the divergences internal to the hierarchical structure of world capitalism which are currently disturbing the so-called emergent economies of the South and local factional divergences, this African neoliberal capitalism cannot be considered as representing the interests of workers and the African popular layers nor as a factor of real social progress. As everywhere, this African capitalist accumulation adapts to the high rate of poverty that the international institutions fix on average at 50% of the sub-Saharan African population.

Growth has not improved the fate of wage earners (small and medium), the small peasantry (mostly women), or youth whether in school or unemployed, those dismissed by private enterprises, or the popular classes in general. If there is, undeniably, an "Africa which is winning" — that of the African capitalists in objective alliance with others — it is firstly in opposition to the wage earning work force, as the International Labour Office noted in 2008, before the crisis: "Around 55% of all the workers of sub-Saharan Africa still do not earn enough to live, with their family, above the poverty level of 1 dollar per day, around 80% live on less than 2 dollars per day… " [12].

In addition, the collapse in the prices of cotton, rubber, textiles, and so on has led to layoffs and factory closures in factories from Benin to Tanzania via Morocco. In Egypt there have been 100,000 laid off, from October 2008 to March 2009; 10,000 in Kenya, in the first quarter of 2009 alone; 13,000 in Morocco in the textiles sector, 60% of them women. In South Africa the unemployment rate has gone from 21.9% in the last quarter of 2008 to 23.5% in the first quarter of 2009, or 3.87 million unemployed to 4.18 million [13]. Thus the other growth is that of unemployment across the continent (including the islands), which went from 30.8 million unemployed in 2007 to 35 million in 2009.

This Africa, which is not winning, has moreover paid the cost of the price rises for some foodstuffs, which preceded and accompanied the crisis; a consequence of the dependency organised since colonisation which has developed continually in the postcolonial period. By demanding, for example, priority for exports for the repayment of the external public debt, at the expense of food crops, neoliberal structural adjustment policies have favoured the aggravation of the absence of food sovereignty. With as further consequence soil exhaustion, by certain monocultures in certain countries. This is the case for the Ivory Coast and neighbouring Ghana where the importance in world production of cocoa is rewarded by soil exhaustion since the colonial period. Which is a factor in conflicts over land, as is already the case in Ghana, or Kenya. In Darfur (Sudan), soil exhaustion caused by neoliberal intensive agriculture is one of the factors of crisis which have led to war [See Jean Nanga (2004), "Darfour : les enjeux d'un conflit meurtrier",].

The absence of food sovereignty and the situation of the small peasantry will get still worse. Partly because of the offensive waged by the multinational companies producing genetically modified seeds and intent on patenting or privately appropriating the agricultural genetic patrimony. And partly by the private appropriation of African fertile and common lands by international agrarian capitalism, by the multinationals whose thirst to appropriate the world is comparable to that of the companies of four or five centuries ago. There is already a question of the grip of the cocoa multinationals on the fertile lands of the Ivory Coast. In the context of neoliberal structural adjustment, it was necessary already to adapt national land legislation, which had conserved the principle of commonly owned property, to the principle of commodification of everything possible.

This neo-colonialism of land, which brings to mind the enclosures of the first centuries of English capitalism [14], undoubtedly will transform small independent farmers into servile and low paid labour, favouring the growth of unemployment in rural areas and the exodus towards the cities to swell the shanty towns and the lumpenproletariat, a very cheap reserve army of labour. Among the specific victims of this humanly absurd capitalist logic are the peoples living traditionally in the forest, like the so-called "Pygmies", hunter gatherers spread across eight countries in central Africa and the Great Lakes, from Cameroon to Uganda, and including the two Congos. Thus the problem is not that of the presence of white South African farmers in the Congo, or that of the supply to the Gulf Emirates of agricultural products, for example, but that of the property relations thereby installed — although there is no risk of reproduction of the history of the Boers and Huguenots who contributed to the formation of the current South Africa — and the consequences for the native populations. White South African, Chinese or other farmers, having immigrated, who do not set up a colony turned in on itself, exploit or overexploit local labour, who produce for the satisfaction of the food needs of the area, together with small local producers, who understand the soil ecologically, do not in themselves present any problem. This is not the case with Daewoo's project in Madagascar, or others which orient African agriculture towards the production of agro-fuels. An orientation in which Brazil, through, for example, the Brazilian Agency for Promotion of Exports and Investment (Apex-Brasil) plays a motor role, under the pretext of South-South exchanges of experience. As if Brazil was not a bad example in the area of agro-fuels and genetically modified seeds of which it also promotes the sale, in Africa, after the US. As if the problem of lack of oil should be resolved by creating another ecological problem, that of the consequences of agro-business — already practiced by the African oligarchs, from the Ivory Coast to Zimbabwe — which are more criminal with respect to this important part of the world population which already suffers from a food deficit. Whereas the problem is not posed, currently or in the near future, in terms of penury of food products, but of division of the available food production and a reorganisation of world agriculture, which would also avoid the current waste and preserve fertile lands for future generations.

After fifty years of neo-colonialism, the neoliberalised capitalist organisation of the continent seems to reserve it a destiny as the continuation of the accumulation of its most noxious effects. Thus, in terms of global warming, Africa which is not one of the main polluters of the planet will suffer the consequences of the growth and productivism of capitalism, imitated for around fifty years by the regimes of the Stalinist bloc, According to the IPCC: "New studies confirm that Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents because of the diversity of the anticipated effects, the multiple stresses and its weak capacity of adaptation". That does not stop the African partisans of neoliberal capitalism promoting an "African strategy for the war of "green business"" [15].

African resistance to neoliberal capitalism

The first social consequences of neoliberalism in Africa produced in the 1980s and 1990s a dynamic of popular mobilisation, and social struggles — with trade union organisations providing the backbone — which contributed to the "democratisation" of the postcolonial monolithic regimes. But this was in an international context of loss of legitimacy of the socialist emancipator project, identified with a collapsed Stalinism, with European social democracy proving a good manager of capitalism by constructing the Europe of neoliberal capital. In other words the transcendence of capitalism was no longer on the agenda. Thus this new democratic opening was everywhere realised in favour of political currents favouring the management of neo-colonialism, which, in some cases, then became jointly responsible for neo-liberal wars.

The popular organisations of the African left which had survived the monolithism of the three or four postcolonial decades were almost everywhere swept up by the discredit thrown on the socialist emancipatory project and in some cases, by the wars of neoliberal restructuring of neo-colonialism. At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, the more popular of the surviving organisations were progressively integrated into the management of the neo-colonial order, from the South African Communist Party (SACP) linked to its ally the African National Congress (ANC) to And-Jef/Parti africain pour la démocratie et le socialisme (AJ/PADS) in Senegal. The union leaderships which were linked to these parties were caught up in this drift, practicing so called responsible trades unionism or becoming "social partners" of the employers and rulers [16].

However, the activists or former activists of the radical African left, the "class struggle" trades unionists, have been among the main leaders of the so-called global justice dynamic in Africa. Anti-capitalism has become relatively audible again on the basis of a critique of neoliberalism in the context of the dramatic social effects of structural adjustment policies.

However, in gaining a certain media visibility — while often remaining very weak numerically among the popular layers — the African global justice movement has not escaped the hegemony of organisations/associations and individuals of"civil society" which were/are hostile to any critique going beyond the framework of neoliberalism, taking as its target the system of exploitation, oppression and pollution that is capitalism. Thus, there is no identification with any radical and global emancipatory project as an alternative to capitalism. Which is not an African peculiarity. It is also the expression of a grip exerted on the current by the big organisations of the West, mobilised for a "capitalism with a human face" and reproducing in this context the classic type of relations between the centre of capitalism and its periphery. The financial aid contributed to the African global justice movement is conditional on their opposition to the orientation of the radical current in the movement. The corruption of the African rulers can be denounced, but on a moralist basis, without being placed in the historic context of the capitalist system.

A state of affairs which is also favoured by the precarious status of the African middle layers, to which the leaders of "civil society" often belong. To be an activist or an organisation representing the "civil society" of the global justice movement means being open to dialogue, indeed partnership, with Western embassies, private multinationals, Western foundations and international institutions like the World Bank, and this openness provides a means of escaping this precarious status. A subtle mechanism of corruption.

Thus after a decade of the global justice movement, of local and regional social forums, demonstrations against the cost of living, student mobilisations, trade union and peasant struggles, mobilisations of the unemployed and so on, the African organisations still identified with the radical left can claim no obvious successes in the area of contribution to the self-organisation of the workers and small peasantry in a perspective of articulation of their struggles with an overall project of a break with capitalism. The frequent, indeed permanent, mobilisations for access to drinking water, electricity, health care, decent jobs, land, good study conditions, against violence against women and so on remain fragmented and without convergence. A permanent fragmentation which can also be interpreted as an expression of the sectarianism of the organisations of the radical left, which certainly have the merit of having survived the steamroller of neoliberal ideology but which, unhappily, spend more time on the narcissism of small differences than the organisation of convergences and the local construction of permanent unitary and democratic dynamics.

Bringing Africa out of its tragic situation

The five postcolonial decades have been decades of neo-colonialism. A neo-colonialism with tragic consequences: the development of social inequalities in every country, neoliberal wars in some of them, exploitation of wage earners by a variety of actors. This is unhappily accompanied by a decline of organised radical anti neo-colonial /anti-capitalist consciousness, linked to a worldwide phenomenon but more serious. Moralism has been imposed as the only possible horizon of criticism. That is why it is more than ever necessary to avoid the apolitical conception of a betrayal of Africa by the ruling bourgeoisies. Because, if they are African, they are also guided and motivated by their class and individual interests. They are not in this respect fundamentally different from the French bourgeoisie, for example, which overwhelmingly made the choice to collaborate under occupation with the Nazified German economy.

To bring Africa out of its tragic situation, there is objectively no other road than that of anti-capitalism, beyond anti-neoliberalism. Today neither China, nor India nor Brazil or anywhere else can present any illusion, because the social and ecological costs of growth in these economies cannot be neglected. These countries cannot be examples of societies based on equality and social justice, the satisfaction of the basic needs of each individual and of peoples.

One of the best ways of honouring those who have fought against neo-colonialism/capitalism in Africa — rather than the neo-colonial "fathers of independence" — is to make genuine balance sheets of the struggles waged locally and continentally. To draw the lessons from them for the construction of new anti-neo-colonial /anti-capitalist organisations contributing to the self-organisation and struggles of employees, small peasants, women, youth and all the other oppressed social categories. Organisations which fight against economic exploitation, different oppressions and against avoidable harmful effects on the environment. In other words for the construction of socialist societies, that is to say societies which are socially just and egalitarian, feminist, anti-homophobic and ecological. The construction of this socialism demands a pan-African perspective. This is favoured moreover by the presence of the same exploitative enterprises in several countries, whether African or non-African, and the regional groupings of economic integration.

It is then urgent that organisations which still identify as socialist and pan-Africanist initiate a genuine dynamic of exchanges, solidarity, learning and common action, locally and regionally, in a democratic manner. The affiliation with different political traditions which characterised the socialist movement in the 20th century should not be an obstacle. It is in the construction of this dynamic of consultation and revolutionary socialist pan-Africanist action that each organisation will best contribute to the construction of an Africa genuinely and fully decolonised, emancipated from capitalism. For, as indeed is the case elsewhere, the alternative in Africa is either the struggle for and construction of a democratic socialism or the worsening of the capitalist social disaster.

Footnotes

[1] According to "African Economic Outlook/Perspectives économiques en Afrique, 2010", the rate of profitability in Africa was 12.1%, higher than that of other continents

[2] Spain, France, Portugal and Britain still occupy African territories: the Azores, Ceuta and Melilla, the Canary Islands, Chagos Islands, Madiera, Saint Helena, Mayotte, Réunion

[3] The sum of the seven biggest arms exporters of the European Union (Germany, France, Britain, Holland, Italy, Sweden, Spain) exceeded that of US exports in 2006 and 2007, according to figures from SIPRI (Sweden)

[4] Quoted in "Affaire contrats chinois : Kinshasa donne raison à Pékin par la bouche du porte-parole du gouvernement", "Le Palmarès" (a Kinshasa newspaper), June 4, 2009: http://www.digitalcongo.net/article...

[5] Ibid.

[6] According to Pew Global Attitudes Project: "Across Africa, favourable views of China outnumber critical judgements by two-to-one or more in every country except South Africa, where opinion is divided", Washington, Pew Research Center, June 2007, p. 41: www.pewglobal.org.

[7] Abdoulaye Bio-Tchané, "La Chine n'est pas une menace pour nos economies", interview published by the Abidjan newspaper, Nord-Sud, May 30, 2007

[8] Dambisa Moyo in "L'aide fatale. Les ravages d'une aide inutile et de nouvelles solutions pour l'Afrique", foreword by Niall Ferguson, Paris, JC Lattès, 2009, p. 189

[9] In the formula of Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jia Bao, "Report on government activity to the National People's Assembly", March 5, 2010, http://french-news-en/documents/2010-03

[10] 12. "La Chine défend ses investissements en Afrique", March 8, 2010, http://www.focac.org/fra/zfgx/jmhz/...

[11] Lionel Zinsou, "Plus du tiers des investissements en Afrique sont africains", "Les Afriques", number 96, November 5-11, 2009

[12] "Report of Director General", International Labour Office, Eleventh African Regional Meeting (Addis-Ababa, April 2007): "L'Agenda du travail décent en Afrique": 2007-2015, Geneva 2007

[13] These rates and figures are those for declared unemployed, not for all South African unemployed

[14] See Karl Marx, "Capital", Volume 1, Chapter XXVII: "Expropriation of the Agricultural Population From the Land"

[15] The African financial journal, "Les Afriques" published a dossier favourable to "green business" over several numbers, during the last quarter of 2009, in synch with the Copenhagen Summit

[16] Most recently the Zimbabwean Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) entered the government of ZANU-PF, led by Robert Mugabe, in January 2009, in the name of national reconciliation, with its leader Morvan Tsvangirai named as Prime Minister. Before the creation of the MDC, Mr. Tsvangirai, a former miner but also a Harvard graduate, led the Zimbabwean Trade Union Congress. Recently the MDC ministers have endorsed a pay freeze for Zimbabwean public employees

The marginalization of sub-Saharan Africa

Jean Nanga

Thursday 18 December 2003

The neoliberal structural adjustment imposed on the sub-Saharan African states from the 1980s onwards, aimed at dismantling the underdeveloped or dependent welfare states established in the first decades of independence, aroused popular opposition in a good number of sub-Saharan countries. The loss of legitimacy of the traditional neocolonial regimes allowed a relative "democratic opening" in the areas of freedom of expression, a multiparty system and change of government by electoral means rather than military coups. Meanwhile, in South Africa, the regime of constitutional apartheid was ended.

In general, this "democratic opening" did not lead to political pluralism, because it was ultimately controlled by the neoliberal elites. These elites are linked in different ways to international capitalist interests, in whose service they manipulate ethnic, national and religious rivalries. "Democratization", that is, the passage from a single party to a multi-party system - about which Jacques Chirac was famously dubious [1] - favoured above all the recomposition of the neocolonial political classes. Democracy was understood as a multiparty system plus the market economy or a process of neoliberalization organized by the IMF and World Bank. This allowed a certain legitimating of neoliberalism, facilitating structural adjustment, which initially met with popular opposition.

Pauperization

The sub-Saharan African economy remains dependent and under imperialist domination, although in a different manner. The vicious circle of the payment of the foreign debt serves as justification for the so-called structural adjustment policies, the privatization of the most profitable state enterprises [2] economic disengagement by the state and liberalization of markets to the benefit of the multinationals and at the expense of small local producers. These policies can only increase pauperization in the rural agricultural milieus, now deprived of state aid and more exposed to the fall in the price of basic products on the world market. They lead to a sharpened deterioration in the terms of trade, brought about by the priority accorded to exports under structural adjustment policies.

Countries like Congo-Brazzaville (rich in oil), the Ivory Coast (the main economy of the West African Economic and Monetary Union), Nigeria (the 6th biggest producer in OPEC and the main economy of the West African Customs and Economic Union) - once classed as "medium income countries" - are now candidates for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, with 70% of their populations living below the poverty threshold. Estimated average life expectancy was 58 in 1950, 56 in 1992 and 51 in 2000. Countries like Kenya, the Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe [3] and Zambia have a life expectancy below 50, indeed below 45. There is massive unemployment in urban areas, resulting from the privatization of state enterprises, job freezes and layoffs in the civil service and little or no access to education for youth, above all girls, in the pauperized layers. There has admittedly been a resumption of growth in Africa in recent years (at least 3% since 1995), but this has not led to prosperity for the majority (from the employed middle classes to the lumpen-proletariat).

Pauperization and poverty have led to the development of a traffic in children in central and western Africa; 200,000 per year in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Togo according to UNICEF, condemned to work in the coffee or cocoa fields, for example in the Ivory Coast. Children are exploited with the consent of their impoverished and immiserated parents. [4] In 14 sub-Saharan countries the indices of human development show an obvious regression. Among them is South Africa, which has also in recent years experienced massive layoffs, following the privatization of public enterprises and the neoliberal "restructurings" of big private companies like Toyota.

Sub-Saharan African growth (down slightly to 2.6% in 2002 as against 3.2% in 2001) is largely attributable to mining and oil and not to the growth of agricultural production, where falling prices on the world market have in recent years been the rule rather than the exception. This is the consequence of organized overproduction in the name of giving priority to exports and a fall in household consumption in the importer countries.

Oil production is increasingly important with the discovery of new oilfields (Congo, Gabon, Nigeria), and the entry of new countries into the oil producers club (Equatorial Guinea, Sudan, Chad) has led to a consolidation of the imperialist presence in sub-Saharan Africa. The US in particular, but also Japan and indeed China, are openly displaying their interest in the natural wealth of sub-Saharan Africa. They are assured of making neocolonial super profits, since the return on investment is considered more rapid in Africa than everywhere else, thanks to the Codes of Investment and Labour (free exploitation of very cheap labour and contempt for universal social rights). These Codes have been dictated to the governments by the IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO) and the OECD. The "democratically elected" parliaments [5] merely implement the transformation of sub-Saharan Africa into a free trade zone, in accordance with the wishes of European imperialism, within the framework of the agreements between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific states.

Inter-imperialist rivalry

In 1996 the then US secretary of state for trade, Ron Brown, said that: "Countries on the African continent are about to have a strong influence on the world's political and economic climate... My country is challenged to invest its human and economic resources in bringing about Africa's rebirth... Africa offers extraordinary outlets for leaders of American business... In this sense, American business can compete with Africa's usual trading partners like France and Portugal... In the future, the USA will no longer leave business dealings with Africa to European firms... [6] "Whatever Colin Powell says, it is oil, rather than the war on terror, which explains this new interest in Africa. The US is interested in a greater presence in the oilfields of the Gulf of Guinea, so that it can increase Africa's share of US oil imports from 17% to 25%, thus reducing its dependence on Middle Eastern oil. The Bush team is also anxious to see Nigeria (the US' fifth biggest supplier) leaving OPEC. [7]

Rentier elites

Certainly US investment in Africa can be considered insignificant, but it is not negligible; US exports to sub-Saharan Africa rose from $5.6 billion in 2000 to $6.8 billion in 2001, with transport equipment accounting for 42.4% of this, chemical products 11.6%, electronic products 10.4% and machine tools 9.9%. Nor is it negligible that France's economic relations with Africa result in a positive balance of 3.2 billion euros. [8]

This inter-imperialist rivalry works to the benefit of the African elites, who find their role in the aggravated reproduction of dependence/domination and in the rentier status of the African states. The struggle for control of this rent - paid even in wartime - and the conservation of certain imperialist privileged positions generates fraudulent elections and new military coups (Central African Republic, Congo, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Niger) and wars (supposedly ethnic or religious) between local neocolonial fractions (Angola, Congo, Ivory Coast, Niger, Sudan). [9] These elites, in addition to their status as rentiers, link up with the multinational companies in wars for the monopolization of mining resources, carving up countries (Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone) so as to establish fiefdoms of pillage and export of mining resources by the warlords, whether government or rebels. The heads of the private militias recruit massively among the lumpen-proletarianized youth and rely on mercenaries of every stripe who behave barbarically. The increasingly open participation of the rulers of the sub-Saharan countries (Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda, Zimbabwe in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Angola) in these barbaric enterprises of capitalist accumulation allows them to participate more fully in the neoliberal restructuring of the world capitalist economy. [10]

The economically motivated cynicism of the sub-Saharan neocolonial elites has culminated in the murderous carve up of Somalia into oilfields coveted by US imperialism, the genocide of the Tutsis and 'moderate Hutus' - a great human tragedy of the late 20th century, virtually reduced to banality - and the three million victims, direct and indirect, of the wars for diamonds, copper, colombo-tantalite/coltan (used in cellular phones), gold and so on in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The criminality of sub-Saharan lumpen-capitalism, although reminiscent of some aspects of the capitalism of past centuries is nonetheless thoroughly contemporary. Capitalism seems condemned by necessity to be very hideous, very irrational in sub-Saharan Africa. [11]

The promise of progress through structural adjustment has proved false. The investment, jobs and prosperity promised have not materialized. According to the official figures, sub-Saharan Africa, not including South Africa, continues to transfer to the West more than it receives in capital. [12] And these figures do not take account of the natural resources pillaged and processed in the West, the public funds placed in western banks and unaccounted for. Thus, the neoliberalization of sub-Saharan Africa has led to a permanent worsening pauperization for the African people.

NEPAD at the service of multinationals

The would-be enlightened fraction of the African neoliberal elite, preoccupied with the "African Renaissance", has set up the

African Union (1999), modeled on the European Union, [13] created in July 2002 out of the ashes of the neo-colonial Organization of African Unity (OAU). The African Union is supposed to conclude a project of continental integration, from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean. However, at the same time the founding states are pursuing xenophobic policies, making immigrants from other sub-Saharan countries scapegoats for the failure of their neoliberal social policies: expulsion and destruction of small fishing villages in Gabon; affirmation of "Ivoryness" against those originating from Burkina, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Mali in the Ivory Coast; violence against sub-Saharan Africans in Libya; national preference against Mozambican immigrant workers (an important labour force under apartheid) and other sub-Saharans in South Africa. Not to mention wars between neighbour states (Ethiopia-Eritrea, Guinea-Liberia, Chad-Central African Republic, Rwanda-Democratic Republic of Congo).

This African Union has as its economic programme the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). A programme "conceived by Africans, for Africans" but whose legitimacy has not been submitted to any popular consultation. It is rather imperialism that has been consulted; multinationals meeting in Dakar (April 2002) and the G8 at Kananaskis (Canada), where the G8 Plan of Action for Africa was adopted. The heads of state of the NEPAD have also adorned the recent summits at Davos and the G8 at Evian. The French state has its own delegate to the NEPAD, former IMF director Michel Camdessus. The only African consultation has been with "private entrepreneurs" who are supposed to represent civil society in Africa.

NEPAD's goal is to establish the bases of an African economic takeoff, with a projected annual average growth in GDP of more than 7% over the next 15 years and the reduction by half of the percentage of people living in extreme poverty over the same period. [14]

NEPAD raises no demand for the unconditional and global cancellation of the foreign debt whose repayment is asphyxiating state social budgets. There is no halt planned to the process of privatization of strategic public enterprises. On the contrary, in pursuing "partnership" with private enterprise, the states show increasing zeal in this process of privatization. Thus, in Nigeria, for example, which has received more investment in recent years, the reelection of Obasanjo (2003) has impelled the privatization of the country's most strategic state enterprises. Moreover, responsibility for the economy has been entrusted to a high-ranking Nigerian functionary of the World Bank. Also omitted from the programme are the restoration of universal social rights in general and the rights of wage earners in particular undermined by the new neoliberal Labour Codes, adopted everywhere in the context of structural adjustment. There is no question of restoring the mechanisms of protection for small producers in relation to the multinationals. Investment codes establish equality between multinationals and small local entrepreneurs. The key movers behind the NEPAD (Bouteflika of Algeria, Mbeki of South Africa, Obasanjo of Nigeria, Wade of Senegal) expect a significant participation from the multinationals in the financing of the programme. But support from the multinationals is conditional on guarantees of security and profitability.

Hierarchical submission

It all adds up to a project of neoliberal reproduction of imperialist domination from which fractions of the African bourgeoisie expect a significant profit, conscious that under capitalism partnership can only be hierarchical, even between imperialisms, whose complicities and rivalries will be in this framework more determinant for the future of Africa than the ambitions of this undemocratic African Union. Imperialism, of course, will not finance a programme that would annihilate its grip on Africa's wealth. Thus, South African private capital aspires to a position of mini-power in sub-Saharan Africa in particular, in the whole of Africa in general. The end of apartheid was, for the enlightened part of the South African bourgeoisie, necessary to improve access to the continental market, previously limited because of the OAU's boycott. Since then, South African capital, through privatization of state enterprises and the liberalization of markets, finds itself in competition in certain sectors (port infrastructure, mining and so on) with non-African capital. The "African Renaissance" promised by Thabo Mbeki above all represents this continental expansion of private South African capital.

In fact, under the NEPAD the economy should be essentially private and in the hands of the multinationals. All the talk of African national economies or the African economy amounts in practice to "western" capital invested in Africa exchanging with "western capital" elsewhere.

Despite its constantly proclaimed "African-ness" there is no popular consensus around NEPAD. The lack of consultation of national civil societies has been heavily criticized by development and human rights NGOs. These critiques often propose amending the programme without challenging the underlying neoliberal paradigm. Such was the case with nearly all the African interventions on NEPAD at the Summit For Another World held as part of the counter-G8 activities at Evian this year. However, there is an as yet very minority current, symbolized by Jubilee South (Africa) which bases its radical critique of the NEPAD on unconditional cancellation of the foreign debt and a rejection of the Washington Consensus. Privatization and the ending of price subsidies for basic staples are being opposed in some countries, while trades unionism is experiencing a kind of reawakening. An example is Nigeria, where in the space of two years the oil unions have staged two general strikes in reaction to price increases. The price hike in June-July 2003 virtually paralyzed the country for a week, until a compromise was struck with the Obasanjo government on the eve of George Bush's visit.

However, in nearly every sub-Saharan country, a pole of political radicalism that can converge with the progressive sectors of "civil society" and the trade union movement is lacking. The "democratization" which accompanied the "end of communism" favoured a certain revival of anti-neocolonial consciousness which was exploited by political parties limiting their ambitions to alternation of power within the neocolonial state. Thus degradation of the social con-ditions of existence coincided with the proliferation of neoliberal oligarchical parties.

Footnotes

[1] During his visit to the Ivory Coast in February 1990 - a period of popular mobilizations for a multiparty system and democracy in sub-Saharan Africa in general and its French-speaking countries in particular - Chirac publicly declared his support for the Houphouët-Boigny regime's view that a multiparty system was a luxury for Africa: "I think that the developing countries should concentrate their effort on economic

expansion, which is not always easy in a multi-party system. There are multi-party regimes where democracy is not respected and single party regimes where democracy is perfectly respected, for example the Ivory Coast... ” (Le Monde, February 27, 1990). Thus, it is logical that he continues to support the Togolese dictator Eyadema.

[2] Privatization, which was and is presented as a source of income for the public treasury, has in fact brought in practically nothing. (Loïc Rivière, “Privatisations: un bilan en demi-teinte”, Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens, July 18, 2003).

[3] Nearly all the critics of the detestable regime of Robert Mugabe forget that from 1990 the Zimbabwean state reorganized its economy in general and its agriculture in particular according to the recommendations of the IMF and the World Bank.

[4] This phenomenon brings to mind Marx’s comment that “a great deal of capital, which appears today in the United States without any certificate of birth, was yesterday, in England, the capitalized blood of children”.

[5] In the process of neoliberalization sponsored by the World Bank and IMF, states are obliged to revise their legislation concerning the circulation of capital and the exploitation of the labour force, which are considered to be comparative advantages.

[6] Jeune Afrique, number 1836, March 13-19, 1996.

[7] This push for withdrawal by Nigeria is related to the attempt to overthrow Chavez in Venezuela. The existence of OPEC is considered to be incompatible with neoliberalism in Washington or Houston.

[8] Rapport 2003 du Conseil Français des Investisseurs en Afrique, “Les entreprises françaises et l’Afrique”, LE MOCI , number 1579, December 31, 2002. In 2001, France’s trade surplus with sub-Saharan Africa was more than 2 billion euros.

[9] See Jean Nanga, “Ethnisme néo-libéral”, Inprecor 468-469, March-April 2002.

[10] See François-Xavier Verschave, La Françafrique, Stock, Paris, 1998; “Noir Silence”, Les Arênes, 2000; UNO, “Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo”, April 2002; Human Rights Watch, “Back to the Brink. War Crimes by Liberian government and rebels. A call for Greater International Attention to Liberia and the Sub-Region”, May 2002; Pierre Baracyetse, op. cit.; Bonnie Campbell, op.cit.

[11] See Aimé Césaire, “Discourse on colonialism”, Monthly Review Press, 2000, the work of Belgian journalist Colette Braeckman on Rwanda and Congo (ex-Zaïre) and Marc Ferro (dir.), Le livre noir du Colonialisme, Fayard, 2002.

[12] According to UNCTAD, concerning the inflow and outflow of short term capital in sub-Saharan Africa, without South Africa, the cumulative net outflow for the period 1980-1998 was 38 billion dollars and the cumulative inflow 30 billion dollars. (Capital Flows and Growth in Africa, UNCTAD, 2000).

[13] For example, the executive organ of the African Union is its Commission, structured like the Commission of the European Union.

[14] New Economic Partnership for Africa’s Development, official document, Abuja (Nigeria), October 2001.