

The New World Struggles to be Born and the Necessary Strategic Thinking

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The situation seems to be desperate. The offensive of the right wing and the far right movements occupies space and minds. It spreads out in the media and claims to express the shift of societies to the right. This is not the case and nothing has been decided yet. Societies resist and contradictions are at work; they are the ones that determine the future. To understand the situation, let's take again as a starting point Antonio Gramsci's quote: "The Old World is dying and the New World struggles to be born: now is the time for monsters." [1].

In this context, the strategy of the social movements that wish to carry out an emancipation project must articulate the response to the emergency and the construction of an alternative project for the future. The social movements must at the same time fight the monsters and be part of the construction of a new world.

The old world is dying

The financial shocks of 2008 do confirm assuming the exhaustion of neoliberalism. Global warming, the loss of biodiversity, and global pollution, confirm the exhaustion of productivism. Assumptions are made about the exhaustion of capitalism as a mode of hegemonic production. It being understood that in order to succeed, capitalism will not necessarily be a fair and equitable mode of living and working ; History is not written and is not linear.

At the World Social Forum in Belém, in 2009, there was a convergence of movements: the Women's movements, the peasant movements and the ecological movements, as well as the movements of Amazonian peoples have strongly expressed a new point of view. They argued that it is a question of redefining relationships between the human species and Nature but is not just a crisis of neoliberalism or capitalism: it is a crisis of civilization, which for five centuries highlighted Western modernity and led to some forms of contemporary science.

The situation is marked by the persistence of contradictions. The structural crisis articulates five major contradictions : Economic and social, with social inequalities and discrimination ; ecological with the destruction of ecosystems, the limitation of biodiversity, the climate change and the endangering of the global ecosystem ; geopolitical with the decentralized wars and the rise of new powers; ideological with the challenge to democracy and the xenophobic and racist thrusts; Political with the corruption born from the merger of politics and finance that feeds mistrust in relation to

politicians and abolishes their autonomy. The right and the far right waged a battle for cultural hegemony, right from the late 1970s against fundamental rights and particularly against equality, against solidarity for security-based ideologies, for disqualification that was amplified after 1989 of progressive projects. They have carried out attacks on labor through generalized organized precariousness of work conditions; against the welfare State through commodification and privatization and the widespread corruption of political classes; and by the subordination of the digital revolution to the logic of financialisation.

The new monsters

From 2011 onwards, the quasi-insurrectionary movements of occupation of world-famous places are an answer from the people to the domination of the oligarchy. From 2013 onwards, the neo-liberal arrogance takes over and confirms the trends that emerged right from the late 1970s. The dominant policies of austerity and structural adjustment are reaffirmed. Destabilization, wars, violent repression and the instrumentalisation of terrorism imposed themselves in all regions. Reactionary ideological currents and extreme right-wing populism are increasingly active. Racism and extreme nationalism fuel protests against foreigners and migrants. They take specific forms such as libertarian neo-conservatism in the United States, extreme rights and various forms of national-socialism in Europe, armed jihadist extremism, dictatorships and petroleum monarchies, extreme Hinduism, etc. . But, in the medium term, nothing is decided yet.

We must ask ourselves questions about these monsters and the reasons for their emergence. They rely on fears around two main and complementary vectors: xenophobia and hatred of foreigners, racism in its different forms. It is necessary to underline a particular offensive taking the forms of Islamophobia; after the fall of the Berlin Wall, "Islam has been established as the main enemy within the "Clash of civilizations".

This is the result of an offensive consistently conducted for forty years by the extreme right, to conquer the cultural hegemony. It focused mainly on two values. Against equality first of all by asserting that inequalities are natural and in favor of security-based ideologies by considering that only repression and restriction of freedoms can guarantee security.

The aggravation of contradictions and social tensions explains the emergence of extreme forms of confrontation. The aggravation begins with that of the class struggle and extends to all social relations. Billionaire Warren Buffet declares quietly: "Some people have doubts about the existence of a class struggle; of course there is a class struggle, and it is my class that is winning it". Financialization has widened inequality and the caste of the very wealthy has narrowed. The so-called middle classes have swollen, but precariousness affects and makes insecure part of them.

The will to accumulate wealth and power is insatiable. In the face of this excess, people find refuge in the return of the religious dimension which hopefully will manage to temper the unbearable drifts. Confidence in regulation of the state of affairs by the Government is greatly affected. The financial class succeeded in subordinating the Governments, and the nascent socialist state sank in the hands of the nomenklaturas and the new oligarchies. The situation is unstable. How to believe that a world in which 62 people, 53 men and 9 women, have as much as 3.5 billion people, can last indefinitely? The will to impose the reproduction of the situation and the fear of revolts result in the rise of violence, repression and wars.

But there is also another reason for the situation, namely the fear of the emergence of a new world. New monsters know that their world is being put into question; in order to safeguard their positions and privileges, they exploit the fear of the future and the fear of disruption of societies that will mark

the future.

The new world struggles to be born

What is this new world that struggles to be born? A new world that can scare the affluent and which social movements are reluctant to perceive.

The proposal is to be attentive to the ongoing revolutions. There are several revolutions in progress, but they are incomplete. And their outcome is uncertain. There is no evidence that they will not be crushed, diverted or exploited. However, these revolutions upset the world; they also bring us hope and already mark the future and the present. These are long-term revolutions whose effects will affect several generations.

To illustrate this, let us take as a starting point the five ongoing revolutions, which, it should be recalled, are unfinished. These are the women's rights revolution; the revolution of the rights of peoples; the ecological revolution; the digital revolution; and the revolution of the way the planet is populated.

The women's rights revolution is the most impressive. It calls into question millennial relationships. The struggles for women's rights have always existed. The recognition of women's rights has advanced enormously over the last forty years. The upheavals caused by the recognition of women's rights are gradually measured. This revolution is incomplete and entails resistance characterized by great violence. It is measured by the violence of the reactions of some states to any idea of the liberation of women and to the resistance in all societies to the questioning of patriarchy. The women's rights revolution has already generated a great change in the strategy of movements; it is the refusal to subordinate the struggle against the oppression of women to other struggles. Their refusal to consider their claim as a secondary contradiction was echoed by all movements and reflects the recognition of the diversity of social movements and citizens.

The revolution for people's rights is also significant. It is incomplete and related to the attempts to reconfigure imperialist relations. The second phase of decolonization has begun. The first phase, that of the independence of States, has reached its limits. The second phase is the liberation of the peoples. It opens with new issues with the rights of people who take different names; indigenous people, first people, or autochthonous people. It renews the question of identity with the emergence of multiple identities as described by poet Edouard Glissant, and it addresses the relationship between individual freedoms and collective freedoms.

The ecological revolution is in its infancy. It already upsets the understanding of the mutations and of the direction of change. The ecological revolution introduces the concept of finite time and the notion of limits in relation to the unlimited growth. This revolution challenges all the conceptions of development, production and consumption. The ecological revolution re-imposes the discussion on the relation of the human species to Nature. This revolution addresses the limits of the planetary ecosystem. The ecological revolution is a philosophical revolution that upsets the most established certainties.

The digital revolution is a decisive part of a new scientific and technological revolution, especially combined with that of biotechnologies. This digital revolution opens up very strong contradictions concerning the forms of production, work and reproduction. It impacts culture by starting to turn upside down domains that are as vital as those of language and writing. For now, financialisation has managed to develop the digital mutations, but contradictions remain open and deep.

The revolution related to the way the planet is populated is in gestation. All the great historical upheavals have had consequences on the way the planet is populated. Giving consideration to this fact makes it possible to avoid qualifying the issues of migration and refugees as a migratory crisis that could be isolated and eventually resolved. The changes in the way the planet is populated do prolong the previous breakups. The breakup represented by urbanization and global urban structure with the proliferation of shantytowns. Climate change will not limit itself to increasing environmental migration. The sea level rise could reach up to one meter by the end of the century. According to the United Nations, 60% of the 450 urban areas with more than one million inhabitants in 2011 - i.e. some 900 million people - could be exposed to high natural hazards. The schooling of societies modifies migration flows. Graduates who leave their place of origin stay in touch with their generation through the internet. Other join the mass of unemployed graduates, creating a new alliance between the children of the lower classes and the children of the middle classes. Social movements try to articulate the struggles for the rights to freedom of movement and settlement with those for the right to live and work in their country. These social movements prove that the desire to remain is inseparable from the right to leave. The very notion of identity is challenged by the evolution of territories and by the interbreeding of cultures.

The necessary strategic thinking

Social and citizens' movements need to adapt their strategy to the new situation. Any strategic thinking is built on the articulation between urgency and the construction of an alternative project. What is urgent is resistance to the new monsters. But in order to resist, an alternative project is needed.

The alternative project is beginning to emerge. From 2009 onwards, at the World Social Forum in Belem which has been mentioned previously, the proposal that emerges is that of an ecological, social, democratic and geopolitical transition. This proposal combines the awareness of the great contradictions and the intuition of the great unfinished revolutions in progress.

One must insist on the idea of transition which is often abusively used as a proposal for procrastination. The transition proposal is not opposed to the idea of revolution: it represents a paradigm shift with respect to one of the concepts of revolution, that of the big and wonderful Revolution that will come one night; the transition proposal places revolution within a long and discontinuous time. It conveys the message that new social relations are already emerging in the world today, just as social capitalist relationships have emerged, in a contradictory and incomplete manner, in the feudal world. This conception gives a new meaning to the alternative practices that might potentially be implemented and which make possible, here also in an unfinished way, to define and prepare an alternative project.

One of the difficulties of this period concerns the relationship between the resistance and the alternative project. The class struggle is undoubtedly the key element of resistance and transformation. It is also necessary to redefine the nature of social classes, of their relationships, and of class struggles. In the dominant conception of social movements, the social revolution must precede and characterize the other revolutions and liberations. The importance of the five other revolutions under way challenges the social revolution, and the delay in the social revolution challenges back the other revolutions.

One must return to the urgency and to resistance against monsters, while stressing the importance and necessity to build an alternative project. One must understand how the fear of the new world acts on the emergence of monsters. Let us take an example with a Trump voter, from the middle

class, a white man, in the heart of America; when he looks around, he sees that Indians are still there, that blacks no longer tolerate racism, that Latinos are increasingly numerous and sometimes a majority, and that women refuse to be subservient. The Trump voter finally sees that his dream America will no longer exist and he is ready to take up arms and shoot!

In fact, societies resist more than we think to the rightward drift of the elites and of the media. This can be ascertained. In Hungary, the referendum against foreigners could not be validated because, despite the pressure, only 37% of Hungarians went to vote in this consultation. In Poland, mass demonstrations have pushed back those who wanted to prohibit abortion. In France, two thirds of the French population is opposed to the repeal of laws for marriage for all. A survey in 5 European countries shows that, depending on the country, 77-87% of respondents are in favor of strengthening the laws against discrimination and that despite the anti-migrants frenzy 55 to 69% of respondents are in favor of the issuance of legal documents to the undocumented who have a work contract. An Amnesty International survey in 27 countries showed that despite the anti-refugees discourse in 20 of 27 countries, more than 75% of respondents are in favor of their country hosting refugees.

When they can express themselves, societies are more open and more tolerant than what the far right currents and the media that relay their ideas would like people to believe. Nonetheless, this resistance is not displayed and does not result in joining a progressive project, thus reflecting the absence of a credible alternative project. It is not so much the “right-wingers” who triumph as the “left-wingers” who are collapsing.

We must therefore resist, immediately, step by step, and accept to engage in the long term dimension. This resistance requires the largest alliance possible with all those - and they are numerous - who think that equality is better than inequality, that the individual and collective freedoms should be extended to a maximum, that discrimination leads to disaster, that domination led to war, and that one must save the planet. This battle over values requires the questioning of the cultural hegemony of neoliberalism, capitalism and authoritarianism. We can demonstrate that resisting is creating. For each of the unfinished revolutions, through mobilizations and alternative practices, we can fight to prevent them from being manipulated and used to strengthen the power of an elite, whether old or new.

The coming years will no doubt be very difficult and the conditions will be very harsh. But, at the scale of a generation, nothing is settled for ever, everything becomes possible.

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P.S.

* <http://www.cadtm.org/The-New-World-Struggles-to-be-Born>

Footnotes

[1] « Les Cahiers de prison » (The Prison Papers), 3, Ed. Gallimard Paris, France, 1983