

Complementarity or Confrontation Between East and South?

From the Crisis of Civilisation to the New World Community

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The Pax Christi conference, involving representatives from Eastern and Central Europe, the South and many organisations from the European Community, the United States and Canada and focusing on the theme 'Worlds Apart-Worlds Together', is a symbol of the new times.

Recent developments tend to incite confrontation between East and South, enmeshed in a struggle for economic resources which are scarce, and to capture the political attention of the Group of Seven and the rest of the international community. This paper argues that the time has come to make direct bridges between East and South, thus putting an end to the mutual barrier of existing ignorance and prejudice, a step which may well be more important in terms of the future than the destruction of the Berlin Wall itself was.

Building such a bridge requires, in the first place, a new common language facilitating direct communication, without the misunderstandings previously caused by the profoundly ideological use of language. In the past dif-

ferent meanings have been attached to the same concepts, as a product of the different cultural and political experiences which were occurring in isolation. Until just a few months ago, these meanings were reinforced by a wall of mutual ignorance. A direct cultural bridge between representative members of related civil societies is essential in order to establish the new economic and political agreements meant to substitute those that were crushed by the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and by the emergence of democracy both in the East and in the South.

Helping to build such a bridge may be the most significant contribution the Church can make to the achievement of an interdependent solidarity, and to consolidate the coming together of related civil societies, upon the basis of common values and interests, thus overcoming potential confrontation at the strategic turning point of this decade, at which the 21st Century may already be said to have begun.

This presentation is divided into two parts:

1. The logic of the complementarity between East and South.
2. Some proposals to initiate this joint task.

1. Complementarity between East and South

A new-born competitiveness between East and South, which both scramble for the same economic resources and political attention, is creating a distancing and a confrontation between them, instead of the complementarity that the current situation, and above all the future, demand.¹

The false dilemma between East and South – complementarity versus confrontation – must be unmasked from the start: it can serve no other purpose than to reinforce the North's power, marginalising even further the major actors of the East and South. At the same time, this type of confrontation hampers once again the possibilities of dealing satisfactorily with the post Cold War period, and of finding a new vision and a new paradigm for defining the challenges posed by democracy, ecology, peace and collective security, economic equity in the face of the massive world-wide explosion of poverty, racial and gender inequality.

The gap between North and South is in danger of increasing due to the East's competitive insertion in the global system, making it likely that the East will

become the new periphery of capitalism. Simultaneously, the North may increase its capacity for concentration, centralisation and control of the world's resources, and of humanity itself. The crisis of democracy and security may thus reach world-wide proportions.

The situation in the East, from a Latin American perspective, is unpredictable. It is just not clear how this transition stage will continue to unfold. Political disintegration and the control of nuclear weapons; nationalist effervescence; the fall of production and the dismantling of the productive fabric; the financial crisis, especially of foreign exchange; the fiscal deficit; the threat of inflation, the incapacity to service the external debt are almost all familiar recurring themes throughout Latin America and most of the countries which, until recently, were referred to as the Second World.

Will the South and the East be forced to compete, and even confront each other, in order to resolve their separate problems? Isn't there already a certain clash among Eastern countries, rushing as they are to cope, in a mad scramble to 'let anyone save himself in any way he can'?

Given the emergence of a global, single world for the first time in history, attempts to solve problems in a fragmented individual way without affecting the structural causes only reproduces distorted mechanisms, eliminating the option of creating an alternative project and an adequate counterbalance of power.

The current situation, as seen from the South, suggests four possible scenarios for the East:

1. 'Westernisation' from the top, without a project belonging to the emergent civil society itself.

2. Authoritarian transition with or without more coups d'état.
3. A social explosion with unpredictable consequences for the East, and even for humanity as a whole.
4. The consolidation and growth of civil society, enjoying international support both from the North and the South.

This last model of transition without authoritarianism and social chaos, which would be a product of a process of democratic maturity, would be the most convincing for all actors seeking the construction of a New World Community which overcomes both the 'order of the Cold War' and the North's unilateral

the potential of complementarity between South and East. This would also benefit the North, before the threat of new and scaling confrontations.

Seven theses for an argument

1. The experience of five hundred years

Five hundred years ago the world was discovered as one unit, and universal history per se began. However, a genuine world civilisation is yet to be constructed.

The need to surpass the ideological proposals of the Cold War to control the world, and of the 'New Order' as defined by a minority in the North, demand a vision of the future and of the Utopia

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and dominant 'New Order'. The South has undergone experiences that could be innovative and constructive for the East's transition, since it has found similar structural difficulties building democracy in an emergent society, without enough economic base to satisfy the new expectations and demands. The crisis of ungovernability is the dominant feature in a good many countries in the South, where the eruption of civil society has provoked a rising wave of democracy, yet people's expectations and aspirations have not found a material basis for their attainment.

We outline this argument, which stems from the experience and vision accumulated in Latin America, stressing

needed to sustain the hope of being able to consolidate a New World Community, within specific parameters of realism and viability. This 'audacious pragmatism' is a cultural attitude which is the product of five hundred years of resistance, struggles and revolutions, giving rise to the self-discovery of Latin America by Latin Americans in this century.

The days of protesting without providing alternatives are over. Today specific proposals must be made, protesting also, if need be, but with a constructive global outlook that strives to optimise results, building the phases in time necessary in order to reach—perhaps not the ideal, and therefore sometimes

1. The structural competitiveness existing between East and South can be negative or positive, whether it is a complementary competitiveness, which increases the efficiency and power to negotiate of all the parts involved in order to achieve greater common benefit, or a confrontative competitiveness causing asymmetry and irrationality, and thus decreasing the negotiating capacity of the weaker parts involved. The competitiveness much publicised today is ambiguous: it can either reinforce symmetry and reciprocity, thus approximating an ideal type of competition, or increase market disparities and imperfections, both in terms of the economy and at the technological, political or military levels.

The technological revolution has permitted the North to concentrate and centralise power, based on 'accumulation through intensity in knowledge'. This has been the most highly concentrated form of capital intensity in history, increasing even further the dependence and asymmetry of global production and power systems.

ideological, and therefore a - historic result - but the maximum possible result.

2. Concentration and centralisation of world power.

Never, not even during colonialism, has there been such a degree of concentration and centralisation of economic, political, technological and military power, held by such a small number of nations and by such a reduced minority of the world's population. The United Nations 1991 *Human Development Report* bears irrefutable statistical evidence in regard to this characteristic of our decade.

3. The 'technological revolution' and structural changes

The modern technological paradigm has transformed the intensity of knowledge into the most important axis of accumulation, both of economic, military, political, administrative and ideological power. The technological revolution is not only at the root of the growing gap between North and South, but also of today's blatant, crushing gap with the East. The dematerialisation of production, the automatization of labour, the revolution in management and systematisation, the new biotechnology and the shift in 'natural' comparative advantages are all structural transformations determining new relations among countries and social classes; that is, between actors sharing in this concentrating power, and those progressively being marginalised and even excluded as non-viable by this 'technotronic society'.

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The current restructuring of the world's productive system is likely to increase asymmetry in the future. The so-called comparative advantages of the South and East—abundance of natural resources and cheap labour—have decreased in importance and value as a result of the 'technological revolution'. The East and South's comparative advantages and differential rents have been transformed in favour of the technological North. Labour, on the other hand, in

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the North, South and East alike, loses its relative value in the face of 'technological capital'. This manifests itself in the loss of negotiating power of the trade unions, and even more visibly in the level of

non-organised labour now existing on a world scale.

The option for the South and East in this single world market is a transnationalised, asymmetric and subordinate insertion in a market that is neither free nor fair.

This perspective is even gloomier for the future, given that the new axis of accumulation – space and the sea – are also increasingly more in the hands of the technological financial monopolies of mega-corporations, which become more and more concentrated and centralised as time goes by. This restructuring of the world carried out under the mandate of world capitalism, without any alternative system in operation at present, coincides both as cause and effect with the dramatic political changes erupting in 1989.

4. Global political transformations

Four phenomena characterise the radical nature of the latest political changes:

4.1 The collapse of 'real socialism'

The fall and danger of disintegration of Central and Eastern Europe was not the product of perestroika, but rather perestroika was the product of accumulated difficulties. Extrapolating for Latin America—we might say for the

South as a whole—these changes in their entirety are fundamentally positive. At the short term, however, they create an imbalance of power favouring the North, a loss of support for needed changes in

the South and submission to direct military control, exerted in particular by the United States.

On the other hand, the 'crisis of an alternative paradigm' due to the collapse of 'real socialism' causes confusion and a weakening effect in the first instance. It releases the South, however, from an ideological dependency which hindered dangerously its capacity to construct its own alternatives. At the same time it allows the emerging democratisation of the East, and favours democracy in the South.

Complementarity and the counter-balance that the South formerly received from the East, have been transformed rapidly and dramatically into a scramble for resources and political attention tending to marginalise and even completely exclude many countries in the South from an international agenda. This is the most significant impact, at the short term, but it involves a false dilemma that must be unmasked urgently, in order to prevent the East from reinforcing asymmetric world structures even more—structures which the East has already been a victim of, and will continue to be a victim of otherwise.

4.2 European unity

This unity transforms the old colonial powers into the most powerful megamarket in the world, reproducing a trilateral, neo-colonial system, along with the United States and Japan.

Faced with the rapid, profound and unpredictable changes in the East, the Europe of 1992 is anxious and perplexed. The crisis in Yugoslavia and the independence of the Baltic republics have awakened a nationalist effervescence throughout Western Europe, which is forcing a questioning of the political dynamics of the European unit of twelve countries. This European tension provokes an 'eurocentrism' that reinforces both political and psychological borders between East and South. On the other hand, the East's pressing financial needs, its struggle to enter the protected European agricultural market and to attract political attention, all increase the

prospects for an artificially created East-South confrontation.

4.3 Japan and the era of the Pacific

The technological, trade and financial expansion of Japan, hegemonising the industrial dynamics of the NICs, has converted the Pacific Basin into the most important geo-economic pole, surpassing for the first time in importance the historically dominant Atlantic.

This economic multipolarity of the 21st Century is ambiguous; it may serve to diversify dependence or to consolidate the North's system of concentration and centralisation of power, if the dynamics of the Pacific should also come to be controlled by the Group of Seven.

Once more this phenomenon demands global proposals in the face of global circumstances, surpassing the urgent but immediate local needs, in order to obtain structural advantages

through the CTN-BTN (transnational corporations and banks and the governments involved, greatly assimilated to the capital and power of these conglomerates). Civil society in the Pacific, which is also emerging as a great force, should be incorporated in this trilateral democratic alternative.

It must also be remembered that a great many people in the East are not Western, white or Christian either. Thus they are not likely to be assimilated into the North's system, unless they were to contribute a significant share to the North's system of centralising power. These people are more prone to becoming part of the list of 'superfluous' populations and 'non viable countries', increasing the polarisation among similar regions in the East, instead of creating a coalition and alliance of common values and interests.

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from the new spaces opened by competition, and from the contradictions resulting among mega-markets. Otherwise the South and the East together will come to form part of a new enlarged and subordinated periphery before the North's nucleus of reconcentrated power.

Nevertheless, Japan and the NICs are not Western, white, or Christian; therefore they are not Northern, either culturally or historically. This difference offers the option to establish a bridge between North and South, in the era of the Pacific. However, this requires connecting civil societies in the South and in the East with civil societies in the Pacific—overcoming the current exclusive link existing among mega-markets,

Will this world of cultural and political diversities and economic urgencies possibly be capable of thinking and acting globally, from its contrasting local realities, in order to build collectively a New World Community? Is it only capital and its logic that have the capacity to transcend these differences and create a world system? Is there no other logic capable of provoking humanity into developing a project that results in a more humane community?

4.4 The crisis of North American hegemony

The most indebted country in the world, with the greatest fiscal and trade deficit, and growing loss of productivity

and competitiveness regarding the European Community and Japan, cannot hegemonise unilaterally, in a sustained and stable fashion, a world which is surpassing geo-politics in order to enter into an era dominated by geo-economics.

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The project of 'global unilateralism' is a threat to peace and world stability, promoting macro-economic imbalances that also affect the world market's economic stability. The constant disarray of the North American domestic market, due to gross spending on defense and to the overconsumerism characteristic of the 'American Way of Life', which makes it far exceed its own means, makes the United States absorb approximately one third of the international financial liquidity (around 100 billion of a total amount of 350 annual billions available). This reduces the resources available for the pressing needs of the East and South, causing the artificial confrontation mentioned.

The above also forced a net transference of resources from the South to the North in the order of one trillion dollars during the decade of the Eighties. In Latin America alone during the last decade, the net transference has been in the order of 500 billion, equivalent to ten Marshall Plans.

This distortion of the North American economic structure demands an urgent economic adjustment, that multilateral organisms do not dare to confront. Under these circumstances, the harsh treatment of the IMF and the World Bank towards the imbalances in the South, and soon probably also in the East, lacks economic, and even less democratic legitimacy, creating a double standard incompatible with an international democratic order.

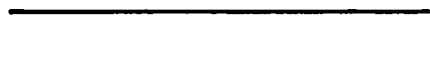
On the other hand, the state of the North American economy fosters strong

North American protectionism, together with an inflexibility towards dealing with problems concerning external debt, marine law, ecological agreements, negotiations over the code of conduct of transnational corporations, etc. Rejecting the International Court of The Hague's verdict and jurisdiction, not only corresponded to President Reagan's obsession with Nicaragua, but also exemplified the need for an hegemonic project that attempts to repeal any type of control by multilateral organisms over the unilateral power.

Relating to North American civil society is essential in order to obtain a restructuring of its economy. Growing awareness of the crisis among North American people themselves, and of the existence of common interests and values shared with ample sectors of its



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society - particularly since anti-communism crumbled - offer new perspectives that the South and East alike can benefit from.

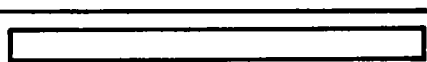
Domestic stability in the United States and stability throughout the whole world are at stake, and an interdependence based on solidarity should extend even among those who were considered enemies of the East and the South. The change in North America's civil society, through the democratisation of power and of its foreign policy, is a determinant factor in order to go deeper into the process of global democracy. Without democratisation of power in the North, particularly in the United States, global democracy will always continue to be structurally threatened.

5. *The North - South, capital - labour avalanche*

The concentration and centralisation of the global power system will widen the avalanche - like character of the confrontation between North and South and between capital and labour, which is the real contradiction of our times. Other contradictions are secondary, and may even have been caused by this fundamental contradiction. Without a project of global cooperation and interdependence based on solidarity, East and South will find themselves faced against one another, and the force of this dual avalanche will continue to grow.

6. *The crisis of civilisation*

"Perfection in the means and confusion in the objectives seem to be the



characteristic of our times." (Albert Einstein)

The crisis is expanding. The last statistical studies show that poverty, the great economic scandal of the 'technological revolution', is on the increase in both absolute and relative terms. The recent *United Nations Human Development Report* (May 1991) concludes by stating:

"The absence of political commitment and not the lack of financial resources is the real cause of the neglect in which humanity finds itself."

- 77% of the global population receives only 15% of world income;

- The South's income per capita is 6% that of the North's;
- Cooperation from the North has come down to 0.32% of the GNP, from the 0.7% approved by the United Nations;
- 21.5% of the world population experienced negative absolute growth during the Eighties. More than another 50% experienced negative relative growth in comparison with the North.

No more data are needed. "Global income distribution continues to be terrifying" (page 77 U.N. report). The North - South dialogues have failed, being "sterile and counterproductive" (page 82). More dramatic is the fact that exclusion continues to be greater and greater in intensity as time goes by: 85% of the world's wealth is produced by the North, for 23% of the world's population. It is not surprising, therefore, that the real income per capita between the industrialised countries (100%) and the less developed countries (LDC) in the South decreased between 1960 and 1980:

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|---------------|-----------|
| LDC | 9 to 5% |
| Subsahara | 14 to 6% |
| Latin America | 38 to 30% |
| World | 38 to 30% |

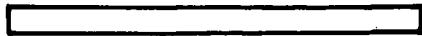
It is not surprising either that since the end of the Second World War twenty million people have been killed in regional conflicts in the South, a sum greater than those killed during the whole Second World War. "A great portion of the impulse towards militarisation in the Third World comes from industrialised nations" (page 19).

The United Nations Regional Development Program (UNRDP) paradoxically dares to assert that "development does work" (page 8) because illiteracy and infant mortality have decreased, and life expectancy has increased. The failure of three decades of development is not easy to assimilate. The historical or political causality of this tragedy is shadowed by an ambiguous statement: "The entrenched power structures can frustrate well - meant reforms" (page

14). The UNRDP report, however, emphasises a central theme: "Human development depends on human development", and "the principal task is investing in individuals in order to liberate their initiative". This empowerment of South and East populations is what the "entrenched power structures" do not allow, and what makes the crisis of civilisation more and more severe.

The innermost enemy of development is the inferiority complex that is duplicated when causality is diluted and the poor feel obliged to assume responsibility for their own poverty, which disables them even more. The ideologisation of the South as the 'slums of evil' from which the new signalling the East as the 'empire of evil'.

The manipulation of hope in a possible change, and the provocation of passiveness before an alleged inevitability,



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are the most sophisticated of all modern technologies. One of the leading brains of the Trilateral Commission, Brzezinski, consultant to several North American governments, expressed it in these precise terms: "In the technotronic society, the path, it seems, will be trodden by the accumulation of individual support by millions of isolated citizens, who will be easily charmed by a series of charismatic and attractive personalities expert in effectively exploiting the most state-of-the-art techniques to manipulate emotions and to control reason". Not only reason but hope, we would add.

Current civilisation cannot be universalised for all human beings. The model of society implied by the style of development of Northern countries is a universal model of society that cannot be universalised. A collective suicide would take place if North's development guidelines were to be implemented by the South. There are ecological and democratic limits. This model of society demands 'an economic Darwinism', with the exclusion of the majority, in order for the privileged civilisation of one third of society to survive. Such a society cannot be universalised, and is it democratic, since it demands a restricted democracy for the majority that only a culture of poverty can sustain. Therefore peace will continue to be a chimera, because "development is the new name of peace" (Paul VI).

7. The revolution of civil society

The 'revolution of civil society' has

been the name given in Latin America to the eruption of social organisations that has mushroomed during the so-called 'lost decade' and in 'the times of the cholera', times of the plague which reflects this catastrophe and the people's resistance.

In terms of the future, the awakening of civil society may be the most significant of all the fast and deep changes that took place during the decade of the Eighties in the East. This was the message participants from Eastern countries attending the conference conveyed.

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African and Asian participants also highlighted the same perspective insisting on the recovery of their own identity and culture, with the demand for equitable and democratic participation in global affairs.

The protagonists as subjects of democracy and development, are crucial issues for the South's perspective, and also the different logics and principles that they bring with are also progressively emerging in the East. Opposed to the 'He that has, is', which represents the logic of the North, the South proposes 'He that is, has', as Marcos Arruda from Brazil summarised. The logic of capital opposing the logic of the majorities; that is, the logic of a world democracy not restricted just to those who control the power of having and knowing. The East is more susceptible on this score. This may be explained due to its yearning to enjoy the forbidden fruit of the recently discovered West, which the South today finds an old and painful mirage.

The challenge for East and South alike is how to face the ungovernability of the emerging civil society, which cannot find an economic, material subsistence basis for its accumulated aspirations of democracy. The experience of Latin America can be very suggestive in dealing with dilemmas the East is bound to encounter on the difficult road to consolidating a civil society.

The temptations of democracy are multiple during such a transition. Latin America still wears several democratic masks that have begun to fall in the face of the growing demand for more direct participation: the 'low intensity democracy' that requires an authoritarian hand for the transition; the 'restricted democracy', that demands limiting not only economic demands but also participatory ones, in order not to stumble into anarchy; the 'facade democracy' that offers the legality of democratic rights without the capacity to implement them; the 'tutored democracy', that requires an external power protecting and guiding its construction.

In Latin America, economic development during a democratic tran-

sition demands investing in human capital and in political stability in order to create consensus, and the capacity of human mobilisation able to face such complex challenges. Financial aid is lost in bottomless sacks if the social fabric and the political will of the majorities are not mobilised in order to implement both democracy and participatory development. Recent examples in the East seem to confirm previous experiences in the South.

Internal conditions in any given country are the determining factor. However, the democratisation of international power is also an indispensable requirement. The international democratic space dominated by the North, in

Productivity. The East has sacrificed liberty in the name of Justice at the same altar. The South asks itself whether that Goddess deserves the sacrifice of our lives". (Eduardo Galeano. *Etre comme eux*". *Le Monde Diplomatique* Oct 1991, pp. 16 - 17).

The logic of the argument outlined pretends to show that the current tension between East and South is short-term and artificial, and conceals a genuine potential for cooperation, essential in order to surpass the crisis of civilisation and the threats geometrically accumulating in the current global concentration of power.

In order to overcome the crisis, a shared vision of common values and

The innermost enemy of development is the inferiority complex that is duplicated when causality is diluted and the poor feel obliged to assume a responsibility for their own poverty, which disables them even more. The ideologisation of the South as the 'slums of evil' from which the new threats to the global order rise, now substitutes the previous ideology signalling the East as the 'empire of evil'.

economic, institutional, technological, military and juridical terms, has hampered the potential for development and democracy in the South. It is likely that democracy and economic development in the East will face the same obstacles.

'The Stockholm Initiative' (April 1991) demanding 'global economic accountability', 'adjustment policies to all nations', and 'global law enforcement in one inseparable humanity' raises hopes that the decade of civil societies in the East and in the South shall also open democracies in the North towards the construction of a New World Community and the establishment of democratic and multilateral instruments suitable for a New World Democracy.

2. Some principles and guidelines to initiate East - South Cooperation
"The West has sacrificed justice in the name of liberty, at the altar of Divine

common interests is required, constituting a common East-South agenda for the nineties. Without this alliance of shared, common values and interests, confrontational competitiveness between East-South will favour the concentration of power by the 'global elite of the North'.

An alternative global vision to a system of concentrated power, demands a logic different from the logic of capitalism, which is based on 'maximisation from the top'. The logic of the majorities in civil societies is fundamentally a logic of 'optimisation from below'. This logic of the majorities implies a balance with nature, with gender and minorities, and regard for cultural identity, with active participation in the building of democracy from the bottom, not just state democratisation from above.

This democracy from the bottom has already had an effect, for example in disarmament, which the 'detente among governments' would never have accomplished during the negotiations on SALT. This logic should also be applied to development from the bottom, after three decades of continued failures of 'development from the top'. An 'ecumenism from the bottom' has achieved what dozens of years of dialogue among hierarchies and theologians had not been able to, in the way of uniting Christian churches. Today, springing forth from civil society, a new ecumenism is being sought, which embraces all historical religions in order to compile the values that humanity needs to build a New World Community, overcoming the crimes and aberrations formerly committed in the name of God.

International organisms, in particular the United Nations, require democratisation from the bottom. The representation of only governments before the United Nations, without a 'Lower House of the People', has transformed such institutions into bureaucracies controlled by the power centralised in the Group of Seven. The neoliberal democracy of the IMF imposed through the adjustment and economic conditionalities over many countries in the South, eliminates the capacity for self-determination of different peoples, blocking their chances to attain their own solutions.

The experiences of failure accumulated by civil societies in the South and East, both from dependent capitalism on the South and state socialism in the East, should be shared to create an alternative vision based on the common values and interests of the majorities. The 'global elite' has failed to promote the development of humanity, democracy and the ecological balance. It has however triumphed in manipulating the hope and trust required to 'decolonise the imagination', and to participate in the construction of a common future that can defeat the paralysis of inevitability.

The state, both socialist and capitalist, requires a deep-rooted transformation regarding the phenomenon of growing

globalisation of the world. The new state should be an open state, transparent, accountable to civil society. The crisis of apathy and of participation in the North reflects a profound individualism created by market logic, which leads to growing political abstention. This 'internal colonisation' provokes what we have called 'low intensity democracy' in the North as well, which allows the elite to act without democratic checks and balances.

Sharing these experiences between South and East, using new, non-ideological language, is possibly one of the most pressing tasks. 1992 may be, besides just a symbol, a platform from which to launch for the first time ever a global dialogue among the new social actors, promoting a balance of power and of alternatives in order to counteract the monopolies of planetary thought, which only allow global thinking and action in marginalised areas.



The most dramatic aspect of the current crisis is that questions are no longer asked, or even allowed.

1992 is the time to recover the questions raised 500 years ago, when in 1511, in the Espanola Island (Dominican Republic and Haiti), the King and the pope were called to task "under what authority does the conquest of indigenous people take place". Bartolome de las Casas, some years later, demanded "restitution of stolen and pilfered goods". The debate that shook an imperial Spain 500 Years ago is required today, before the world system initiated five centuries ago. On the other hand, the questions that rose in 1917 regarding equality, justice, economic democracy, are still awaiting response, after the abrupt failure of state socialism.

The most dramatic aspect of the current crisis is that questions are no longer asked, or even allowed. The questions

without answer that gave rise to the South, and the questions without a valid answer that gave rise to the East, can serve to begin this dialogue concerning civilisation, which up until now has permanently been postponed.

Some proposals for a Common Agenda

The peace potential created by the end of the Cold War, and the emergence of global democracy amidst contradictions and difficulties, provide the framework for this proposal. The massive growth of poverty on a global scale, and the simultaneous ecological deterioration, together with the possibility that 'the momentum' may be lost or even provoke a new East-South confrontation, provides the context for these questions. They may seem utopian or unrealisable, if seen exclusively from the viewpoint of the elite holding global power. However, the masses in the South and East, and possibly also in the North,



once aware of the threat and of the potential for a common alternative, may well organise around the objectives of a Common Agenda.

- a. *Disarmament and the peace dividend* as a source of new resources to surpass the crisis of civilization. This 'detente from the bottom' cannot be left in the hands of those who have taken the world to the edge of nuclear war and given rise to continuous conflicts in the Third World. The 'culture of peace' in a democratic society, must be exploited for all of its consequences.
- b. The *economic crisis* threatens collective suicide, of at the very least a growing deterioration of the quality

of life. Ecological defense and recovery demand a global tax proportional to each country, depending on the corresponding pollution factor.

c. *The debt of the South and East* is the major obstacle to the creation of the economic base that democracy requires: transforming the servicing of debts, and using this service as a collective savings for a fund for democracy, development, ecological recovery and peace', would be an alternative, not as far-fetched as it may seem at first, in the face of the world's growing problems. Such a fund would involve savings with alternative purposes on behalf of debtor countries, and compensation for the 'colonial debt, ecological debt and social debt' accumulated by the countries in the North.

d. *Democratisation of technology*, demanding greater transparency regarding the use of resources destined for technological research, with the purpose of advancing in the development of alternative energies and in technology suitable to the different phases of human development. The current 'technological totalitarianism' is one of the prevailing causes of the lack of development alternatives, and of the ecological crisis.

e. *The sea and space* belong to humanity as a whole, not of governments and transnational corporations controlling the technology for their exploitation. Here lies the axis of future accumulation, now in the hands of a 'global elite' which has no responsibility to civil society.

f. *The establishment of trilateral relations between civil societies* of North, South, and East, through the representatives of its civil organisations, is fundamental for counteracting the globalisation of elite power through the Group of Seven and its global bureaucracies (IMF, World Bank). The PP21 Project (people plan XXI) in the Pacific; the Hamburg Declaration; the

multiple declarations of international NGOs, and the recent Declaration of Stockholm (April 1991), signed even by personalities belonging to the 'global elite', indicate that increasingly important sectors in the North also desire to face jointly the crisis of civilisation.

The creation of a network of global relations between civil societies in North, South and East to confront and compete the trilateralism of the 'global elite', is a crucial requirement of this era of globalization.

g. *Establishment of a network of NGOs in the East*, strengthening the emergence of civil society, supporting the organisation and working tools of the different sectors to share. The experiences of NGOs in

given women's marginalisation from the present system.

i. The churches can serve as a platform for this new 'global ecumenism' to surpass historic differences and gather religious and humanistic values around the most pressing problems of the human gender.

j. The creation of the service of and *ombudsman of civil society*, with the aim of verifying the democratisation of information, assuring that genuine participation is broadened and that the new agenda is implemented in the relevant organisms. These proposals are only indicative of some of the themes that civil society organisations have identified as priorities in different parts of the

What has still not been proposed is how to solve the problems of neocolonialism affecting the majority of the world's inhabitants. East and South might at least raise the question together, before misery itself becomes ungovernable in the South, consequently flooding the North with an invasion of desperate immigrants, or before the East itself explodes, without having had time to surpass the contradictions of the most difficult transition period in history.

the South may constitute one of the most dynamic mechanisms in order to consolidate the new democracy in the East, at the level of the peasant movement, women, workers, minorities, churches, etc.

h. *The role of women on a global scale*, is more important than ever. It is crucial that emergent democracies in the East allow women to occupy their rightful place from the start, without accepting discrimination which will be more difficult to overcome in future. The role of women can be even more significant than that of men in surpassing the crisis since males are to a high degree responsible for this crisis,

world. This Agenda of Civil Society does not coincide with the Agenda of the Group of Seven either with its priorities or its methods.

The next assemblies of UNCTAD in Colombia and UNCED in Brazil might become platforms for presenting and launching these issues, giving start to a global democracy based on solidary interdependence. We are not pretending to create yet another 'bureaucratic superstructure', but rather to fill the existing between local dynamics and strength, and their lack of global efficiency ('To act locally and nationally, to think and negotiate globally'). A strong alternative negotiating power has not yet found

global representation in institutional forms. This clearly demands the democratic restructuring of multilateral organisations.

The diversity of social subjects is an asset, not an obstacle, although it may be difficult to implement, due to the lack of mechanisms for global action at the level of civil societies. It is as important to protect and strengthen cultural diversity as it is to protect ecological bio-diversity.

Sustaining hope in change is presented as a Utopia by those who hold global power. This was also true 500 years ago. In 1516 Thomas More wrote his famous Utopia, at a time when Europe, divided by wars and religious strife in a struggle for power, seemed con-

demned to permanent decadence. To cure it then required "a physician of madmen". Thomas More concluded, however, that "if the most benevolent and happy inhabitants of Utopia were imitated in many things, the rest of human beings would equally be happier". Almost 50 years ago, Jean Monnet proposed overcoming the crisis in Europe "not only with the union of states, but through the union of people".

The North's globalising, totalising, unidimensional centralism requires a project, still Utopian as yet, that presents 'global democracy' as diverse with its own identities and alternatives, but based on interdependent solidarity, as a viable path which is still open to humanity.

1992 reminds us of five centuries of colonialism and neocolonialism, and also of five centuries of fratricidal wars waged in Europe.

These circumstances in Europe are slowly being surpassed, but what has still not been proposed is how to solve the problems of neocolonialism affecting the majority of the world's inhabitants. East and South might at least raise the question together, before misery itself becomes ungovernable in the South, consequently flooding the North with an invasion of desperate immigrants, or before the East itself explodes, without having had time to surpass the contradictions of the most difficult transition period in history.