

The alleged saviours of planet Earth

Riassunto. - I pretesi salvatori del pianeta Terra

Le confuse basi ideologiche della contestazione antiglobal si fondano sul neopaganesimo gnostico. Gli slogan sono quelli ben noti, che evadono dai veri problemi del “terzo mondo”, appellandosi ad un vago terzomondismo. Altra radice ideologica è quella della nevrosi ecologista. Al contrario di quanto sostenuto dai noglobal, le diseguaglianze sono sempre esistite e la globalizzazione, fenomeno di graduale inclusione nei circuiti commerciali ed informativi, tende piuttosto ad attenuarle. I paesi che realmente rimangono indietro sono quelli che, presi nella morsa di società statiche, di governi autoritari e spesso corrotti, di burocrazie invadenti e non meno corrotte, nella globalizzazione non riescono ad inserirsi, e questo spiega perché l’antiglobalismo è presente solo nei paesi sviluppati, in quanto si tratta di un movimento di retroguardia postmarxista.

Introduction

The ideological justification underpinning the violence unleashed through the streets of Genoa during the G8 meeting is obviously rooted in “third world” rhetoric (the very expression “third world” has been invented by extreme left-wing propaganda) and environmentalism, besides having links with neopaganism, in the form of nature-worship, in line with neognostic philosophies. Its spokesmen are the “peaceful” demonstrators and their abettors: people who have taken on themselves the task, perhaps slightly ambitious, to save the world. Self-styled “interpreters and legitimate representatives of mankind”, they maintain that

the world is threatened by an iniquitous and polluting globalization: a perverse process engineered by the “masters of the planet”, a process producing wealth for a few, poverty for all others (a muddled “third world” ideology) and environmental degradation (environmentalism). These are exceedingly old contentions, which must now undergo a rational examination.

The miracles of Saint Percentage

Saint Percentage is not on the calendar but performs miracles. To the imagination it lends reality to something which is far from real. The secret lies in that aggregate 100% (20% of mankind owning 80% of the riches, while the remainder 80% of people owns only 20% of all riches, therefore injustice and an urgent call for “redistribution”). All this yields a decided impression of a closed number, of a given amount which cannot be increased, a cake that has mysteriously appeared from somewhere, and that some malignant wizards have cut into unequal parts. But the economy is not a cake, it is a great number of confectioners appointed to bake different cakes. Some are good confectioners who make good cakes, others are not so good, some waste or steal the flour, the sugar and the other ingredients. Some even sell the ingredients to buy a Kalashnikov for themselves.

According to the current propaganda, the wealthy, under the deforming lens of envy and hatred, become automatically the parasites of the poor. Since many people rely on emotions caused

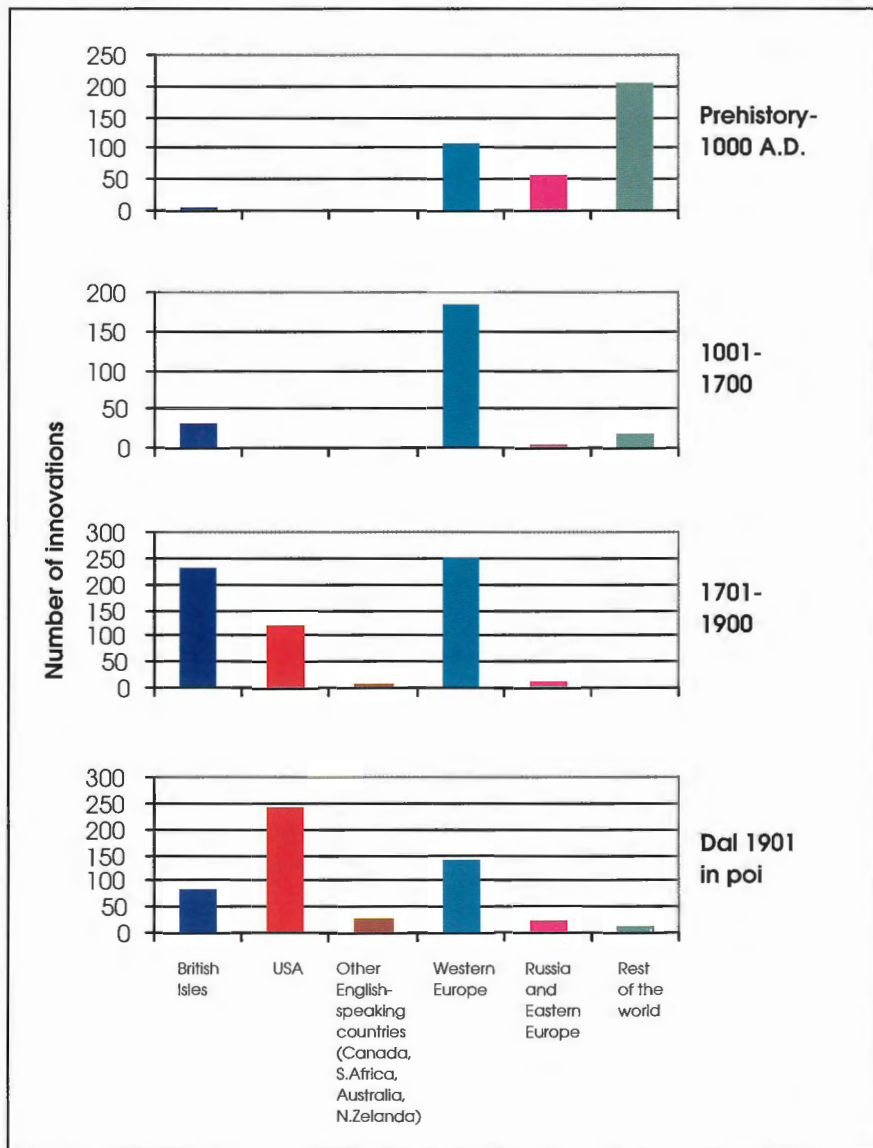


Fig. 1. Innovations generated in different ages by area of origin of innovators (not place where they were active).

by statements whose strength lies in screams, repetition and intimidation, the imposture (up to a point) works. But the thesis of a rich world which lives by sucking the blood of the poor would be questionable in any case, even if the economy really were a "zero sum game", that's to say based on a fixed amount of riches that cannot be increased (with no such things as innovation, value added to goods through applied skills, inventiveness, personal ability), an economy whereby gain by someone would become automatically a loss for someone else. Even if the zero sum model held, it would still be necessary to show that, redistributing everything to everybody in equal parts, dis-

qualities would not arise anew.

Human beings, in fact, although they have (or ought to have) equal dignity and equal rights in the eye of the law, are by no means equal in foresight and ability. A short time after the levelling redistribution, some would have prospered, others would have squandered what they had. Among nations, some would have used the same amount of resources to invest them in productive activities, others to purchase weapons and smart cars for their rulers, while the mass media showed a distorted picture by showing poverty, but not its true causes (Glucksmann & Wolton 1987). A trivial reasoning, no doubt, but suited to the intellectual



level of the many *maîtres à penser* who rely on the even rougher slogans of Saint Percentage. And what about entrusting to the State the task to rule everything, so that the clever and sparing might not prevail against the squanderer? We would have a world scale Big Brother, an all-seeing police State, in which the satraps at the top would in any case be highly privileged, with all the others forcibly levelled downwards. Such solutions have been tried many times in history, with the results we all know.

On the other hand, it cannot be overemphasised that *the modern economy is by no means a "zero sum game"*. In order just to *begin* to speak of the highly complex working of today's economic world, it is imperative, first of all, to understand what development is, by studying the way whereby the developed world has come into being (Dugan 2000, Rosenberg & Birdzell 1986, Wilson 1979). It goes without saying that we cannot simply apply elsewhere the methods that have been effective in the West. The Westerners themselves have followed development paths which were somewhat different from one another. To bear in mind the different experiences, however, can doubtless aid us in approaching the problem in truly scientific fashion, thereby shunning any ideological and demagogic *cul-de-sac*, and also avoiding the fancies of a preindustrial eden, which, as Ricossa (1974) teaches us, was the reign of fatigue.

Far from a rational examination of the facts, many *laudatores temporis acti* (worshippers of the past) regard development and urban centres, which are the main engines of development, as the roots of all social evils. Others, like the celebrated Lacoste (1965, 1983) and many other besides, dream to be able to speak of underdevelopment without having first made clear to themselves what development really is. Others still, like the talkative *lobby* gravitating around the masonic "Club di Roma" (Gabor & Colombo 1976; Mann Borgese 1986, 1988; Meadows *et al.* 1972; Mesarovic & Pestel 1974; Moll 1991; Neurath 1994; Peccei 1974; Pestel 1989; Tinbergen, Dolman & Van Ettinger 1976) or the theoreticians of neocolonialism (Baran 1957), locked into barren malthusian schemes (Malthus 1999), are unable to realize the basic conceptual difference between *growth*, *development* and *progress*.

The most effective approach to the problem of development appears to be that by Friedmann (1972), who defines it as *innovative structural change of the society and the space it occupies and uses*. It is no mere economic concept: innovations in the political, social and cultural fields also fuel

change, and therefore development. Moreover, it is nowhere prescribed that innovations must invariably be good: there may be some very nasty ones (e.g. the introduction of a dictatorship, or anti-Christian persecutions), and many have both positive and negative effects (a new factory may provide jobs but pollute the environment), and some others may be difficult to assess, since no man is able to see all ends of good and evil. This definition of development is therefore far from being unduly optimistic, and even less is it tainted with triumphalism.

Needless to say, development must be clearly distinguished from *growth*, which is a merely quantitative change without structural modification of the social and spatial system, and we should also avoid carefully any confusion with the vague term "progress". If by progress we mean improvements in some limited features of human activity, for instance if we say that computers ten years ago were less advanced than those of today, and therefore that there has been "progress" in their construction, we are certainly stating an obvious and undeniable truth. But anyone who tries to make us believe that there such thing as "Progress" with the capital letter, in the rough and arrogant fashion of the so-called "Enlightenment", perhaps adding the pretence to "make the new man" and to "save mankind", just falls into a tragically misleading myth of neognostic make, as all historical experience has abundantly shown. The amount and diversification of resources absorbed (and often, unfortunately, pollution too) both grow with development (we are now talking merely of *economic* development), the latter unfolds thanks to innovations, and innovations flourish thanks to an entrepreneurial culture unhindered by envy and paralytical bureaucratic interference.

Entrepreneurs are often singled out as people pushing hard for self-interest (or the mythical "maximisation of profit"), but often they are just human beings aiming at a certain level of satisfaction in their work and no more; some of them are really sharks, undoubtedly. We should clearly distinguish between a healthy entrepreneurship that generates jobs and does not lean heavily on the support of the taxpayer, from the action of speculators who do not accept entrepreneurial risk but rely on public money to cover their debts: such speculators are usually a hindrance, often a severe one, to the adoption of useful innovations. We must also be aware that self-interest takes many shapes, and is by no means merely economic: a politician, a trade union leader or a bureaucrat seek power, an academic or a judge seek power



and prestige, and the methods to achieve such desirable ends and satisfy personal ambition may sometimes be as morally unjustifiable as any of a dishonest entrepreneur. In any case we cannot overemphasise the basic fact that the causes of development and underdevelopment are intrinsically internal, *no intervention from outside can replace the efficiency* (or lack of it) of the economy of a given country, nor can it create efficiency where there is none.

And how does economic efficiency arise? It is directly proportional to the level of entrepreneurial culture, and therefore to the greater or lesser propensity to generate innovations and adopt them, accepting the attendant entrepreneurial risks. It can never be overemphasized that the true engine of an economic system is innovation. Let us consider the innovations generated in different historic ages, distinguishing them according to the country of birth of innovators (Fig. 1). A veritable explosion of British economic dominance took place during the First Industrial Revolution (1701-1900), while the United States slowly emerged, to achieve wholesale domination in the following industrial and postindustrial stages (from 1901 onwards). The primacy of English-speaking countries is unchallenged, while western Europe lags behind, though staying far stronger than non-European, non-English-speaking countries. The comparative collapse of the rest of the world in terms of innovations generated is quite evident: in the last stage it is almost exclusively represented by Japan, an excellent imitator of the West. Eastern Europe, up to the year 1000 was brightly represented by the Greek world, but later fell into a decidedly subordinate role.

The march of innovations had a recognisable impact on the relation between income and population growth. Between the year 1000 AD and 1500 the world population grew by 0.09% a year and income per capita by 0.05%: these five century were therefore marked by stagnation and slow regression. The protoindustrial and early industrial age, from 1500 to 1820 saw a marked acceleration of population dynamics (0.28%), while income lagged (0.07%) and this was an age of worsening social conditions, typical of the early stages of accelerated development. But from 1820 to 1995 income rocketed by 1.27% a year, easily passing a population growth of 0.96% (Maddison 2000). As a "general law", we can say that economic isolationism is tantamount to underdevelopment (Fraser Institute 2002): even in Europe, the success stories of Spain and Ireland are obviously linked to the opening of the economy. Globaliza-

tion is advantageous for those involved in it: in the "third world", low income globalisers (such as China, India, and several Latin American countries) have improved a great deal, with growth rates of the gross national product at 5% from 1990, against a mere 2% of industrialised countries (whose more dynamic nodal regions are active globalizers): these harbour together about half of mankind, ie three billion people, who have improved, in general, their social conditions (almost entirely passive globalizers, but globalizers nevertheless). Other developing countries (such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, a large part of the Arab world and Africa), with two billion people, instead, have experienced, in the Nineties, an annual decline of 1% of their per capita income: these have been left at the margin of globalization (non globalizers), and are the real problem. The most isolationistic countries such as North Korea, Cambodia, Burma, and many African countries, are those which fare worst of all.

Between 1990 and 1998 the number of people living in conditions of dire poverty, with an income below \$ 1 daily, have dropped from 21% to 19% (Cecchi Paone 2002): there is no reason to be particularly happy about a situation in which nearly one fifth of mankind is still in such desperate straits, but this shows that poverty at least is not growing, but rather slowly receding. Nevertheless, average expectation of life has improved everywhere: in 1900, in what is now the "third world" people could expect to live 26 years, in the West 46 years; today Westerners live in average 78 years, people of the "third world" 46 years, and the increase has been in a century, 77% in the West, and a staggering 146% in the "third world". Evidently, innovation, especially in the field of preventive medicine and reduction of infant mortality, has by no means bypassed even the poor countries, which have benefitted from medical research taking place in Europe and North America. Yet, many imbalances are still there, but they are not hard to account for. Any innovation in a favourable entrepreneurial environment – to be found in the West, while it is usually hard to find in the "third world" – produces money, often huge amounts of money, as it generates input-output links and gives rise to innumerable adaptations and improvements. It is no chance if the most innovative and entrepreneurial countries are also the richest. What does it mean, then, to state that the developed countries are rich because they have plundered the rest of the world? If 20% of the people hold 80% of the wealth, is it not perhaps because they have invented and adopted 95% of the innovations?



The whole matter hangs upon the level of *dynamism of the society*. If the opposing contention were true, and the wealthy were rich only at the expense of the poor, how could we possibly explain that countries which never possessed any colonial empire, such as Sweden or Switzerland, have an income per caput higher than Great Britain, which has ruled for centuries over the largest colonial empire in history? Spain and Portugal also had giant colonial empires and certainly did not restrain themselves in exploiting them. But to what use did they put the riches thus accumulated? Instead of investing them in productive activities, they built lavish palaces and purchased works of art. As a consequence, the economies of the two Iberian countries have lagged far behind the rest of Western Europe. Their living standard began to rise only when they undertook industrialisation, in the second half of the 20th century, when colonialism was long gone.

On the contrary, England and Holland in the 16th century, *before* undertaking the conquest of their colonial empires, and even before entering the great circuits of world commerce, which was being formed on the wake of great geographic discoveries, were the two wealthiest countries in the world. Why? The answer is straightforward, perhaps too straightforward for those who like complications, allowing a broader range of propaganda manoeuvre: *local* innovations, *local* entrepreneurship, exploitation of *local* resources with *local* manpower. An efficient agriculture (compared with contemporary standards), coal mining, metallurgy, wool cloth making, in England. High quality agriculture, linen cloth, fishing of North Sea herrings and their export after smoking them, in Holland. These were the economic recipes of the two countries which are still among the most meaningful among those having a high development level. The riches of India and Indonesia, forthcoming great colonial objectives of these two European powers, were still to come to the fore. Colonial conquest was a consequence, and not the cause, of their strength, which took the form of military and political power, in comparison with the weakness of the future colonies. Weakness has always invited aggression. *Exploitation took place, no one denies it, but it was by no means the cause of the imbalance in riches and power.*

And after all, how did India and Indonesia fare, before being colonised, respectively by the British and the Dutch? "Third worldism" has emphasized their wealth, Golconda diamonds, for example, to compare them with their present widespread poverty which is alleged to be due to colonial (and

neocolonial) dependency. But, the fabulous wealth of precolonial India was held by the maharajas, while poverty had always been the common lot of the mass of the population long before the Indians heard of such thing as the British Empire. Moreover, Indian poverty is receding. And what about the vast modern sector of the Indian economy, including the great computer pole of Bangalore, largely responsible for solving the problem of the dreaded "millennium bug"?

Severely depressed conditions existed in the Precolumbian empires: yes, the Inca swam in (unproductive) gold, but what of his subjects, systematically held in humiliating subjection? If they, trembling, had to visit the Inca, were obliged to carry a weight tied on their back, in order to stress their abysmal inferiority, and the fact that perhaps this was not felt as something humiliating, "because it was part of their own culture", as the relativist anthropologist would say, just makes things worse. And when they were sacrificed to ferocious and cannibal gods? These gods, in the diabolical mythologies prior to evangelisation, were deemed to "need" drinking human blood to live. Our relativist friend would object, again, that "so was their culture", and it was not felt as a negative thing. And again, the answer is that this just makes the case even blacker. Asia, Precolumbian America, Africa (at least the better organised tribal kingdoms) lived in the tradition of oriental despotism, in which the ruler was master of everything, including the life and the death of all his subjects. In Russia, oriental despotism was introduced by the Mongolic invasion in the early 13th century, and this heavy heritage accounts for a great many things, in terms of non-existent democratic traditions, of economic backwardness, of elephant-like bureaucracy, of political "justice" used to destroy any opposition to the regime and not to protect the common people against common criminals: this was, and to some extent still, the condition of the desperate Eurasian lands where communism has found an easy ground and has taken roots.

Leaving aside the exceptional case of Indian weavers (prevented by caste barriers from changing occupation to escape the competition of British cloth, during the colonial age), on which Lenin (1916) insisted so much, taking it to be the general rule of all European imperialism, it is impossible to sustain that colonialism invariably worsened the economic conditions of colonial peoples, first of all because it would be hard to find something to worsen the situation even more, and moreover because in the colonies something has been built (the Indian railways have been the

largest investment made in Asia in the 19th century), some notion of modern economy has been introduced, after all, and if today Bangalore, mentioned above, and the city-state of Singapore are among the major centres for computer production, and enjoy a comparatively high living standard, this is due to contacts started under colonialism and to entrepreneurship, both foreign and local.

Neither does the marxist thesis viewing neocolonialism as the main source of prosperity for the developed world, bear scrutiny. If colonialism, with its paraphernalia of political and social control, has not been a significant factor to make the colonisers richer and the colonised poor, why should neocolonialism do so, with its network of relationships less rigid and constrictive, and which is rather linked, or tries to be linked, to attempts to stimulate development? The utter inability of marxist theory to generate valid predictions is well known. The marxian "prophecy" of an imminent revolution in mid 19th century has failed, the further "prophecy" on the fall of the more advanced "capitalist" countries first, has gone the same way. Revolution (or rather a military putsch) occurred only in backward countries, beginning with Russia. The "prophecy" on the end of all religions has been ridiculed. The leninist thesis of imperialism as the "supreme stage of capitalism" has gone utterly wrong too (Aron 1951). Valid scientific theories are singled out by a high predictive ability. To stay within the field of the social sciences, let us recall the formidable intuitions by Tocqueville (1992), who depicted a future dominated by the rivalry between Russia and America and forecast that racial conflicts were going to be the greatest difficulty for the United States, and this hundred and seventy years ago, when prospects of that kind were extremely remote. Marxism, on the contrary, as pointed out by Pera (1979), had constantly to "run after facts, in order to explain why things had not gone according to its predictions".

In line with the marxist tradition, "third world" ideology and nonglobalism are essentially destructive criticism. Strange bedfellows are, in this regard, (post)communists, Le Pen and other extreme right-wingers, nostalgic protectionists, multi-coloured pauperists including many priests. Often the unequal terms of exchange are singled out as responsible for "third world" poverty. It is true that raw materials coming from the "third world" fetch low prizes, while industrial goods produced in "rich" countries are expensive, but industrial production brings forth a value added (through work and technology) which a raw material can-

not possibly have. It is true that economic aid often turns into a support to firms of developed countries setting up branch firms in developing countries. It is also true that a greater liberalisation of exchanges could help developing economies a great deal. On the other hand, the multinational firms in average pay salaries twice or three times as high as those current in the developing countries in which they set up their branches. And in any case the causes of development and underdevelopment run deeper, they are still and in any case internal to the different countries. It is worth stressing once more that without a social and entrepreneurial dynamism, without an ability and propensity to generate innovations, to accept them, to put them to good use (resources all of intellectual and cultural nature, neither material nor financial), any economic opportunity, either based upon internal physical resources or upon resources coming from outside, will inevitably be lost.

Neither is underdevelopment something un-moving and unchanging. Not a few countries formerly backward have been able to rise, treading in their turn the path to industrialisation. The club of developed countries tends to grow. During the late 19th century just a few countries of western Europe and the USA could be regarded as affluent. In the following century, there have been several success stories, and not only in countries mainly settled by Europeans, such as Canada and Australia. Any country achieving an entrepreneurial culture can put resources to a good use and increase its share of production (and pollutants too). Also, economic liberty goes hand in hand with political freedom (Fraser Institute 2002). The diffusion of the habits of the open societies boosts the self-esteem and strength of entrepreneurial and professional classes, which become better able to counteract the perverse power of political and military cliques (Novak 1996). Globalization is a process of inclusion, and the countries with better prospects of catching out with the richer ones are precisely those having more open societies and therefore more open policies (Bonaglia & Goldstein 2003). Saint Percentage is by no means the unchanging total suggested by an emotional propaganda, neither can it be easily altered by the magic word "redistribution". It is an easy task to redistribute money, especially if it does not belong to us, but to taxpayers. It is not as easy to "redistribute" innovative and entrepreneurial abilities. Those who call loudly for "redistribution" of wealth evidently do not know, or do not want to know, that wealth has first to be produced.



Even worse, by *accusing colonialism, dependency and globalization for every problem besetting the less developed countries, the noglobals only manage to offer ideological support to dictators and warlords who are largely responsible for the poverty of their peoples.* It was easy, for Saddam Hussein, to claim that the embargo was causing untold suffering to the people of Iraq, he was constantly supported by sizeable Western lobbies evidently accustomed to consider countries as brutal totalitarian blocks, being unable to distinguish between the rulers (who may be oppressive and corrupt) and the common people (who may be their victims). But when the Americans troops entered the lavish palaces of the *rais*, they not only found a luxury worthy of Harun al Rashid, but also huge sums of money. It is permissible to surmise that perhaps the plight of the Iraqi population might have been lessened if Saddam's wealth had been used differently? And there are some more questions the opponents of globalization should answer. How comes that countries never colonised are exceedingly poor, such as Afghanistan, whereas former colonies, such as Malaysia, are far richer? Why is no global unrest strictly localised in developed countries, while developing ones (with the marginal exception of a few fast food outlets wrecked in India, but more for reasons of culture shock than for real opposition to globalization) tend to regard globalization as beneficial? Although these questions have been asked before, no answer has been forthcoming, yet. In view of the emotional, unscientific character of noglobol ideology, it is highly unlikely that an answer will ever come.

Unsolved problems and unanswered questions

The straightforward problem of maintenance reveals a great deal on the static nature of some societies, suffering from lack of entrepreneurship, perhaps with governments which are not as competent and honest as might be wished. It does not take to be particularly bright or to possess plentiful financial resources to keep what we already have in passable order, yet things are not that simple. We said already that many "third world" governments prefer purchasing military hardware instead of feeding their peoples, but, if the weapons are not swiftly used to wage war against a neighbour, what happens to them? These are, of course, complex machines, which cannot simply stored in a shed. Yet, in the hands of some "third world" regimes, not all, but most of them, fighter planes and tanks,

dearly bought with resources that might have been far better used, become quite soon unusable, and new ones must be purchased. "Third world" metropolitan cities tend to vie with New York pushing their skyscrapers higher and higher, and build large prestigious avenues, but not infrequently basic infrastructures are rather substandard. Under the skyscrapers and the lavishly broad avenues there are often sewers with a disturbing tendency to become clogged, with all the consequences that can easily be imagined.

Static societies have further disadvantages of their own making. Let us consider the problem of land ownership. The "third world" is hiding huge capitals which do not enter the production circuits because they are locked into buildings and fields held in common, into areas under tribal tenures and given in use to people according to traditional oral legal agreements, without any legal property title. Therefore they can neither be accepted by the banks as guarantees against loans, nor developed within the modern sector of the economy. This huge immobilised capital is worth over \$ 9000 billion, twenty times the value of all investments in developing countries between 1989 and 1999 (De Soto 2001). This huge submerged economy could turn the scales towards a positive development in most countries now struggling with poverty. The emergence of this wealth is highly desirable for all concerned, because it would be cheaper to pay taxes rather than bribes and having to hide from the authorities, thereby foregoing opportunities for expansion of business. But such a healthy solution is hindered by gigantic bureaucratic obstacles: regular registration of a small business enterprise requires hundred of bureaucratic passages, an inordinate time spent filling up legal forms and the completion of the procedure may take sometimes five to ten years or more. The opening of a new enterprise in Canada costs \$ 280, requires 2 bureaucratic procedures and is completed in 2 days. The same figures for Bolivia are: \$ 2696, 20 bureaucratic procedures and 82 days; in Hungary (where the bureaucratic tradition of communism still lingers in spite of the demise of the regime) the cost is \$ 3647,10 bureaucratic procedures and 53 days (Cecchi Paone 2002).

The ideological opposition to the industrial world often takes the form of an extreme catastrophism. Business cycle slumps are interpreted every time as the result of irreconcilable "contradictions of the system", deemed to pave the way to endless depression, social unrest and (hopefully, for someone) revolution. The Seventies and Eighties were years of complex and highly sophisticated marxi-



an “analyses” on the “transition from capitalism to socialism” (whatever the meaning of these words may be). The “analysts” were so busy with their beautiful “explanations” of non-existent changes that they were taken unawares by the changes that eventually did take place. Now, many of those same “scholars” maintain that the fall of the communist regimes is “their” victory, because “that was not socialism”, or “not communism”. It would be interesting to know what it was, then. It is worth stressing that the crisis of all marxian applications has involved not only the communist regimes, but democratic socialism as well, from the United Kingdom to Sweden, where the socialist parties have been obliged to largely to abandon dirigism, to avoid serious electoral consequences. Can we expect the opponents, the catastrophists of development and of the attendant unavoidable globalization, to realise that their catastrophism is largely wishful thinking?

There are more serious reasons to be worried, reasons that nonglobal catastrophists seem unable to recognise. Abortion and attendant birthrate decline are the causes of a mounting population suicide of developed countries (Dumont 1991, Dumont, Sauvy *et al.*, 1984). An egoistic attitude generates the “Kronos syndrome”: individuals do not wish to accept that their time is limited and that they will have to pass away and leave the stage to future generations; like Kronos, they prefer to devour their offspring. This edonistic/materialistic attitude, utterly contrary to the Christian roots of the Western world, leads straight into disaster, moral, social, economic. Of course, the alleged “saviours of the Earth”, while strutting and fretting for this and that, do ignore this very real problem, this race towards collective suicide, or rather hail it as a great benefit. One of the consequences of the “Kronos syndrome” is that an aging population becomes less and less apt to accept new ideas: we are therefore running headlong, in Western Europe especially, into a serious decrease of social dynamism, into a renewed static society, ready to decay and be conquered by cultures (such as the Islamic one) which laugh at feminism, birth control and abortion. Demographic victories are the only stable and final ones.

Those who really try to aid the people of poor countries by working there as unpaid volunteers, when they bring clothing or medicines, are often obliged to declare that these articles are for their personal use, lest the goods be seized at the frontier, as accepting aid in that form is not “dignified for the country”. This is the official excuse. The true reason is that the ruling clique, often the

president and members of his family, only want aid in cash, which remains in their pockets. And the seized clothing and medicines? Sold for good money, pocketed by the same clique. The media almost invariably show a conventional image of underdevelopment. Two characters: the wealthy Westerner filling his belly, the famished “third world” poor. However, they leave out of the picture a third character: the soldier wielding a Kalashnikov, pushing the poor towards deportation and starvation.

The seminal case, extensively discussed by Glucksmann & Wolton (1987), is that of Ethiopia with its artificial famines caused by the deportations under the marxist regime of Menghistu, who had forbidden the reading of the Bible and filled the country with giant pictures of Marx and Lenin. The communist Cambodia of the broken skulls is another highly meaningful example. The genocide of the Montagnards in Vietnam is a further case in point: “guilty” of supporting the Americans during the war, the people of this ethnic group are rapidly disappearing through sterilisation and countless atrocities; they were more than two million, they are now reduced to six hundred thousand and in a few years they will be no more. In Sudan the northern Islamic regime is mercilessly destroying, by massacres, tortures and forced conversions, the southern Christians and animists. In the whole of Africa south of the Sahara, tribal conflicts and feuds within ruling families are playing havoc. *Silence, on tue* (Silence, we are killing), the title of the book by Glucksmann & Wolton cited above, is highly significant: no media coverage, no peace marches, no multicoloured flags for millions of victims.

If we speak of a “first world” (or developed world) and of a “third world” (or world of underdevelopment), it is fit to remember the “second world” too, that’s to say that world variously called “communist”, “real socialist”, or “ruled by a marxist nomenklatura”. In the third edition of the even too celebrated *Géographie du sous-développement*, Lacoste (1976) finally realised the importance of the entrepreneurial culture, and acknowledged, in his marxist jargon, that “in the underdeveloped countries what lacked was the bourgeoisie” (what would be more properly called an entrepreneurial élite), but he proposed the singular thesis that real socialism in the “third world” had at least the merit of to “do away with unemployment, and rather creating a scarcity of manpower”. But Lacoste forgets that it is an easy task to eliminate unemployment wielding totalitarian power: it suffices to introduce forced labour, precisely what has



been done in the communist countries.

In this regard, and interesting fact accurately suppressed by the marxian historical vulgate is that pre-revolutionary Russia, during the half century prior to 1917, was effectively developing, thanks to foreign investments, coming especially from Great Britain, Belgium and France (Von Laue 1963). Not only, but on the wake of foreign example, some Russian entrepreneurship was also developing, according to an imitative process which later worked exceptionally well in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, that's to say in all that fringe of eastern Asia which escaped communism. Between 1865 and the outbreak of the first world war, milk and cheese production developed in Siberia, textiles in St. Petersburg and Moscow, steel in eastern Ukraine. In the leninist gulag, perfected by Stalin, which lasted until Gorbachev's time included, with centralised planning geared especially to arms production, this entrepreneurial development was crushed. The "leading country" became the seat of gigantic armed forces built upon an economic and social void. There was no production of the most basic consumer goods. Prices were low because they were forced downwards, empty shop windows exhibited propaganda posters instead of goods.

All other communist countries fell in line with the "leading country", no matter whether they were satellites or rebels to the leadership of the Kremlin. Secrecy and spies everywhere (we have witnessed the obsession with secrecy even in the recent case of Sars pneumonia in China, which allowed the epidemics to spread). The whole was masked by a noisy propaganda campaign and by statistical imposture: for example the ratio of doctors to patients seemed higher in the USSR than in the West because paramedics were counted as doctors. The imposture was heavily supported by Western mass media personalities, intellectuals, politicians, as a few documents (such as the Mitrokhin dossier), escaped from the secrecy of Kgb archives, exhaustively prove. The collapse of such a system was unavoidable. The "second world", plunged in the nefarious cultural heritage of oriental despotism (and still sunk in it, since the old story continues in China, Vietnam, North Korea, and elsewhere), begs the question: did the "second world" ever exist as such, or was it just deeply underdeveloped and therefore a mere part of the "third world"?

But who really helps the poorer countries? In practice mainly, or rather only, the missionaries of the Catholic Church. According to marxists, missionaries exercise a negative role (at most they just

provide some perfunctory relief), because they prevent the achievement of "political consciousness" by the poor, which, translated from propaganda jargon into human speech, means that, by spreading charity, i.e. love, they prevent the spread of class hatred and the seizure of power by professional revolutionaries. Here, therefore, comes to the fore the marxian concept on religion viewed as "the opium of the people", which has been the catchword of uncounted bloody persecutions against the Church. In fact, missionary aid is by no means and opiate and a perfunctory relief. It provides the basics of development (medical care, excavation of wells, new crops, handicraft training). This is the true path to effective aid: *to help people to do things by themselves*. The farmer who has learnt to use capillary tubes for drop irrigation can feed his own family and have surplus to sell; the artisan who has learnt to use properly hammer, pincers, saw and planer (a skill far from easy), is the potential small entrepreneur of tomorrow, and we can say likewise of him who has learnt the trade of electrician, plumber or farmer.

But what do the noglobals propose to do? Beyond vague slogans, such as "another world is possible", it is utterly unclear what viable proposals are contained in their utterances, in Porto Alegre and elsewhere. Certainly they have not taken any stand on the need to improve the level of societal dynamism. The myth of "redistribution" forcefully put forward does not take any account of the intellectual inputs necessary to a modern economy. The proposal of abolishing the patents for inventions, if implemented, would bring about the end of any incentive for research and development, with an attendant dramatic standstill of innovation in the developed world and no advantage accruing to developing countries. What "redistribution" practically means, is that production and income in the whole world would be crushed everywhere to the same level. It seems more than probable that all this is but an ideological screen for a totalitarian design, exactly like the multifarious ecologist mythology, which makes up the other horn of the muddled noglobal ideology.

The ecologistic neurosis

In its "reckless quest for profit", "capitalist" development, together with the "population explosion", is bent of "destroying the planet" – this is the wisdom pouring from the mass media. The villain of the situation, the Great Intruder, is, of course, man. It is therefore declared imperative to



contain the number of obnoxious human beings. What an excellent thing, abortion. The unborn child is sacrificed to the comfort of adults, and in this way more room can be found for the animal species threatened by human encroachment. The sweet moralists so deeply moved by the cruel destiny of seals have apparently no qualms for the children murdered before their birth. Extremist ecologism, by disowning the Western open society, is also responsible of throwing discredit upon the only effective controls on environmental problems, exercised thanks to transparency of information.

Precisely the democratic control exercised in the West by the people upon economic initiatives has prevented the dreadful environmental havoc brought forth by communist industrialisation in Eastern Europe and in the Eurasian plains. In Ukraine, oil pollution is such that a lighted cigarette stump thrown into the Dnjeper has set fire on a river stretch several kilometers long. The burning of coal in the open air has poisoned the people from East Germany to the Urals and beyond. The Kara peninsula has become a dangerously radioactive area. The hydrology of the Russian great plains are in disastrous disarray, large parts of the taiga are dying due to the lowering of the water table, the Kara Bogaz has been dried up and steppe winds are scattering many million tons of salt over the fields in Central Asia, lakes and rivers are dead all over Russia and Siberia. The highly hazardous Three Gorges project (involving, among other things the dislocation of more than one million people) in the strongly diastrophic area of Central China poses a serious threat: in the event of major earthquake, the consequences will be too ghastly to contemplate. More of this in a further contribution, by Corona, in the present volume.

Environmental protection is a serious matter: in the Western countries evaluations of environmental impact for every major project are justly mandatory. What is not acceptable, instead, is extreme ecologism, which is not science, but a fashionable ideology, a form of mystique clothed in scientific terms culled from truly scientific ecology. It is a kind of pantheism, evidently rooted in the neognosis, in awe in front of "mysterious forces of nature", which fires gullible spirits wishing to feel themselves part of a "grand project to save the planet". After rejecting Christianity, with its obnoxious Ten Commandments ("Do as you please", was the motto of diabolical initiation of the Hell-Fire Club, a highly significant product of the 18th century English Enlightenment), the human soul is

thirsty of purpose and meaning, and tries to find it in gnosis. The gnostic ideology rejects the limited human perfection, it is the frenzy of those who "do not tolerate not to be God" (Samek Lodovici 1991), and thanks to "a magic jump beyond the mirror of reality", hope to find the edenic world.

It is an extremely old heresy: harking back to the dawn of Christianity, with clearly pre-Christian forerunners. It reappeared in thousand different shapes and versions. The myths of the "good savage", of "mother nature", of the "living planet", are some of its most recent idols. The ideology of "Gaia", the living planet, is but a reissue of the heathen Gea or Mother Earth. Of course, any planet is but a big stone revolving around a star, which can or cannot offer physical and chemical conditions favourable to life. The idea of "Gaia" is mystic, not scientific. Confronted by these forms of irrationality, it matters little that ecology, the truly scientific one, has shown the high resilience of ecosystems (Holling 1978), or the fact that the very concept of sustainable development is utterly vague and needs, at the very least, a careful re-interpretation and redefinition.

It matters little that the Club of Rome has already been obliged to reassess many times its catastrophic predictions that had been proved utterly wrong, thereby causing the Club to become the target of devastating criticism (Clark 1973, Larouche 1983). In the meantime, misguided fanatics are prepared to make use of highly unconventional methods to prevent the broadening of a road necessary to ease traffic and prevent accidents: they dig tunnels and bar them with steel doors to forestall their pursuers. Their presence underground prevents bulldozers from coming into action for fear to cause a collapse of the tunnels on the human moles. They chain themselves to trunks, or even nail themselves to them; in short they seek sacrifices they probably would not even dream of undertaking to save a human being or their very soul.

In accordance with the newly rising heathenism, one finds in ecologism all the moral features of the old pagan world: infanticide by exposure under the cloak of legalised "therapeutic" abortion to prevent the spread of human life, the denial of a special place in nature to man (degraded to an animal among animals), the cult of the Mother Earth, tree worship, and worship of water sources and animals, a rampant superstition which enriches without measure such individuals as "magicians", seers and quacks (he who does not believe in God is by no means a "free" thinker, but a conceited being ready to believe anything), the



conscious idealised reappraisal of ancient heathenism so respectful of nature (and also slave-driver, persecutor of Christians, and a veritable world of terror ruled by an inexorable Fate to which the gods themselves were subject; however these less pleasant features of paganism are conveniently passed over).

The irrational nature of ecologism gives rise to true psychoses (Ciusa & Spirito 1971). Some examples among many may help to clarify this point. The Yugoslav ship *Cavtat* sunk in the Otranto canal on July 14, 1974, after a collision with another ship. Immediately after the accident, some scientists expressed serious worries about a possible catastrophe for the whole Adriatic or even for the Mediterranean. The mass media immediately echoed with alarm, not without hot polemics on the alleged inefficiency of the recovery operations to free the Italian seas from the "terrible" threat represented by the 200 tons of tetraethyl lead contained in the wreck. Only three years after the shipwreck, a quantitative analysis (D'Arrigo 1977) showed the real size of the problem: even if all drums containing $\text{Pb}(\text{C}_2\text{H}_5)_4$ had been smashed and their content had homogeneously mixed with sea water in the Canal of Otranto, the concentration of $\text{Pb}(\text{C}_2\text{H}_5)_4$ would have grown by 0.05 parts per billion: a concentration comparable to that already naturally present, whereas with a diffusion in the whole Adriatic the tetraethyl lead from the wreck would have totalled just 0.006 parts per billion. Anyway, given the high specific weight of the chemical and high water pressure, the $\text{Pb}(\text{C}_2\text{H}_5)_4$ gushing out of the drums could not have possibly become dispersed, but it would have spread at the bottom up to a few hundred metres around to wreck, destroying benthonic life on such a puny area as to cause no serious problems at a regional scale.

Like the case of *Cavtat*, that of the oil tanker *Haven*, which caught fire and sunk by Arenzano, Liguria, in 1992, was widely reported in the media, obviously presented as a catastrophe for the whole Mediterranean. Quite soon, the wreck which was expected to poison the sea became a true "haven" for benthonic, nectonic and planktonic fauna, and a few years later it swarmed with healthy fishes, mollusks and crustaceans. As usual, while the disaster was glaringly reported, the recovery of the ecosystem (which in the end was vastly improved, as the big submerged structure provided for the fauna a refuge area which otherwise would have never existed) went almost unnoticed. This mass media noise on disasters, and the scanty attention paid to the later solutions of the problems has two

quite obvious reasons: one intrinsic to the nature of the media themselves, sensationalism to attract the attention of the public and widen the audience, the other is that the communities involved have a vested interest in magnifying the problem in view of the forthcoming litigation for damages.

But is it true that nature is unpolluted, and that man is an alien source of pollution? Nature, "provident" and "intelligent", does feed everybody as a mother? He who harbours idillic fancies of this kind evidently has never thought of the cholera vibrio and the bacillus vector of the bubonic plague. Neither has he ever seen a lion in action against the cubs of his own pack, to whom he systematically breaks the neck to protect his position as the dominant male. Neither does he imagine what a weasel does if it manages to penetrate a henroost: it does not kill one hen which would be amply sufficient to fill its belly (and that of many more weasels), on the contrary it slaughters as many of them as it finds. The meek turtledoves fight each other to the death, each trying to wrench the tongue from the other's mouth: at the end of the struggle the loser is literally torn to pieces. And what of the millions of species extinguished before man appeared on earth? Whole ecosystems of past geological eras have been erased by nature, sometimes in sudden catastrophies.

A very heavy responsibility in the formation of a watered-down and distorted image of the natural world falls on the cartoons and the documentary films by Disney, where everything is splendid and ordered, and where you never see animals eating, except a few herbivores. The result: an increase of serious accidents because more and more youngsters, especially Anglosaxon, bewildered by nature worship, behave recklessly in dangerous ares. Among the many examples, it is very significant that of the eleven years old Mark Garratshea from Baltimore who, in the summer of 2000, with his mother, went to the national park of the Okavango delta in Botswana. The child, who had seen many times the Walt Disney film *King Lion*, was convinced of the "goodness" of animals and, with permission from his mother, had wished to sleep in an open tent on his own to feel close to these "dear friends" of his. Next morning the following pieces of him were found: the head, an arm, a pool of blood, the whole mixed with urine of hyenas.

Edenic ideology thus plays havoc among the people who only know nature through the Disney Corporation and the WWF. Truly, nature is the most powerful polluter (Ciusa 1976, Hammond

1975, Johnston 1974). During his great expedition in Latin America (1799-1804), the founder of modern geography, Alexander von Humboldt discovered natural sources of oil in the Maracaibo lagoon: the impact of these, which had been pouring at the scale of geological times, must have been far more serious than the shipwreck of a supertanker; evidently, the oil becomes naturally decomposed and ceases to be a problem. The huge amounts of sulphur anhydride let out by volcanoes must necessarily be a major cause of acid rains. Three large eruptions alone, which took place in the space of a century: Tambora (1815), Krakatoa (1883) and Katmai (1912) have ejected in the atmosphere such a huge amount of matter (carbonic anhydride, sulfur anhydride and dust) as to surpass all pollution produced by human civilisation from the beginning. No doubt, mining and metallurgical activities are sources of dangerous metal particles, but plants let out in the atmosphere organic particles containing lead and zinc (Beauford *et al.* 1977). At the same time, the extremely homogenous chemical makeup of the metal content in the atmosphere cause their presence very hard to account for with anthropogenic pollution only.

It seems that alarm mongers often lag behind reality. In the Thirties of last century, British planners and politicians began to voice the deepest worries about the "excessive growth" of cities. After the second world war the Labour Party set up a drastic policy of urban containment and foundation of New Towns in order to "lighten" the demographic pressure of metropolitan cities and provide more "natural" living conditions. Young families moving to the New Towns had serious problems: the expression "New Town Blues" entered the dictionary, meaning the boredom and bad mood of young wives left alone the whole day long in a monotone and dreary urban environment of these dormitory towns while their husbands were out at work. It was not long before it was realised that the problem of "excessive urban growth" had entirely changed face, independently from any policy consciously followed. The demographic crisis and spontaneous emigration from large cities began in fact to cause worries, exactly opposite to the previous ones: mounting depopulation, loss of jobs. In short, the economic health of the cities began to cause widespread alarm. Likewise, "excessive" energy consumption and the attendant pollution are causing fears and igniting polemics, and meanwhile the problem is radically changing: the leading economic sectors, such as electronic and computers have low energy intensi-

ty, whereas they are strongly information intensive, so that ecological problems of high energy consumption and pollution are being solved, thanks to innovations and market trends, in the developed world. The strongest polluters, nowadays, are the developing countries, and this points to the need of more, not less development, in order to heal not only poverty, but the environment too. It has been demonstrated that environmental protection undergoes considerable improvement in a country when per capita income passes the \$ 5000 threshold (Krueger & Helpmann 1991).

Great attention is being paid in the media to the destruction of the Amazon rainforest, dubbed in ecologicistic propaganda the "green lung of the earth", because the plants of the region are deemed to be essential for the production of the oxygen we breath. It is not commonly known, however, that over 90% of this oxygen is produced by sea algae, especially myriads of microscopic ones which are not even remotely in danger of extinction. Likewise it is not generally known that during the repeated ice ages from Late Pliocene onwards, practically the last three million years, forests were repeatedly destroyed by the dramatic climatic changes, and later recovered starting from small ecological niches where the various tree species had managed to survive: yet it does not seem that the disappearance of the forests caused anoxia at all. Moreover, the extent of Amazon rainforest deforestation has been exaggerated, and most of the damage has not been caused by the large corporations, which have adopted conservation policies involving partial and selective logging, but to the landless poor who destroy the trees in wholesale fashion to settle in the land thus laid bare, and then go happily to Porto Alegre to protest alongside the nonglobals (Cecchi Paone 2002).

What is more disastrous, pollution or ecologism? The answer to this question is not easy, but the case of Love Canal, in Upper New York State can offer interesting food for thought (Holden 1980, Kolata 1980). In 1978, the town, which was built on a chemical disposal site, harboured a thousand families. A study commissioned by the Environmental Protection Agency found in the local population some chromosome aberrations, president Carter declared a state of emergency and the residents were evacuated. Two years later the Department of Health and Human Services performed a new investigation and uncovered a great many methodological blunders in the previous research: the percentages of cancers, spontaneous abortions and chromosome aberrations



found among Love Canal residents fell statistically within national averages. Much ado about nothing, but in the meantime the demoralising effects on the people had been devastating and in many cases beyond repair. Many families had broken up: husbands wanted to stay to avert losing the profits of years spent toiling, wives insisted to go away to protect the health of their children; quarrels had arisen, leading to separations and divorces. Those who had not left lived in terror of irreversible genetic damages.

Environmentalists in Italy are few and not particularly popular, but for mysterious reasons they wield a huge influence. In 1992, an eruption of Etna threatened Zafferana Etnea closely, but the “greens” raged against the embankments, the motor scrapers and the artificial gullies which, according to them, would have “spoilt” Etna: evidently a nice stream of lava covering the houses of unlucky families should be regarded, according to them, as an environmental improvement. For years, in the municipality of Rocchetta Tanaro, Piedmont, the “greens” thwarted any attempt to dredge a large bar in the bed of the Tanaro, in spite of repeated requests from the mayor. The reason given was the need to protect a nesting area of a precious flock of grey herons. Eventually, during the flood of 1994 – as the mayor and any other person with a modicum of common sense in the town had foreseen – the bar, which in the meantime had kept growing, formed such an impediment to the flow as to cause a disaster in the built-up area. And the herons? They did by no means suffer, but merely flew to the river bank nearby and built new nests there. In the province of Novara, in 1996, while the damages of the 1994 flood were still being mended, it was forbidden to clean a number of pits to avoid disturbing the habitat of a certain freshwater shrimp. Any comment is unnecessary. *Usque tandem, Catilina, abuteris patientia nostra?*

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