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SYMPOSIUM



# BUSH'S NEW WORLD ORDER AND OURS



BY JEREMY BRECHER

A SYMPOSIUM WITH  
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AND PETER WATERMAN

*The following article was sent to a number of respondents with the request to submit comments for a symposium.*

**T**HE WORLD surely could use a new order—one that would correspond to the needs of people and planet. That's hardly George Bush's New World Order, nor the "Old World Order" that preceded it. But what then might it be?

We live in a world where oil spills, satellite news broadcasts, and fleeing refugees stream across national borders, a world in which an entire factory may be nothing but one work station on a global assembly line. The purpose of this article is to stimulate transnational discussion of what kind of world order would meet human and environmental needs, and how such an order might be realized, in a world whose features are no longer cut to the measure of the nation state.

### The "Old World Order"

**T**HE "OLD World Order," which characterized the decades following World War II, had as its basis the model of sovereign nation states developed in early modern Europe. Humanity was assumed to be divided into distinct peoples. Each people was entitled to form a nation which in turn was entitled to a monopoly of political authority within a given territory, governing all who lived there and determining the use of natural and human products. Each such nation was assumed to have or to be acquiring clear boundaries and political, economic, military, and cultural institutions permitting relatively independent, self-directed functioning.

This system was based on illusions. The human population was not divided into distinct non-overlapping groups, but rather was composed of peoples who had been mixing for millennia and who owed loyalties to multiple religious, political,

ethnic, economic, kin, and other groupings. The result has been continuing conflict.

Further, natural and social forces did not form closed systems where actions taken in one nation had little impact on others. Nations were subject to natural, market, ideological, and other transnational forces, weaker nations were subject to pressure from stronger ones, and nations were often caught up in the unintended effects of transnational interaction processes, like arms races and wars.

Nonetheless, the nation-state system was reinforced during the 19th and most of the 20th centuries as the boundaries of social institutions came increasingly to coincide with those of nations, bringing reality closer to nationalist doctrine. After the decline of European colonialism, the entire world was organized on the nation state model.

The "Old World Order" superimposed three supranational structures over this national structure in the years following

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World War II. The Cold War defined two relatively stable blocs in political, military, economic, and cultural confrontation. The division between industrialized and formerly-colonized nations defined an economically-developed First and an underdeveloped Third World. The United Nations provided a weak forum through which international cooperation could be managed when dominant nations wished it.

This "Old World Order" was marked by tremendous concentrations of power. U.S. economic, political, and military power predominated everywhere except in the Communist "Second World"; the U.S. consumed the lion's share of global resources. The United Nations, the one institution that might have represented common global interests, was a creature of nation states and was usually immobilized in the face of their conflicts. Measures embodying the interests of the great majority of the world's people—for example, disarmament and environmental protection—had little chance in this order if they conflicted with powerful national or other special interests.

## The Old Order Passeth

**T**HE END OF Cold-War bi-polarism, a result of the breakup of the "Second World" and the declining economic power of the United States, has been widely noted. Less noted—but of greater long-run significance—is the erosion of the nation-state system itself.

The 1970s and 1980s saw not the emergence of a new hegemon to replace the United States, but rather a multifaceted globalization and fragmentation of power. U.S. economic institutions hemorrhaged into a global economy of transnational corporations, world markets, and an integrated "global factory." Huge industrial complexes oriented toward national markets were replaced by small, easily-relocated facilities scattered through a variety of countries and producing for a world market. While the economic

center of gravity shifted away from the U.S., no other power developed comparable military capacity. Satellite broadcasting made it possible for people everywhere to see events across the world more easily than those in the next town. Meanwhile, hundreds of civil wars and ethnic insurgencies fractured the unity of established nation states throughout much of the world.

In effect, the boundaries of economic, political, military, and cultural spheres began to decouple or de-align from the borders of nations and superpower spheres of influence and from each other. This deep change underlies many of the dramatic visible changes that mark the end of the "Old World Order," such as the end of the Cold War, the decline in dominance of both the U.S. and the USSR, and the shift of much production from deindustrializing areas in the "First World" to "Newly Industrialized Countries" in formerly underdeveloped regions. The result is a world in which the boundaries of nations and of First, Second, and Third Worlds have been severely eroded, while inequalities of wealth and power have increased but also dispersed through all nations and regions.

## New Orders

**G**ORBACHEV'S "NEW thinking" was, in effect, an attempt to create a new world order by replacing the bi-polar superpower dominance of the cold war era with a "concert of nations" based on genuine national sovereignty. It foundered because it did not come to terms with the de-alignments that were undermining the nation-state framework, particularly the rise of ethnic nationalist movements within established states and the pull of the global economy and culture.

Bush's New World Order, in contrast, represents a tentative step toward a new form of transnational organization in response to the realities of de-alignment. Its intent, while obscure in Bush's speeches, is apparent in his Gulf War strategy and his international economic policy.

Bush's Gulf War coalition pooled different kinds of power possessed by different entities. The U.S. provided

military equipment and trained personnel. Arab countries provided base areas. The Emirs, the Japanese, and the Germans provided cash. The Security Council, dominated by the major powers, provided legitimation for the entire effort. While the war drew on nationalist sentiment in the U.S. and some other countries, its coalition model actually reflected the inability of the U.S. or any other single nation to function as a hegemonic power on its own.

A somewhat similar coalition of "haves" has functioned in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, where conservative policymakers backed by the U.S. and a few wealthy allies have forced poor countries to accept "structural adjustment" plans which open their resources to foreign corporate exploitation and turn their economies into money machines for the benefit of their rich creditors. The Bush administration has tried, not yet successfully, to mobilize a similar coalition in the GATT negotiations on world trade in order to break down national protection of environments, cultures, and economies and make the world safe for unregulated transnational corporate activity.

The Bush New World Order, in sum, aims to create a consortium of powerful political regimes, corporations, and military establishments which will cooperate to preserve their access to the resources of the earth, the products of past human activity, and the fruits of future labor. It aims to establish for transnational corporations what conservative "law and order" provides within nations: protection for private property and its owners' rights to aggrandize themselves. Nations which attempt to resist their assigned place in the hierarchy (whether through democratic aspirations like Sandinista Nicaragua or through a desire for domination like Saddam Hussein's Iraq) can be starved or bombed into submission at financial, political, human, and ethical costs that the Gulf War indicates are acceptable to the coalition. The probable consequences will be repression of insurgencies and increasing concentration of wealth on a global scale.

Whether this Order can adjust conflicts among its partners over time, the way the Coalition did during the Gulf

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War, remains an open question. But its larger difficulty will be its inability to solve the basic problems facing the world. It doesn't address impending ecological catastrophe, the growing gap between rich and poor within and between countries, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, or the denial of basic human rights in most of the globe. This New World Order can't provide security, well being, or freedom to most of the world's people. Indeed, its goal is not to reduce the domination and exploitation of the Old World Order but, under new conditions, to perpetuate them.

## The Limits Of National Resistance

**M**OST OF THE established traditions for resisting and replacing domination accept, indeed celebrate, the nation. They envision a nation state controlled by its own people, controlling its own resources, able to determine its own character and fate. Externally, this has meant "wars of national liberation" to resist foreign domination, ideally to be followed by a world of sovereign nations living in peace with each other. Internally, it has defined wealth and territory as the collective property of nation.

Even under the Old World Order, the nation-state model of resistance and reconstruction proved difficult to realize. Subordination to outside forces and internal ethnic conflict were more the norm than the exception for most nations. State control of economies and militarized strategies for national independence meant dictatorships more often than empowered populations.

With the de-alignment of economic, political, military, and cultural power from the nation, this model has become even less viable. Globalization of the economy has provided most nations a choice of stagnation in isolation or subordination to foreign economic power. Fragmentation has meant fratricidal

conflict over just who constitutes the nation. Given the new military capacities and ability to pool repressive resources manifested by the Gulf Coalition, wars of national liberation seem likely to prove an increasingly suicidal vehicle for resistance to domination.

## An Alternative World Order

**A** WORLD ORDER corresponding to the needs of people and planet will need to correct the flaws of the Old World Order based on the nation state—and the flaws of Bush's New World Order based on a transnational consortium of the rich and powerful. It will need a worldview which recognizes the transnational character of human identities and historical forces, a set of principles for ordering them, and institutional means for implementing those principles.

*WORLDVIEW:* A worldview for such an order needs to accept the premise that the social world is composed not of sovereign entities of any kind but rather of a multiplicity of interpenetrating entities with relative and overlapping boundaries. This might be compared to the paradigm of ecology, in which an ecosystem is seen not as a collection of isolated organisms, but rather as a set of overlapping systems and subsystems.

Such an "ecological" approach starts from a conception of the individual as a member of many groups—kinship, ethnic, religious, political, etc.—whose boundaries do not generally coincide and no one of which can be regarded as sovereign over the others. Individuals possess multiple identities; group boundaries overlap.

Such an approach abandons the fictional notion of sovereign nation states: that they can and should control their own internal affairs free from outside interference and serve as the sole representatives of their citizens' collective will. Instead, it recognizes the current reality of multiple overlapping transnational power networks. It envisions a multilevel system of regulation cutting across the boundaries of existing nation states to control the transnational forces that actually shape today's world.

*PRINCIPLES:* Within such an "ecological" paradigm it is impossible to define

completely separate entities which can be treated as private property or national territory. This means that the people of the world must be seen as inheritors-in-common of the earth and the products of past human activity as a whole. Such co-inheritance implies a right of all individuals and groups to a share of the governing of life on earth and the benefits thereof. It also implies a responsibility of all individuals and groups to protect the rights of all co-inheritors and to preserve the earthly environment for present and future.

For people to secure their rights and fulfill their responsibilities, two conditions are necessary:

First, individuals and groups must be free to express themselves, communicate, and organize—to exercise what are now generally termed fundamental human rights. This in turn implies that no group or institution can legitimately suppress the right of others to express themselves or to organize in a particular territory or population.

Second, all people have a right to effectively participate in governing all institutions insofar as they affect common rights and responsibilities. Whereas today, in theory, corporations are responsible to their stockholders, governments to their citizens, and international organizations to their member governments, such power centers should be ultimately subject to governing by the world's people as a whole.

*INSTITUTIONS:* While ultimate authority and responsibility over such powerful institutions should be held in common by all people, this whole cannot practically express itself or act directly as a whole. Where all cannot assemble and decide, individuals and groups must be able to delegate to representatives their rights and responsibilities vis-a-vis such institutions. But if power is genuinely to remain the people's, such delegation must be temporary, limited, supervised, and revokable.

This doesn't mean a "world parliament" making every decision in the world. There are many instruments through which rights and responsibilities may be distributed for a limited time and under limited conditions, such as leases, licenses, charters, taxation, profit-shar-

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ing, easements, and regulation. These define in effect "bundles of rights" which may be assigned to different individuals and institutions at various levels. Protection of the ozone layer may be assigned to a global environmental protection authority; building a local road primarily affects—and therefore requires input from—builders, users and neighbors. Only ultimate authority need remain with the people as a whole.

Such a system might take existing institutional structures as a provisional starting point, but redefine them as subject to approval by the world's people. It could accept, for example, that there currently exist states, corporations, and international organizations, most performing some kind of social function. It would insist, however, that these institutions not block the organization of self-defined groups and that they accept governing by such groups or their delegated representatives.

In sum, the basis of an Alternative World Order can be the free development of self-defined individuals and groups and their participation in the governing of all powerful social institutions.

## From Here To There

**T**HIS KIND OF world order, unlike George Bush's, can only be shaped by the efforts of millions of people—not by the edict of one man or one nation. Indeed, it is implicit in the conjunction of two kinds of efforts that are already under way.

First is the creation and strengthening of self-defining grassroots organizations of underempowered groups and of advocates of underempowered social interests throughout the world. In many instances such self-organization requires a struggle for human rights against the power of states and other authorities to suppress or discriminate against ethnic, political, cultural, religious, class, or other groups.

Second is the establishment of influence, and eventually of control, by such organizations from all over the world over corporations, international organizations, states, and other power centers. Some recent efforts indicate that such groups can indeed be brought together to confront the institutions that affect them:

- A transnational coalition of development, human rights, and environmental organizations holds counter-meetings called the NGO Forum at the annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They have proposed alternative policies and helped organized transnational campaigns. They helped generate the pressure that led the World Bank to modify policies encouraging the destruction of the Brazilian rain forest and to create an environmental department charged, among other responsibilities, to be responsive to the concerns of the nongovernmental environmentalist community.
- A similar coalition of environmentalist, consumer, and farm organizations has held counter-meetings at the various GATT sessions and helped organize the opposition which led to the breakdown of the Uruguay Round in late 1990.
- The "Maquiladora Coalition" brings together religious, environmental, labor, Latino, and women's organizations in Mexico and the U.S. to pressure transnational corporations to implement a "Maquiladora Code of Conduct" which will ensure a safe environment, safe working conditions, and a fair standard of living in the Mexican border export zones.
- The growing network of citizen groups in Mexico, the United States, and Canada are opposing a continental Free Trade Agreement which would undermine the environment and local economies.
- A transnational coalition of unions and environmental groups organized a successful campaign to affect the worldwide labor and environmental policies of the BASF corporation.
- The campaign for a free South Africa brought together hundreds of organizations inside and outside South Africa and eventually forced the South African government to come to the bargaining table and begin dismantling apartheid.

- Campaigns for human rights have brought together groups inside and outside of many countries. The acceptance by many countries of outside observers to monitor their elections is one example of the incorporation of outside oversight within national political systems.

Democratization movements within many countries over the past few years provide a possible model for how such efforts might evolve toward a new way of governing powerful institutions. These movements generally started with the development of an opposition which brought together a wide range of excluded groups social interests—such as environmentalists, women, workers, and oppressed ethnic groups. Due to pressure from the opposition, from outside forces, and from their own contradictions, ruling groups agreed to negotiations with the opposition, informally began sharing power with it, and eventually accepted—willingly or unwillingly—an institutionalization of representation of the previously excluded groups, normally through some version of parliamentary democracy.

A similar process might enable self-constituted groups to establish the right to participate in the decision-making not just of "their own" state, but of any power centers which affect them. Coalitions of such groups, both inside and outside particular institutions, can cooperate to put pressure on those institutions. Under certain conditions existing institutions will be forced to negotiate with these oppositions. In some cases they will have to engage in de facto power sharing. Eventually this may be institutionalized in formal governing systems like those described above for an Alternative World Order.

## Implications For Action

**F**OR SOCIAL MOVEMENT activists, helping construct such a world order generally means not abandoning current struggles but conducting them in a new perspective which encourages transnational linkage of movements. Here are some guidelines:

- Support the right of all people worldwide to organize and define themselves

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without interference from the authorities. Fight the complicity of your own government in such interference.

- Create and strengthen self-defining grassroots organizations of the disempowered and of advocates of underrepresented social interests.
- Define the goals of such groups in ways that are congruent with the common interests of people and planet.
- Address problems and solutions globally. Make proposals not just for a national energy policy but for a transnational energy regime based on integrating the needs of the global environment with those of people in regions with different energy needs and resources. Seek input from people's groups in other lands.
- Reach out for coalitions with others around the globe. Pursue transnational grassroots mutual aid and solidarity.
- Use such coalitions to pressure institutions to conform to the needs of people and planet. Demand that GATT stop devastating local markets and start ensuring the protection of labor rights and the environment. Demand that the Security Council stop authorizing massive bombing of cities and start demilitarizing regional conflicts. Demand that the IMF stop turning poor lands into workhouses for export production and start providing resources for their sustainable development.

A New World Order which meets the needs of people and planet boils down to the self-organization of humanity. People's self-organization across national boundaries is what can produce it.

## NEW WORLD ORDER? STEPHEN R. SHALOM

I'D LIKE TO raise some questions both about Jeremy Brecher's description of the New World Order and his Alternative World Order.

Brecher says that Bush wants to make the world safe for transnational

corporate activity, and by this Brecher apparently means *any* transnational corporate activity, whether U.S.-based or not. It seems to me, however, that the governments of the capitalist countries today continue to represent the interests of their own corporations, just as they have always done. Yes, the U.S. government now has to be concerned about such things as a Japanese firm located in Tennessee since it provides employment, but this doesn't mean policymakers in Washington and Tokyo have identical interests. The U.S. government, for example, still cares less than nil about the well-being of a Japanese firm that may be investing in France.

That governments serve their own corporations is not just a matter of nationalist false consciousness, but a result of the links between corporate power and political office. In the United States, for example, U.S. corporations are major campaign donors, and the corporate elite substantially overlaps with the political elite. On the other hand, foreign firms generally do not bankroll U.S. elections and U.S. government officials are not recruited from key leaders of foreign corporations. Information and capital flow readily across national boundaries, and firms pick up and move plants to tap different labor markets, but they don't move their corporate headquarters to other countries. Top U.S. corporate executives see themselves as American and they aren't interested in permanently relocating to Paris, let alone Seoul.

This doesn't mean capitalist states don't have some common interests and won't cooperate to serve these interests. They do have a common interest in maintaining a world in which capitalism thrives, though at the same time they are vicious competitors. And this has long been the case. The great powers of the past often cooperated to tame some recalcitrant people (for example, the crushing of the Boxer rebellion in China), but this did not prevent these same powers from engaging in the fiercest competition, including brutal wars. Brecher sees the recent Gulf coalition as representing some sort of transnational identity of interests. In my view, the rush to war was precisely a U.S. effort to reassert its dominant position over its capitalist rivals. Other countries may be able to make better cars or VCRs, but war brings out the U.S. comparative advantage, namely, military strength and

military technology. Victory brought with it a privileged position for the U.S. in the Gulf vis-a-vis its competitors: the U.S. will be the one to get those construction contracts, the one most able to affect oil pricing decisions through Saudi Arabia, the one to maintain a military presence in the region. (Indeed, according to a former Pentagon official, the U.S. has even been overcharging its allies for the costs of the war and then threatening them if they fail to pay up.) The nation-state, it seems, is far from dead.

Trying to imagine the basic principles of an alternative world order is an important task, and I welcome Brecher's taking the initiative in this regard. His principles, however, need to be clarified or refined if we are to avoid some rather undesirable consequences.

Everyone, says Brecher, has the right to participate in governing all institutions insofar as the institutions affect common rights and responsibilities. Direct participation, Brecher acknowledges, would be impractical, and he suggests a system of representation under which representatives have only limited and temporary authority and are recallable. Even such a world parliament could not possibly deal with every decision that would have to be made in the world, so Brecher proposes a variety of instruments through which rights and responsibilities might be distributed. But these instruments are merely mechanisms for assigning authority from the center, there is no real decentralization of power. So he has licenses and charters operating on a local level, but the only *democratic* decision-making body that Brecher's model seems to include is the one world body. This seems to me dangerous for two reasons. First, because the principle that everyone should decide everything is not just impractical, but inappropriate, and, second, because decentralization has certain important virtues in its own right.

THE KEY PRINCIPLE of socialist democracy, on an international scale as well as on smaller scales, ought to be not that everyone decides everything, but that people ought to participate in decisions in proportion to how much the decisions affect them. On one level, of course, everything affects everyone and

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so everyone should have a say on everything; but not everything affects everyone equally. Thus, for example, whether English or Chinese is taught as the main language in my local school affects to some degree everyone on the planet, but it obviously affects local folks more than it does the residents of Beijing, so much so that the interest of Beijing residents in the matter probably approaches zero. Therefore, my neighbors and I ought to have the decisive say on the question. On the other hand, many issues dealing with the earth's resources and environment affect all the world's people (and their progeny) to a substantial degree and in roughly equal amounts and therefore these issues ought to be decided by everyone. (Brecher refers to this distinction when he talks about the ozone layer and the local road, but he doesn't make explicit that democratic structures are needed at every level, not a parliament on the world level and licenses and charters on the others.) How do we decide which decisions get made at which level? Sometimes there will be disagreement about just how much a decision affects different people, and, if no consensus can be reached, we ultimately will have to let the global community resolve the disagreement. But at least the general principle—participation in proportion to how much one is affected—ought to be clear.

In deciding the proper locus for decision-making, another consideration is involved as well. Decentralization is not simply a means of operationalizing the "participation in proportion to how much one is affected" principle. Decentralization—making decisions on lower levels—has other benefits as well. It tends to promote more participation, more individual initiative, more experimentation, and more diversity. These things are desirable in and of themselves and to encourage them we might want to sacrifice a little of our global authority. The international community will have to protect the

planet's environment and ensure minimal standards of democracy and social justice, but often the human and social benefits from decentralizing the decision-making for certain decisions will outweigh the costs.

I may not be disagreeing with Brecher, but only making explicit what he didn't. Either way, he is certainly correct in insisting that it is high time the Left tried to put forward its own vision of a humane and just world order.

## **"NEW WORLD ORDER" OR PLANETARY COMMUNITY? THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY FOR GLOBAL COOPERATION**

**BY JOHN BROWN CHILDS**

*At no time can you understand the problems between Black and white people here...unless you understand the basic problem (is)...not confined to the local level but confined to the international, global level on this earth today.*

—Malcolm X

**I**T IS to the on-going creation of Planetary Community, that I direct these remarks. To assist in the growth of this Community requires grappling with the tremendous diversity of peoples, holding many different outlooks, while simultaneously undoing elite-dominated, deeply-rooted structures of inequality and subjugation. I believe that locally rooted, culturally grounded diversity is not intrinsically a barrier to a Planetary Community. To the contrary, locally rooted diversity can be fundamental to the growth of egalitarian cooperation rather than domineering forms of world order inequality.

The "alternative world order" that Brecher discusses is actually one of "community," rather than one of "order" with its hierarchical elite dominated command-systems. But Brecher's "community" is at first glance different from the village, the tribe, the ethnic group, and nation which are the more usual sites to which that term is applied. This globally expansive community is premised on a worldview, which Brecher says, "recognizes the transnational character of human identities, and historical

forces, a set of principles...and institutional means" for implementation.

Can such a view, "Of the planet, By the planet, and For the planet," be anything more than a pipe dream lost in the smoke of pollution, war, and hatred? I believe a Planetary Community with its embracing worldview is both possible, necessary, and currently in development. But we must identify and address countervailing problems that erode the tendency toward this Community.

Obviously the world is riddled with conflicts, infused with tremendous inequalities, while being shaped by powerful elites that survive through brutal subjugation of whole peoples, classes, and regions. Huge economic empires of multinational corporations mold the destinies of millions of unwilling people. The subordination of women, the virulence of racism, bloody ethnic conflict, and the willingness to use genocidal force of powerful national military machines in the interest of maintaining "geopolitical" domination, are harsh realities. What chance does the thin reed of "Planetary Community" stand in these powerful currents?

Were Planetary Community only an idea, however compassionate, I would have to say it stood no chance at all. However there are also powerful requirements for global survival that work toward the growth of such a community and some apparent barriers to that growth are not what they seem on the mirage surface presented by the mass media.

Consider "race" and ethnicity. We hear about the very real ethnic/racial conflicts in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, France, Belgium, Northern Ireland, the United States and elsewhere. Indeed, there are strong indications that increasing inequalities connected to changing industrial/economic realities and fueled by hard-core racism will produce social explosions in many Western nations to rival the difficulties now being faced in the Soviet Union. Some deride "the new tribalism" and "ethnic separatism" as the source of all social conflict. They point to intensive local identities as barriers to interaction.

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But conflict is not intrinsic in terms such as "tribe," which means a group of people who share a common way of life and history. Tribes and local groups do not per se stand in the way of a planetary outlook. Rather, it is modern industrial society, which in about 200 years has brought the planet to the brink of destruction, that has much to learn philosophically from indigenous "tribal" peoples who managed to live with, not against, the planet for centuries. To be sure there are also histories of tribal warfare among some peoples. But those are at most just sub-sets of a long sad human history in which groups of all sorts fight one another. The most destructive wars using the most horrible scientifically developed weapons in human history have originated in this century, not among tribal peoples, but among modern "civilized" industrial nations struggling over power and territory.

The nightmares of imperialism and totalitarianism are historically carried out in the name of a Uniformity that subordinates and obliterates diversity in the name of one nation's asserted superiority. Imperialism, lockstep totalitarian systems, and the World Wars are not caused by efforts to create "cultural diversity." To the contrary, it is monocultural uniformity, imposed from above, using the barrel of the gun, and the power of "cold cash" to obliterate diversity, that has wreaked major destruction and suffering in modern history.

Consequently, the growth of Planetary Community, requires constant vigilance against claims of monocultural uniformity and the superiority of one nation over another. If we are to be a Planetary Community rather than a New World Order run by the United States and its "consortium" elite partners, we must rely in part on diversity as a resource. The resilience of local groups can be the elemental stuff from which will grow a real community that can resist the deadening hand of international uniformity

used to maintain the power of the few. This said, we still are left to wrestle with the classic dilemma of how to form unity with, rather than against, the real diversity of peoples.

We are flooded with negative examples of the apparent disruptive effects of diversity every day in the media. Some examples are tragically real and must be confronted directly. But the most positive possibilities for Planetary Community are coming from highly distinctive cultural/occupational/local groups who are increasingly working cooperatively with one another. Many such groups have intersecting concerns about the environment, about corrosive massive poverty, about militarism and elite control, and about the still real specter of nuclear war.

Such group concerns are important for a variety of reasons. They are often grounded in tangible economic and environmental issues that operate at both local and global levels. The felt need to do something about these problems is intense. From the Veracruz Ecology Group in Mexico to "Ecology Club" activists in Poland; from Bhopal to Chernobyl; from nuclear testing sites in the Soviet Union to the land of the Shoshone in the western United States diverse peoples face the awesome consequences of the lust for power and money by the world's elites.

But local groups do not have to give up their distinctive identities in order to address these problems collectively with others at great distance from them. Rather, their strength can flow from their tangible senses of distinctive self and place. We see this powerful sense of self, place, and planetary connectedness among the Kayapo in Brazil; among aboriginal peoples of Australia; among the Inuit, and Saami of the Arctic. We see the importance of local diversity in the activities of Love Canal organizers, in the coalitions of the Yakima, Umatilla, and Nez Perce Indian peoples near the Hanford nuclear weapons facility. We see it among women organizers in the Chipko "Embrace-the-Tree movement" in India; among "the Greenbelt movement" activists in Kenya; in the anti-toxic waste-dumping coalition of Chicano and African-American community activists

outside Los Angeles; and in the base community movement in the *favelas* of Brazil. Such distinctive local groups often have stamina, knowledge, and resilience because they are grounded in tangible global environmental/economic dilemmas, while simultaneously working from deep cultural, historical, and local rootedness.

So the Planetary Community is being created from below, from a diverse variety of ethnic, cultural, and local contexts that confront globally destructive, international economic elites and forces. Moreover, it is precisely because this Community is being created from grounded distinctively diverse groups that it is not a pipe dream lost in the ozone-thinning sky. And this development from diversity avoids the historic trap of imposing one monocentric viewpoint, which has so bedeviled human existence in recent centuries.

Given that culturally and locally-rooted diversity is vital for a non-authoritarian Planetary Community, it follows we do not need a "New World Order's" monocentric elite-dominated blueprint to shape us. Rather, as Brecher suggest, we need improved and expanded instrumental means for mutualistic communication and interaction between these diverse groups across national boundaries. It is time to make greater use of the technological and often simple means of communication now available, if we are to build bridges among distinctive yet parallel groups.

In his book *A Dying Colonialism*, (New York: Grove Press, 1967), Frantz Fanon describes the way radio, originally viewed as an instrument of French domination of colonized Algeria, is transformed into a weapon of resistance once revolutionary broadcasts are made by liberation stations. Today, satellite communications, videotapes, audiotapes, and relatively cheap means of duplication are but some of the ways increased activity could open up vast planetary networks of cross-group contact. Information about successes, failures, and common needs can be shared more widely. Such "mutualistic people-to-people communication," is important precisely because the strength of local groups flows both from their autonomy, and from their

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ability to know about, and work among themselves.

Alone of course such mutualistic communication is not sufficient. But it is a necessary aspect in the battle against a monocentric New World Order that maintains the Old Order of massive inequality and violent suppression. Diversity of grounded tribal, ethnic, neighborhood, labor, environmental, womens' associations, and other local groups is a tremendous asset which, assisted by mutual sharing of information among us, will aid in the on-going growth of the constructive egalitarian Planetary Community.

## **THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS—A GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY**

**BY PETER WATERMAN**

**J**EREMY BRECHER'S "New World Order" paper arrived just after I had written an angry and anguished piece to try and sort out my feelings about the Gulf War. This was subtitled "International Relations Can Severely Damage Your Health." It also came as I was trying to formulate a discussion note on "International Civil Society: The Need for a New Concept and a New Practice." Brecher's paper is, therefore, more than welcome: it sets out in political terms and plain language a project that now requires the urgent attention of all progressive people and all social movements—old, new and yet to come. Here I would like to add a couple of elements to his argument, one on alternatives in international relations, and one on the need for relevant reflection and research.

### **Alternatives In International Relations**

**T**HERE IS A long and honorable tradition of movements that consider "international relations" as relations between people and

peoples, instead of between armies, states, or multinational companies. Three major historical traditions are those inspired by religious universalism, by liberal cosmopolitanism and by socialist internationalism. The first has inspired pacifism, the second the United Nations, the third the combination of struggle against war with those against capitalism and imperialism.

It was the international labor movement that prevented the destruction of the young Soviet Republic by a massive capitalist military alliance in the years after 1917. It was, at least in part, the struggle of Australian dockers that prevented the Dutch from successfully re-colonizing Indonesia after 1945. It was a—largely unorganized—Western "public opinion" that, even at the height of the Cold War, prevented the Soviet Union from being atom bombed by the U.S. when the latter had the nuclear advantage. It was the Western peace movement and Eastern intellectual, labor, and popular movements that changed the agenda of East/West relations. It was the middle-class, labor and community-based anti-intervention movement in the U.S. that at least prevented its government from Vietnamizing Nicaragua. Labour, feminist, religious, human rights, ecological, anti-imperialist, and many other movements are, in West, East and South, active in protest against the policies of states, multinationals, and such interstate agencies as the International Monetary Fund.

But this past or present activity does not mean that either public opinion or movement always get it right. Both the strength and the weakness of the Western peace movement of the early to mid-1980s was that it limited itself to struggle against nuclear arms and the East-West conflict. As Eqbal Ahmad pointed out in 1987, it failed to recognize that all wars since 1945—and all East/West conflicts—had been fought in the Third World and with non-nuclear arms. Ahmad warned specifically of the danger of ignoring the Middle East. Only marginal minorities within the Dutch peace movement fought against Dutch exports for military purposes to the Middle East at the time of the Iran-Iraq war. It must be a matter of shame to all those in-

involved in the peace movement that we did not mobilise against that war (which most of us saw as one between two equally-despicable regimes). This limitation does not, however, mean that that one-sided, Eurocentred—or even Eurocentric—movements need be written off as without significance.

In the late-1980s, the Western peace movement was criticized, by the human rights one in the East, for its tendency to prioritize "life" over "liberty." The debate that ensued, however, was educational for both parties. It also provided us with some kind of model for future international relations between other social movements. It is, moreover, instructive to see how at least one Eastern critic responded to the shortcomings of what he might have considered a West eurocentric movement. It was the leading Czechoslovak dissident (now Foreign Minister), Jiri Dienstbier, who in 1988 suggested to the Western peace movement a more universal aim. He saw the tank as an important and multifaceted symbol. In the first place it was the primary weapon of inter-state aggression. In the second place it was understood in Eastern Europe as a primary instrument of both foreign intervention and internal repression. In the third place it was a highly environmentally-hostile weapon, expensive in production and operation and environmentally damaging even in non-conflict situations.

Wouldn't a demand to "Ban the Tank" be both simple and significant enough to provide a focus for a new international peace campaign, a World Anti-Military Movement?

### **An Alternative Practice Needs An Alternative Theory**

**A**N ALTERNATIVE PATTERN for international relations requires an alternative theory of international relations. This is not likely to be provided by Marxist scholars most of whom seem to agree with their "bourgeois" colleagues that international relations means the relations of capital and states. Unlike Marx, they neither start their analysis with social movements nor have any message for them. Some of us are, however, drawing

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critically from the tradition of socialist and proletarian internationalism in order to contribute a specific labor element to the "new internationalisms" of the new social movements. There are also various other traditions that offer emancipatory theories and models—among them are those involved in Peace Studies and those from the tradition of World Federalism.

One original theorist of alternative international relations is Johan Galtung who in 1980 set up a model of "transnational" relations in which he suggested the necessity for shifting attention from the Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs), via the International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) to the Transnational Non-Governmental Organizations (TRANGOs). It was, he argued, the last—voluntary citizen organizations, organized on a non-state basis, and concerned with global social rather than national territorial issues—that provided the progressive and dynamic force in international relations. He did not imagine that the two earlier ones would disappear. He simply suggested we would see—and should favor—strengthening the last group. The point here is not to necessarily identify with the model (which obscures labor-capital conflict internationally) but to show that one can think about international relations in an emancipatory way.

A crucial concept necessary for the development of alternative international relations still has no theoretical standing. This is "international civil society," proposed in 1990 by Dutch communications specialist Cees Hamelink. "Civil society" is a term that poses the necessity for a vibrant social and public life independent of the state if popular sovereignty is to have any meaning. In conventional use—of left or right—it exists only within the parameters of the nation-state and only in tension with the state. Hamelink proposes taking this notion from the national to the international level. Given the growing

power of transnationals over our lives, he also proposes setting it up in contradiction with international capital as well as the inter-state organs. Hamelink, significantly, offers the concept while proposing an international campaign for the democratization of decision-making in the increasingly crucial sphere of international communications policies. He seems, however, to consider civil society as something that needs defending. I would rather say that it is something that needs to be constantly re-invented and expanded. This would take it way beyond any liberal and limited notion. In so far as one is imagining both an expanding global space for civil (non-state, non-capitalist) activity, and a process of civilizing both multinational capital and inter-state agencies, this kind of global civil society does exist in practice, if not in theory. It is represented by such international movements, initiatives and organizations as those referred to above. A development of the concept could assist effective action.

We also need systematic reporting, coordination, and movement-oriented research. There is very little, even on the three traditions and various experiences mentioned above. The field of "alternative international relations" activities is vast. An attempt to identify crucial areas of action would be helpful not only on political and social rights but also, peace, environment, communications, labor, etc.). So would the identification of crucial social subjects and related democratic movements (additional to the above: women and feminists, socially-committed academics, churches and churchpeople, ethnic minorities, and deprived regions, etc.). There is little research on any of these as international movements or at the international level. There is little if any research, and often few descriptive accounts, or major international events or organizations of democratic significance (e.g. regional or international feminist conferences, Amnesty, the "political pop" TV concerts). We know next to nothing about attempts to create "regional civil societies" (or civilize regional societies) outside Europe and North plus Central America. Yet three recent regional feminist documents come from Latin America and

South Asia as well as Europe. We need critical studies of all these, as well as of the INGOs that may combine social-movement and inter-state-organization characteristics (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions? International Organization of Consumer Unions? International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions?). The international role of non-governmental development—cooperation agencies requires investigation in terms of their reproduction of, or challenge to, exploitation/ domination on the North—South axis. And in terms of whether or not they stimulate the development of civil society in the South. And in the North. And within and between the countries of both!

## Don't Moan, Organize!

**T**OO MUCH RADICAL reflection and action on international relations is concerned with the ritual repetition of the sins and crimes of U.S. imperialism. This instills feelings of powerlessness rather than recognition of our existing power—and a possibility of further self-empowerment. The U.S. is only as imperialist as unorganized "public opinion" and organized social movements permit it to be. To preach that the war against Iraq was an imperialist one, or that capitalism has "defeated socialism" in Eastern Europe is neither original, interesting, adequate or helpful. Rather, we need to take the moral highground on global issues, to use imagination, to develop alternative scenarios for each contested terrain (e.g. international marine transport and cargo-handling), and to propose activity that is humane, joyful, and attractive, rather than merely oppositional and angry. If a pop concert can get an audience of tens of millions to listen to a 20-minute speech by the world's leading black revolutionary, then we had better learn how to organize internationalist TV pop concerts. And leaders had better learn to make speeches that can move the international audiences that watch pop concerts.

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