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### **Industrialism: Law, Science and Imperialism**

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I propose to pose three questions which I believe are the key to a new alternative politics that I will call “resistance with regeneration”. I will not attempt to answer those questions today. Posing the right questions is however the first step to finding the right answers. My purpose today is to throw open some ideas for discussion about alternatives. My first point concerns my approach to the question of alternatives. I come to the question of alternatives from the standpoint of the Third World which in fact is the two-thirds world. My second point is that industrialism and democracy are fundamentally incompatible. My third point concerns our capacity to develop a new knowledge base for “resistance with regeneration” that challenges law, science and imperialism.

#### **1. Third World approaches to alternatives**

In Third World societies, industrialism and modernity was introduced by colonialism and imperialism. Modernity did not develop through internal contradictions within those societies. It was not the result of the trajectories of their own historical development. It was an external imposition by colonising powers. This is true for all types of colonialism: settler and non-settler colonialism, direct and indirect rule, as for example under the protectorate systems, or economic colonialism, sometimes referred to as semi-colonialism. Regardless of the type of colonialism, modernity was an external imposition. In this respect, industrialism and modernity in Third World societies is fundamentally different from industrialism and modernity in European societies and European settler societies.

In European societies modernity developed through their own internal contradictions, history and within the European cultural context. Capitalism evolved from within European societies in contestation with diverse social classes. This fact is central when speaking about alternatives. European industrialism plundered and pillaged and continues to plunder and pillage the natures, labours and cultures of the entire colonial world. We had slave labour, then indentured labour and now we have migrant labour and sweat-shops set up by transnational

corporations around the world. Industrialism in the Third World is the siphoning off of natural and social wealth by external investors, manufacturers and miners. Industrialism introduces a schism or division in Third World societies where one section, the modern sector, is aligned to the colonial/imperial powers and the 'traditional' sector to the people, nature and place. There is an internal colonisation that is supported by external colonisation.

These real differences in industrialism in First and Third Worlds must inform our search for alternatives. While we must always be open and willing to learn from every culture and intellectual tradition, we need to interrogate closely whether those ideas fit the realities of societies with colonial and imperial history. We cannot pluck ideas developed in Euro-American contexts and expect it work automatically in the Third World. Our alternatives must come from our realities. Self-determination is the starting point for our economic, social and cultural development. This means we have a problem straightaway. Alternatives for people in the Third World have an external and internal dimension. Internally, we need to find ways of relating to our own natures, cultures and histories for the economic, social and cultural well being of our people. When we begin to do that, inevitably we face external aggression from the most destructive military powers of capitalist states. How can we conceptualise alternatives that will enable us to retain the coherence of natures, cultures, labours and at the same time defend ourselves from the most destructive forces human civilisation has ever seen?

It is useful to recall that the post- World War world was inaugurated by three opening events: the holocaust, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the partition of India. The holocaust demonstrated the destructive capacities that the coming together of logic of industrial competition, the unpredictability of financial markets and militarised state power make possible. Hiroshima and Nagasaki tested the destructive power of science commanded by a militarised state. It may be recalled here that Japan had made an offer of surrender when the atomic bombings took place. The partition of India demonstrated to the world the terrible consequences of democracy and rule of law when it is introduced by colonising powers. The seeds of partition of the subcontinent were sown by colonial policies of 'responsible government'. 'Responsible government' much like 'democracy promotion' today introduced electoral systems based on communal electorates that classified people on the basis of religion. So, *how* do we develop strategies that are regenerative internally, and at the same time develop capacities to resist external aggression?

## **2. Industrialism and Democracy**

With that introduction to my approach to industrialism, I will move on to my second point about industrialism. I want to begin by remembering something that an ancient Tamil philosopher, Auvaiyaar said. She said "build small and live big". If you wish to live big you must build small. Industrialism does the opposite. It builds big and our lives get smaller and ever more meaningless in institutional mazes that Kafka describes so beautifully.

Industrialism and democracy are fundamentally incompatible. Industrialism is about large scale production based on division of labour on a global scale. Industrialism relies on expansion of scales. Throughout history industrialism has sought to expand from local, national, regional to global scales of production, distribution and consumption. Expanded scales of production, distribution and consumption entail large scale appropriation of natures and labours. Expanded scales of appropriation require large bureaucracies and professional armies that rely on command-control mechanisms. They presuppose legal and institutional mechanisms that are removed from human mediations and rely instead on mediation by technology and modern law.

Large dams require large management, large investments from global investors, centralised states and regional and international organisations. In the past decades we have seen how these projects have led to repression and displacement everywhere. The Turkish state wishes to modernise the economy but the Ilysu Dam displaces Kurds. There are two competing conceptions of nature and human relationships to nature that clash at the dam-site. What if a Kurdish state built the same dam? Would that make a difference? Throughout the Third World we have seen states committed to decolonisation ended up doing what colonial states did in the past. They believed in the idea that capitalism is possible without colonialism and ended up with neither European style industrial development and nor the national independence that they fought for. Large dams brought large-scale displacement produced widespread protests and resistance, but this time the resistance did not produce the powerful anti-colonial movements that shook the Empires of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Democracy, in contrast, entails participation by people in decisions about people-in-places. Places unify natures, labours and cultures. Industrialism developed by rupturing relations between natures and peoples. The primal rupture freed both nature and labour from ties to place. It opened the pathway for the commodification of both nature and labour, and rendered both natures and labour "placeless". Technologies enable the water from the river in my backyard to be transferred to a distant place. I could be living in a rich river valley and not have water to drink because water sources have been captured for large scale appropriation by bottling companies. Technologies impose architectures on societies. It does not matter if the large scale appropriation of natures and labour is done by a liberal, socialist or nationalist state.

Democracy in contrast presupposes restoring the unity of peoples and natures. The unity of nature and people can only happen in places, it cannot happen in a placeless world of bureaucratic institutions. Industrialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has transformed into militarism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The two World Wars changed the character of industrial science and the institutions of state and society in radical ways. Since the World Wars militarism has been the driver of scientific and technological innovation and legal and institutional innovation. The questions for science and for law are set by demands of militarism and governance. Twentieth century introduced new fields of science like social psychology, management sciences and or-

organisational behaviour, cybernetics and communication technologies. All of these fields and inventions were developed during the World Wars in order to wage war, not peace. The World Wars integrated institutions of states, military, civil society organisations like universities and associations, and social science research such that the boundaries between public and private, state and society are blurred in the post War era. Revolving doors operate between corporate bureaucracies, scientific bureaucracies, legal bureaucracies and knowledge bureaucracies, and occasionally we read scandalous stories about them in newspapers.

Large institutions are complexes of laws where power is concentrated in small nodes. Democracy on the other hand relies on contraction of scales. Democracy entails participation of people located in places. Place unifies natures, labours and cultures. The ideology of place is 'regeneration', regeneration of nature, society and life. The ideology of industrial militarism is 'frontierism' – conquest of peoples, natures and cultures. Real democracy presupposes a very different kind of science and law. Science is the study of nature. Industrial science studies nature to appropriate it for large scale production, distribution and consumption. Law is the study of rules that govern human relationships to each other and to nature. Law in industrial societies creates complexes of large institutions within which it places people – the place of people in the world is in this or that corporation, this or that organisation within which they must exist. To restore the unity of people and places calls for a different kind of science and law than the science and law that underpin militarism and industrialism.

The problem we have is that industrialism conflates modernity with democracy. This conflation and association of modernism with democracy is problematic. This is more so in the Third World where colonial rule created institutions that were anything but democratic. Many radical movements in different parts of the Third World have highlighted the incompatibility of expansionist industrial development and formal democracy. The challenge is: how do we delink the two concepts – industrialism and democracy in public discourse and political practice? This is another question for alternative politics.

### **3. “Resistance with Regeneration”: Challenging Law, Science and Imperialism`**

I come to my last point about the knowledge base for “resistance with regeneration”. The knowledge base for industrialism is a body of knowledge that we call the European Enlightenment. The European Enlightenment is by no means a single homogenous body of knowledge. Nevertheless the European Enlightenment advanced by challenging the authority of the Church and theology. The European Enlightenment developed in the course of the struggle against European feudalism. European feudalism relied on the authority of the Church for organising power and order in the world and theology as the source of law. European Enlightenment developed as the antithesis therefore of Church and theology. In the Enlightenment thinking science took the place of god and the state took the place of the Church. The structure of enlightenment knowledge had the imprint of the European intellectual traditions. Indeed it drew inspiration from pre-Christian Europe, in particular Greece and Rome for its scientific and legal challenge of the Enlightenment, but retained the structure of

thought that the Church and theology had embedded in European society. The cultural underpinnings of European modernity remained consistent with European history and traditions. This was not the case in the colonies. In the colonies, colonial science destroyed the nexus between the natural world and the social world. Science was not the result of social transformations within society but rather the result of colonial introduction to expropriate nature and labour. The roots of modern science are at best tenuous in the Third World.

Over five hundred years Enlightenment thought has dominated ideas of science and law and it has brought human civilisation to a precipice. Environmental distress is all around us. We have lost our capacities to make decisions over basic everyday needs like the food we eat, the water we drink, the material with which we build our homes. We live in a world of uncertainties – a bank collapse, a nuclear disaster, a natural calamity, a wrong social, economic or technical decision somewhere in Washington or Geneva, a small mistake anywhere can result in large scale losses and involve sizeable sections of society often remote from the place where the decisions were made. With the expanding scales of production, distribution and consumption, the scales of disasters also expand. What is interesting about post-War science is that the scientists who made amazing new contributions to science were the first ones to recognise that they may have created a Frankenstein monster. After the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings Einstein said, 'I would have become a shoemaker if I had known they would do this'. Oppenheimer, Nobert Weiner, Berners-Lee amongst others became critics of their own inventions. And one must ask why? Their criticism of their own discoveries suggests that there is a disjuncture between the developments in science and the social institutions including the legal and constitutional contexts within which science occurs.

The same goes for law. 'There is no such thing as society' Margaret Thatcher a prophet of neo-liberalism said. The elevation of contract law to every sphere of human life has destroyed the very notion of a society. From space to the body everything can be an object for contracts. There is an extensive body of law now on surrogacy contracts and how they should be written. Contracts between International Financial Organisations like the World Bank or International Monetary Fund and Third World states dictate the types of constitutional and legal changes that Third World states must adopt. Enlightenment thinkers elevated contracts to a metaphysical level because contracts were voluntary and challenged the supernatural source of law in theology. One has to ask what is voluntary about a poor woman in a Third World country agreeing to a surrogacy contract with a childless European couple or a poor man agreeing to donate a kidney to a rich person because they have no other means to earn the money they need?

Law and science were central in Enlightenment thought. Much of modern knowledge developed from their conceptual framing of questions about human relationships to nature and to each other. In resisting feudalism, Enlightenment thinkers rebelled against ties to place. They rebelled against the sanctity of nature because that sanctity was dictated by god, they rebelled against natural law because it had its source in theology. However, there were no

anti-feudal revolutions in the Third World. In the Third World, imperialism co-opted feudal societies in their entirety into imperial structures of power and governance. Since colonialism, feudalism and imperialism have coexisted in mutually reinforcing ways. Not surprisingly no new science or law developed from the national liberation struggles.

National liberation movements believed that once the colonial rulers were removed, modern science and constitutionalism could be used for the well being of their people. Instead imperialism reappeared as neo-colonialism and later neo-liberalism largely through the conduit of science and technology and law and institutions. Similarly socialist revolutions were inspirational in the political challenges to capitalism. Socialist reconstruction relied on the same science and same positive legal systems that the Enlightenment had produced. Socialists believed after removing capitalists from power they could harness Enlightenment science and modern law to create an equal and just society. Most farmers will recognise the saying "you cannot sow one seed and reap another fruit." It is the same with knowledge. Einstein said "no problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it." We cannot use capitalist knowledge to build socialism or imperialist knowledge to exercise self-determination. In thinking about alternatives the challenge is: can we go beyond the critique of economics and politics to interrogate the preconditions that sustain the kind of political economy we have? What are the presuppositions for the military-industrial complex that we live in? What kind of knowledge do we need to build a society that is the antithesis of the Enlightenment? Where will the knowledge come from?