

IMPERIALISM AND TRANSITIONS TO SOCIALISM

Edited by Rémy Herrera

RESEARCH IN
POLITICAL ECONOMY

VOLUME 36

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TO SOCIALISM

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IMPERIALISM AND TRANSITIONS TO SOCIALISM

EDITED BY

RÉMY HERRERA

National Center of Scientific Research (CNRS), France



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PREFACE

In this volume, we provide the reader with a set of texts designed to shed light on the issues of imperialism and the transitions to socialism. Written by 18 contributors – in addition to the author of these lines – from 12 countries and 3 continents, these texts are organized in two main parts. One part is devoted to certain theoretical aspects whose analysis seems to us to be decisive for understanding the subject under consideration. The other part is focused on the examination of practical experiences of socialist transitions, more or less advanced and with varying degrees of success.

In the theoretical part, the reader will not find a homogeneous definition of imperialism nor a unified characterization of the transitions to socialism. Rather, we propose multidimensional, polyvalent and multidisciplinary approaches to highlight both the complexity and the topicality of these phenomena. Thus imperialism, which combines and articulates relations of domination between nations with relations of exploitation of labor by capital, is linked here to several of the most fundamental concepts of Marxism, such as value, abstract labor, the distinction between productive and unproductive labor, and class struggle, but also to the contradictory dynamics of the transformations of present-day capitalism, in connection with the new contemporary forms of fictitious capital, the behavior of transnational firms in the concentration and centralization of globalized capital or the delocalization of production, as well as with the configurations of unequal exchange in the international division of labor and global value chains or the evolution of economic structures. These analyses do not claim to be exhaustive and would certainly be enriched with in-depth studies of wars and military expenditures, new technologies or the destruction caused by capitalism on the environment – points that are present in this book but not extensively developed in the form of specific chapters. In addition, even if the calculations and estimates in Chapter 6 are performed on a particular country (China), we ultimately thought that it was recommendable and preferable to place this text in the theoretical part of the volume, given the methodology used. The latter, as a matter of facts, is centered around a conceptual and theoretical reflection on the rate of profit and mobilizes technical tools (such as econometric modeling, impulse response functions, matrix calculation, Bayesian analysis, among others).

The countries studied as case studies in the applied part can, beyond the singularity of their respective historical trajectories, be classified into several quite distinct categories. Here, two criteria will be used, depending on whether or not these countries are anti-capitalist – that is to say, for questioning the structures of capitalism – and/or anti-imperialist or not – in other words, for or against the implementation of policies aimed at opening up margins of maneuver for national sovereignty. China, Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba all fall into a first category, that of countries that are both anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist, where

the revolutionary processes are the most radical, where the struggles for socialist emancipation and national liberation have merged into a conceptual and political unity, and through which the generalized social gains and the concrete improvement of living and working conditions of the vast majority of the people are the most solid. Venezuela (since 1999 and the setting in motion of the Bolivarian revolution) but also Ecuador (for the period of the citizens' revolution between 2005 and 2017 only) belong to a second group, bringing together countries where significant revolutionary advances have been performed, or are still in the process of being consolidated, whose anti-imperialist and pro-socialist orientation is explicit, but which have so far only managed to tackle the neoliberal form of the capitalist system, rather than its deep structures. Other governments, with a popular base and progressive leaders, have made progress in the fight against poverty, but limited and without affecting its causes, because the neoliberal line of capitalism has not really been inflected there: this is the third category in which we find Brazil of the mandates of Presidents Lula and Dilma Rousseff. Finally, other countries, the fourth and last group, are seeing popular resistance, whose heroism is no less important than that of previous struggles, against regimes that, for the time being, remain right-wing or even extreme right-wing. Brazil after the parliamentary coup of 2016 and Ecuador since 2017 have slipped into this category. However, movement in the opposite direction is also possible, as Bolivia has recently shown, whose people succeeded in overturning the military coup orchestrated by proimperialist and racist forces in 2019 and, thanks to the victory of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS, or *Movimiento al Socialismo*) in the Bolivian presidential elections of October 2020, in reviving the momentum of the indigenous revolution begun in 2005. Bolivia, like other countries in Asia (especially Nepal) and Africa (Burkina Faso, for example), could have been studied here to show how important the revolutionary advances of modern times are for the strengthening of national independence and social justice, but also how vulnerable they remain as long as they do not succeed in radicalizing themselves by breaking with capitalism and socializing the productive forces.

Capitalism is in crisis. This crisis, old, structural, serious, is systemic, in the sense that the system will not find a solution by itself. The capitalist system is declining, degenerating, becoming more destructive and dangerous, and if it is not collapsing faster, it is because its state is supporting it, at arm's length, as was the case in 2008 when the monetary authorities of the US hegemony injected astronomical amounts of liquidity into the economy and granted the Central Banks of the countries of the North and some key countries of the South unlimited access to the dollar; or as is the case at the present time in the so-called "health crisis" following the COVID-19 pandemic, with the main capitalist economies that only remain in a functioning state because they are placed under an infusion of public money. There will be no way out of the "health problem" with neoliberal managers who weaken public hospital services; nor will there be a way out of the financial problem with rapacious private bank managers who continue to speculate frantically, shamelessly. There will be no way out of the environmental problems with procapitalist environmentalists; nor will there be a way out of the social problems with the social-liberal reformists; any more than there will

be no way out of religious terrorism with capitalist leaders who stir up hatred and communitarianism and behave like temple merchants by weakening national education (and secularism where it exists, as in France) by selling it to the private sector (confessional, moreover) and promoting market mechanisms in education.

Capital will not find a solution through its internal logic of profit maximization that locks the world system into a spiral of destruction and wars that ends up threatening us all with death. This is where we are. And this is why wanting to embark on a socialist transition is not only a response to a spirit of justice but also an answer to the call of reason: it is a question of survival for humanity and for life. Socialism is not just a word, it is a struggle. It is not an end, but a transition process, long and difficult that can take many paths toward the liberation of labor from the domination of capital. It is socialism, a society of solidarity, which walks with history.

Rémy Herrera

December 29, 2020