

Since this chapter is concerned about the future, it would not be out of place to conclude by suggesting perhaps an even more bolder strategy. Why not consider the matter of the problem of the democratization of the South African economy as one rooted in an entirely erroneous conception of what “development” truly means, and, therefore, mandating movement away from a Eurocentric understanding of development toward a new, wholesome and *earth-friendly* concept of development? Consider the problem: As Caufield (1996: 331) reminds us, in 1948 the average annual per capita income was around U.S. \$100 in PQD countries as against \$1,600 in the United States. Today the ratio is in the order of \$1,000 as against \$23,000 (these averages, it may be noted, mask deep inequalities among the PQD countries themselves too). Now, can one legitimately argue that this enormous and ever-widening gap between these two different parts of the world has nothing to do whatsoever with the global policies of the rich (mainly Western countries) which have their roots in the colonial period—and further back? The truth is that by never considering these kinds of matters in a historical context, one can sink back into the comfort of a general amnesia that allows one to resort to theories that at their core are driven by the project of “blaming-the-victim.” Hence, for instance, the common tendency of the OD countries (including often even those directly involved in the development-aid business), is to “forget” that the global inequality between them and the PQD countries is neither divinely mandated nor genetically predetermined; it is a function of human engineered international economic, political and legal structures in which those who garnered initial economic advantages through accident of history have shaped the “rules of the game” to maintain and bolster these advantages. It must be remembered that the conditions of poverty or wealth are not a matter of choice for most people at the group level (and probably at the individual level too). The poor are not poor because they have chosen to be poor. What is even more ironic, tragically, is that the solution being advanced by the ruling elites of the West is more of the same under the new mantra of “globalization”; which its proponents disingenuously refuse to point out, is nothing more, *at its fundamental core*, than an intensification at the global level of capitalist accumulation—in principle, no different from the globalization of the post-1492 imperialist era (even if the form of capital has changed in that the modern transnational corporation is a vertically and horizontally integrated *monopolistic* economic behemoth).¹

The issue being raised here, however, transcends this traditional concern (over undemocratic global structures and exploitatively mindless accumulation) among those involved with the struggle for development in PQD countries: the problem is not only one of transforming the existing structures of the global economic order toward greater equity, but one also of *conceptualizing a life-style that the earth can truly sustain for all who live on it (including fauna and flora)*. A simple thought experiment to drive home the point: imagine it was possible for all of driving age throughout the world to own a motor vehicle, where would the raw materials come from to manufacture those vehicles? From where would the land come from for the roads, without jeopardizing our ability to produce food? How would the environment be able to cope with the pollution? (And remember that even alternative forms of energy still have environmental costs on the back end.) We must see the global inequality of today as also an expression of a global system in which one third of the world’s population consumes two-thirds of the world’s resources to sustain a standard of living that the remaining two-thirds can only dream of.² Consequently, no amount of re-engineering of the global economic order would in itself resolve the fundamental problem of the incapacity of the planet to generate the resources needed for all outside the West to enjoy the same standard of living as that taken for granted within the West. Perhaps, its time for the enlightened among the citizenry of South Africa, in alliance with the enlightened among the citizenry of the United States, and those of other nations across the planet, to begin a movement for a redefinition of the meaning of “development.”³

A final thought: if there is one theme that we can discern in this overview of more than three centuries of U.S. relations with South Africa, then it is this: while it is absolutely true that, as in the case of U.S. relations with many other countries in the world, the overriding engine of these relations has been the inexorable need for accumulation by U.S.-domiciled globalized capital, both directly and indirectly (through the framework, in the twentieth century, of the cold war which was always motivated by the need to create global conditions conducive to accumulation), the U.S. citizenry has not always permitted an untrammelled operation of this engine. They have sought to “pollute” it with their needs: a humanistic world. It would be premature, therefore, to abandon our hope for a future in which U.S. relations with South Africa are imbued with the true spirit of the preamble to the U.S. Declaration of Independence (“WE hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all [Persons] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable

Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness”), even while it is tempered by the current reality in this first decade of the twenty-first century of a renewed effort, under the leadership of the minions of capital who patrol the corridors of power in Washington, at ensuring the continuation of the global hegemony of the West that now harks back to the era of European imperialism but under the guise of, both, “globalization” and the so-called “war on terror.” Moreover, the slow but steady emergence of China (and India?) as a world economic power in its own right, as the twenty-first century unwinds, portends, possibly, a more complicated (multipolar?) world in which, perhaps, countries like South Africa may be presented with a sufficient wiggle room to permit its peoples to exert a greater degree of independence from the corporate tentacles of Western hegemony than has been possible hitherto.⁴ Hence, the struggle continues; corporate capital has not, as yet, completely vanquished the will of the people, either in United States or in South Africa (or elsewhere in the world for that matter).⁵ Though it is true, that against the backdrop of the relentless accumulation-driven acceleration of the massive exponential destruction of the planet’s life-sustaining natural resource base—in the context of an ominously accelerating pollution-determined world climate change—by an insatiable globalized corporate capital (aided and abetted by such seemingly benign, to the lay public, multilateral institutions as the World Bank), the stakes are incredibly high and, therefore, the people’s struggle in the decades to come will be that much more difficult and brutal.⁶

NOTES

1. As a reminder, see Amin (2003) and Foster (2002). See also Baran and Sweezy (1966), which though dated, is still relevant conceptually. Interestingly, given the dominance of U.S. capital in the global arena, some have even suggested that globalization should be seen as nothing more than a project of a post-cold war revived U.S. imperialism. This view has been articulated (though not in so many words), for instance, by no less a personage than that cold war hawk, Henry Kissinger. (See his speech titled “Globalization and World Order” that he delivered at Trinity College in Dublin on October 12, 1999, and reproduced in its entirety in the *Irish Independent* in the following day’s issue, in which in the course of criticizing the conventional wisdom on globalization he states: “The basic challenge is that what is called globalization is really another name for the dominant role of the United States.”) For more on globalization, see this basket of sources: Allen (2001), Amin (2004), Appelbaum and Robinson (2005), Balakrishnan (2003), Bello (2001), Berberoglu (2004), Edelman and Haugerud (2005), Harrison (2005), Harvey (2003), Hopkins (2002), Magdoff (2004), Stiglitz (2002), and Wall (2005). To bring a heavy dose of reality to what globalization can also mean in practice to people of the PQD ecumene see also Hiatt (2007).

2. Consider, to give just one example, a problem that few among the international ruling elites appear to be overly concerned with (especially in the context of the latest U.S.-driven global obsession, the so-called “war on terror”)—notwithstanding the *Kyoto Protocol* and the recent Bali Conference on climate change—but yet it threatens the interests of all and everything on this planet, let alone of those most immediately affected: the ongoing criminal destruction of Amazonia in Brazil (and other ecologically fragile systems elsewhere in the world, including the world’s oceans). Leaving aside for the moment the human rights issues involved, the steady destruction of Amazonia, is a huge global environmental disaster in the making—the long-term consequences of which are as yet to be fathomed. And it is not as if this is an entirely new issue. Some two decades ago, only three days before Christmas one hot summer evening in 1988, in the small village of Xapuri in Brazil’s Amazon Basin, an outwardly nondescript man by the name of Chico Mendes was surprised, just as he was stepping out of his house, by a powerful blast from a 12-gauge shot-gun fired at point-blank range—it abruptly terminated his life. Despite the media reports, for most of the world this event, tragic in more ways than one, passed relatively unnoticed. Yet the brutal death of Chico Mendes, even though only one among many in the Amazon—nearly a thousand Brazilians ranging from peasants to high-ranking politicians had been murdered (during a period of nine years or so leading up to the murder of Chico Mendes) over the issue of Amazonian land—would send a shock wave worldwide among those knowledgeable and concerned about one of the most important and fast growing problems to emerge in the PQD ecumene in the waning decades of the twentieth century: the unprecedented rapid destruction of the last remaining patches of rain forests in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the name of profits. It is estimated that at the present rate of destruction the rain forests will be gone in a mere twenty or so years!

A simple man with no wealth, and a rubber-tapper by trade, Mendes had come to earn a reputation for leading a life-long struggle against the voracious greed of Brazil’s land-speculators and cattle-barons, as well as the Brazilian government itself whose members have been increasingly plagued by visions of mineral riches, supposedly waiting to be discovered beneath the Amazon forest, dancing in their heads. The capitalist thirst for profits—fueled by the very real problem of land-hunger among the poverty-stricken peasants pouring out of the Brazilian slums—has inspired a destructive assault on the Amazon forest of unprecedented cataclysmic proportions. Awarded the prestigious Global 500 award by the United Nations in 1987, his work had had sufficient impact to earn him many enemies among the capitalists that were exploiting the rain forest. Mendes had managed to escape, at least, five previous attempts on his

life. Though he had once said: “I want to live—funerals won’t save Amazonia,” it is absolutely necessary that his death and those of many others like him be not in vain. The world must work toward permanently halting the rapid deforestation of the rain forests of the PQD ecumene, and the reasons go far, far beyond those of “nature-nostalgia” that the unconcerned often think lie at the motivational roots of the work of environmentalists: First, there is the simple matter of justice: deforestation is a form of genocide perpetrated against the human citizens of these forests. Primitive and backward though the lifestyle of rain forest inhabitants may appear to the outside world they, like everybody else, have a right to their home and source of livelihood—even if they lack the capitalist values of property ownership which ethnocentric outsiders see as necessary to legitimate their claim to their forests. Second, the destruction of rain forest flora and fauna is symptomatic of a greed-engineered inability to coexist in harmony with nature, an inability that must be corrected if the entire planet is not to eventually take on the barren effect of the Saharan desert sprinkled with islands of glass and concrete jungles. It must also be remembered that vegetation forms a critically important part of nature’s rain-making machine. Third, the rain forests represent a huge store-house of natural products of great potential value to all of humanity: ranging from medicine to food, but only if the rain forests are conserved and properly managed. Scientists know the chemical composition of only a tiny percentage (about five percent) of rain forest flora. It is estimated that almost eighty percent of the foods we eat here in the West have their origins in the rain forests. (This should not be surprising given that fully half of all planetary biodiversity is located in the rain forests—but which, amazingly, covers only about six percent of the earth’s surface.) Fourth, rain forests are among the major “natural engines” that help in preventing the “green-house effect” from degenerating into the “oven-effect”—the over-heating of the planet brought about by excess carbon-dioxide in the atmosphere that allows in heat but prevents it from escaping. Deforestation on a scale such as that taking place in the Amazon basin today (every-day an area the size of Rhode Island is going up in smoke) not only means the addition of tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, but also the elimination of the very mechanism that helps to reduce carbon dioxide: plant photosynthesis—hence the concept of the “carbon sink.” Why is it important to prevent the oven-effect from coming into play? It has the potential to bring untold climatic damage to the planet: ranging from droughts and heat-waves to rising sea-levels and the resultant floods and destruction of existing shore-lines. It should be remembered that a mere seven degrees Fahrenheit upward change in temperature was required to melt the mile-high ice sheets covering the North American continent during the last ice-age. Consider these two of the many warning signs of the disastrous climate-change in the making as a result of climate change: for the first time in recorded human history the Northwest Passage in the Arctic Ocean completely opened up in the summer of 2007 making it possible to traverse it in less than two months, rather than years, and Polovina, Howell and Abecassis (2008) report that the “sea desert” (oceans with low chlorophyll habitat—oligotrophic gyres) are expanding at a much faster rate than originally predicted. (See also these two well-made documentaries on climate change, but with a U.S. focus: *An Inconvenient Truth* [2006], and National Geographic’s *Human Footprint* [2008].) Fifth, destruction of the rain forests increases the chances of human exposure to highly dangerous and often incurable infectious viral diseases through the processes of both *zoonoses* and *species jumping* as contact between animals and humans ceases to be episodic because of shrinking animal habitat.

Yet while the need for halting the destruction of rain forests is beyond dispute among the knowledgeable, there is the question of how to achieve this. Here, North Americans and others in the industrial world have a major role to play. At the minimum there is the need for the following short-term and long-term steps to be taken by both the PQD governments and Western governments:

- PQD governments must be educated through bilateral contacts that in their haste to exploit their rain forests they are in effect killing the goose that lays the golden egg. Properly and cautiously managed rain forests can serve as an infinite renewable natural resource. They must be made aware, however, that rain forests are extremely fragile ecological environments. Hence, for example, despite the illusions created by the density and lushness of their flora their underlying soils are too infertile for arable activity. The illusions of fertility is a result of the extremely finely balanced plants-to-soil-to-nutrients-to-plants ecological cycle that cannot be touched without provoking immediate and irreversible collapse of the entire cycle. Once destroyed, rain forests are not likely to come back.
- More countries than those presently involved must be included in the new strategy of swapping their national debts for measures to protect their rain forests. Six countries that account for approximately a quarter of the total PQD country debt also account for nearly fifty percent of the entire planetary biological diversity via their rain forests: Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mexico, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- The World Bank and other similar organizations must cease all aid that subsidizes the destruction of the rain forests in the name of “development.” In fact, all “development” aid must be explicitly ecologically sensitive or not implemented at all.
- The Industrial world must stop importing all products produced as a result of the destruction of the rain forests. This means, for example, North American fast food chains must stop importing Brazilian beef produced on cleared Amazonian land and the Europeans must stop importing cheap iron-ore mined in the open-pit mines of the Amazon.
- The West must increase its development aid but in a targeted fashion, to the PQD countries if it is to convince them to preserve the rain forests for the benefit of the entire planet (analogous to “royalty payments”). To the starving peasant the short-term goal of placing food on the table by clearing the rain forest must of necessity take precedence over the long-term goal of preserving the ecosystem. PQD governments cannot be asked to keep their people poor and hungry so that we in the industrial world are spared the consequences of ecological destruction.
- A concerted campaign must be started to convince all concerned to declare all threatened major ecosystems in both the PQD and in the Western World as the heritage of all of humanity and place them under the joint supervisory

management of a body comprising representatives from the home-country and the United Nations. It is time to recognize that the consequences of environmental degradation respect no national boundaries.

- Western governments must demonstrate through concrete action that they too have responsibilities in protecting the environment by undertaking two immediate steps: first, permanently halting any further efforts to “develop” existing undeveloped areas—such as, here in the United States the Alaskan nature sanctuaries, the Florida Everglades, and the Redwood forests. The crusade for the “Wattification” of public lands begun by Reagan’s first secretary of the interior (James Watt), that was aimed at throwing them open to profiteers who see the world only through dollar tinted glasses, must be rolled back. Second, begin long-term nature reclamation projects coupled with renewed vigorous programs for cleaning up the environment. Of what use is so-called “development” if the price is polluted air, water and land. Third, those Western industrialized countries, such as the United States, that did not ratify the laughably limited Kyoto Protocol should work toward (and of course ratify) an even better protocol, in environmental terms, when it expires in 2012. (Though the United States and Canadian performance at the recent Bali Conference on climate change leaves does not leave one with much optimism on this score.)
- A long-term sustained program of education must be launched to convince the public of the need to move away from the super wasteful, super-consumerist society. (With regard to the this point, while the new era of post-Soviet communism is a welcome development, there is the danger that it bodes ill for the worlds’ natural resources, because yet another industrial giant in the making, Russia, has launched its efforts to create a Western-style consumerist society.) Imagine for a moment that the entire planet was recreated in the image of the industrial world, so as to allow all peoples access to the same standards of living that the West enjoys; the result surely would be complete ecological collapse with ensuing wholesale degradation of the quality of life for all.
- This commitment to the environment must also mean the passage of laws by Western governments prohibiting the dumping of hazardous wastes in the PQD countries—they must not be bribed into accepting these wastes because of their desperate need for money. They neither have the expertise nor the financial resources to deal with these poisons coming out of the industrial world. At the same time new legislative and education efforts must be launched to halt and eliminate national and international trade in endangered plant and animal species and products derived from them. It is a tragic commentary on the life-style of the industrialized world that in its pursuit of vanity that it is willing to drive animal and plant species into extinction. Are ivory-made piano keys, for example, of such importance as to warrant the extinction of the majestic elephant?
- The global race in phallic symbols—the nuclear arms race—must be brought to a halt. Not only because it constitutes a total waste of scarce resources, but because it strikes at the very purpose of the effort to protect the environment: the preservation of human and other life.
- All stops must be pulled to find ways of harnessing the limitless energy that can be derived from the sun, wind and the motion of the sea so as to reduce carbon emissions into the atmosphere and thereby reduce climate change inducing global warming.
- A sustained nation-wide education campaign must be started to make the public environment-conscious and be funded in part through fines imposed on businesses that violate environmental regulations. The problem of the disappearing rain forests in the PQD countries should no longer be seen as a deplorable but only a PQD country problem. It is a global problem akin to such other environmental disasters as acid-rain and the depleting ozone layer. The urgency to reverse the tide in the relentless effort to convert the planet into a gigantic cesspool, stems not only from the need to secure the future of generations yet unborn, but for the present generation too. The recurring large-scale droughts and hurricanes in many regions of the world are ample proof of the immediacy of the consequences of destroying the planetary ecological balance.

Note: for more on the life and work of Chico Mendes see Revkin (1990), and visit these websites: www.chicomendes.com, www.chicomendes.org, and www.mirandaproductions.com—the last is the website for the highly informative documentary film *Voice of the Amazon*. The 1994 HBO (Home Box Office) award-winning film directed by John Frankenheimer, *The Burning Season—The Chico Mendes Story*, with Raul Julia playing the lead part, is also worth seeing. For information on rainforests in general, as well as on the problem of environmental destruction, see Cashore, Gale, Meidinger, and Newsom (2006), Flannery (2005), Kolbert (2006), and London and Kelly (2007); and it is also worth visiting the websites of Rainforest Action Network, Amazon Conservation Team, Rainforest Alliance, and Rain-tree.com (website of an innovative entrepreneur specializing in sustainable use of rainforests). See also the academy award winning 2006 documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth* (directed by David Guggenheim and presented by the former U.S. vice-president, Al Gore), as well as the fourth report of the Global Environment Outlook project of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), published in 2007, titled *GEO-4* and available as a PDF download at the UNEP website.

3. There is now a burgeoning literature on alternative conceptualizations of “development.” These five considered together should provide an overview of the key issues involved: Bakan (2004), Kovel (2007); Foster, Buttel, and Magdoff (2000); Wall (2005); and Yunus (2007).

4. The tentativeness of this statement stems from the fact that despite the current wisdom among many mainline foreign policy analysts in the United States, and elsewhere, that China is unquestionably on its way to shattering the status quo of the post-cold war unipolar world that we presently live in, the truth is that China still has a long, long way to go before it can muster the wherewithal to allow it to decamp from the PQD world and emerge as the vanquisher of the current unipolar world. Neither its economic prowess nor its military power even remotely matches that of the West today. Moreover, the clear lack of an imaginative vision on the part of its authoritarian ruling clique to go beyond simply retracing the traditional Western strategies of boosting “economic growth” at all cost—that is with almost no regard for *true* development as suggested, for instance, by the sources indicated in the preceding

note—places considerable hurdles on its desires, usually expressed sotto voce, on the path to creating a multipolar world (especially in light of the ever-escalating global resource constraints). Note: The Euro-North American ecumene, for all intents and purposes (vide, for example, the continuing effort to strengthen NATO), ought to be considered as a single unit—not withstanding the silly view among some mainline foreign policy analysts that Europe (excluding Russia) and the United States are adversaries from the perspective of the quest for global hegemony—for the simple reason that economically, culturally, politically, and racially (excluding marginalized minorities) they are, in the last instance, cut from the same cloth. Yes, to be sure, the march of globalization appears to hold out the promise of the erasure—in practical terms—of national boundaries, but the fact remains that corporate capital in its struggle with competitors is never above playing the “nation-state” card (or in this instance “the West-and-the-rest-of-them” card). In other words, much as racism/ethnicism at the domestic level has its uses for corporate capital (see Appendix II) so it does at the global level too. But notice, always working in tandem with the class factor, as manifest by the role of the “Uncle Tommery” of corrupt and shameless compradorial elites in the PQD ecumene who would sell their mothers down the river for a few pieces of silver in a heartbeat.

5. One cannot be accused, here, of excessive optimism if one is reminded of that popular adage (attributed to President Abraham Lincoln): “You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you can not fool all of the people all of the time.”

6. The bombs raining down on some of the peoples of the Islamic world (at the moment, and one wonders who will be next)—aided and abetted by their compradorial elites of course—are only a foretaste of what is to come. (The so-called “war on terror,” especially in a context where every legitimate movement of resistance to the hegemony of corporate capital now potentially stands accused of being labeled “terrorists,” is much more than meets the eye.)