

The Hares, the Hounds and the ANC: On Joining the Third World in Post-Apartheid South African

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**[to be published in Third World Quarterly: Journal of Emerging Areas,
Special 25th Anniversary Issue, 25, 1 (2004)]**

The utility of framing questions of global inequality in relation to a 'First World' and a 'Third World'; a North and a South; or developed countries and developing (or underdeveloped) countries, has been much debated since the end of the Cold War. This article addresses the issue of the perceived weaknesses and possible continued strengths of the notion of the 'Third World' in general terms, and then grounds such a discussion through an analysis of the way that the African National Congress (ANC) government in post-apartheid South Africa has approached the question of global inequality. Since its election in 1994, and more particularly since Thabo Mbeki succeeded Nelson Mandela as President, the ANC has presented itself as having an especially important leadership role on behalf of the Third World. The profound contradictions inherent in the ANC's effort both to retain its Third Worldist credentials and to present itself as a reliable client to the Bretton Woods institutions and foreign investors provides insights into how to design alternative strategies for overcoming world-wide poverty, strategies which might be more effective than those chosen by the ANC. Since the ANC was elected to government in 1994 it has pursued a brand of deeply compromised quasi-reformism, analyzed here, that serves primarily to deflect consideration away from the options pressed by other, much more meaningfully radical international and South African labour organizations, environmental groups and social movements. At the present juncture a range of increasingly well-organized grass roots movements in South Africa find that they have no choice but to mobilize in active resistance to the bankrupt policies of the ANC. The increasing significance of these efforts points to the possibility that they might eventually be able to push South Africa - either through a transformation of the ANC itself or through the creation of some new, potentially hegemonic, political project in that country -- back into the ranks of those governments and groups that seek to use innovative and appropriately revolutionary approaches to challenge the geographical, racial and class-based hierarchies of global inequality.

Analytically, the value of conceptualizations that cast the issue of global inequality in terms of geographically-defined hierarchies (First World vs. Third World; developed vs. underdeveloped or developing countries; "North" vs. "South") have come into some disrepute in recent years -- even if, in political circles, these dichotomies continue to retain considerable resonance. We will have to explore, in the first section of this essay, the

paradoxes, at once linguistic and substantive, that stalk this contested analytical-cum-political terrain before seeking, in a second section, to locate the manner in which the post-apartheid ANC government in South Africa has itself come to address issues of global inequality. For the fact is that the South African government, particularly under the stewardship of now - President Thabo Mbeki, has presented itself as having an especially important leadership role to play in mediating and reconciling the gaps and tensions that such binaries evoke. We will also see, however, that there are severe and quite revealing contradictions inherent in the ANC's attempt to articulate such a role for itself. Indeed, the peculiar difficulties of a government that has, simultaneously, professed to run with the hares of the Third World poor while also aspiring to hunt with hounds of global capitalist power-wielders will be shown to be particularly revealing ones for defining alternative strategies for overcoming world-wide poverty that might prove more effective than those chosen by the ANC.

I What is the Third World? ¹

What, first, of "geographically-defined hierarchies"? As we mark, with a straight face, the 25th anniversary of the Third World Quarterly it is tempting to note the irony that Mark Berger seemed to have laid to rest the very notion of "the Third World" almost a decade ago -- and in these very pages. "The idea of a 'Third World,'" Berger wrote, "now serves primarily to generate both a dubious homogeneity within its shifting boundaries and an irrelevant distinction between the Third World" (developing) and the "First World" (developed) on the other."² In thus critiquing the commonsensical understanding of the existence of a straightforward causal connection between the coexistence of a wealthy North and an impoverished South that once structured many analyses in both left and liberal development circles, he and others have sought to inter both "Third Worldist" conceptualizations and those suggested by other of the binaries mentioned above. Such formulations, it is stated, have lost much of whatever usefulness they might originally have had both for analyzing the (increasingly diverse) fates of the economies of the formerly-colonized countries of the global South and for focussing the struggle against grinding poverty and the existing manifestations of extreme material inequality in an ever more globalized socio-economic environment.

Of course, the concept "Third World" has seemed especially questionable to such writers, not least when considered with reference to the once rather more convincing logic of its original coinage: the disappearance-- with the crumbling of the Eastern so-called socialist states, of anything that might once have been considered a "Second World" -- has underscored the most self-

¹ I have advanced more detailed versions of some of the general arguments in this first section in two related articles in recent editions of the Socialist Register ("Globalization, Imperialism, Development: False Binaries and Radical Resolutions," in Leo Panitch and Colin Leys [eds.], The Socialist Register 2004 [London: Merlin Press, 2003] and "Identifying class, classifying difference" in Panitch and Leys [eds.], The Socialist Register 2003 [London: Merlin Press, 2002] and I draw on certain of the formulations to be found in those articles here.

² Mark Berger, "The end of the 'Third World'?" Third World Quarterly, 15, 2 (1994), p. 258.

evident of difficulties in this regard. More important is the problem (also thought to bedevil the other parallel binaries) of the increasing lack of clear referent for the concept even in its own terms. After all, South Africa is not the only country said to have both "First World" and "Third World" conditions (i.e., extremes of wealth and poverty) within its own borders: this is true within the most advanced of capitalist societies as well. Small wonder that, more recently, a writer such as Ankie Hoogvelt can suggest global inequality to be now much more "social" than "geographical" in its coordinates: "The familiar pyramid of the core-periphery hierarchy is no longer a geographical but a social division of the world economy," she writes.³

For her, a global division of labour, more centrally than ever defined along lines of class and (often) socio-economic exclusion that cut across national frontiers, has created both a dominant transnational capitalist class and vast outer circles of less privileged people, both North and South. Such a model helps, she suggests, to comprehend growing inequalities within countries. But it also helps us to incorporate into our approach a much clearer acknowledgment of the dramatic diversity to be found among the countries of the so-called "Third World" itself: a spectrum that stretches all the way from the material accomplishment of the NICs to the desperate situation to be found in the countries of the most impoverished zones of Africa.

But if the truth value of such tropes is so limited what is to account for the fact that their continued deployment "has legs," surfacing as they still do in the common-sense discourse of prevalent political and journalistic short-hand but also in more scholarly publications (like the present journal) and debates? A number of negative reasons have been adduced as to why this has occurred. Thus Berger approvingly cited Escobar to the effect that "to represent the Third World as 'underdeveloped' is less a statement about 'facts' than the setting up of a regime of truth through which the Third World is inevitably known, intervened on and managed." Berger's own conclusion: this is a crucial means by which key Western players can "homogenize" the experience of the very "particularity of social formations on the so-called 'periphery,'" the better to control them in the name of a universalizing "modernization theory."⁴ In addition, the attendant emphasis on

³ Ankie Hoogvelt, *Globalization and the Post-Colonial World: The New Political Economy of Development*, Second Edition (London: Palgrave, 2001), p. xiv. As Arrighi and Silver have correctly pointed out (see Beverley J. Silver and Giovanni Arrighi, "Workers North and South," in Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (eds.), *Socialist Register 2001: Working Classes, Global Realities* (London: Merlin Press, 2000), 56-7), Hoogvelt's use of the term "social" is misleading: the geographical hierarchy of nations that they themselves continue to emphasize is, of course, also a social relationship. Nonetheless, what Hoogvelt is here seeking to underscore is important.

⁴ This is also true in some of its variants of neo-liberalism, that now ubiquitous "ultra-modernist" take on development (as Fred Cooper and Randall Packer term it in their edited volume, *International Development and the Social Scientists* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997], p. 2). But note that some of the crustier architects of the neo-liberal counter-revolution in development studies

the "original" nature of the "backwardness" of such social formations serves to shift attention away from a focus on the less than benign workings of "international market relations" and of global capitalist power that explain more adequately the problems they confront. As he specifies this point, "Economic development in the 'Third World' is seen primarily as a technical or policy problem...that can be overcome by the right mix of advice, investment, aid and liberal reforms...rather than a historico-political problem."⁵

There is also the fact that tropes which emphasize the continued centrality of the fact of geographical hierarchy to the reality of global poverty have been subject to the most self-interested kind of manipulation by Southern leaders of often highly dubious provenance. Once again Berger makes the pertinent point: "'Third World' elites have emerged in the international arena claiming to speak for the 'Third World' at the same time as they are deeply implicated in the prevailing international discourses and structures which work to manage the 'Third World.'"⁶ As Smith adds:

There is thus the risk that the expression 'Third World' might obscure the heterogeneity of social classes, each with its own political objective. The concept of the Third World has consequently been denounced...as mystification designed to conceal dependency and exploitation, as well as a device allowing rulers of Third World countries to present a common interest between themselves and the masses to disguise their own alliance with metropolitan interests.⁷

Here such points have general implications. We will see, however, that there could scarcely be better short-hand descriptions of the role chosen for itself -- albeit rather against the hopes and expectations that had arisen for it during the anti-apartheid struggle -- by the ANC leadership in post-apartheid South Africa.

This said, it must also be emphasized that there are a number of more positive reasons why conceptualizations of the "Third World/First World" and "developed"/"underdeveloped" type continue to have positive resonance. To begin with, it is not actually quite so easy to ignore the geographical coordinates of inequality as Hoogvelt and others imply. For, as Giovanni Arrighi and others have continued to document tirelessly over many years,

(like Peter Bauer) have turned this argument inside out: they also profess to see "the Third World" as being a Western artifact, but this time as the artifact of "'Western guilt' and the politics of foreign aid" -- which holds, erroneously in their view, that "the West is responsible for the poverty of most of Asia, Africa and Latin America"! See the summary of this position in John Toye, *Dilemmas of Development: Reflections on the Counter-Revolution in Development Economics*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), ch. 1, 'Is the Third World Still There?' pp. 25-26.

⁵ Berger, op. cit., p. 270.

⁶ Berger, *ibid.*, p. 258.

⁷ Brian S. Smith, *Understanding Third World Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), ch. 1, 'The Idea of the "Third World,"' p. 29.

there is still a great deal about the global hierarchy that remains spatially-defined, and along lines that are also "largely a legacy of Western territorial and industrial expansion since about 1800." Thus, in a 1992 article on "the increasing inequality of the global distribution of incomes," he demonstrated "a major widening of the already large income gap that fifty years ago separated the peoples of the South from the peoples of the organic core of the capitalist world-economy." His conclusion: "the nations of the world...are differentially situated in a rigid hierarchy of wealth in which the occasional ascent of a nation or two leaves all the others more firmly entrenched than ever they were before,"⁸ this exemplifying for him a "seemingly 'iron law' of a global hierarchy that stays in place no matter what governments on the lower rungs of the hierarchy do or do not do." For in the absence of self-conscious correctives, the 'oligarchic wealth' achieved by the West always tends to draw the bulk of capitalist activity towards it, hence widening the gap. Arrighi, updating his argument in 2003,⁹ also emphasizes the extent to which aggressive Northern 'neo-liberal' policies deliberately reinforced this hierarchy when, in the 1970s, things seemed set to shift slightly in the South's favour. He thus comes to precisely the same conclusion he had a decade earlier as to the persistence of a North/South hierarchy of income -- and this despite (even because of) the fact that some degree of industrial convergence has indeed occurred.¹⁰

There is, then, something important about the nature of the geographically-defined material realities of the global hierarchy that must be kept on the table.¹¹ As people in the Third World seek to improve their lot they actually do confront a global system of power, in economic and political terms (think: the militarized American state and its complex interface with global capital), that -- whatever else it may be -- is also asymmetrical in spatial terms. Moreover, if a global movement to overcome inequality is to be built, one that seeks to unite struggles in both North and South, it cannot ignore the extent to which many in the North, and well beyond the ranks of the most wealthy, have come to share in one way or another in the North's "oligarchic wealth."

In consequence, if the legitimate claims of Southern peoples to global income redistribution, equitable environmental controls, rights of migration, and freedom from high-handed military incursions are to be grasped and supported by potential allies of the South in the North, the latter will have to

⁸ Giovanni Arrighi, 'World Income Inequalities and the Future of Socialism,' *New Left Review*, 189 (September-October, 1991).

⁹ Giovanni Arrighi, Beverley J. Silver and Benjamin D. Brewer, 'Industrial Convergence, Globalization and the Persistence of the North-South Divide,' *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 38, 1 (Spring, 2003).

¹⁰ In the same issue of *Studies in Comparative International Development* (38, 1 [Spring, 2003]) that carries the Arrighi, Silver and Brewer article, there is also a critique of their position by Alice Amsden entitled "Good-bye Dependency Theory, Hello Dependency Theory" as well as a response to her by the original authors. This stimulating exchange merely serves to reinforce the latter's case, in my opinion.

¹¹ As Toye, op. cit., (p. 31) has written, "The Third World is not...a figment of our imagination ready to vanish when we blink"!

understand more clearly the facts regarding both the creation and the persistence of the presently existing global hierarchy.

Note, as well, that there is also a cultural dimension to the latter challenge -- and to a reconsideration of the potentially positive charge of the binaries under discussion. For the imperialist history that has spawned global economic and political hierarchy has also had a strongly racist dimension, one that helps to lock into place complacency in the North regarding the legitimacy both of its enjoyment of "oligarchic wealth" and of its often unilateral actions, economic and military, to ensure it. Small wonder that the present global hierarchy, could recently be defined as a kind of "global apartheid"¹² or that Robert Biel could write of "the racial capitalism that exists between the North and the South" and the need to confront the racist premises of the system's functioning head on and in their own right.¹³ Small wonder, too, that Southern intellectuals have sought to complement concrete struggles for material equality carried out by the poorest of the poor with cultural assertions that claim, vis-a-vis Western cultural hegemony, the right to be heard in their own voice. Most recently this has taken the form, in the academy, of a preoccupation with "post-colonialism", producing a postcolonial school of thought that claims not merely to expose Eurocentric biases within the global centres of cultural production, but also to listen afresh to those diverse voices of the South that otherwise would be squeezed out of the canon and out of global public discourse.

While suggestive, this kind of preoccupation with "identity" and voice can also, its critics suggest, be misleading. As Arif Dirlik argues, "postcolonial critics have been largely silent on the relationship of the idea of postcolonialism to its context in contemporary capitalism; indeed, they have suppressed the necessity of considering such a possible relationship by repudiating a possible 'foundational' role to capitalism in history."¹⁴ It need come as no surprise, therefore, that Ella Shohat can cap

¹²Salih Booker and William Minter, "Global Apartheid," *The Nation* (July 9, 2001).

¹³Robert Biel, *The New Imperialism: Crisis and Contradiction in North/South Relations* (London: Zed Books, 2000), pp. 131-2.

¹⁴Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism" in Anne McClintock, Amir Mufti and Ella Shohat (eds.), *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 502. In sharp contrast Robert Young (in his *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2001]) has attempted more recently to defend post-colonial theory these kinds of criticisms by asserting that "many of the problems raised can be resolved if the postcolonial is defined as coming after colonialism and imperialism, in their original meaning of direct-rule domination, but still positioned within imperialism in its later sense of the global system of hegemonic economic power" (p. 57). This may be somewhat disingenuous. For even Young professes his own unease with the term, suggesting his actual preference for the notion of "tricontinentalism" as capturing even more directly "a theoretical and political position which embodies an active concept of intervention within such oppressive circumstances." Nonetheless, he claims that "postcolonialism" as he defines it can still serve the purposes he has in mind, capturing the "tricontinental" nature of Southern

her own critique of the post-colonial approach in a manner quite germane to the development of the argument of the present essay:

The circulation of 'post-colonial' as a theoretical framework tends to suggest a supersession of neo-colonialism and the Third World and Fourth World as unfashionable, even irrelevant categories. Yet, with all its problems, the term 'Third World' does still retain heuristic value...At this point in time, replacing the term 'Third World' with the 'post-colonial' is a liability. Despite differences and contradictions among and within Third World countries, the term 'Third World' contains a common project of (linked) resistances to neo-colonialisms [and] implies a belief that the shared history of neo/colonialism and internal racism form sufficient common ground for alliances among such diverse peoples."¹⁵

Note, too, that this formulation provides an additional reason for validating, up to a point, Third Worldist, left-developmental and Southern-focussed problematics: the potential they retain for both enlivening and focussing radical projects of redress of grievances by the poorest of the global poor.¹⁶ Shohat herself is circumspect here: "The term 'Third World' is most meaningful in broad political-economic terms, and becomes blurred when one addresses the differently modulated politics in the realm of culture, the overlapping spaces of inter-mingling identities." For this reason, she writes, the concept of 'Third World,' while "schematically productive," must itself be "placed under erasure, as it were, seen as provisional and ultimately inadequate."¹⁷ Nonetheless, the thrust of her argument links to that of others who have sought to validate such notions as part of a language in terms of which global claims are staked vis-a-vis global capitalism and progressive mobilization is advanced both in the South and in the North: "Third Worldism is in part about reminding people that poverty is still a problem, and that in general there are widening gaps between the developed and the developing countries."¹⁸ Indeed what Cooper and Packard write of the "marvelous ambiguity" of the concept "development" might also be said of the concept "Third World": "What at one level seemed like a discourse of control

resistance to imperialism while remaining sensitive to the sheer diversity of the settings in which such resistance occurs.

¹⁵ Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'" *Social Text*, 31/32 (1992), pp. 111; as she adds, "[t]he 'neo-colonial,' like the 'post-colonial' also suggests continuities and discontinuities, but its emphasis is on the new modes of and forms of old colonialist practices, not on a 'beyond'" (p. 106). See also, in the same issue of *Social Text*, Anne McClintock, *The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonial.'*

¹⁶ Berger (op. cit.), it should be noted, cites several related arguments in his own essay (p. 258).

¹⁷ Ella Shohat, op. cit., p. 110; as she further suggest, "[a] celebration of syncretism and hybridity per se, if not articulated in conjunction with questions of hegemony and neo-colonial power relations, runs the risk of appearing to sanctify the fait accompli of colonial violence" (p. 109).

¹⁸ Smith, op. cit., p. 24.

is at another a discourse of entitlement, a way of capturing the imagination of a cross-national public around demands for decency and equity."¹⁹ Not "After the Third World" then (as the title of this special issue of Third World Quarterly would have it). Better put, what is at issue are the ways in which notions of "the Third World," "the developing world," "the global South," "global apartheid," and even "the post-colonial" are linked to a simultaneous consideration of the realities of the global class structure and the imperatives of the global class struggle. This is what determines, in context, both their accuracy and their efficacy.

II Where is South Africa?

The ANC government in South Africa came to power with the strongest of Third Worldist credentials, of course, the battle against apartheid having been amongst the most salient of twentieth century liberation struggles. And while it is true that ANC spokespersons once in power have not tended to use the term "Third World" very often, they have, nonetheless, sought in many of their pronouncements to build on their struggle credentials in order present themselves, both domestically and internationally, as key representatives, interpreters and defenders of the countries of the Southern poor. The litany is impressive, up to a point. Consider, for example, Mandela's own statement at the 1999 Davos forum that brought together heads of state and of multinational corporations to discuss the question: "Is global capitalism delivering the goods?" Mandela was prepared to ask some questions of his own: "Is globalization only to benefit the powerful and the speculators? Does it offer nothing to men, women and children who are ravaged by poverty?"²⁰ But it is Mandela's successor, Thabo Mbeki, who has taken the initiative most vigorously in a number of his speeches both before and after his ascending to the presidency. Consider his 1998 pronouncement to the effect that South Africans "must be in the forefront in challenging the notion of 'the market' as a modern God, a supernatural phenomenon to whose dictates everything human must bow in a spirit of helplessness."²¹ Consider, too, his important speech to the twelfth heads of state meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, including the statement that "the 'free market' path of development...has failed to live up to the expectations of the people of the South."²² As Rok Ajalu epitomized the occasion:

¹⁹ Fred Cooper and Randall Packer (eds.), *International Development and the Social Scientists* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), "Introduction", p. 4.

²⁰ As quoted in an article entitled "Mandela poses hard questions about reach of globalization," in *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), January 30, 1999 (p. A19). Of course, this statement must be compared with his 1994 affirmation to the US Joint Houses of Congress that the free market was a "magic elixir" that would produce freedom and equality for all" (cited in Andrew Nash, "Mandela's Democracy," *Monthly Review*, 50, 11 [1999], p. 26).

²¹ From a speech by Mbeki at the opening of the ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, Durban, August, 1998.

²² Thabo Mbeki speaking at the twelfth heads of state meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in South Africa, September 3, 1998 (and quoted in Robert Wade and Frank Venerosa, "The Gathering World Slump and the Battle over Capital Controls," *New Left Review*, 231 [September-October, 1998], p. 20).

What then is President Mbeki's solution to the problem of market fundamentalism. He concluded his speech by urging the Non-Aligned Movement to go back to basics, to demand a new world order -- "to turn itself into an effective organ for the creation of the new political, economic and security world order which will succeed actually to assist in the life and death matter that the aspirations of the weak and the poor become an integral part of the actual agenda of the entirety of our world."²³

It is statements like these, and Mbeki's attendant evocation of the fact of "global apartheid" (explicitly so named), that can lead so astute a commentator on developments in Africa as Rok Ajalu to embrace their author's progressive credentials with unbridled enthusiasm - this being true, in particular, of Mbeki's much-trumpeted presentation of the need for what he calls an "African Renaissance." This is said by Ajalu to represent a potential rebirth of African self-respect, sense of efficacy and "rebellion" -- even to the point of "seem[ing] to imply a subtle and sophisticated challenge to globalisation."²⁴ In fact, so agog is Ajalu at Mbeki's various rhetorical flourishes, Ajalu comes to a most startling conclusion:

It would seem, therefore, that those who have assumed the pinnacle of Mbeki's African renaissance to be the drive for the virtues and dictates of the free market, making Africa safe for the overseas multinational investments and private capital, are grossly mistaken. Mbeki's African renaissance represents a much more nuanced and a subtler critique of the contemporary world order than such interpretations allow. It is indeed a call to take up an anti-imperialist stance!²⁵

Yet one is left to wonder at the precise provenance of such a bizarre and overstated testimonial. It is not merely that Mbeki tends to switch the tenor of his rhetoric markedly from one audience to another that might have been expected to give Ajalu some pause here. More important is the fact that the bulk of the evidence regarding Mbeki and company's actual practice ("Talk left, act right," as domestic critics of the ANC have come to epitomize such flights of Mbekian fancy-talk) suggests a quite opposite conclusion. For the ANC in action has dedicated itself to a version of neo-liberalism that is, in fact, baldly market-driven and premised on a kind of "one-worldist" celebration of the more or less unqualified hegemony of capital, world-wide

²³ Rok Ajalu, "Thabo Mbeki's African Renaissance in a Globalising World Economy: The Struggle for the Soul of a Continent," *Review of African Political Economy*, 87 (March, 2001), p. 36.

²⁴ Ajalu, *ibid.*, p. 35. In an alternative reading, I have described the domestic collapse of the notion of an "African Renaissance" into a rationale for the self-aggrandizement of a black petty bourgeoisie in my "Cry for the Beloved Country: The Post-Apartheid Denouement," *Monthly Review*, 52, 8 (January, 2001); for its degeneration continentally into the "New Partnership for African Development"/NEPAD project, see below.

²⁵ Ajalu, *ibid.*, p. 37. Ajalu is also referencing an Mbeki speech to the Non-Aligned Summit when he cites him as stating that the process of globalization "ineluctably results in the reduction of the sovereignty of states, with the weakest, being ourselves, being the biggest losers -- those who are already the worst off, suffer losses of the first order as a result of a marginal adjustment by another" (p. 35).

and local. This is most evident, as is widely acknowledged by most commentators both of the left and the right, in its domestic policies but, as we shall see, it also underpins the initiatives that post-apartheid South Africa has actually taken on the world stage -- as distinct from what it given to saying that it is doing.

As stated, the best proof of the counter argument to Ajalu's case is offered by the deeply conservative cast of post-apartheid South Africa's policies at home and we must begin there. I have documented elsewhere the process by which the ANC came to embrace a starkly neo-liberal domestic project, capped dramatically by then SA Vice-President Thabo Mbeki pugnacious comment, "Just call me a Thatcherite," made when he announced the government's GEAR ("Growth, Employment and Redistribution") document that consolidated its move to the right in 1996.²⁶ True, some would argue that the choosing of this option merely confirmed the fact that "There is No Alternative" on a world stage set by the untrammelled hegemony of global capitalism. Others are more inclined to see in the ANC's post-apartheid project a confirmation of the self-interested petty-bourgeois ambitions that were said always to have characterized that movement's leadership: after all, Mbeki himself had argued strenuously from quite early on that "the ANC is not a socialist party. It never pretended to be one, it has never said it was, and it is not trying to be. It will not become one by decree or for purposes of pleasing its 'left' critics."²⁷ But, whatever the reasons for this outcome, surely few could dispute the essentially neo-liberal character of it.

True, many of the ANC's pre-liberation formulations had emphasized the need to impose a much stronger measure of social control over the workings of the market and a capitalist economy that was very much more developed in South Africa than elsewhere on the continent. Much was heard of the prospects for nationalizations and, of special interest, of economic strategies designed to facilitate "growth through redistribution." Linked implicitly to a radical notion of "structural reform" that seemed to have as a goal a progressive closing in on the prerogatives of capital by movement and state, such strategies would have sought to press capital to slowly but surely gear an increasingly high proportion of its productive energies to meeting popular needs (rather than permitting capital freely to pursue the logic of its own global ambitions). And yet, as stated, the transition would instead produce a development project premised primarily on "global competitiveness," the centrality of foreign investment, the rule of the market and, more specifically, accelerated privatization, an apparent indifference to rising structural unemployment and the marketization of service delivery that makes such services unattainable to so many.²⁸ The esteemed Indian writer Arundhati

²⁶ See my "Cry for the Beloved Country," op. cit., but also, inter alia, Hein Marais, *South Africa: Limits to Change: the political economy of transformation* (London, New York, and Cape Town: Zed Books and University of Cape Town Press, 1998), now in a second edition, and Patrick Bond, *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

²⁷ Thabo Mbeki, "The Fatton Thesis: A Rejoinder," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 18, 3 (1984), p. 609.

²⁸ See, amongst other of his numerous writings on these matters, Patrick Bond, *Against Global Apartheid: South Africa meets the World Ban*

Roy has written, both poignantly and accurately, of this sad denouement to the anti-apartheid struggle as follows:

And what of Mandela's South Africa? Otherwise known as the Small Miracle, the Rainbow Nation of God? South Africans say that the only miracle they know of is how quickly the rainbow has been privatised, sectioned off and auctioned to the highest bidders. Within two years of taking office in 1994, the African National Congress genuflected with hardly a caveat to the Market God. In its rush to replace Argentina as neo-liberalism's poster boy, it has instituted a massive programme of privatisation and structural adjustment. The government's promise to re-distribute agricultural land to 26 million landless people has remained in the realm of dark humour. While 60 per cent of the population remains landless, almost all agricultural land is owned by 60,000 white farmers. Post-apartheid, the income of 40 per cent of the poorest black families has diminished by about 20 per cent. Two million have been evicted from their homes. Six hundred die of AIDS every day. Forty per cent of the population is unemployed and that number is rising sharply. The corporatisation of basic services has meant that millions have been disconnected from water and electricity.²⁹

And so, for the mass of the population, doomed in practice to increasingly high levels of unemployment during the period of "rationalization" of the South African economy in line with global "imperatives," their jobs as well as their welfare needs were to be provided for -- mostly in the much longer run! -- by the trickle-down effects that a beneficent and expansive market-driven capitalism is said to be poised to deliver. Unfortunately, the fact that this aggressively capitalist project has so far proven to be such a dismal failure at home does not seem to have dampened the ANC leadership's enthusiasm for it.

Nor has it dissuaded the ANC from pushing such "solutions" upon others: the ANC's global and continental strategies have become, in practice (if not always in the terms of the rhetoric that accompanies them), merely an extension of its domestic approach. Thus, even while advancing a case for some measure of "reform" (debt relief, increased aid, the lowering of Northern trade barriers, and, not least, increased investment) within such bastions of global power as the IFIs and the WTO South Africa's moderate approach has (in the words of senior government minister Alec Erwin) been premised on "attempting to break with a conception of contestation by stressing partnership" and by avoiding (in the words of a core ANC document) the temptation "to elaborate solutions that are in discord with the rest of the world" or that represent "a voluntarist South African experiment of a special type."³⁰ Yet how relevant can a "non-discordant" practice of global reformism - a projected "partnership" between hares and hounds -- really be when global capitalism offers so little by way of positive promise for the

²⁹ Arundhati Roy, "When the Saints Go Marching Out," Znet (www.zmag.org), September 2, 2003.

³⁰ These quotes are cited in Patrick Bond, "South Africa's Agenda in 21st Century Global Governance," in Review of African Political Economy/ROAPE, 89 (September, 2001), p. 416.

kind of reformist strategies that the ANC says it is striving to achieve. The case for Africa is clear, at least. As Colin Leys and I have argued, the Current plight.

Is relegation to the margins of the global economy, with no visible prospect of continental development along capitalist lines....Which does not mean that nothing is happening, let alone that no alternative is possible. It simply means that Africa's development, and the dynamics of global capitalism, are no longer convergent, if they ever were....Insofar as these economies remain unlikely to generate investment of a more productive and transformative variety -- whether from (still extremely weak) domestic bourgeoisies, from international capital, or from complementary state initiatives -- investment of the hit-and-run variety is likely to remain the commonest kind, with predictable lack of developmental results continentally, regionally and nationally. In sum, the dream of a transformative capitalism in Africa remains just that: a dream"³¹

The meagre returns to Africa for the reformist entreaties of South African and other continental leaders at sites where Northern powers meet to consider the present and future - most notably at G8 Summits at Kananaskis in 2001 and Evian in 2003 -- might give additional pause here. For the fact is that Africans who seek meaningful development for their continent will have to become participants in global and continental initiatives that proceed on the basis of a much more profoundly anti-capitalist perspective than the ANC leadership is currently prepared to countenance.

Moreover, the situation as regards the ANC's global programme may actually represent something rather more negative than merely the almost inevitably failed practice of a naive reformism. For recent analyses of the ANC's record in international negotiations suggest more sinister possibilities. Thus Dot Keet, in a scrupulous analysis of South Africa's role (and particularly that played by Minister of Trade Erwin) within the WTO, notes the claim (made by Erwin) that South Africa, as a "major player" on the global stage, acts "a bridge between the developed and the developed countries."³² However a close tracking of Erwin's actual role in WTO assemblies both in Seattle (1999) and Doha (2001) provides a very different picture. When not denouncing the demonstrators in the street in Seattle, Erwin was found to be eschewing any close contact with other African delegations and, much to the consternation of the latter, concentrating instead on the opportunity given him to enter the "inner circle" of "Green Room" discussions by the global heavy hitters (the EU, US, Canada and Japan) and their occasional invitees.

As Keet documents in even more telling detail for Doha, Erwin and his delegation were once again deemed to have run principally with hounds of global capital in seeking to push African (and other Third World) delegations towards making, in the name of "realism" and its own "broad agenda," various "trade-offs" that would have compromised those delegations' demands on a wide

³¹ Colin Leys and John S. Saul, "Sub-Saharan Africa within Global Capitalism," Monthly Review, 51, 3 (July-August, 1999), pp. 17 and 25.

³² As cited in Dot Keet, South Africa's Official Position and Role in Promoting the World Trade (Cape Town: Alternative Information and Development Centre [AIDC], 2002)

range of fronts. Not surprisingly Keet found "many developing countries, especially in Africa, [noting] with wry comments that, while South Africa keeps its distance from the more active and effective developing countries in the WTO, there is a contrasting readiness of South Africa to engage actively with the governments of the more powerful countries, separately and together." Hence Keet's hard-edged but entirely convincing conclusion as to "the South African government's highly questionable role" in such a context:

Following the logic inherent in its own strategic choices, and independently of Pretoria's self-defined "good intentions" and declared "tactical" aims, South Africa played and plays an increasingly questionable WTO role within Africa and internationally. As events unfolded, in the past three years, Pretoria's strategic positioning in the WTO and tactical interventions in international negotiations have lead to the widely held conclusion that South Africa is playing a role not so much as a bridge between the developed and developing countries but rather as a bridge for the transmission of influences from the developed countries for the promotion of their economic interests and global aims throughout the world.³³

Moreover, as Patrick Bond and others have tirelessly demonstrated in their voluminous writings on related themes, much the same could be said of the role that the South African Minister of Finance, Manuel, and other South African representatives have played from the lofty positions to which they have ascended within the halls of the World Bank and the IMF.³⁴

As for the much heralded African Renaissance, it seems to have been narrowed in its terms of reference to the horizons encompassed by the "New Partnership for African Development"/(NEPAD) proposals -- drafted, it would seem, primarily by Mbeki and his advisors and then shepherded through various Pan-African bodies by the troika of Mbeki and Presidents Obasanjo and Bouteflika of Nigeria and Algeria respectively. These leaders pushed hard to see that NEPAD was on the agenda of the G8 Summit to be held in Kananaskis, Canada, in 1999 and also was central to the premises that underpinned the recasting of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union. It is, of course, tempting to hail an initiative that has sought to bring Africa and its plight to the attention of the globally powerful. Moreover, NEPAD does have some useful things to say about the extent to which trade in African products is blocked by the protectionist economic policies of Northern countries, while also including a measure of self-criticism regarding the undemocratic practices of the African regimes themselves.

³³ Keet, *ibid.*, p. 4; see also Patrick Bond's chapter (ch. 5) on "The Doha trade "agenda": Splitting Africa to launch a new round" in his newest book, tentatively entitled *Sustaining Global Apartheid: South Africa's Frustrated International Reforms* (in manuscript: forthcoming).

³⁴ Here, too, one of Bond's chapters, entitled "Washington renamed: A 'Monterrey Consensus' on finance" in his *Sustaining Global Apartheid* (*ibid.*), is particularly useful; more generally, in this book and its predecessor (*Against Global Apartheid* [op. cit.]) Bond provides much the richest and broadest analysis of South Africa's deeply compromised post-apartheid global positioning.

Nonetheless, at core, NEPAD seems a sad, defeated document, evidencing the ever-deepening subservience of the African leaders that authored it to the "common-sense" of a neo-liberalizing, structural-adjusting global capitalism; while written by African leaders, it reads like it could just as easily have been framed in the offices of the World Bank and the IMF.³⁵ Absolutely central to it, certainly, is a very familiar (and very damaging) premise: that African countries must continue to "adjust" their economies in order to provide the enabling conditions for their ever deeper penetration by global capital - with increased foreign investment presented as being the primary key to progress. Not just at Seattle and at Doha, but also on the African Continent itself, South Africa emerges ever more clearly as point-man for global capital. And not only for global capital. For there is also a growing suspicion in some continental quarters that the kind of further freeing up of African markets NEPAD envisions may also serve the desire of ANC free-marketeters to batter down barriers to South African-based capital's own ambitious plans for the further penetration of the rest of Africa. Not South Africa as "anti-imperialist," then, but as "sub-imperialist."

Patrick Bond has traced such policies, at least in part, to their grounding in a "defeatist -- and highly questionable -- attitude" towards globalization that he suggests to be held by Mbeki and his closest colleagues in South Africa (Trevor Manuel, his Minister of Finance, and Alec Erwin, his Minister of Trade, being amongst the most prominent of them). In Mbeki's own words, "the process of globalization is an objective outcome of the development of the productive forces that create wealth, including their continuous improvement through the impact on them of advances in science, technology and engineering." Hence Bond's conclusion that "the driving force of globalization boils down, in Mbeki's neutral story, to little more than technological determinism."³⁶ True, the likes of Rok Ajalu can attempt to put a bold face on this, praising Mbeki for realistically urging his fellow African heads of state not to react to globalization like "King Canute striving to wish the waves away."³⁷ And yet the mild reformism that Mbeki's approach gives rise to is very far removed from a necessary understanding that the existing market-dominated global order -- driven by "a minority class that draws its wealth and power from a historically specific form of

³⁵ For a critique, detailed and powerful, of NEPAD along these lines see Patrick Bond (ed.), *Fanon's Warning: A Civil Society Reader on the New Partnership for Africa's Development* (Trenton and Cape Town: Africa World Press and AIDC, 2002). As Bond documents, a wide range of organizations drawn from South African civil society, as well as from elsewhere in Africa, have been amongst the most articulate and assertive critics of NEPAD; see also, in this regard, Trevor Ngwane, "Should African social movements be part of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)?" notes from a speech given by Trevor Ngwane to the African Social Forum's African Seminar at the World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2 February 2002.

³⁶ For Bond's argument, with several useful citations from Mbeki, see, once again, his *Against Global Apartheid* (op. cit.), p. 139.

³⁷ Thabo Mbeki, "Statement at the 35th Ordinary Session of the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government," Algiers, August 13, 1999 (cited in Ajalu, op. cit.)

production" -- is, in Greg Albo's words, "contingent, imbalanced, exploitative and replaceable."³⁸

Very far indeed, that is, from the kind of genuinely "anti-imperialist stance" that we have seen Ajalu erroneously take it to be. Yet it is such a stance -- real not rhetorical -- that can alone guarantee progress for the poorest of the poor in today's global economy.

South Africa: running, however ineffectively, with the hares? Or, as one increasingly suspects to be the case hunting, however guardedly, with the hounds? Either way, the fact remains that the ANC's brand of deeply compromised quasi-reformism serves primarily to deflect consideration of other, much more meaningful, radical alternatives, both globally and locally. As Bond writes, the exercise of a more meaningful "Third Worldism" by the South African government would involve something very different from an approach that "excludes (indeed most often rejects) alliances with increasingly radical local and international social, labour and environmental movements who in reality are the main agents of progressive global change."³⁹ Moreover, the ANC government also has chosen in its own country to turn its back coldly on those forces that might begin to provide the social and political base for any more meaningful "anti-imperialist" project. I have identified elsewhere,⁴⁰ a range of increasingly well-organized grass-roots initiatives surfacing in South Africa that find they have no choice but to mobilize people in active resistance to their own government's bankrupt policies. Included on the list would be, amongst other initiatives, the Anti-Privatization Forum, the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, the Treatment Action Campaign, the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, the Concerned Citizens' Forum in Durban, the Landless People's Movement, as well as some unions, some churches, some women's organizations.⁴¹ It is the further growth of such initiatives that could eventually produce the political will necessary to draw South Africa back into the ranks of those who challenge in meaningful ways the geographical, racial and class-based hierarchies of global inequality.

³⁸ Greg Albo, 'A World Market of Opportunities? Capitalist Obstacles and Left Economic Policies,' in Leo Panitch (ed.), *Socialist Register 1997: Ruthless Criticism of All that Exists* (London: Merlin Press, 1997), p. 30; as Albo continues, more positive outcomes "can only be realized through re-embedding financial capital and production relations in democratically organized national and local economic spaces sustained through international solidarity and fora of democratic co-operation."

³⁹ Bond, "South Africa's Agenda," op. cit., p. 416.

⁴⁰ John S. Saul, "Starting from Scratch? A Reply to Jeremy Cronin," *Monthly Review*, 54, 7 (December, 2002).

⁴¹ Much of the spirit and thrust of such initiatives is captured in Ashwin Desai's recent *We are the Poors: Community Struggles in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002); see also the important contributions of Neville Alexander, *Issues in the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002) and Gillian Hart, *Disabling Globalization: Places of Power in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg and Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of Natal Press and University of California Press, 2002).

