

The Texts of the Convivium

**GLOBALIZATION, A UNITED WORLD
AND THE MISSION OF A NEW EUROPE**

2005

C O N T E N T S

1. Globalization means unity of the world: which, as such, promises us a great deal of good; but the transition proves to be very rough, accompanied as it is by breakdowns and disasters of every kind
2. Global, above all, is the menace represented by the use of nuclear energy for war: ever more deadly bombs that could be freely produced by states and even private persons
3. But even the peaceful use of nuclear energy can cause harm and damage health, particularly due to the effect of radioactive wastes; quite apart from the deadly effects of radioactivity, even industrial development as such implies a wide and variegated series of pollutions
4. Many forms of pollution are of a global scale and only a world government ultimately resolve this particularly grave problem
5. To all this one has to add the damage that, on account of an excessive overpopulation, is being by an indiscriminate and chaotic exploitation of the resources of the planet, which renders a regulation at the world level even more necessary
6. The disorder of the economy is accentuated by the globalization that at present is taking place in accordance with an unbridled liberism, where powerful multinational enterprises render themselves wholly autonomous of the national states and dominate the markets in their exclusive interest
7. Certain important international institutions that should promote stability and development, especially of the backward countries, intervene in crisis situations in a decidedly improper manner
8. Greater well-being has spread in the world, but in far too many cases the rich and the more advanced countries have increased their wealth, while the poor individuals and the poor and backward countries have become even poorer
9. Workers, technicians, white-collar workers can always be found, if not in the country where an enterprise has developed, certainly in some other and more backward country; and this makes workers compete with each other, makes them earn less and become more and more emarginated
10. In a situation that risks degenerating into chaos, formidable problems are being raised by the World Wide Web; and hence the need for creating a world magistrature, especially for the purpose of preventing and repressing a cybernetics criminality in rapid expansion

11. Vigorous reactions to liberist globalization are coming to the fore at various levels and in widely differing forms, all of which are converging into a movement of worldwide proportions
12. Here there is felt the need for giving a more positive and constructive content to what is at present a pure opposition movement: and in this connection the proposals of economic scholars and experts intended to reform the structure and the work of the international financial institutions could constitute a valid help
13. Even if perfectly designed and working with the best of intentions, no international institution will ever be able to act with full efficacy unless it is backed by precise and rigorous rules that can be imposed in a strict and, in the limit, coercive manner
14. There follows the need for creating a world federal state with a parliament elected by the peoples of the world, and then a government, a magistrature and armed forces (under its sole control) that would enable it to exercise an effective sovereign authority
15. Are the objectives so far set out utopian? They undoubtedly correspond to a kind of maxiprogramme that can be implemented only by degrees and amid a thousand difficulties: that is why a sage realism requires one to pursue only a series of gradual conquests, though without ever losing sight of the ultimate goal
16. The process of world unification can find a much more effective motor in Europe than in the United States of America whose "American Dream" is now in a severe crisis: in this way a new "European Dream" takes shape
17. The American and the European "Dreams" will nevertheless have to converge and combine and all the available powers in the world must cooperate to bring about the realization of this great hope
18. We have to have faith in our capacity of jointly reaching the final goal; and in the meantime the problem is to promote consciousness and a firm will in ourselves by cultivating the universal values that alone can inspire a strong commitment to world unity

Bibliography

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To be frank, "globalization" is a word that either in Dante's language ("globalizzazione") or in Shakespeare's does not sound particularly well. But even more sinister is the sound it assumes in the mouth of many dissenters: committed citizens, economists and sociologists of a particular orientation, environmentalists, defenders of human rights, trade unionists, journalists, students, religious, the "Seattle People" in all their ramifications.

This does not mean that the word "globalization" must necessarily have a negative significance. To Anglo-Saxon ears it is synonymous with the French "mondialisation". Undoubtedly, everything today tends to assume a worldwide dimension: economy and finance, communications and technologies, publicity, culture, and even politics.

Globalization is a vast and complex phenomenon and is, no doubt, associated with many obscure sides, many dramatic and even tragic aspects. And yet its substantial meaning is “united world”.

That the entire world could become united to constitute a great and solidary family is undoubtedly a very lofty ideal that expresses a profound aspiration of men. But how can this unity be implemented in real terms today? Is it a phenomenon that can be controlled, effectively governed for the common good? Or are we rather concerned with a vigorous and unruly horse that refuses to be bridled by its rider? Face to face with such a grandiose movement, we have to consider its concrete pathways – often, de facto, very harsh and rough – and therefore its grave human costs.

Many barriers are tumbling down, and each man or woman can follow the lives of the other human beings far more closely than ever before. With Internet we can communicate with anybody in the world and in real time. It is an immediate means of communication that comes to be added to our telephone and television technologies by cable, radio, and satellite. When we turn on our television set, we can see what happens even in the most remote corner of this earth, as if we were present just a few steps away. And our jet planes will take us there in next to no time.

There are those who say that even air travel will become out of date within a few years. A business-class crisis for the air lines. Here is a short-term prophesy by Jaron Lanier, the French scientist-musician, who has given his name to virtual reality: rather than travelling, the participants of a meeting will be able to project their “avatars”, i.e. their respective quasi-real images, by telematic means. And thus we have some thirty odd gentlemen attending a meeting in a virtual conference room. They will be able to say to each other whatever they want, exchange objects and – why not – shake hands and give each other pats on the shoulder, naturally all dressed in appropriate cyber overalls.

There can be no doubt that in experiences of such proximity even the most distant becomes close at hand, a neighbour. And this can be particularly important for a religious person, because it enables him to see, just a pace or two away, the neighbour with whom he wants to be solidary: to perceive his problems, his happy moments, his sufferings and hopes.

Some neighbours could be bothersome for us and even odious, not least on account of the closures and prejudices we have within us. All considered, however, there can be no doubt that this reciprocal greater closeness and better knowledge facilitates greater solidarity.

The aid that many nations receive from abroad enable them, for example, to create schools in rural areas, irrigate land and double its production, to halt the spread of Aids. Many people live longer in better conditions. The countries that have remained behind are today less isolated from the rest of the world.

Information is being spread everywhere. People are in a far better position to acquire new notions than were even rich people in the days when the Western economy was being developed.

This feeling of solidarity for all human beings may be further strengthened by the fact that we are discovering ever more clearly that the life of each one depends on the life of the others, of all the others, even those furthest removed from us.

The world is becoming ever smaller. Indeed, a very suggestive expression speaks of a “global village”. A global impact is being exerted by both wars and ecological disasters, by the financial crises of even very distant countries, the collective psychoses, the fashions. We have an almost immediate vision of everything that happens. All the ills of this earth become quickly known sooner, just as we realize that the good things are good for all of us.

As we have already begun to note in these first few pages, globalization is rich in positive potential. Ever more sophisticated technologies have made it possible to transfer information, goods and people from one place to another even when they are far apart. They have greatly facilitated contact between countries separated by great distances.

And thus, favoured also by causes of a cultural nature, we see the emerging countries of the south-east and south of Asia, of south eastern Europe and Latin America become integrated in the world economy.

Intensified commercial exchanges, spread of prosperity, ever better knowledge of each other, the overcoming of many prejudices, fanaticisms and provincialisms and growing democracy in ever greater areas, more civilization, more freedom, more respect for man and his rights, a more ecumenical spirituality.

That the entire world should unite to constitute a single great and solidary family is undoubtedly a very lofty ideal that expresses a profound aspiration of men.

The point of arrival would be all this and more, but the transition, alas, proves to be extremely harsh. The relationships that are being struck up are for the most part of an economic nature: of an economy that de facto is being left in the hands of its forces, its enterprises, with a minimum of regulation.

In the clash with the strongest, those who succumb are the undefended and not sufficiently protected weak. The difference between rich and poor countries is getting greater, as also the difference between the rich and the poor of one and the same country. The number of people of condemned to surviving on one dollar a day is getting greater. More that 80% of the population of India are surviving with less.

The last ten years of the twentieth century saw the number of poor shoot up by almost a hundred million people. The expectation of life in Africa, which had begun to increase, is now declining again. Apart from Aids, it is poverty as such that acts as killer.

In a wholly liberalized economy each enterprise pursues its immediate profit without any regard for either their competitors, the human societies in which it operates or the natural environment. From this there derive all the breakdowns and disasters of a global scale that, unfortunately, we shall have to list here; they render our life ever more inhuman and, in the limit, menace the very survival of our planet.

2. Global, above all, is the menace represented by the use of nuclear energy for war: ever more deadly bombs that could be freely produced by states and even private persons.

Globalization also means global impact of certain phenomena, be they positive or negative. And therefore also global importance of the far-reaching menaces that these negative phenomena could imply.

The survival of the earth is menaced by numerous and variegated initiatives of a highly dangerous nature. Among these there is one, always potentially on the cards, that could in an extreme case lead to the destruction of the planet or to its devastation, and this not gradually, but rather immediately, from one moment to the next. The accused here is the use of atomic energy for war purposes.

The destructive effects of atomic bombs and hydrogen bombs are well known. The “progress” of certain technologies could arrive at furnishing even more destructive weapons.

Any state can pursue the construction of its bomb in full liberty. The risk of the use of atomic bombs comes from both great and small powers. Even a pocket-size dictator could have his atomic bomb.

But this is also possible for private parties. Since the procedures are kept secret only up to a certain point, even some ingenious madman, basing himself on information that is readily available, could arrive at making a small atom bomb in his back garden as it were.

We are in the hands of the criminal folly of any Tom, Dick or Harry. Everything has turned out alright until today, but who knows what might happen tomorrow, given the lack of an effective international control.

And what form could such a control assume? To what authority could it be entrusted? And, lastly, in what way could this authority intervene, with what means, with what sanctions against the most dangerous offenders?

There immediately comes to mind the war the USA and the United Kingdom waged against the Iraq of Saddam Hussein, accused of having chemical and bacteriological weapons at his disposal. The Iraqi government denied this, the inspectors sent by the United Nations did not manage to find anything, and nothing has been found right up to this moment.

Let us imagine, however, that an adequate quantity of these arms had been available and ready for use, that the risk had been real. An authority legitimated to intervene would have to have recourse to a war, with all the killings and destructions and all the indescribable sufferings that this implies.

So here we have the need for a supranational authority that would be the only one to have armed forces at its disposal, having disbanded the armed forces of all the national states, having accorded their governments only police forces for the maintenance of internal order. Hence not only the need but the urgency of creating a worldwide state.

It is the thesis of this essay that the constitution of a worldwide state is necessary – and I would say also extremely urgent – not only for preventing the use of fearfully lethal weapons, but also to resolve the many grave and far-reaching problems that today beset the world.

These are questions that cannot but interest each individual, no matter where he may happen to be, by virtue of the fact that we have all become “neighbours”, inhabitants of one and the same “village”, and are therefore closely involved. What is good or ill for any one has the same effects on all the others.

3. But even the peaceful use of nuclear energy can cause harm and damage health, particularly due to the effect of radioactive wastes; quite apart from the deadly effects of radioactivity even industrial development as such implies a wide and variegated series of pollutions

Side by side with the problem of the use of atomic energy for war purposes, there is now taking shape also the problem of its peaceful use. The radioactive waste materials can cause death and destruction over vast territories.

A *radioactive pollution* is now in course, but also a *pollution of the air*. The machine civilization is a great destroyer of oxygen. The chlorophyll function is being lost, overwhelmed by the growing production of carbon dioxide and other harmful gases. One fifth of the world population is breathing air that is more polluted than the air the World Health Organization considers to be fit for breathing.

Civil and industrial emissions, the exhaust gases of motor vehicles, smog, tanker aircraft and oil refineries are spreading every kind of poison in the atmosphere. A contribution to this form of pollution is also being made by other factors that we shall consider later.

Soil pollution is being caused by solid wastes of civil and industrial origin and also by the precipitation of the poisons that have already polluted the air.

Pollution of the water of the rivers and the seas can be attributed to the effluents from inhabited centres and industries and also to agricultural discharges and the discharge of non-degradable detergents, fertilizers and insecticides. Pollution of vast sea areas is also being caused by the not by any means rare shipwrecks of oil tankers, as also by the other accidents they suffer and even the simple discharge of "bilge water" from them. With the consequence, among others, of a wholesale slaughter of fish.

The increased temperature of the water due to the discharge of large quantities of hot water from atomic power stations is giving rise to the *thermal pollution* of rivers.

Another contribution is made by the so-called "glasshouse effect": an excessive carbon dioxide content can form layers that can be compared to the walls of a glasshouse, because they hinder the dispersion of terrestrial heat into the upper regions of the atmosphere, so that they bring about an increase of the average temperature of our planet and therefore stimulate the melting of the polar ice caps, the raising of the sea level and the consequent submersion of inhabited coastal strips.

The glasshouse effect is not only a disruption procured by man's ill-considered activities. It is, above all, a natural phenomenon. Contained within its proper limits, it retains the heat that our planet needs to be and keep on being inhabitable. If the atmosphere were to dissolve, the heat would become dispersed and the temperature of the earth would fluctuate around eighteen or nineteen degrees below zero. The "glasshouse" that comes to be formed consists of a transparent atmosphere cover that reflects what would otherwise be lost back onto the surface of the earth. Entrapping this heat, it maintains the average temperature around fifteen degrees above zero and thus makes life possible.

What is it that man has done at this point? He burns coal, oil and methane. He uproots forests to obtain agricultural land. He abandons cultivated lands, which are thus transformed into deserts. Thus, abandoning its natural locations, carbon is liberated into the atmosphere, where it combines with oxygen to constitute immense quantities of carbon dioxide.

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, before the industrial revolution got under way, a million "parts" contained just 280 parts of carbon dioxide. By 1959 these had risen to 316. In 2000, forty years later, the count amounted to 370, an average annual increase of 17 percent! The limit of the sustainable concentration would seem to be at the most 450.

Carbon dioxide is a typical glasshouse gas, but is not the only one that has undergone such an evident growth. Nitrogen oxide increased by 15 percent during the same period and ozone by 145. However, carbon dioxide is distinguished by the time it persists in the atmosphere, which exceeds that of the other gases.

These glasshouse gases thicken into a kind of atmospheric membrane that imprisons the greater part of the heat, preventing its dispersion and increasing the earth's temperature in a manner that is becoming less and less tolerable.

As we have seen, even the presence of ozone increases in the atmosphere. Ozone retains heat on the earth, but at the same time screens the impact of the sun's rays. Another phenomenon is now taking place: various gases used in industrial production, but especially the chlorine and fluorine carbides, cause a thinning of the ozone layer in the atmosphere. And thus we have the famous "ozone hole", which regularly forms every spring and seems now to have reached a size comparable to the area of the United States.

No longer filtered by an adequate ozone layer, the rays of the sun come to constitute a danger for those who remain exposed to the sun for a considerable time: in the long run, they give rise not only to a "tan", but also cause cancer of the skin.

A report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Changes published in 2001 sustains that, if things continue to develop at their present rate, within a century the average temperature may rise by a minimum of one degree centigrade and a maximum of 5.9.

The gradual melting of the polar ice caps is a direct consequence of this phenomenon. The arctic ice cap is diminishing at a fearful rate. In the course of the twentieth century the glaciers of Mount Kenya lost 92 percent of their volume, those of Kilimanjaro 73 percent and those of our Alps 50 percent.

It has to be feared that the industrial development of China and India, Africa and Latin America will bring the glasshouse effect to even higher levels, multiplying the risks associated therewith.

Another factor promoting thermal pollution is the development of transport made possible by fossil fuels (carbon, oil, etc.), which increases the presence of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Industrial activity and particularly the combustion of carbon also brings about a concentration of nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide in the atmosphere. Hence the phenomenon of acid rain: these substances precipitate together with the water, damaging buildings and monuments, vegetation and harvests, and also the water tables.

To this series of contaminations we still have to add the *acoustic pollution* caused by prolonged exposure of human beings to noise in the factories and the streets and even in their homes. Let us remember the roar of the aircraft and, more particularly, the bang of the supersonics, as also the volume of the music in the discos. This continually increasing decibel aggression causes grave psychological and physiological harm.

One may also speak of a *food pollution*: manipulations, colourings, sweeteners, food rigged to give it an appearance of freshness, intensive breeding, estrogens fed to the animals in order to make them grow faster and tranquilizers administered to them against the hypertension due to crowding, pesticides and other chemical contaminants that all end up in our food, and so on.

Added to the polluting action that each individual already exerts as such, pollution in all its forms increases not linearly, but exponentially. And such is the production of poisonous substances that nature no longer succeeds in digesting them. In the limit, therefore, we run the risk of dying asphyxiated in an ever more unbreathable atmosphere or being buried under the ever greater accumulation of our garbage and waste products.

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These various forms of pollution are no longer occurring in just the limited spaces of single countries. As they spread beyond each and every national frontier, they come to represent a great problem and, in the limit, an authentic peril for the whole of humanity.

To give some idea of the global scale of certain pollutions, one may here recall that a high concentration of toxic substances of industrial origin has been discovered in the flesh of penguins from the South Pole, i.e. from what one may presume to have remained one of the least polluted parts of the world.

“We are tenants in the same house”, was the way an American president put it some years ago, concluding that we therefore “have to clean it together”.

These are problems that cannot be faced effectively by means of merely regional logics, so that we are always more and more clearly brought back to the idea of a worldwide *joint venture*, a *partnership* between nations that will come to grips with the new ecological imperative, devising global intervention strategies. And we become ever more conscious of the need for assigning more means and granting greater powers to the United Nations.

At this point it will be as well to say what these increased powers would have to be. They would certainly have to include the possibility, the full capacity of coercive action.

Several states, or even all the states of the world, may jointly decide a certain action. But what happens when one of the contracting states lacks loyalty and fails to execute what has been established by agreement between the parties? This question is particularly relevant in connection with pollution limitation agreements between states.

We all know that excessive emissions of carbon dioxide pollute the atmosphere not only of the territory in which they take place, but of the entire planet. At this point the international community could decide that each state should apply limits. Let us assume that all the governments sign the relevant agreement, but then one of the signatory states, after having formally accepted, fails to do so.

It could draw advantage from this. The adoption of anti-pollution measures may involve substantial costs. Not maintaining its commitments, the disloyal government will benefit from the cleaning-up operation undertaken by the others and save a lot of money, with which it could then subsidize its still polluting industry, thus rendering its products more competitive than those of other countries, where industry receives no comparable help.

In that case the international community will deprecate and stigmatize, but what else could it do? With what force could it undertake a coercive intervention if it does not possess an adequate military force?

If the authority in question is to intervene effectively by means of a simple police action rather than having to unleash a war on each occasion, it would have to be more than a mere association of states, that is to say, a state in the true sense of the term, with all the attributes of sovereignty and with armed forces to which the defaulting member state could not oppose armed forces of its own.

Is it conceivable that a delinquent or a group of delinquents prosecuted by justice should be able to oppose the police of a sovereign state with private police forces of equal or even superior efficacy?

I have taken the example of a possible case of violation of an international agreement on carbon dioxide emissions. But it is clear that the example could be extended to any form of pollution and appropriate measures to eliminate it.

In any case, it should be evident that no agreed measure could be deemed to be effective in the absence of a truly supranational state disposing of the necessary force. The state in question would no longer be regional, but worldwide, by virtue of the fact that all the phenomena we are considering have worldwide repercussions, the damage is global, global are the danger, and global is the solidarity necessary to face them in a decisive manner.

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In its rightful struggle against every form of pollution, the first commitment of a supranational government would have to be the introduction of a little more order into the economic life of the world, which, abandoned as it is to the free play of the market, is becoming ever more chaotic.

Far too many disasters are due to overexploitation of the planet's resources. The development of industry has devoured enormous non-renewable resources.

The growth of the population obliges a country to intensify its agricultural production, but an indiscriminate exploitation of the cultivable land will render it barren. It is therefore abandoned and becomes transformed into a desert. New land is being created by the wholesale destruction of forests.

Each year some 17 million hectares of tropical forests disappear in this way. Deforestation substantially annuls the function of the chlorophyll, which diminishes the excessive presence of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by transforming it into oxygen.

Water pollution leads to the death of even the fish that have survived indiscriminate fishing. It poisons the water tables that, in any case, have been largely exhausted by excessive consumption.

What is in danger in the animal kingdom is not just the survival of innumerable individuals, but of entire species. And the same may be said of plants and micro-organisms. The extinction of many living species goes to the detriment of biodiversity, which represents an undoubted asset for our planet.

The entire planet lives a miserable and wretched life. And one can say the same thing of a large part of the world's population, which exploits the resources of nature to its utmost possibilities and yet does not even manage to ensure a decent existence for itself.

As I said a few lines earlier, the first link of this negative chain is overpopulation, the demographic explosion. One can calculate that in 1750 the Earth had about 730 million inhabitants. In 1800 this had risen to about a billion. It then reached three billion around 1960, four in 1974, and five in 1987. At the end of the twentieth century one can calculate some six billion. If the present growth rate were to be maintained, our planet could have eleven billion inhabitants by 2050.

In the underdeveloped countries, where there is no birth control, production always proves insufficient to satisfy the elementary needs of the population no matter how greatly it may have been stepped up.

In India the population grew by four hundred million in no more than twenty years. In sub-saharan Africa the population doubled in twenty years. No stretch of the imagination allows one to see how the development of the economy could help a nation to overcome such a hiatus.

Not by any means the last thing to be taken into consideration is that increased productivity and industrial development, ever more necessary to assure the means of subsistence for a continually growing and hungry population, implies a far from negligible stepping up of the aggression suffered by the natural environment.

Thus, in an article in *Futuribili*, an Italian review, Giorgio Nebbia summarizes the responses of the Forrester-Meadows model published in the Club of Rome's famous report entitled *The limits of development*. This book does not tell us what will happen, but rather what could happen if certain conditions were to come true.

When the population increases, there is a greater demand for food. Agricultural production must therefore be increased. This steps up the consumption of fertilizers and pesticides, which – in its turn – implies the impoverishment and erosion of the cultivable land. Hence agricultural production will diminish and less food will be available. This means that there are undernourished people and that more individuals will die of hunger. As the demand for material goods and energy increases, industrial production is stepped up and this means an impoverishment of the resources of nature: minerals, water, fuels. The scarcity of resources will increase the conflicts for conquering them. An increase of industrial production implies greater pollution and more harm to health.

There is hardly anybody nowadays who does not appreciate the need for limiting the birth rate. In the developed countries of the West this line has already been followed for a long time.

In Communist China, where at least fifteen and possibly even thirty million people died of hunger and epidemics around the turn of the 'fifties, even excessively drastic anti-conception measures bordering on cruelty were adopted from 1971 onwards and made the average fertility of a Chinese woman come down from six children (1959) to less than two at present.

In India the corresponding figure came down from six children in the 'fifties to 3.1 in the period 1995-2001.

In Islamic society the number of children was still oscillating between six and seven in 1970, but now, to give just a few examples of the most recent estimates, has come down to 2.6 in Indonesia, 3.3 in Turkey, 3.0 in Egypt, 2.1 in Iran, 2.0 in Tunisia, 2.5 or even less in Algeria and Morocco.

Pakistan remains highly prolific, while Bangladesh, one of the world's poorest countries, is about halfway between.

Overpopulation implies deterioration of the environment and the resources of the planet, with every possible form of pollution. Here we have a planetary problem. No nation or group of nations can resolve it on its own and with its own exclusive forces. The overpopulation of a country produces effects that go to the detriment of the earth as a whole. Here, too, there is need for the intervention of a world authority capable of adopting a coherent demographic policy with all the necessary wisdom, but also with all the necessary decision.

6. The disorder of the economy is accentuated by the globalization that at present is taking place in accordance with an unbridled liberism where powerful multinational enterprises render themselves wholly autonomous of the national states and dominate the markets in their exclusive interest

The markets are no longer dominated by the national states, but by the multinational enterprises. These nowadays control twenty percent of production and seventy percent of the trade in the world.

The multinationals can create jobs also in other countries, wherever it is most to their advantage. And they can distribute the work in different localities of the world. They can have a first phase carried out in a given locality, a second phase elsewhere, and so on, even immense distances apart.

Enterprises generally avail themselves of the place or state where the most favourable conditions prevail and the tax to be paid is least. Place of investment, place of production, fiscal domicile and residence may also be chosen in different places and states, making them compete with each other to offer the greatest advantages and the most appropriate infrastructures, opposing fewer obstacles and imposing fewer rules and burdens.

A multinational will always remain bound to its nation of origin, though it may well succeed in not paying any taxes there, according their preference to the state offering the largest discounts.

This means that multinationals will turn their back on those countries where the trade unions are more active than in others and the government implements a policy intended to protect workers and the environment.

Strong markets and weak states. The financial markets nowadays function as if they were a single body. Globalization of the economy tends to subtract capital from the control of the national states.

States even find it difficult to tax capital that has become so volatile.

Commercial exchanges concluded electronically find it particularly easy to avoid taxation. One may say that the total volume of transactions concluded in this way amounts to six times the total of the reserves concentrated in the central banks of the world's seven principal economic powers.

Telematic trade is destined to grow in such a manner as to throw the fiscal systems of the various states into a grave crisis sooner or later.

The principal sufferer of this is destined to be the welfare state, which remains and will continue to remain short of the necessary funds.

A multinational may be far stronger than an individual state. But even the small and medium-sized enterprises can avoid its authority. Any government that adopts restrictive measures, or even exercises a control that is perceived as close and less tolerable, risks causing capital to flee abroad. It thus makes it more difficult for the country's industry to sustain foreign competition.

If a government were to impose heavier taxes with greater social contributions and more restrictive legislation to safeguard the environment, an industry which feels to be negatively affected thereby would look for more favourable conditions elsewhere and transfer its investments to other countries. It is not at all difficult to find cheaper labour, fewer taxes, greater facilitations and more generous government subsidies elsewhere.

The situation is wholly dominated by the managements of the enterprises. They exercise a power for which they do not have to render account to any authority, because

no government can really impose itself to guarantee the general interest, the common good.

Only the market commands. Enterprises want to earn, pursue immediate profits. They invest only limited amounts in research. In their short-sighted optics, they invest to earn right away, not in long-term projects. A market economy pursues immediate profits and is loath to finance more far-reaching initiatives that call for long implementation times.

Now that the Marxist ideology has failed, as also the ideologies opposed to it (Fascism, social democracy, Christian democracy, etc.), the place of ideology is being taken by more pragmatic “methods”. We live in a pure economicism, where the economy enjoys primacy even over politics.

Such a form of pure pragmatism tends to set itself up as a supreme doctrine without adversaries. A doctrine that finds its adherents, for example, in the economists of the Chicago School, who seek to render less dramatic the immediate effects of the ongoing economic revolution. They do recognize the traumatic character and the grave human costs of the initial phase of the new phenomenon but, in a more optimistic light, foresee a future in which the spontaneous forces of the economy will contribute to putting all things to rights, thus generating new equilibriums and well-being for all.

That all is destined to finish well is a simple dogmatic assumption of the theoreticians of this school. The liberists of the eighteenth and nineteenth century professed a similar conviction. But then, as the facts tell, the grave crises that came into being within the system could effectively be faced only by means of a massive state intervention.

It seems more reasonable to expect a worsening of the situation if things are left to run their course without correctives of any kind, without the least intervention of a superior authority in defence of the general interest.

In this neo-liberist attitude the manager’s new “ethic” is business for the sake of business. No sense of solidarity, no attachment to his country. My country is where I make the most money. I invest wherever capital gives me the best return.

The new economic “philosophy” is pursuit of the maximum profit at all costs. You invest to earn and for as long as it yields a profit. And not even a long-term profit, only an immediate one. Bite and run! Get out as soon as you have the impression that profits are coming to lack and there is the possibility of losing something.

It can happen – indeed, it has happened on several occasions – that a developing country attracts foreign capital and welcomes the establishment of multinational companies and obtains great benefit therefrom, at least for as long as no moment of crisis arrives.

Indeed, any combination of negative circumstances can trigger a crisis, which could in any case be overcome with just a little good will and also with the international help of mechanisms of the type that were devised and vainly proposed by Keynes.

But what happens in actual practice? At the very first impression that things are no longer alright and earnings have become less certain, the investors and multinationals abandon the country to itself. This leads to a financial collapse, a chain of bankruptcies, unemployment and misery.

A significant example is the one that occurred in South-East Asia in 1997: Thailand, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines. The formidable economic development of the “Asian tigers” had attracted enormous “portfolio investments”, which are the ones that aim at an immediate profit. Suddenly some bad news caused a wave of panic and triggered a “contagion effect” also in adjacent countries. Large amounts of “hot money” volatilized from one moment to the next.

And hence the closing of factories, mass dismissals, production drop, collapse of imports; and, with a view to sustaining exports, devaluation of the currency; and, of course, drastic cuts for health, schools, transport and other public services.

The mentality and the practice of pursuing only immediate profits induces large and small possessors of capital not so much to invest, but rather to gamble on the stock exchange, which has become transformed into a kind of planetary casino. Capital jumps around like flipper balls. Money pursues more money. For every dollar that goes to increase trade in real goods, a thousand are destined for investments that are not productive, but pure speculation.

To give but one example, world trade in goods and services in the year 1998 amounted to 6500 billion dollars, which is the equivalent 4.3 days of trading of the foreign exchange markets.

In 2001, again, the volume of the financial exchanges that take place on a single day throughout the world was more than sixty times the value of exports for the whole year.

As far as the speculative aspects are concerned, a personal experience related by Antonio Baldassarre, former President of Italy's Constitutional Court, is rather impressive. One day he visited the headquarters of one of the leading banks in the UK, and the Company Chairman who guided him on his tour showed him two rooms where about 1400 persons, all aged no more than thirty years, followed all the stock exchanges of the world with their computers, earning money from the different prices at which the same stock was quoted in two different places from one moment to the next. He asked why there were so many young people; and the chairman explained that round about thirty-five years they left this activity either to start a business of their own or to enjoy a conspicuous income for the rest of their lives.

Capital can be displaced to any part of the world almost instantaneously, in the time it needs to instruct a computer. And it is not only capital that can be transferred with extreme ease, but also information, goods and even people. Space barriers seem to have disappeared.

In such a situation the economy of any country, and even more so the economy of a backward country, is inevitably extremely unstable.

When investing in a given national economy proves advantageous, foreign capital comes in abundance. But it needs no more than some bad, possibly false or exaggerated news to make the rounds for a veritable psychosis to come into being that can induce the investor-gamblers to abandon the country right away.

A sudden capital flight will throw the economy of an entire country into crisis from one moment to another. A crisis that can easily spread to the nearby countries, assuming regional proportions.

That is what happened from July 1997 onwards in some South-East Asian countries. These countries were in full development at the right pace for the length of their legs. Their populations are hard-working and readily given to saving. Little by little these countries could have drawn the necessary capital from growing home sources.

Nevertheless, their governments were induced to liberalize capital movements and to contract substantial short-term loans abroad. And thus we have a flowering but precarious situation, where the capital is available and conspicuous, but ready to escape from one moment to the next as soon as the first speculative bubble bursts.

In Thailand real-estate speculation had led to the construction of far more offices than were effectively needed or could be sold. There thus formed a speculative and stock-exchange bubble that could have been limited, but unfortunately burst in a truly clamorous manner, crushing the entire economy, and not just in Thailand.

Convinced that the bath, the local currency, was on the point of being devalued, many speculators were induced to an ever greater extent to sell their baths, converting them into dollars or other. This caused the collapse of Thailand's national currency and this, in its turn, triggered a regional crisis that affected South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. Starting from Asia, the crisis then struck Russia and Latin America.

A government could protect itself against the possibility of crises of this kind by selecting the foreign investments and attaching conditions that would not permit them to disappear at a moment's notice. It would have to set up a kind of protective network to avoid competitive foreign goods destroying the corresponding national production.

A minimum of healthy protectionism can serve to create a kind of dam. Employment, too, has to be defended. In some way or other the government has to protect the country's economy against the effects that sudden changes of market humour can unleash.

The governments that manage to face these crises with some measure of success are those who conserve some control over the economy. Malaysia, for example, following in the footsteps of China and also Chile, had prepared measures to limit the flight of foreign capital.

A premature liberalization implemented before the creation of strong financial structures can generate instability and expose the country to unexpected, sudden and terrible market blows.

And it is precisely for the purpose of facing these crises that the international institutions in defence of the weaker economies were created. But what results have they produced? That is what we shall see in the next chapter.

7. Certain important international institutions that should promote stability and development especially of the backward countries intervene in crisis situations in a decidedly improper manner

In 1944, while the Second World War was still being fought, the Allies called an international conference at the picturesque little township of Bretton Woods in New Hampshire. There it was agreed to set up both the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (known as the World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). There were laid the bases for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which in 1995 became transformed into the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Liberalizing trade to the greatest possible extent, eliminating all limits to the circulation of goods and capital, it sought to obtain a maximum of economic development.

But financial activity had its mainstay in the convertibility of the American currency into gold. For more than twenty-five years, a dollar bound to gold was thus the reference currency for all the other countries. The Bretton Woods Agreements, underlain by the inspiration of John Maynard Keynes, the great British economist, were intended to forestall a great depression like the one of 1929.

These agreements envisaged the authorities that had been set up to intervene firmly in order to keep under control a market that was not to be abandoned to itself. The creation of a system of fixed exchange rates constituted a de facto guarantee of a

solid monetary stability that, in its turn, represented an unprecedented factor of prosperity.

Moreover, the governments were committed to implementing their monetary and fiscal policies in such a manner as to sustain the social programmes and full employment. They could afford to do this thanks to the massive concentration of capital that was to facilitate its regulation. Defaulting or lukewarm governments would have seen investments flee their territories.

Little by little, however, the controls on capital movements were eliminated. The gold exchange standard was abandoned in 1971, followed by the entire mechanism of fixed exchange rates in 1973. This gave rise to a phase of stagnation and, at one and the same time, high inflation: a wholly unexpected stagflation that the industrialized countries succeeded in governing only in the 'eighties with the advent of the New Right (Reagan in the United States and Mrs. Thatcher in the UK). De facto, the last twenty years of the twentieth century and the subsequent years witnessed an ever greater acceleration of capital movements, not least between countries.

That was the time of deregulation, which involved the dismantling of the welfare state and a marked reduction of the role of the state in the economy. The "state vampire" was accused of imposing excessive taxation for social expenditure, considered to be practically unproductive. It was held that the only truly productive investments were the ones intended to produce direct economy increases. These were the competence of businesses and had therefore to be freed of fiscal burdens deemed to be excessive.

These were the ideas that – matured by the School of Chicago and its economists, some of whom work in positions of responsibility – inspired the combined action of the US Treasury Department, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They are therefore the principles on which Washington's Consensus is exercised. This gave rise to a policy that, put in a nutshell, can be summarized as follows: few taxes and therefore limitation of expenditure for assistance and education, freedom of investment and trade, privatization of even the public services.

This policy, adopted by several rich countries, was imposed on the poor countries who turned for help to the World Bank and the IMF. This was justified, at least in theory, by the conviction that it was the right recipe for re-launching also the national economies in crisis. On the practical level, however, there acted other motivations that were not wholly disinterested, as we shall see ever more clearly further on.

The Soviet empire collapsed in the early 'nineties and all those countries opened their doors to the free market. Though incomparably more gradual, controlled and prudent, the subsequent opening of China completed the globalization of finance. And thus there followed an intensification of international trade, more than ever concentrated on finance.

Those years also saw a great development of informatics, which became employed to an ever greater extent throughout the economy. It has to be seen as a new technological revolution with an impact similar to that of the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th century. It unifies the worldwide financial market even more closely and impresses a formidable drive upon it.

The economy is growing enormously in every sector, but – given the absence of an international authority capable of imposing rules in the same way as they are imposed by a government within its national confines – in an excessively free and unbridled manner.

Keynes was of the idea that the market should be controlled in a rigorous manner by a truly impartial international authority, for the benefit of all the countries and especially the weaker ones. The latter, whenever in situations of a deficit in the trade

balance they found themselves without adequate short-term liquidity, were to be granted emergency loans without restrictions and without conditions, so that they would be able to survive the unfavourable moment while continuing to import goods from abroad, keep their workers employed to develop the national economy at the same rhythm as before.

In these circumstances the “winners”, i.e. the countries with the active trade balance, should have felt themselves to be in duty bound to help the “losers”, i. e. the countries with a negative trade balance. The international institutions were to exercise strong pressure on the countries enjoying surpluses to induce them to import from the countries with deficits. Such an attitude, which is both generous and wise, would have avoided the crises that in the long run are resolved to the detriment of all.

According to Keynes, there should have been set up an International Clearing Union with the task of granting loans on the simple request of governments in difficulty. The surplus of certain trade balances would thus have helped the deficits of others without imposing burdensome conditions upon the “losers”.

The influence of America, represented by the Secretary of the Treasury Harry Dexter White, induced the Bretton Woods Conference to opt for a system based on the free circulation of goods. The dollar had long since become the international currency and was anchored to gold at a fixed rate, so that it was as “valid as gold”. Everything resolved itself to the far greater advantage of the United States, rendered capable of dominating the world economy more than ever before.

The three new international institutions – World Bank, IMF and WTO – were no longer neutral, but solidary with the United States, with the rich nations and the multinationals. These, in their turn, remain always firmly attached to their countries of origin. They are, as it were, national companies who act internationally.

Noam Chomsky comments that in promoting certain international bodies the United States have tried to create a world in their own image and likeness to dominate with their power. The American government thus favours or at least lets pass everything that is in line with its projects, but violates without hesitation any commercial agreement opposed thereto.

Among the world’s five hundred largest enterprises there are very few who do not have their headquarters in the United States, in the United Kingdom, in Germany, in Japan.

IMF, WTO and World Bank greatly underwent the influence of the Treasury Department of the US government. In all their work they reflected and expressed the interests of the Western countries and their free trade ideology.

Therefore the policy of these three institutions, rather than regulating the markets, tended to liberalize them to the greatest possible extent. Free trade with practically no controls favours the economically strong countries to the detriment of the weakest ones. The latter open to the former and end up by suffering their dominion.

Under the influence of Keynes’ doctrines, which conceded very little to liberalism, the IMF had been created on the assumption that the markets often function badly and have to be guided and corrected. According to its original inspiration, it should have urged and helped governments to invest, reduce taxes, or to lower rates of interest, stimulate the aggregate (i.e. global) demand for goods and services, which in its turn stimulates the economy to produce them), sustain employment, not neglect education and health, encourage development in every way.

Today, on the other hand, an IMF converted to the liberist ideology helps only governments who pledge themselves to privatise and liberalize extensively and quickly. Governments are then subjected to pressure to limit also the deficit, reducing even social expenditure, to increase taxes and raise interest rates. With these increases it is

hoped to attract more capital from abroad. But the result is a contraction of the economy. Among others, the IMF advises countries in crisis with a great deal of insistence to maintain the exchange rate at a high level, valorizing the national currency far more than the value that could be attributed to it by the free market. Fine contradiction of the liberist motto to leave everything to the spontaneous reaction of the market!

To sustain this overvaluation against all and everything, the IMF employs without security considerable quantities of money that humanly would have been spent far better to help the poor, the unemployed workers, the innocent victims of the crisis.

Why does it do this? Because, evidently, what these institutions have at heart are not so much the debtor countries, but rather their creditors, the rich countries of the West. Maintaining an artificially high exchange rate, the creditors are offered the opportunity of converting the local currency in their possession into dollars and thus acquiring far more dollars than they would have obtained with a devalued currency. Thereafter the currency may be freely devalued: the capital that the short-term lender has withdrawn has been saved. Once again, the IMF confirms itself to be the paladin of the rich Western countries rather than the poor countries in need of help.

It is well known that excessive austerity strangles growth. Indeed, it is evident that a public initiative and also a public enterprise are needed when private initiative is lacking. Suppressing them suddenly may leave a great void when their place is not taken by a corresponding private initiative.

When privatizing implies the dismissal of a large number of workers, one cannot proceed in a human manner before having created new employment opportunities for them as part of a much wider programme. It is not possible to subject a weak economy to excessively energetic and reckless therapies before having erected a solid protection network.

A government cannot liberalize everything to the point of completely foregoing interventions in the economy. When South East Asia entered in its state of crisis, the Thai government, which had liberalized very extensively in accordance with the counsels of the IMF, managed to recover far more slowly than the governments of South Korea and Malaysia. These had not renounced governing the situation, controlling capital movements also for keeping interest at a low level. They were therefore in a position to undertake the financial reorganization of the greater part of the businesses in difficulty within the space of two years. Thailand, on the other hand, was still in recession three years later.

Control was also maintained by the Chinese government, even though the economy underwent a certain liberalization. Avoiding to follow the counsels of the IMF, China was thus the only major country of the Far East not to be touched by the crisis.

Passing to the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe, a comparison between the Czech Republic and Poland provides another good example. Unlike the Czechs, Poland introduced privatization very gradually, first setting up the institutions needed to make the market economy function correctly.

Attributing the proper value to democratic support, the Polish government kept unemployment at a low level and, wherever it existed, paid appropriate unemployment benefits. It also brought pensions in line with inflation. In short, as was pointed out by the Polish Minister of Finance, it did exactly the opposite of what the IMF had recommended.

Unlike Poland, the Czech Republic followed these recommendations and the result was that the gross domestic product is now below what it was in 1989, year that saw the fall of the Soviet and European Communist regimes.

A similar confrontation could be made between the success enjoyed these last ten or more years by China, very prudent in liberalizing and privatizing, and the poor results obtained by Russian and other post-Communist countries of Eastern Europe, who let themselves be excessively conditioned by the ideology, the suggestions and the impositions of the Bretton Woods institutions.

In as corrupt a regime as that of post-Communist Russia, the sale of state enterprises turned into a below-cost clearance bargain goes to the advantage of the competent ministers and officials, who obtain more than generous bribes for themselves.

Many state properties pillaged in this manner have ended up in the hands of organized crime. Others in the hands of Western businesses. Clamorous is the example of General Motors, who in 1996 acquired Rubnik Motors, gone bankrupt after having furnished, in its heyday, some eighty percent of the Soviet military air fleet and sixty percent of the country's civil aviation. GM paid 300,000 dollars, i.e. about six hundred million of our former lire, the price of a fine apartment in the centre of Rome!

Having taken over the production of both civil and military aircraft, General Motors then became one of the principal contractors of the Russian defence Ministry

Such a bargain sale of Russian enterprise can be likened to the sale of similar businesses in Yugoslavia: state-owned enterprises and also enterprises managed by their workers, characteristic of the socialist economy of this country. Here, too, the economies of the new separate republics have been literally taken over by the Westerners creditors. The sale of the Yugoslav enterprises was once again effected at bargain prices.

The decisions of the WTO are taken by a staff of officials who have not been elected and do not have to respond for their actions to anybody other than the bureaucratic structure of which they form part. Their meetings may be attended only by government representatives, but neither the citizens, the mass media or the representatives of the local institutions. Their judgments are anonymous and cannot be appealed against. Acts and documents remain secret. Transparency and democracy leave a great deal to be desired!

The WTO is greatly in favour of free trade, but takes little or no interest in safeguarding the environment, human rights, employment and well-being of the workers, school and culture, the health of people and health service organization, the pursuit of food self-sufficiency and, quite generally, policies aiming at what is known as the national interest.

The WTO is in no manner or wise concerned with how a given merchandise has been produced, not interested in the fact that it may be fruit of the work of people who are exploited in conditions that are close to slavery. A precise rule of the institution prohibits all discrimination between goods in this sense.

One may say that the WTO is strongly oriented in favour of the rich countries and the multinational businesses.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund likewise seek to liberalize the economies to the maximum extent. The action of governments left without support therefore remains inevitably strongly conditioned by the multinationals and the ups and downs of the humour of the short-term investor-gamblers.

Though Keynes had proposed a financial institution that was to limit itself to providing loans without imposing conditions, the IMF and the World Bank made loans to indebted countries only on the basis of precise commitments to proceed with "structural adaptations": maximum liberalization of the economy by reducing state interventions; cutting back social expenditure and the salaries of public employees and doctors and nurses and teachers; devaluing the currency to facilitate exports.

The transfer of low-priced goods from the indebted countries to the rich states, their “Samaritans”, enables the latter to get an ample return on their money. In terms of real assets, the poor state gives to the rich ones far more than it receives from them.

Furthermore, the interest may be of such an amount as to exceed the sum originally lent. Considering just a single decade, the 'eighties, Brazil paid ninety billion dollars on a loan amounting to one hundred and twenty billion.

When such conspicuous sums have to be set aside for interest payments, investments for development are inevitably reduced and cause the economy to stagnate.

Many of the loans granted by the IMF and the World Bank failed to obtain the desired advantages, and this not only due to the fact that a part of the money enriched the notables and financed armaments, but also and above all for another reason: the two institutions overestimated the recovery capacity of the assisted countries and thus granted them excessively short repayment periods. They did not realize sufficiently clearly how essential it was that the beneficiary countries should already possess developed infrastructures and adequate technical structures, and that their population should already be oriented for organized work and enjoy at least a minimum of basic education.

The backward countries exploit the land to the greatest possible extent in order to export its products; but these exports are permitted by the rich countries only if they do not compete with local products. When such competition is to be feared, the government of the rich country imposes duty such as to discourage the very exports that the poor countries desperately need.

The rich countries keep preaching the free market to the poor economies. It will serve to open them, subject them to the rich economies, which will never hesitate to defend themselves with protectionist measures whenever this is necessary. Fine hypocrisy!

An example of the way in which a rich country can compete with a poor country is represented by its state-subsidized agricultural products. Exported to the poor countries at prices lower than the local products, they will ruin the farmers of the place.

In the same way the local producers of ice cream and drinks will succumb when Unilever and Coca-Cola manage to get a foothold in the country. They will propose themselves at promotional prices to throttle the small indigenous businesses. This will create a monopoly situation and enable the multinational to get its money back by raising prices.

In sub-Saharan Africa the local clothing industry was literally swept away by the competition of second-hand clothing thrown into the market by the West at eighty dollars a ton.

In Ethiopia agriculture was thrown into crisis by “donations” of fertilizers and genetically modified seeds. Given to the Ethiopian people as food aid, they paved the way for the expansion in that country of the agroindustrial companies and the biotech industry of the USA. A contribution to this spearhead function is also made by the below-cost sales of American excess grain. The competition of these modern businesses truly hits local industry below the belt.

In the same way – to give another example – American banks can prevail over local banks by virtue of the fact that they provide better guarantees for depositors. Such an evasive expansion can be brought to a halt only by an intervention of the local government in favour of better guarantees on deposits. But this conflicts with the absolute liberalization that constitutes the economic faith and, even more so, the interests of the one-way free traders of the North of the world.

The advantages deriving from the possible economic growth of country will go substantially to the benefit of the better-off classes. An example of this is offered by

Mexico, where the thirty percent of the population enjoying the highest incomes is the part that enjoys the greatest advantages, while very little finds its way into the pockets of the poorer classes, many of whom, rather, find themselves in a worse condition.

In any case, those who profit from the liberalization of the economy and the sale of government enterprises are to be found among the rich and the new rich. These come to form a kind of oligarchy: a new class of “steam bosses” perfectly willing to collaborate with the Bretton Woods institutions and the Western multinationals. And the latter also buy up businesses that are being wound up. They thus penetrate ever more deeply into the local economies, to the point of true takeover in their own interest.

The alliance between the new bosses and the international “donors” and the foreign creditors, jointly bent on getting their hands on the local economy, will support a sham democracy intended, first and foremost, to promote their own interests.

The poor of the backward countries have very little to consume. But a similar condition is being experienced also by the workers of the rich countries, whose industries are ever more inclined to transfer to the countries of the South and the East, where they find workers, technicians, accountants, etc., at an incomparably smaller cost or where certain production phases can be subcontracted.

There thus diminishes the demand for normal consumer goods, while luxury goods for the new rich come to be in greater demand. The drop in global demand is already of itself a recession factor.

Loans are granted to governments who accept special conditions: conditions that aim first and foremost at assuring safe restitution of the lender’s funds. When restitution becomes problematical, the loans are renewed at ever more onerous conditions for the backward country, which by that time finds itself as if held in a vice with a continuously increasing debt. One may say that the growth of the debts, far from deluding the Western creditors, really constitutes for them a welcome opportunity, a pretext for further tightening the hold of the industrial and financial systems of the rich countries on the economies of the poor countries.

In Africa, for example, the debt has increased by forty percent since the World Bank and the IMF commenced managing the economy with their structural adaptations. The governments of this continent are obliged to pay to their creditors of the North of the world four times the sum they spend on health and education.

The total long- and short-term debt of the developing countries has increased 32 times since 1970.

If a government weighed down by foreign debts were to decide not to stop interest payments altogether, but only to postpone a part of them, this would prove extremely counterproductive. Peru dared to do this after Alan Garcia had been elected President in 1985. He announced a moratorium of interest payments, which were not to exceed ten percent of the profits deriving from exports. Peru immediately found itself on the black list of the world’s financial community. Aid was stopped, and so were loans. The influx of fresh money came to a halt.

Nations of different continents have in common the fact that they are obliged to sacrifice a large part of their social expenditure to serve their debts. They invest as little as possible in providing the economy with infrastructures: railways, roads, irrigation canals, etc. Subsidies and food aid are suspended for lack of funds. Some of the public employees are dismissed, and at times the salaries of those who remain in service are frozen. Where salaries are tied to the cost of living, this legal reference point is suppressed. The laws protecting the workers are taken off the statute book or rendered ineffective, including those regarding minimum wages, in order to permit state enterprises to free themselves of their excess staff. There also takes shape an orientation

to reduce old-age pensions: this is what was done, above all, in Russia. Attempts are made to silence the opposition of the trade unions in every possible way.

Many schools are closed and teachers are dismissed. On the other hand, a small closed number in the teacher training colleges and a larger number of students in each class are among the conditions imposed by the World Bank for adjusting the country's structures in the social sector if an assisted country is to be granted loans. This leads to the merging of classes, fewer lessons and double turns, scarcity of books and teaching aids, deterioration of buildings. To keep his job, a teacher has to do the work of two.

While basic public education is thus abandoned to itself, a private and commercialised higher education begins to flourish.

The health system lacks equipment. The personnel, badly paid, is anxious to transfer to private structures for the rich. Often they are replaced by untrained volunteers. Efficient treatment becomes difficult or impossible, and this is all the more true for prevention. Contagious illnesses thought to be under control make a come-back and continue to ravage.

Some time later a repented and converted Peruvian government became reconciled with international finance. By that time it was faithfully following the directive of the World Bank and the IMF. And in that new situation the cholera epidemic of 1991 was for the most part due to the poor state of the public health infrastructures and the poverty in which a large part of the population had relapsed. When the price of kitchen fuel went up thirty times and more, innumerable poor and even middle class families found themselves reduced to cooking food as little as possible and neglected boiling the water before drinking it.

It was the miserable condition of many peasants that drove them to migrate towards the coca cultivation areas. And hence the upswing of a "narco-economy" sustained by cocaine production and trafficking, which – all said and done – makes it much easier for Peru to honour its debts.

The Bolivian economy, just like its Peruvian counterpart, was subjected to the energetic cures counselled and imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions, and with similarly sad results. There, too, the traditional crops gave way to the cultivation of coca. There, too, the drug economy was declared illegal, but only weakly opposed and persecuted. The laundering of the money earned in this way is clearly entrusted to the international banking system. One may say that the narcodollars have made quite a substantial contribution to the development of the Bolivian economy in recent years.

To come back to health problems, however, in far too many cases the poor cannot buy the medicines they need, since the price is more than they can afford. The price of medicines is kept high in order to pay the intellectual property rights of those who hold the patents. The pharmaceutical companies of the rich countries benefit from these rights to an altogether excessive extent. Even the international agreements (Uruguay Round) permit the Western pharmaceutical businesses to prevent their third-world counterparts from selling medicines at the low cost that would save many lives.

The decline of education and the decline of health proceed at exactly the same pace. Two decades of structural adaptations not only prove insufficient to repay the debts, but cause incredible sufferings to innumerable people. They include undernourishment, chronic hunger and, in the limit, death due to hunger.

The institutions born at Bretton Woods have decidedly lost sight of the ends for which they were created and tend to transform themselves into interest groups dedicated to maintaining their power.

**8. Greater well-being has spread in the world
but in far too many cases
the rich and the more advanced countries
have increased their wealth
while the poor individuals
and the poor and backward countries
have become even poorer**

Many of the advocates of liberism sustain that the progress of the economy ultimately resolves itself to the advantage of the poor, albeit an advantage that comes to them little by little, drop by drop, thanks to a certain “permeability”.

But even this is pure and ill-founded faith. It is well known that, already in the 19th century, the industrial revolution created a vast proletariat who vied for the available jobs in order to be able to survive with miserable wages and in inhuman conditions.

In our own days, once again, ever since the 'eighties, the poor have seen their condition worsen gradually in spite of the ongoing economic expansion.

More than a billion people live on this planet with less than a dollar a day.

In the backward countries all over the world more than thirty thousand children less than five years of age die each day due to illnesses that in the rich countries would not only be cured, but easily prevented.

The nine hundred million inhabitants of the richest regions of the planet have a daily per capita income in excess of 75 dollars; while five billion (or more) inhabitants of the poor regions have to make do, on average, with little more than ten dollars.

These nine hundred million fortunate people enjoy 86 percent of the world's total consumption, while the consumption of the poorest class, consisting of about one billion and two hundred thousand people, amounts to no more than 1.3%.

There are countries of sub-Saharan Africa (like Uganda, Niger, Madagascar, Ethiopia), Latin America (like Bolivia and Honduras) and South-East Asia (Cambodia, Laos) where people live on a daily per capita income that ranges from one and a half dollars to a quarter of a dollar.

The scarcity of income is supplemented by other forms of misery: scarcity of water, non-availability of electricity, lack of a telephone service, poor education, illnesses like Aids (which in Africa strikes down twenty-six million people, often already at birth). To say nothing of the 150,000 minors who are enrolled in the armies of the various local warlords in Africa alone. Or of the 200,000 who are sold to work like slaves even in mines.

Although various countries (like some in South-East Asia) have improved their condition, the overall difference remains stable. The fact is that other countries (like those of sub-Saharan Africa) have worsened their condition.

This impressive difference has doubled as compared with what it was in 1960. In that year the income of the richest twenty percent of the world's population was thirty times greater than that of the poorest twenty percent; in 1997 it was seventy-four times greater.

Apart from the figures about their economic condition, the poor of both the advanced areas and the most backward and remote areas are bombarded by the publicity that reaches them via the television sets that can at times be found even in many slum dwellings. Consumerism thus comes to them, truly adding the tortures of Tantalus to the sufferings of misery.

The poor of the most advanced countries become supplemented by those of the countries in crisis. Russia is among these. Notwithstanding all its distortions, the Communist regime assured full employment for all, as well as housing, education,

health, assistance, services for children, a pension and a tenor of life that was certainly well above the levels of extreme poverty. Then there came privatization, liberalization at full and inappropriate speed. The bargain sale of a large part of the state assets enriched entrepreneurs, speculators, mafiosi and corrupt politicians and officials.

The middle class has been ruined. A frightening inflation, triggered by the sudden abandonment of price control in 1992, has reduced to zero the frugal savings of a great multitude of families. In our days some forty percent of Russia's population lives on less than four dollars a day. Average salaries in 1992-93 amounted to less than ten dollars per month.

The rouble equivalent is only barely sufficient to buy the necessary food. Very different – and beyond all possible comparison – is the situation of the new rich. Russia, once Communist, has become one of the countries with the most clamorous inequalities.

This can be said, above all, of the countries that followed the recipe of the FMI: indiscriminate liberalization, cuts of expenditure on education, health, assistance, etc. These cuts may imply, as they did in Thailand for example, an increase of prostitution and setbacks in the struggle against Aids, which had already achieved some encouraging successes.

The best-off countries today are those who liberalized least, where the government still plays an active part and keeps the situation under control: South Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan.

The states are thus induced to neglect their poor. Less and less thought is being dedicated to helping the poor. They do not receive sufficient assistance. Their education is neglected. It becomes difficult for them to improve their condition.

It does not necessarily follow that the poor are lazy. Often they work very hard and with extenuating time schedules. But the lack of food limits their productivity

The poor feel insecure in their jobs, impotent, abandoned, discarded, without assistance and social security, without free education (paid education is beyond the possibility of their pockets) and therefore unable to improve their condition, often obliged to adopt illicit expedients to survive, without a say in things and without even the possibility of making the lament of their desperation heard.

Poverty can be a factor of environmental degradation. To keep warm, the inhabitants of poor countries like Nepal will cut trees and plants without replanting them. But a soil without roots can be more easily eroded.

Misery drives people to emigrating to places where they hope to find better conditions of life. The migration phenomena afoot today are of biblical proportions and then, within the ambit of individual nations, we have the explosion of urbanism, a galaxy of slum dwellings with all the negative consequences implied by such uprootings, concentrations and conditions of material and moral misery.

**9. Workers, technicians, white-collar workers
can always be found, if not in the country
where an enterprise has developed
certainly in some other and more backward country;
and this makes workers compete with each other
makes them earn less
and become more and more emarginated**

It is clear that in an economy wholly dedicated to the search of an immediate profit there will be unbridled exploitation of both natural and human resources.

Workers, technicians, white-collar workers will be far too often overworked, underpaid, violated and offended as regards both their rights and their human dignity.

In a contribution to Detragiache's book (see bibliography) Terenzio Cozzi notes that in the United States the salary range is wider than in Europe; and that the 'eighties and 'nineties saw a marked increase of the polarization between the excessively rich and the excessively poor, with public support for the latter on the downturn. Between 1979 and 1994 the average family income increased by ten percent, but 97 percent went to the twenty percent of the richest families. This means that the income of the poorest families has undergone a drastic reduction. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, the ten percent of the least paid workers saw their wages diminish by thirty percent in real terms.

The managers and the components of the technostructure constitute the hard core of business and enjoy stability and high earnings. A billion low-cost workers have become available since the fall of the Berlin wall. Business managements can choose and are in an even better position to dictate the conditions of work. Employees performing subordinate functions thus see their salaries and wages diminish in real terms.

Capital no longer needs labour. Man is being replaced to an ever greater extent by machines with ever more intelligent devices. Telebanking enables a bank to close many of its branches. A telephone company is in a position to eliminate thousands of jobs. Entire services have become decimated and are destined to disappear, typing being a case in point. Only the employment of highly qualified professionals remains safe and well paid, but in the USA these constitute no more than 2.7 percent.

Well off – and, indeed, ever more so – are the managers and the possessors of large capitals, together with the technical executives and the higher-level technicians. As industry expands, their earnings keep going up; but the same cannot be said for those who work at the middle and low levels. A colossal transfer of wealth is taking place between these two poles.

Reviewing a book by Bill Gates, J. Fallows observes that informatics technology undoubtedly creates a great deal of new wealth, but this increasing wealth calls for an ever smaller number of people to produce it.

Capital can find the men it still needs wherever it likes, indeed, far more than it needs. It can find them in its country of origin or also abroad, in underdeveloped countries, where it can find qualified or trainable labour at a smaller cost and at all levels.

This situation is superposed on the one generated by the ever growing use of machines that substitute man; employment is thus becoming more precarious even in the most industrialized countries.

The trade unions of the workers and their parties are losing both negotiating power and social influence. The guarantees hitherto offered by the welfare state are beginning to disappear. The human condition of the worker is getting ever more difficult to sustain.

Let us take a look at two countries where employment has been traditionally high. In our days only a third of the active population is employed in the United Kingdom, while in Germany the figure has gone down from eighty percent twenty years ago to a present sixty percent.

In the so-called "employment paradises" like UK and USA the persons who live in the grey zone between work and non-work nowadays constitute the majority: they are the ones who in return for a miserable pay have to content themselves with short-term work half-jobs and "variegated forms of employment".

Though in the days of the Clinton administration somebody could say that the young president had created millions of jobs, he could also hear some directly interested worker reply: "Yes, I have three jobs, but even so I can't feed my family". Something very similar could also be said in the days of Reagan, who claimed that his policy had given rise to a wave of investments and the consequent creation of new jobs.

Below this growing mass of under-utilized and therefore underpaid workers we have the multitude of those condemned to emargination. And then there are all those who for the moment survive, silently or almost, but live in a continuous state of alarm, terrified by the idea of becoming similarly emarginated.

Stable work anchored to a given social order is coming to lack. The worker is obliged to undergo continuous updating and retraining not only to keep up with the progress realized in the techniques of his own profession, but also to be selected for the new "professions" created by the policy variations decided by his employing company.

By the way: it does not follow that this impossibility of resting on one's laurels and standing still, this necessity of keeping well awake, creative, available, up-to-date and knowledgeable, developing a wide range of competences, cannot also have a positive side.

The need for changing type of work and place of work may arise at any moment. Flexible work, temporary work, work for an indeterminate period of time, atypical contracts, etc., may be congenial for a certain number of people, but give rise to a kaleidoscopic condition of continuous precariousness and uncertainty for the future that, for an innumerable host of other and less happy-go-lucky people, constitutes an intolerable psychic burden.

Man's work is gradually being expelled from production; and this phenomenon is no longer simply a passing phase, but is becoming ever more inherent in the system, an irremediable structural feature.

For young people it is becoming ever more difficult to find work. Jobs are getting ever more precarious. Side by side with the losers, the abandoned, we now have the potential losers. Economic uncertainty grips a growing number of people, be they workers, technicians or white collars. Unemployment ends up by constituting a menace more or less for everybody.

The "American dream" is vanishing for the greater part of the US population: the feeling of living in a country where opportunities are great for those who want to work, where there is the prospect of a future of sure and continuous improvement.

Why should one "get busy" in such an uncertain situation? Frustration generates a strong charge of resentment. The individual comes to refuse a community that, in any case, has already been thrown into crisis by emigration, urbanism, distance between home and place of work, the break up of the family traditionally enlarged to include also other relatives, the absence of a human and solidary relationship with one's neighbours. He rebels against an order that seems more bent on crushing the individual than promoting his personality, becomes tempted to evade by taking to drugs or joining some religious sect.

Asociality leads to criminality as a mass phenomenon. According to the latest available data, more than two million people are now detained in US prisons. There can be no doubt as to the connection that exists between criminality and the profound state of uneasiness I have here tried to describe.

Juvenile delinquency has undergone an exponential increase. In 2000 one third of Britain's young population between 14 and 24 were arrested or held by the police.

The explosion of criminality among minors has induced many of the states of the USA to lower the age limit at which crimes become punishable. The measure proved

ineffective and discussion is now centred on whether or not the distinction between minors and adults should be maintained.

Baldassarre comments that a society that treats youngsters like adults and associates them without reserve with common delinquents is no longer concerned with preparing or recuperating them for civil living together: it therefore no longer seeks to grow and progress, has lost the sense of living together, the sense of collective improvement.

However, quite apart from certain degenerations, certain reactions that in the limit can give rise to forms of mass criminality, what is becoming of the dignity of work, the love and pride that each should feel for the work he is doing as something that belongs to him, forms part of his life, integrates his way of being?

What is becoming of the participation in enterprise ownership that the ideologists of the societies more open to progress would attribute to the workers as such?

What is becoming of the welfare state that, pursuing greater distributive justice, sought to spread wellbeing to all and not just a privileged part of the population?

The problem is not just to assure the means of life for all, but work itself. It is a problem that is very difficult to solve when every government is obliged to dismiss a part of its employees and when private businesses are obliged to do the same thing to be in line with pressing economic imperatives.

A state or business that gives work and pay and social security to a number of workers greater than what is strictly necessary would find itself in difficulty in facing the competition of other national economies or other businesses of the same sector. Only a world authority could impose the due share of this burden on all, protecting each and all by making it impossible to evade this obligation.

To operate successfully in this field, the world authority would have to be in a position to exercise an adequate control over all economic activity.

The present disorder of the economy, which tends to avoid and escape from regulations of any kind, would have to be replaced by order. And this could not subsist in as vast an ambit as the world unless it were to be realized in the most rigorous manner.

Rigour is not by any means synonymous with centralization. It can be conciliated with very ample autonomies. But it does mean that the law as such should be fully in force and be respected in an absolute manner.

There are multinationals that tend towards a monopoly in their particular sector. These could be “planetized” (the equivalent of nationalization on the global scale), becoming the property of the world government.

Alternatively, the world government could acquire a majority of the shares, and therefore control of the business, in a manner similar to the present state holdings.

Another possibility is that the government, though keeping the business wholly free and private, regulates it appropriately by availing itself of the powers the law confers upon it.

The government will also draw strength from the fact that it could grant contracts to the business or place orders for supplies and services with it.

In any case, it is important that the business should not in its turn condition the government due to the infidelity of some corrupt official or some politician in need of sponsors to finance his election campaigns.

Acquisition of direct control of a business can be a valid means of rendering it more docile to public regulation. This approach is appropriate, above all, for large multinational enterprises, whereas, given their lesser weight, the small businesses can be more readily induced to comply with the law in a rigorous manner.

In general principle, the provisions of world law would determine what the national states, the regions and the municipalities would be required to do by means of ever more specific regulations, ever more in line with particular local situations. Only in this way could work be provided for all.

In Italy, for example, Law No. 68 of 1999 requires each enterprise to employ a certain number of disabled people that depends on the size of the business. But there is also the problem of giving work to those who do not have it. Of course, those who are without work have to be well oriented and prepared. At this point, however, could not the law impose a maximum limit of hours to be worked by each worker, thus rendering possible the hiring of unemployed?

I think that in an overall perspective production increase should make it possible for an ever larger number of people to work fewer hours, while yet earning enough for a dignified existence. Distributive justice would thus come to be fully implemented.

I have dared to formulate a hypothesis, well knowing that it is more prudent to discuss these themes only in general terms. Determination of the details is a problem of a more technical nature. It has to be faced by specialists and experts who are fully familiar with the evolution of the situations and their prospects.

In a book dedicated to the “invisible continent” of the Web, Kenichi Ohmae, the famous Japanese cybernetics consultant of businesses and governments, notes that if the new economy under the aegis of the Web is to develop in an advantageous manner, it will need more dynamic and flexible structures capable of being adapted to ever new situations. In such a context, an organization regulated by the principle of maintaining fixed jobs and the customary type of work at all costs undoubtedly does not seem the most appropriate approach. It is essential that, whenever this is advantageous, a worker should consent to being transferred to other duties after having duly learnt the necessary techniques. He will have to be constantly updated and ready to face the new.

There may also be need for some phase of programmed unemployment. The appropriate passages, of course, would have to be extensively assisted, protected and rendered painless. Account will in any case have to be taken of the worker’s human situation and his human rights.

**10. In a situation that risks degenerating into chaos
formidable problems are being raised
by the World Wide Web;
and hence the need for creating a world magistrature
especially for the purpose
of preventing and repressing
a cybernetics criminality in rapid expansion**

Assuring justice at the global level is undoubtedly another formidable problem. Two major questions immediately take shape: legitimacy and concrete feasibility.

What kind of legitimacy can be recognized for many of the acts of international justice that have already been realized? The justice of the Nuremberg and Tokyo trial is undoubtedly the justice of the victors, who of course did nothing to put on trial the crimes they had themselves committed, not least among them the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

But considerable criticisms have also been levelled against the international penal courts set up to judge the war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia (1993) and in Rwanda (1994). For example, some people wondered whether there was an international humanitarian right that authorized Nato’s intervention in Kosovo, and

whether the functions entrusted to the Security Council comprised the setting up of courts of this kind.

These courts seem to be instituted for what is essentially a political reason. Antonio Baldassarre asked himself why similar courts were not set up also after the far more numerous massacres that took place in East Timor, Kurdistan, Tibet, Kashmir, and the Horn of Africa.

It is difficult to show oneself to be “just” in an “objective” manner in a situation of power politics where one does not survive and makes little or no progress without doing thousands of favours. Justice, says Baldassarre, is not a flower that crops up in the desert. It presupposes the existence of a complete juridical order endowed with an objective sense. It calls for an adequately organized institutional system. It calls for clear rules. These are principles not as yet known in the international order we have today, which – all considered – seems as yet to be rather primitive.

Side by side with the question of legitimacy, there arises the question of the concrete feasibility of an adequate criminal judiciary order. The difficulties are enormously increased by the advent of telematics. Capital transfers, and even the laundering of illicit funds, seem to become less and less controllable when they are effected by means of the web.

Delinquency as a mass phenomenon, today in full development, is becoming supplemented by Internet delinquency and the doings of the hackers and the crackers. Operating with particular ability, they can get hold even of information kept rigorously secret and subtract substantial sums of money. It is difficult to realize just how great can be the damage caused by the introduction of “viruses” and “worms”.

“To hack” may today have assumed an ugly sound, but its original meaning is “to cut”, “to chop to pieces”, “to break the surface of the soil”, and similar; as a slang term, it seems to have assumed the meaning of “to manage”, “to succeed”. The hackers still constitute, as it were, an elite of persons who, be it even with a twisted and distorted mentality, set out on undertakings of extreme difficulty, spurred on by a form of *amour propre*, longing for virtuosity and the challenge of technological invention. There are also repentant hackers, those battling against the pedophiles, and others extensively used and well paid by government institutions to defend their immense electronic archives.

The crackers, on the other hand, are pure destroyers. The day is not far off when billions of people will operate in Internet, inevitably including also quite a few terrorists and a large number of hooligans and criminals.

How can Internet be governed in a situation of this kind, face to face with such grave and growing difficulties? How can electronic crimes be prevented, how can cybernetic crime be prosecuted? Here the essential problem to be resolved is the establishment of true and complete control over the network.

Given the present absence of a world state, governments can only try to reach agreements for joint action. But such an agreement would have to be signed by all the states; and we know only too well how difficult it is to obtain this.

All that is needed to invalidate an agreement of this type is for a single state, just one little state to violate it. A site operating in the territory of any of the member countries could send any kind of material by e-mail to another site operating in a non-member state, after which the game is up, because the second site could transmit whatever it wishes – and therefore also the illegal material – without being disturbed in any way.

The world is full of cybernetic paradises, today, especially Tonga and the Tuvalu Islands, the Bahamas and various other islands in the Caribbean.

Today there already exist dozens of “cyber-nations”, i. e. large communities who act only in Internet, coining electronic money and trading with each other beyond the reach of any state law.

Indeed, state law is capable of controlling and, if necessary, prosecuting only such sites as are operated by clearly identified persons, by institutions having their headquarters within the territory of the state. But how can one keep under control those who operate, often in a criminal manner, from a site that, even if it were to be shut down by the authorities, could simply resume operations from another site and thus escape control continuously and indefinitely?

A cybernetic police, be it even of international dimension, would prove to be wholly impotent, unless the cyber-policeman were to become transformed into a kind of cyber-sheriff with licence to act even outside all legal procedures, more or less like the sheriffs of Westerns, who are often former delinquents and endowed with infinite resources.

If one wants to remain within the bounds of legal and correct action, there is only one way in which cybernetic crime could be prosecuted and, even more important, prevented: subjecting the whole of the world to strict control.

There are no half-way measures: either total and unbridled freedom, which could easily degenerate into chaos, or strict control of the network as of every other means of communication.

Democracy, which lives and thrives on freedom, would undoubtedly be compromised from this point of view. But it could be recuperated in various other respects. The life of each one of us would become more subject to outside control, as in any case already happens in every small village.

However, the situation has worsened in our day, and will get even worse in the immediate future. In January 1998 a report of a commission of the European Parliament made it known an inquiry carried out by independent researchers, who had denounced the existence of a listening system, known as Echelon (its code name): a kind of great ear covering the world created by the National Security Agency (NSA) of the United States in collaboration with the corresponding services of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand in furtherance of a secret agreement concluded in 1948.

The system captures and analyzes practically every message transmitted by ordinary or cellular phone, fax, e-mail, telex or radio from anywhere in the world. A network of stations disseminated in various strategic points of the earth intercepts all the communication traffic via cable or radio.

All this material is passed to an NSA computer system that selects the messages containing particular keywords that could render possible identification. The selected material is also sent to the allied structures and then subjected to a parallel examination carried out by numerous analysts working in the various national agencies. The system also makes it possible to recognize the human voice and writing. Big Brother is already keeping his eye on us.

For many years Echelon had served as an instrument for spying the Soviet Union. Though the Soviet Union has now collapsed, there are still many motivations for maintaining and perfecting the system: there still exists the Chinese Communist regime, there are the rogue states and the terrorists. Since the system proved its worth in the past, the governments are convinced that it has to be maintained and improved.

The system had already been used in the past for monitoring citizens who were members of associations suspected of not being loyal to the state or caused embarrassment to the government by their support for such noble causes as racial integration, peace in Vietnam, etc. Some politicians had obtained information that

interested them for their own purposes. Information was also passed to American businesses to assist them against the competition of businesses in other countries.

It is widely admitted that a spy system like Echelon is useful for keeping an eye on and therefore efficiently opposing not only terrorism and dangerous dictators, but also arms traffic and dope peddling, paedophilia, the mafia and any other international organized crime. And why should one not add to this list also the massive tax evasion that constitutes a premium for speculators and deprives governments of a great part of the funds they need for implementing adequate social policies?

But one can at least hope that, in their turn, structures like Echelon will be controlled by bodies elected by the people or their representatives and that they will act within the limits established by law for the precise purposes of public security for which they were created.

Personally I don't think that one can turn back. Ever more perfect listening means will inevitably be created. The persons, groups and institutions constituting the targets of the listeners will try to encrypt their messages as far as possible. This will not prevent an Echelon from inventing and adopting more perfect decoding systems: here we have the endless struggle between the lance and the shield, between the offensive weapon and its defensive counterpart through the centuries.

The people who have least to hide will be the ones to suffer less from the scrutiny of Big Brother. A positive fact is that it will all go to the advantage of both the repression and the prevention of crime, especially cyber-criminality.

It is desirable for such an ear on the world not to be managed by one or two nations, who would inevitably be concerned also with promoting their own particular interests, but by a world state and, more precisely, a truly impartial and independent world judicature. For a long series of centuries the Church knew all the most personal, intimate and delicate facts of those who came to do penitence, but regarded them as a confessional secret. Everything that is perceived by the big ear will have to be similarly secreted and made known only for investigative purposes with the authorization of an *ad hoc* magistrature.

In more general terms, one may ask whether it is really necessary to regulate the Web. Is it not a free structure by its very nature? Kenichi Ohmae illustrates the peculiar characteristics of this new system of interrelations that is coming into being, not least with a view to letting people who want to enter it learn how to move appropriately and proficuously within its ambit.

This new "invisible continent" could certainly be defined as the continent of freedom. But we must not let it become transformed into a jungle without law, a Wild West. Those who enter it have to be protected in some way.

Ohmae reviews a series of problems for which some regulations will have to be established.

Regulations are needed for taxing electronic commerce, protecting intellectual property and, particularly severe ones, for avoiding speculation. There is a long list of things that will have to be repressed: cybernetic crime, violations of privacy, anonymous slander, paedophilia and more generally pornography, fraud, every form of cybernetic terrorism, all expressions of violence, every form of international financial criminality. Even freedom of speech has to be defined.

There should be promoted all measures that can contribute to rendering the economy more stable and development constant and gradual, without the dramatic ups and downs that often occur in chaotic and ungoverned situations. Hence the need for an entire system of cyber-laws, which should make provision also for cyber-courts.

Ohmae agrees that the fewer the rules, the better the system. He nevertheless holds that it is essential to establish a minimum of regulations. Collective decisions have to be

taken and put into practice. Inevitably, however, some form of organization is needed if this is to be done.

It is true that Ohmae's approach does not make clear what character such an organization would have to assume. Among others, he proposes the institution of a global civic defender. His task would be to defend the citizens of the world afflicted by unbridled speculation and give voice to their instances.

To all intents and purposes, therefore, Ohmae, who is well known as a paladin of economic freedom, proposes an authority to govern the "new continent". The Web is as vast as the world: the authority he feels to be needed is thus a global authority.

Such an authority would not only have to take decisions, but also render them executive and have them observed. Not all will willingly fall into line. Hence the need for the decisions to be appropriately enforced, punishing all offenders. The authority would have to act with the force that only a sovereign state can have. Even by this road, considering the problems of Internet, we are brought back to the need for a world state.

11. Vigorous reactions to liberist globalization are coming to the fore at various levels and in widely differing forms, all of which are converging into a movement of worldwide proportions

The very grave situation I have tried to describe is producing reactions in all parts of the world. Many different initiatives are taking shape at all levels. And these tend to merge into a movement of worldwide proportions: the global movement opposing globalization.

But does it oppose globalization as such or a particular globalization that is felt to be negative? We shall see that both these orientations are present. The prevalent one contests globalization under the aegis of neo-liberism.

Paolo Ceri offers us updated figures and considerations of great interest about this movement, its historical development and its prospects. I propose to draw on all of them quite freely.

The anti-global movement is a great river fed by innumerable affluents. They are the non-government organizations who met on the occasion of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. By common agreement, they then exerted pressure that led to the passage of the agreements for the control of greenhouse gases in 1999. This common action marked the passage from particular initiatives of these groups to their participation in a series of global initiatives.

In 1994 there came the revolt of the Zapatist army under the command of Marcos on the occasion of the coming into force of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a kind of customs union between USA, Canada and Mexico.

In 1995 the WTO took the place of GATT and became the principal target of the new movement as the principal expression of neo-liberism.

There followed a series of institutional summits that all aroused a growing wave of contestation: Vancouver, Manila, Birmingham, Geneva, Kuala Lumpur, Cologne.

In 1999 the WTO held its summit at Seattle. It proposed, albeit without any great results, a new cycle of multilateral negotiations to liberalize trade in the next three years. But fifty thousand demonstrators, for the most part Americans, came to Seattle. Their action was clearly characterized by a certain form of violence, and a degree of violence that was destined to grow on subsequent occasions.

At Seattle the demonstrators prevented the opening ceremony from taking place and retarded the beginning of the conference, blocking some five thousand delegates of 135 countries in their hotels. Their aims and demands thus attracted the attention of the mass media throughout the world.

Seattle was followed by the conferences of Davos, Washington and Melbourne (the only one not to suffer from the violence of the contesters), then Bologna, Prague and Nice (with sixty thousand participants), and lastly Genoa in July 2001 (with more than two hundred thousand).

Who were the groups and organizations that took part in these demonstrations? As far as Seattle is concerned, Ceri presents a long and variegated list, though I shall mention only the best known: AFL-CIO with the unions of the steel workers and truck drivers, America First (of the protectionist Pat Buchanan, a former candidate for the US presidency), Art and Revolution, associations against the production of genetically modified organisms, associations for aid to poor countries, minorities, disabled, Attac, Butterfly Defenders, Black Army Faction (violent anarchists), Free Burma Coalition, CARE, social centres, Confédération Paysanne (of José Bové, who defends Roquefort cheese and fights against transgenic foodstuffs), Earth First (which boycotts businesses that make use of woods from protected areas), Falun Gong, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Global Exchange, anti-Nike groups, religious groups, road theatre groups, International Center for Trade and Sustainable Development, Lesbian Avenger, Lilliput, National Centre for Sustainability, People Global Action, National Centre for Sustainability, People Global Action, People for Fair Trade, Public Citizen (in defence of consumers), Quakers, Rainforest Action Network, Reclaim the Streets, Ruckus Society (climbers of bridges and skyscrapers in defence of sea turtles), Sacred Earth Network, Sierra Club (of California, which opposes the Monsanto Company), Student Environmental Action Coalition, Tibetan Association (for the liberation of Tibet from Chinese oppression), Via Campesina, World Development, WWF, Ya Basta, Zapatists.

Among the various instances and demands whose spokesmen and promoters were present at Seattle specific mention should here be made of the one that calls for a law to prohibit the import of shrimps fished with nets that enmesh also dolphins and sea turtles, the request for a guaranteed minimum wage throughout the world, the moratorium for transgenic food, seeds and feedstuffs, the blockage of deforestation in Amazonia, the application of the International Labour Charter to the poor countries, the preservation of local products.

In the sequence of manifestations that followed Seattle they came to be joined by groups that fight for the defence of the environment, the abolition of the debts of the poor countries, peace, privacy, food safety, protection of threatened cultural identities, greater caution in experiments in the bio-technological field, taxation of earnings obtained from the purchase and sale of capital for speculative rather than investment purposes (Tobin Tax), promotion of alternative energy sources, restrictions on tunny fishing, exercise of trade union rights in factories, reduction of the period of validity of pharmaceutical patents, freedom of a cost-free Internet.

At Genoa representatives of such religious organizations as Agesci, Abel Group, Outstretched Hands, Nigrizia and Pax Christi came to march with the demonstrators. The environmentalist associations were represented, among others, by the Federation of Italian Greens, Legambiente and WWF. The volunteer associations included Lila, Doctors without Borders. Mention should also be made of associations, networks of associations and campaigns aiming at the elimination of the unbalance between the North and the South of the world: Attac, Campaña contra el Banc Mundial, Drop the Debt, Jubilee South and North-South Forum, the Lilliput Network. The trade unions included Comitati Unitari di Base, Confédération Paysanne, and FIOM-CGIL. From the

self-administered social centres there came Ya Basta, Centri Sociali and Zapatist associations. The direct action groups and networks were represented by Reclaim the Streets, Black Bloc and Anarchists.

What is it that makes so many groups and initiatives of such widely differing kinds and operating at so many different levels come together in the No Global movement? One might say: above all, the defence of man against the conditionings imposed by a liberist economy allowed to develop without constraints, without adequate controls that could lead it back into the service of man.

The global revolt clearly differs from the working class movement of the last two centuries. The subject is no longer the “working class” but simply the “multitude”. It is a rebellion not of workers as such, but rather of consumers (also in aid of exploited workers). It should also be specified that the demand action is undertaken not by the consumers as such and in defence of pure consumption, but rather in the name of the rights and the values of man. This has brought to life a new revolution, a humanist revolution.

People rebel against somebody, against something. And, leaving aside the extremist groups, a minority, here the rebellion is against globalization, though not as such, but rather inasmuch as it is inspired by neo-liberism and abandoned to the uncontrolled and irresponsible market forces. The principal symbol of this globalization is the WTO.

It is a fight “against” that expresses itself by means of clear forms of violence. But one has to recognize that the overwhelming majority of the contesters who were present, for example, at Genoa are wholly extraneous to the logic of violence. Nevertheless, the violent episodes made the headlines far more than the large-scale peaceful manifestations that remained almost wholly unobserved. Both the violence of the contesters and the very tough repression of the police have become sadly famous. Even among the policemen there were some who stained themselves with shameful and, in the limit, even criminal behaviour.

Ceri admits that there was some form of violence that, though not fully justified, was at least functional for the growth of the movement and sensitizing public opinion throughout the world to the validity of its demands.

However, one thing is a violence that denounces and unmasks the true violence that dominates in some institutions, but quite another is a violence, like that of the Black Blocs, that creates disorder and opposes power with a counterpower.

This kind of violence, especially when renewed in the course of time, risks discrediting the movement in world opinion. Governments ask for nothing better than that, in the eyes of the people, the very real and serious questions raised by the movement should be reduced to a mere problem of defending public order against a horde of inveterate fanatics and hooligans.

The violence at Genoa induced many people to withdraw from the movement, and this void has been increasingly filled by left-wing movements, like the left of the CGIL (General Confederation of Italian Workers), Communist Refoundation, the Cobas (Base Committees), etc. Taking their cue from the instances expressed by the Porto Alegre Forum, this Italian post-Genoa edition of the No Global movement has come to concentrate its attention increasingly on the North-South differences. But in this way it runs the risk of becoming enmeshed in the problems of Italian politics, espousing Italian movements in crisis that seek to re-launch themselves by riding the No Global movement. This goes to the great detriment of the universalist inspiration of the movement.

Since not all want to follow the extremists and their road, there is the danger of grave fractures. This could weaken the movement very considerably. Ceri speaks of the

need not only for moderation, but also of abandoning the anti-Americanism at all costs that is far too often rampant in Europe and especially in the Italian manifestations.

The psychosis of September 11 led in some way to a weakening of the rebellion of the American movement at a moment when the watchword on everybody's lips was that the American nation should stand four-square behind its President.

But now there are already conspicuous signs of the re-awakening of an opposition more in harmony with the spirit of the global movement. The occasion should not therefore be lost of clearly dissociating what seeks to be a simple opposition to liberist globalism from this anti-Americanism.

The attack on the two skyscrapers of the World Trade Center expresses in an incisively symbolic and frightfully real manner the idea that there can be no security in the world, not even for the great powers of finance, for as long as obvious injustices will exasperate the minds of the great multitudes who are exploited and oppressed in every possible way. The spread of terrorism demonstrates that today even the most powerful states can suddenly prove to be weak.

It follows that the forces of both globalism and anti-globalism are equally interested in cooperating for the security of all, for the survival and liveability of our planet.

And, then, is it really necessary to get so bent on the pure and simple abolition of the international financial institutions? In spite of everything, do they not perform an essential function for economic growth and the spread of wellbeing? Would it not be more appropriate to reform and correct them?

Another exigency that Ceri puts on the table is the following: to keep in mind that among many nations the antiglobalist rebellion is undoubtedly animated by the sense of their economic inferiority, but even more so by the concern for saving their identity from the road roller of a technological and consumerist civilization of the American brand that tends to homogenize everything by cancelling specific cultural differences.

Getting stuck in merely opposing the adversary, the movement would endanger its *raison d'être*. It should therefore try to overcome the moment of polemical negation and pass on to a more constructive phase by suggesting solutions and drawing up projects. Within the limits of the possible, it should promote this line in a coherent and unitary manner, overcoming all internal divisions and contradictions.

**12. Here there is felt the need for giving
a more positive and constructive content
to what is at present a pure opposition movement:
and in this connection the proposals
of economic scholars and experts
intended to reform the structure and the work
of the international financial institutions
could constitute a valid help**

As we saw, there is one fact that is clearly brought out by what happened on September 11: the security, development and wellbeing of the entire planet can be pursued in but one manner: collaboration between peoples and governments. And not only between peoples and governments, but also between the forces of the economy and the people who today contest certain prevalent economic orientations.

Within the framework of this collaboration it seems essential that the international financial institutions should be restored to their rightful function, which is to cooperate

for the good of man. In this connection it is interesting to recall the thought of two authoritative economists of great experience even at the pragmatic level.

Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Prize for Economics in 2001, recalls that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were created for ends very different from the ends they subsequently pursued. For him the best thing they could do is to return to their original Keynesian inspiration. They should work not for liberalizing the market without discernment, but for correcting its defects, to control and steer it towards good ends.

In spite of everything, a country in crisis should be encouraged to promote full employment. It should be provided with the liquidity it needs to invest and to expand the economy rather than contracting, rather than slowing down its development. It is of great importance to sustain aggregate demand for goods and services, which in turn stimulates their production.

It is equally important that it should continue to import: its imports are the exports of other countries, exports that enable them to pay for their imports. An upset of this delicate equilibrium leads to damage for all concerned.

The government should also make a great effort to maintain education, health, assistance, pensions, etc., without increasing taxation, which should rather be reduced.

But how could it do all this in a crisis situation? That is precisely the function of the international financial institutes: to help the country in crisis with adequate financial support to enable it to overcome the negative moment and to get back on its feet and make progress by means of its own forces.

If these functions are to be performed without partiality, the international economic institutions should not let themselves be guided by economic interests that, in the last resort, are those of the rich countries.

They should know and listen to the poor countries and give them a greater say in things. And act with absolute transparency, foregoing the secrecy of their study and organizational meetings. Democratic practice calls for open debates.

Stiglitz also insists that the flow of short-term capital should be regulated by special interventions of the banks and the revenue authorities. Lenders and borrowers must not be left alone to negotiate in an excessively liberist practice that imposes neither rules nor controls to safeguard the common good.

He is against “salvage operations” essentially undertaken to enable creditors to recuperate their funds. They should be forced to be more cautious. As a general rule, credits should be frozen in order to enable the existing management to continue working until the situation is put to rights.

Stiglitz then calls for a better regulation of the banking system in all countries, be they poor or rich. It is essential to prevent the incorrect credit practices that contribute to rendering the economy less stable. As far as possible, a brake has to be put on short-term loans.

And he also calls for North-South cooperation to limit the risks of crises. He suggests that security networks should be improved to guarantee the weaker enterprises and the workers threatened by unemployment. He recommends improved responses to crises. One thing he has at heart is the cancellation of the debt that suffocates the poor countries and prevents them from making a development take-off. He is against loans with strings. He wants strings or conditions replaced by selectivity: loans should be granted to governments that prove trustworthy and capable of promoting development in full autonomy, in accordance with needs that change from one place to another.

Let us now pay a little attention to the things that are written in this connection by George Soros, the powerful Hungaro-American financier converted into a great

philanthropist, patron and promoter of development, which he encourages with a worldwide network of foundations.

He comments that the markets by themselves are capable of creating wealth, but neither of distributing it equitably nor of complying with other social needs that are absolutely essential: legality, security, social justice, safeguards for the right of workers, reduction of poverty, supply of goods and public services, environmental protection, health and, more particularly, the struggle against infective illnesses, education, rules against anti-competition practices, development promotion, control of tax paradises, improvement of the quality of life in countries afflicted by corrupt, repressive and incompetent governments, preserving the market mechanism in as correct a form as possible and sheltered with respect to crises, etc. These needs have to be met by other international institutions.

Since it is fundamental that all countries should comply with certain international rules, their governments, rather than being obliged, should be encouraged to do so, says Soros. There is a missing link in the international financial architecture: we are in need of an efficient method of furnishing aid that will induce the beneficiaries to fall voluntarily in line.

As term of reference, Soros clearly has in mind the Marshall Plan with which the United States in the years between 1948 and 1952 came to the aid of a disaster-stricken Europe after the Second World War. In 1989 he addressed the East-West Conference at Potsdam to propose that Western governments should organize something similar in favour of the successor states of the Soviet Union. His audience, guided by the Deputy Foreign Secretary of the Thatcher cabinet, literally laughed in his face.

At that time we were at the beginning of the great liberist wave that is associated with the names of Ronald Reagan, the US President, and Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister. Rather than following in the footsteps of the Marshall Plan, the conference entrusted the economies of these countries to the IMF and the World Bank.

To all intents and purposes, Soros had suggested to help the economy of those countries in such a manner as to promote a substantial aggregate demand. This would have sustained economic recovery and development. The classical IMF and World Bank method is the exact opposite. These institutions advise the governments to dismiss a goodly number of employees. But the people who thus remain without work or with a makeshift income will be obliged to limit their purchases. This downturn of demand cannot but depress economic development.

Let me here add that in the immediate post-war period that followed the Second World War, the Marshall Plan – so named after John Marshall, Secretary of State of the Truman Administration – was also a means of preventing the excessively impoverished European nations from throwing themselves into the arms of Communism. But now that the Soviet Empire has collapsed, nobody knows to what extent the United States and the other European countries are prepared to help the new Russia to become once more a superpower.

At this point Soros, still unharkened, proposed that the ten-billion-dollar IMF programme in aid of Russia should be destined exclusively for paying pensions, granting unemployment benefits, and setting up a strong social security network. This would have created the demand for goods and services and therefore promoted reconstruction and development of the economy.

Soros deems it important that the donor countries should refrain from all pretence of controlling the economies of the beneficiaries. Unlike what was done by the Truman/Marshall Administration, which made the grant of aid subject to the purchase of US agricultural products. This requirement caused the American share of world trade

in cereals to rise from ten to fifty percent, to the detriment of – for example – Argentina, which had to reduce its exports in this field by as much as two thirds.

Soros proposes that the rich countries should allocate their special IMF drawing rights to international aid. The considerable sum that would thus become almost immediately available could be used for integrating the monetary reserves and also for economic, social and political development of the backward countries. An operation of this kind could open the door for a gradually increasing flow.

Soros is more tolerant than Stiglitz as regards salvage operations. On the other hand, he says that these have become rare today and that, rather than saving private investors, preference is now given to involving them in reorganization, the concession of longer repayment periods and reductions of their credits. This different practice will induce investors to rely less on salvage operations and to risk their money with greater discernment, lending only to those who prove more trustworthy.

Soros speaks of the need for something that does not yet exist: a true central bank of the entire world, an ultimate lender to exert true control over the national banking systems.

In actual practice, worldwide economic policy is directed primarily by the Federal Reserve System and the United States Treasury. These intervene energetically whenever the country's interests are threatened. But when the weaker countries are suffering, they hardly raise a finger.

The United States dedicate about a thousandth part of their gross domestic product to international aid. They seem rather loath to become associated with international initiatives that could cast even the least doubt on the fullness of their sovereignty. Thus, they did not want to join either the International Criminal Court or the Kyoto Protocol or the various conventions of the International Labour Organization, and not even the other conventions on maritime law and biodiversity.

The spirit of the American nation is sustained by profound idealist notions, but American policy far too often allows itself to be guided by an instance of supremacy over the other peoples of the world. Imperialism and universal solidarity are incarnated, respectively, in two presidential figures: Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson.

What dominates today is the spirit of supremacy, with attention overwhelmingly concentrated on national interests. This does not prevent idealism from continuing to inspire the existence of innumerable persons.

One may hope that a more mature American public opinion will in future adhere to the initiative of setting up a world state; but it is difficult to think that the United States might take such an initiative on their own account.

As regards a project for creating a world organization for the environment, Soros notes that governments are generally against such institutions. And then he asks himself whether it is really worthwhile getting involved in a bureaucratic apparatus lacking true authority. He therefore falls back on the moral authority that could be exerted by a college of experts rather than a line-up of recommended officials.

It seems to me that, in the absence of laws and institutions that can really oblige and – in the limit – coerce, this is the only solution possible for the moment.

The word “coercion” has an ugly sound. But it is difficult to see in what other way the rich could be induced to transfer a part of their wealth to the poor, and the advanced states to those that have remained behind. It is true that such an initiative would in the long run prove to be as wise as was the Marshall Plan.

Helping the poor to improve their condition attenuates the widespread uneasiness that always constitutes a grave danger. And it also promotes the formation of the aggregate demand that is essential even for the expansion of the rich economies.

But are the enterprises that dominate the market prepared to work in this direction on their own initiative? There can be no doubt that all this would go to their advantage in the long run. But, as a general rule, are they accustomed to thinking and planning in these terms? The actual practice of free enterprise goes wholly in the opposite direction, bent as they are on pursuing immediate profits in a systematic manner without ever looking further ahead.

What could induce enterprises to make their investments converge on the poorest parts of the world? It is practically impossible to imagine how such a decided change of route – and on such a vast scale – could ever take place without the powerful impulse of a government operating in the common interest with adequate means and far-reaching long-term plans.

Antonio Baldassarre, who thinks that it is not yet very realistic to aim at a world government, proposes the setting up of a “World Agency for Global Development”. He says that loans leave the situation as before, but with an ever more burdensome debt. What the poor nations need above all is aid for economic development, but aid made to arrive at its proper destination and not left halfway along the road to enrich the local notables.

This agency could be created by means of an international agreement. But I am wondering: what could induce all governments, even the most recalcitrant, to support such an initiative? Only a world state would have the force to oblige them all to do so.

Certainly, a world government does not yet exist and, even on the most optimistic assumptions, many decades will pass before we might see even the first beginnings. The United States would want to exercise a vicarial function. At the time of the Marshall Plan that was undoubtedly the case, even though it is true that Soviet Communism represented a menace for our democratic countries of the West, a danger that had to be jointly faced. But what shall we say about the present-day American government, which destines only a thousandth part of its gross domestic product to helping other countries? If this policy will not undergo a radical change, it is probable the world of the poor will have to look for its Samaritans elsewhere.

**13. Even if perfectly designed
and working with the best of intentions
no international institution will ever be able
to act with full efficacy
unless it is backed by precise and rigorous rules
that can be imposed in a strict
and, in the limit, coercive manner**

In 1909 there were 37 international governmental organizations in all the world, supplemented by another 176 nongovernmental ones. By the year 2000 the governmental ones had risen to 6743 and their nongovernmental counterparts to 47,098.

It is also interesting to compare the treaties stipulated between governments. In the century that runs from 1648 (Peace of Westphalia) to 1750 there were altogether 86 such treaties. The twenty years from 1976 to 1995 witnessed some 1600. About a hundred of these treaties gave rise to an international organization.

The world is wrapped in an ever denser network of multilateral agreements, of institutions and organs of regional and global government. Ever more numerous summit meetings regulate transnational activities of every kind.

A variegated range of “agencies” has been set up by the United Nations, and everything is kept under control by the G8, which brings together the seven most

industrialized countries and Russia (for the moment with the exclusion of China, which has now risen to sixth place as far as gross domestic product is concerned).

In the global ambit, nevertheless, there is as yet no institution with powers that can be compared to those of a state. Control of the economy is exercised in far too vast a proportion by particularistic forces acting in furtherance of their own interests and certainly not for the common good. There lacks a state capable of promoting the interest of all in an equitable manner and having the force to get the better of particularisms.

The international institutions undoubtedly limit the authority of governments. But the governments, being jealous of their sovereignties, limit the powers of these institutions, preventing them from acting as powers independent of what could be and – I think – ought to be a superstate.

Only a superstate would be capable of assuring true order in the economic life of the world, which at present is abandoned to the pressures of the powers and the dominant private interests. These pressures greatly affect even the international organizations. They bend them to serve the rich to the detriment of the poor, forgetting the humanitarian ends for which they were created.

In the financial ambit, the international institutions – World Bank, IMF and WTO – operate in a condition of poor transparency. At the very most, they comprise representatives of the governments, though only the strongest of these exert any true influence, first and foremost the representative of the United States and the Treasury Department.

Many people are calling for a greater participation of the poor nations, so that they may be represented, so that they may make known their needs and make them prevail. There are those who propose that the United Nations, in addition to the already existing Assembly of the representatives of the governments, should also have an Assembly of representatives of the peoples.

Today the situation is dominated by the rich countries, with America way out in the lead. Their policy aims at maintenance of their supremacy. None of these countries is sufficiently generous to forego this supremacy, to act with total disinterest.

The poor countries can be truly helped only if the rich ones transfer to them a part of the wealth they possess. In other words, to say it in the simplest and most explicit terms, if they make it a gift. With all the possible precautions, of course, and also with all the possible incentives: so that the beneficiaries will learn to do it on their own as quickly as possible.

Only a supranational authority that cannot be influenced by particularisms could oblige the richer countries to devolve a part of their resources to the poor ones. As things stand today, this could be done only by a national government within the limits of its own territory. Unfortunately, however, a world government capable of assuring an authentic distributive justice does not exist. And it is not even realized just how necessary it would be.

Today the states, as also the organisms of international cooperation, are excessively dominated by the economic powers. The national state is tendentially reduced to a means for sustaining the initiatives of the multinationals: to assuring the security the latter feel to be necessary if they are to step up their activities in all tranquillity.

The economy is increasingly getting out of hand, escaping political control: the political control that can be exercised only by a state in the fullness of its powers. The possibility of taking global *initiatives* is coming to lack. We have to content ourselves with passively noting the *effects* of globalization. Subtracted as it is from a control capable of being pursued in the interest of the collectivity, the world is getting into an ever more chaotic condition.

Within the territory of each nation it once fell to the state to assure order. At least in general principle, it was committed to regulating all activities in the name of the common good. All this becomes possible only where the state does not allow itself to be in the service of particularist interests and remains wholly above them; where the state sets itself the goal of the general interest and has the means for acting in an effective manner.

This effective action is assured not only by the economic means that may be at the disposal of the state, but also by coercive means. It is the coercive capacity that renders sovereignty complete.

The state must not be confused with civil society: it is wholly distinct from it and autonomous. It has its own bureaucratic and military structure. It takes upon itself the tasks of defence and disposes of armed forces of its own. It does not permit its constituencies – regions, municipalities, etc. – to maintain armed bodies other than mere police forces.

In at least the pretended interest of all, the state imposes directives and has the strength to have them observed. It does not rely on coercion in the strict sense, but rather the possibility of coercing. It is always hoped that the individuals, groups and bodies subjected to the law will fall into line spontaneously, of their own accord. Coercion is resorted to only in the cases in which the appeal to good will is not sufficient. There we have a real act of force.

It is clear that anybody who rebels must not have the force to resist the just exercise of authority to the point of annulling it. In a normal and acceptable situation, resistance should take the form of a strong appeal to a magistrature or a higher authority empowered to take a more equitable decision, and never as the counterposition of a power opposed to the sovereign power of the state.

The reasons we have here mentioned confirm that the state is necessary to confer order upon the complex activities – social, cultural, spiritual, economic, political, and so on – of the population living in its territory. Without the state, without some form of even an elementary state, the law of the jungle would prevail: there would be chaos, the Darwinian situation that today is unfortunately so widespread in a world that has become unified, but is still devoid of a world state.

**14. There follows the need for creating a world federal state
with a parliament elected by the peoples of the world
and then a government, a magistrature
and armed forces (under its sole control)
that would enable it to exercise
an effective sovereign authority**

Order is needed in every way for the good of the community that embraces the whole of mankind: there thus arises the problem of establishing a world order.

The national state no longer succeeds in controlling the economy. And not even a federal continental government would succeed in doing so. We would always be concerned with an authority capable of controlling only a part of a system that nowadays occupies the entire globe.

For similar reasons, even agreements between several nations may prove useful, but insufficient.

The same can be said of possible agreements between economic subjects, i.e. several enterprises, in the name of a common interest in correcting certain dangerous unbalances.

Even the help given by international organizations seems decidedly insufficient. These institutions could undoubtedly be extended even to a planetary scale, but seem imperfect and incomplete and weak, particularly in view of the fact that they lack effective sovereign powers.

Though essential, even the initiative of creating a tissue of small and autonomous local communities, each decided to save its own specificity, the environment, local production, human relations and solidarity, cultural diversity, etc., would prove by itself insufficient.

The same may be said of an initiative by parties and trade unions, non-governmental organizations, associations of consumers and ecologists and committed citizens unless and until the merging of these movements leads to the foundation of a sovereign supranational state.

The ongoing globalization of the economy, of finance and information makes the setting up of a strong and worldwide federal state ever more necessary.

More than mediating, a world power would have to guarantee. The first guarantee would be the one it could offer for the development of the proper and healthy autonomies.

The world state could guarantee the common interest only by imposing precise rules that all the national, regional and local powers would be required to apply in a rigorous manner within their own ambits.

The objective to be pursued would be that capital, no matter where it decides to go, would be treated and taxed in the same manner. No exemption from certain obligations would encourage capital to go to some other place, where easy earnings could be realized right away, sacrificing the things that have to be done in each country to promote research, create infrastructures, assure social justice. No possibility should be offered to a business to opt for a country where fewer taxes and smaller social contribution would enable the financiers behind the business to make conspicuous profits at the expense of those who work there. No small or even microscopic state should be allowed to exploit its sovereignty for proposing itself as a fiscal paradise, thus depriving other states of the due and necessary taxes.

Appropriate legislation should make it possible to guarantee that people can work serenely and with equitable pay in all parts of the world, giving the best of themselves, but protected against any form of endemic unemployment.

Each nation should not only be helped, but obliged by law to give itself the structures of a civil and advanced country. And each nation should also be required, whenever work possibilities are limited, to distribute them equitably among all, even if this means reducing working hours and pay. This would be an obligation of world law to be absolved, above all, by means of agreements between enterprises, trade unions and government.

The road to this goal is very long. We have to set out along it with decision, courage and constancy, but even more so with intelligence and the will to gain further insight, with detailed knowledge of all the scenarios and awareness of all the difficulties: the first essential thing is that we should all be conscious of this goal.

The powerful multinationals will be among the first to oppose the unification of the world under a sovereign authority. And therefore the world authority would have to be put in a position to impose its directives on them.

One may well formulate the hypothesis that the world state could derive from a reform, from a development of the United Nations. In this perspective there can be no doubt that the UN would have to be strengthened in a manner never seen before. The new United Nations of the World could no longer limit themselves to being the resultant of a parallelogramme of forces constituted by national interests or, in any case,

particularistic interests. They have to act as an autonomous and strong subject on their own behalf.

The weakness of the present United Nations, as also of their specialist agencies, lies in the fact that, to all intents and purposes, they can act only with the unanimous consent of all the member states. This unanimism is consolidated by the veto right accorded to some powers, the permanent members of the Security Council.

Strengthening the institutional authority of the United Nations, on the other hand, means putting them in a position to render their decisions executive when the deliberating bodies do not attain unanimity. As Michel Virally writes, “unanimity is asocial”. It is therefore more than ever necessary to pass from the unanimity principle to the majority principle.

Deciding by majority means attributing a part of sovereignty to the United Nations and denying it to the national states. And it is within the ambit of this sovereignty that they would have to assume on their own behalf that the United Nations, after being reformed in such a manner as to assume the form of a world state, would be able to assure security by eliminating the peril of atomic suicide and disarming the individual nations.

But the peace that the world state has to establish is a just peace: it must not in any way be understood as the consolidation of a system of relations as iniquitous as the present one undoubtedly is.

It follows from this that another fundamental commitment of the United Nations of the World would have to be the elimination of the economic inequalities that place so many underdeveloped countries into an effective state of colonial subjection to more evolved and richer countries.

Without wanting here to define all its attributions, let us say that such a supra-national state would have to be capable of intervening with full powers and effective force wherever the rights of man or the general interests of humanity are violated.

A world state should also have exclusive possession of space.

Controlling all atomic energy, it would regulate its exploitation, eliminating atomic weapons and all possibility of their being produced again.

It would dispose of its own financial organization, made up of directly controlled enterprises, and possibly also its own system of state holdings to act in furtherance of objectives of common interest.

Relying partly on its formally agreed sovereign authority and partly on its capacity of influencing and its own economic weight, it would be able to promote everywhere a balanced development of the economy, an equitable distribution of resources among communities and individuals, an adequate level of education and culture, and an appropriate reform of legislation.

In assuming this form of sovereign world state, the United Nations would come to constitute a place of encounter and study of common problems. The representatives of the various states may also find it easier to meet there to discuss bilateral or also multi-lateral agreements. Above all, however, the United Nations reformed in this manner would be destined to become the meeting place of a true parliament.

A world parliament cannot be formed solely of government representatives. To these there would sooner or later have to be added the representatives of the peoples, so that eventually the assembly would come to be configured as a chamber of deputies elected by universal suffrage.

The deliberations of the world parliament would have to be executed by a world government. This government could be brought into being by strengthening what is today the Secretariat General of the United Nations.

The world government could concentrate under itself, as its distinct departments or ministries, all or at least the greater part of the activities that are today carried out by the various specialized agencies of the United Nations: UNESCO, FAO, ILO, WTO, etcetera.

The world parliament and government would be flanked by a world court of justice, which is already prefigured today by the international court at The Hague.

The world court would absolve a function similar to that of a constitutional court: it could therefore resolve the controversies between nation and nation or between the federation and a national state.

It would also be required to judge whether the constitution or the legislation or the policy or the administration of justice of a state is or is not in conformity with the rights of man and the world laws. More particularly, it would judge the crimes against humanity or at least supervise their repression by the national magistratures. In any case, there already exists an International Criminal Court, which was founded in Rome in 1998 and came into force in 2002 after it had been ratified by sixty countries (but not yet by the United States, China and India).

Wherever the world laws and the rights of man become violated, the world government would have to be put in position to intervene effectively not with a war, but rather a simple police operation.

Everything would be greatly simplified if national governments were denied all faculty of having armed forces of their own. It is as well to insist on this point: neither an army nor a navy nor an air force, just simple police forces, fire brigades to put out fires, wardens to regulate traffic, forestry guards, dog catchers to take care of stray dogs in comfortable kennels while waiting for adoption. The national and their potential dictators must be deprived of all dangerous toys!

15. Are the objectives so far set out utopian?

They undoubtedly correspond to a kind of maxiprogramme that can be implemented only by degrees and amid a thousand difficulties: that is why a sage realism requires one to pursue only a series of gradual conquests, though without ever losing sight of the ultimate goal

David Held and Anthony McGrew do not think it possible for a world federal state to be constituted in a short period of time; and yet they insist on the need for going beyond a mere confederalism. Merely confederal transnational states would be dominated by the stronger national states and would therefore remain unable to institute an authentic democracy at the world level.

These two authors take the view that for the moment efforts should be concentrated on better democratizing the existing institutions. An international constituent assembly could create a second chamber of the United Nations where the developing countries would be more adequately represented. Something similar should be implemented in the economic cooperation organisms, eventually integrating them in a body representing all the interests at the regional and global level. The European Union should be strengthened and other regional communities promoted wherever possible. An international human rights tribunal should be instituted. Lastly, an efficient and responsible military force should be put together.

Beyond these implementations, in a subsequent stage, ever more extensive coercive powers should be transferred from the national states to these higher-level institutions. The nations should be demilitarized. And at this point a true world parliament could be set up.

Jürgen Habermas takes a look at the old national state with its territory and its population kept together by a common history and culture and a shared sense of collective identity and democratic legitimacy. He then analyses the formation of the European Union. This took shape in the light of economic considerations, but then gave itself a structure of an ever more definite political character. Could it become a true federal state? Certainly not of the same type as a national federal state, like Germany for example. Gradually, however, it could come to assume similar connotations.

What does Europe lack to achieve such a condition? First of all, overstepping the frontiers of the individual states, civic solidarity would have to become enlarged to embrace the entire Union, so that a Swede would feel solidary not only with other Swedes, but also with Portuguese, Dutchmen, Bulgarians and Croats. Schools would have to teach foreign languages and acquaint students with other cultures. The national political parties would have to associate into corresponding great parties at the European level and jointly debate the problems of the entire continent.

A European culture would thus gradually come to assume greater consistency at both the political and many other levels, with the sense of a common citizenship, the sense of forming part of one and the same community, of being members of one and the same collective and solidary body, prepared not only to live together, but also to make sacrifices for each other.

All this could gradually become more and more feasible in the European dimension. Europe is the first example, if not exactly of a supranational state, but undoubtedly of a democracy that goes beyond the national state. But what can we say about a possible federal state that associates the nations of the whole world? As far as Habermas is concerned, the common ethos that is as yet lacking even in Europe is inevitably all the more insufficient at the global level and does not permit men to feel solidary with each other as citizens of one and the same nation. The prerequisites have yet to mature, and the road seems very long and difficult, the goal more than distant. All that Habermas sees possible for the moment, even in the absence of a world government, is a change of route to set out in that direction.

Antonio Baldassarre, in his turn, wonders whether a democratic world government can really be implemented. The course of his analysis is marked by a series of doubts.

Considering the historical development of the European Union, he sees it underlain by a common ethos, a cultural and social integration, a good starting point. These premises are very similar to those that already in the past triggered federative processes that were not markedly different.

But the case of the process that tends towards an association of states at the global level is very different. What seems to lack there are precisely these common premises.

Baldassarre sees possible agreements between states and also the institution of supranational bodies intended to maintain peace, promote economic development, and reduce the gap. What seems utopian is the idea of the creation of a worldwide federal democratic state.

There are those who propose to democratize the United Nations by setting up a kind of world parliament to be associated with the General Assembly, where only governments are represented. Any parliament takes its decisions by a majority vote, but this could oblige a national state to fall into line with the will of others, sacrificing a part of its sovereignty. That would also be the case if only governments and not peoples were represented in the deliberative organ.

If we now consider the hypothesis of a chamber elected by the peoples, another grave problem would come to the fore: how many representatives would be elected by means of an authentically democratic procedure? There are democratic nations, but also many others, indeed, a much larger number, that are decidedly not democratic. If it were decided that only the democratic countries are to take part in the voting, always provided it proved possible to agree the requisites with which a country must comply to be considered democratic, three quarters of the members of the United Nations would be excluded from the election. The world parliament would become a quasi-monopoly of the Western countries, who are also the richest and the most powerful. The others would be deprived of the possibility of having a say in matters, making their particular instances heard.

This would do nothing other than validate the present situation, in which the most powerful nations and the most developed economies substantially constitute a kind of world directory by virtue of bodies like the Security Council, committees like the G7 and the G8, organisms like WTO, IMF and the World Bank. In the absence of a world state, it is a kind of stopgap, a substitute government in the hands of what one would be fully justified in calling an oligarchy.

Baldassarre therefore proposes an agreement between exponents of various parts of the world in which, side by side with the most industrialized countries (North America and Europe), there would be represented Russia, China, Japan, sub-Saharan Africa, the Islamic world and other areas of primary importance. It would be the place of encounter of what might be called the regions of the world. Such an assize would be incomparably more representative than an assembly of the sole representatives of the democratic countries. The decisions adopted within this framework would clearly not be as binding as those of a state parliament, but would have a value at least similar to those of a convention between subjects who feel the need for regulating their relationships.

Baldassarre cites the example of the *lex mercatoria*, which in the Middle Ages derived from an agreement between merchants and certainly did not have the imperative and coercive force of a law issued by the king or by a municipality, but in practice proved sufficient to confer some order upon their dealings.

Coming into ever greater contact with each other, agreeing an ever stricter and more detailed regulation, the regions of the world would gradually learn the ways of a better co-existence. There would thus take shape a behaviour code, an ethos, a common feeling, the sense of common values. And it may well be that this would in the long run facilitate the development throughout the planet of political and juridical unification processes similar to the ongoing ones in the European Union.

It seems to me that each of the authors I have here passed in review, in his own particular way and with greater or lesser optimism, underscores the difficulties of the road that has to be travelled if a worldwide federal state is to be brought into being, but none of them produces arguments that could induce one to exclude *a priori* the possibility of attaining such a goal.

The states that make up the European Union have agreed to entrust the authorities in Brussels with extensive competencies for even the minute and detailed regulation of many aspects of the internal life of each member state. The European Union today represents the best example of what might be a world federation in, hopefully, a not too distant future. The principal European nations also have relations of consanguinity, linguistic identity, close cultural affinity and economic cooperation with nations of other continents. And it may well be that this will be the very thing to give rise to a unifying initiative of ever wider and eventually universal reach.

**16. The process of world unification
can find a much more effective motor in Europe
than in the United States of America
whose “American Dream” is now in a severe crisis:
in this way a new “European Dream” takes shape**

Several months after publishing the essay *Globalization and United World* on our Internet site, I came across a book by Jeremy Rifkin called *The European Dream*. I found very interesting data in it for my research, and fascinating ideas, and it inspired me to resume them in this essay by adding the chapter which you are now reading.

A second chapter which I am adding to it is devoted to the historical development and prospects for the European Union, always from the perspective of it as a driving force for political unity of the world.

I am particularly drawn to the idea of the New Dream. Rifkin contrasts it to the old American Dream. The first thing we see in the necessary synthesis is how Rifkin characterized his own nation’s Dream, which he confesses has nurtured him since his own childhood. The remarks that follow have been drawn from the book in question.

The American Dream springs from the religious tradition of its people. The Pilgrim Fathers who came to New England in 1620 on board the Mayflower under the spiritual leadership of John Winthrop thought of themselves as the new Israel, liberated from British oppression and delivered to the free spaces of America, the new Promised Land.

Even where the religious background tends to fade out, the idea that they are protected by God as the chosen people who walk in the path He has shown them remains firmly planted in the American mind.

58% of Americans believe that their society draws its strength from having been founded on religious faith. Six out of ten Americans testify that their Christian faith affects every decision and aspect of their life. Four out of ten confess that their life has been changed by a strong spiritual experience.

It is well known that the Calvinistic theology professed by the first colonists of New England believes that increasing one’s wealth (by hard and honest work, of course) is confirmation that those who benefit from it are blessed by God and destined for eternal salvation.

The real American Dream involves both faith in God and commitment to hard work, with the confidence that the sacrifice will be repaid with a future of good results and success.

Today, however, the work ethic itself is in crisis. Thanks also to the influence of a formidable advertising machine, people are beginning to think that they can have everything right away, without too much commitment and effort.

If both these elements are excluded, how can we hope to earn enough money to satisfy our desires for consumer goods? Among the shortcuts which can legally be taken, there is gambling, which is a growth industry in the United States.

And there is also a great devotion to investments which allow one to realize great profits without much effort, by buying only in order to sell at the first profitable moment. From being a meeting place for financiers, the stock exchange has developed into a great gambling den.

More than six out of seven Americans believe that lack of success is basically due to inability. Any prospect of careful analysis of social causes of poverty remains relegated to a shadowy gray area.

Americans in general are more concerned with their own welfare than with that of others. Consequently, as far as the state or governmental authority is concerned, they

tend to resist having it intervene to resolve social problems. Helping the needy is considered an individual choice.

The state exists to protect private property and must not intervene to correct imbalances that may occur in the distribution of wealth.

In fact the disparities of property and income are so great that America, which has always been considered the land of opportunity, has become the land of social differences more than any other developed nation. In this regard more than any other it has moved furthest apart from the countries of Europe.

According to the statistics of the OCDE, the United States allocates only 11% of their gross national product for social expenditures to redistribute wealth, while the countries of the European Union allocate more than 26% for this purpose.

Just to limit ourselves to giving a few examples of lack of social concern, health assistance, rather than being guaranteed by the public sector, is entrusted to non-profit organizations.

There is no lack in America of men of good will committed to serving the common good. As individualists, Americans are favorably disposed to volunteerism and ready to organize committees, circles, associations, to give birth to movements for the defense of the rights of nature, of man, of marginalized minorities. What is missing, rather, is the public commitment.

To give another example, in the US there is no legally guarantee of a right to maternity or paternity leave. Most Americans cannot even count on a period of unpaid leave for family reasons. Comparisons are said to be odious, but in Europe paid maternity leave ranges from three to six months. In Sweden mothers are granted 64 weeks of paid leave at 63% of their salary. And paid maternity leave at 100% salary for a minimum of three months is the case in Germany, France, Austria, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Portugal and Spain.

On the other hand, the US spends much more than any other European country to fight crime and to enforce the law. They have 685 prisoners per 100,000, compared to the European average of 87.

And the homicide rates are 6.26 per 100,000, nearly four times the European rate of 1.7 (the data are for the years 1997-1999). To round out the unpleasant subject we find ourselves in, we may add that the suicide rate is about twice that of Europe.

One sees many more homeless and mentally ill people on the streets in America than in Europe. In general, walking about town at night may be dangerous in America, which it is not in Europe.

American Protestantism relies more on faith than on charity. The wealth that an individual can accumulate is a reward that God accords to his diligence and hard work. Anyone who is not hard-working is a sort of parasite and does not deserve welfare. Helping the poor is a free choice made by the generous donor, over and above what is thought to be due from society itself.

This kind of man, who is motivated by religion, is grateful to God for His blessings and calls upon Him to grant him happiness on this earth and in the next life in Heaven.

He blesses God for the wealth that He allows his faithful followers to accumulate. The more wealth one amasses the more independent one becomes, and the less dependent one is on others.

Amassing wealth may be thought of as an ideal connected to the Protestant Christian one, but also as an earthly ideal ever more increasingly uncoupled from a belief in God. In the latter case, as the religious background tends to weaken, man's motivations may become purely materialistic.

With this sort of outlook, economic development blessed by God can take the form of unbridled capitalism, consisting of greed and exploitation.

An American Dream that comes to take on such a configuration may be that of men devoted to consuming all the resources of the Earth without limit and without restraint. More than ever today Americans seem to be obsessed with the idea of protecting their self-interest at all costs. They have built the most powerful war machine of all time and tend to use it to resolve their differences with other countries. They employ their military might to obtain what they want, and what they believe they have a right to. As noted above, they think of themselves as the chosen people and so they believe they deserve a lion's share of the riches of the Earth.

In fact, they consume more than a third of the world's energy and a huge share of the other resources of the Earth, even though they constitute less than 5% of the world's population. They are devouring what remains of the riches of the planet to satisfy almost insatiable individual appetites. They live and prosper by killing and consuming everything that is around them.

Their interest is transforming itself into pure egotism. Rifkin asserts unhesitatingly that American culture has become a culture of death.

The American Dream can be pursued only in America. It does not appear to be exportable as such, even though the American life style finds imitators all over the world.

The force of attraction of the model of the American way of life has shown that it has had the power to persuade immigrants to cut their ties to the past and assimilate into America by entering into the famous melting pot. It is a situation in which it is practically impossible to maintain one's own cultural identity for long.

The dream is now showing its age. And the life style no longer looks like a source of inspiration, but rather something obsolete, a thing to fear or even to recoil from in horror.

Up to this point I have been reporting a series of observations by Jeremy Rifkin. Now I will try to summarize what he has to say about the European Dream. I will combine his comments with others from other sources which agree with his. The characteristics that he attributes to the European Dream appear to correspond to those of the American Dream only in the sense that they are its polar opposite.

In contrast to Americans, Europeans seem to be much more detached from religion. Nevertheless, I would like to observe here, incidentally, that they have implemented and brought about many important implications of Christianity. Uncoupled though they may be from reference to God, so many ideas and actions that have taken shape since the Enlightenment seem to me to be actual implementations of Christianity in the best sense.

Rifkin in any case notes that, though they are less "religious," Europeans seem to be much more concerned with people's general welfare than Americans.

They are far from sharing the American prejudice that a person's lack of success is basically due to his inability. And they are incomparably more concerned with social causes of this situation. This leads to a much greater involvement by the public authorities in dealing with excessive discrepancies.

As I mentioned above, the countries of the European Union allocate 26% of their gross national product to social welfare, in contrast to 11% in the United States. Some of the other comparative statistics provided above give a more concrete idea of this difference. Europe does incomparably more than America in making the management of human resources as flexible as possible, so as to adapt work to different life styles.

To add a couple of examples: in France the work week has been reduced to 35 hours, with unquestionable improvement in terms of results; in Belgium the worker can

very easily obtain the leave he needs for himself or to help another family member, an infant, a sick relative; he can even be granted reduced working hours. Nothing is given away in terms of compensation, but every individual situation is dealt with with the greatest possible flexibility.

The Americans are much more inflexible in their working conditions and in their working hours. People in America earn an average of 30% more, but the Europeans can count on four to ten weeks more of vacation time. So the question becomes whether thirty percent more in income is enough to compensate for losing two or three months of free time a year.

The Europeans are quite right to say that they work for a living, unlike the Americans, who live in order to work. Instead of the American dedication to making money, Europeans value personal benefits and the quality of life.

They plan for economic development, but they consider very seriously the problem of its sustainability, and consequently of the limits that must be set if they do not want to damage the condition of the planet and make it less fit to live in.

In this sense the Europeans feel they are much more responsible for the welfare of the people of all the continents.

They are reluctant to use military force to solve the world's problems. They prefer to rely on a diplomatic course of action. They are more generous with assistance and economic aid. They seem to be more sensitive to issues of universal human rights and those of weaker nations, of the more defenseless minorities, and the most endangered cultural identities.

This basic attitude makes Europeans much better prepared to adapt to the many forces that are driving the world toward a globalized and ever-more-connected society.

The European Dream is the first Trans- or International Dream that has taken shape in our era, which impels us toward globalization.

The hero of the old American Dream is the "self-made man". The hero of the European Dream is an entire population which wants to improve everybody's quality of life, including that of people in other countries.

The first stresses individual opportunity, the second stresses the collective welfare of society.

America appears to be holding fast to the past, while Europe, on the contrary, gives the clear impression of preparing itself to confront the new era.

Europe has become a great experimental laboratory, in which one can reconsider the human condition and imagine the new characteristics which it will have to assume in the transformation that is taking place.

And so it is Europe that has shown that it is ready to drive toward mankind's highest aspirations, the hopes of the world.

For an American, his personal liberty consists in being self-reliant, in not needing anyone. For a European liberty is not so much a matter of possessing something as it is the possibility of having access to it along with others. Isolation is not very desirable where the presence of constant risk obliges people to learn to share and face it together. It is necessary to overcome every source of conflict and individualism. Solidarity and a spirit of collaboration need to be increased as much as possible.

The European Union has not yet assumed a complete final form in state terms. It presents the fluid character of a complex reality in process of formation. It has, moreover, no fixed territorial limits. It is free at any moment to accept the request for admission of any new nation. What it is interested in is not so much where the candidate nation is located as what its values are, and whether it satisfies the conditions established for participation in the Union: a respect for the principles of freedom and democracy, human rights, basic freedoms and the rule of law.

Nobody can say where the European Union's final borders will be. Discussions have been underway for years regarding the inclusion of Turkey into the Union. Some people would like to include Russia in some form.

Moreover, the European Union is constantly changing, in order to be ever better prepared to face the new reality and establish new and even different relationships with other political entities. Along with the full membership of the twenty-five states that now are part of it, there is room for a wide range of other forms of association.

As has already been the case in the course of the last fifty years, there are even today some countries that are not yet full members, such as Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Cyprus, Portugal in 1980, which have lingered in a status of pre-membership, which opens the door for them to receive assistance and investment.

Since 1994 there has existed the European Economic Space, under whose aegis the Union cooperates with the countries of EFTA (the European Free Trade Association, which currently includes only Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein). Special agreements associate the European Union with Greenland and even tiny states such as Andorra, Monaco and San Marino.

Beginning in 1963 the Union established preferential relationships with various African countries, and extended the same relationships over time with others in the Caribbean and in the Pacific (ACP, conventions of Yaoundé and Lomé). And more special accords with Cambodia and Laos in 1997, South Africa in 1999, Mexico in 2000, Algeria in 2001, China and Russia in 2003.

In recent decades the government of the European Union has developed an ever clearer awareness of the importance of collaborating with the countries on the other shores of the Mediterranean and with the Middle East, as shown by the bilateral accords with Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan (1977), the ASEAN nations (1980), with the Arab Republic of Yemen (1984), with the Council of Cooperation among the Gulf States (CCG, 1988), with Tunisia and Morocco (1995). We mention them only as examples: a complete list of such accords would be a great deal longer, extending to embrace nations of the former Soviet Union and even the MERCOSUR of South America.

The European Union could ultimately establish a whole range of associative ties with the whole world, leading the way to its unification.

It presents itself as an example for various communities of "regional" integration. We may mention among such accords NAFTA ("North American Free Trade Agreement" between the United States, Canada, and Mexico), MERCOSUR ("Common Market of the Southern Cone" for Latin America), ASEAN ("Association of South-East Asian Nations"), the African Union and other smaller ones which embrace parts of the same continent, but also much larger communities of nations such as APEC ("Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation"). We may go so far as to say that the European Union proposes itself as a paradigm or model of what the Organization of the United Nations itself could become.

The European Union has no coercive power over its member states, over which it exercises no sovereign power. It draws its legitimacy and its strength only from the trust of its member states and the commitments they have made, the treaties they have signed and promised to respect.

The laws and directives of the Union are binding on its members, to the extent and inasmuch as they are the result of a process of negotiation, compromise, and consensus which is constantly developing at all levels: regional, national, international and global.

A great deal depends on the negotiating skills of the European Commission, which certainly does not have the power to monitor every situation: it does not have enough means (including financial ones) nor the structures to do so; and so it finds itself obliged to put pressure or exert leverage even on private citizens, as it does on all those who are

interested in the implementation of particular policies. These are the people who will encourage initiatives and procedures and monitor their implementation beyond what is in the capacities of the European organisms themselves to achieve on their own.

The Commission of the European Union is forced primarily to act through national public offices, but it does not have the power at its disposal to force them to act in accordance with its own directives. So it will demonstrate its authority if and to the extent that it will manage to legitimize both in an ethical and legal sense the actual conduct of public officials and private citizens.

So the problem, as we had suggested earlier, is to involve private citizens, businesses enterprises, groups speaking up for various interests, unions, professional associations, organizations of producers and consumer groups, those who defend human rights and environmentalists. Each of these groups needs to be engaged so that they can all cooperate together to monitor the faithful implementation at every level of the European Union's directives.

A national government which fails to live up to its obligations will be called upon to justify itself not only before the authorities of the Union, but also before public opinion. It could be admonished or even sentenced to make restitution or heavily fined.

Once the Commission has imposed a sense of obligation in its procedures, those who fail to adhere to it will have to account for their actions not only with the Commission itself and with the European Court of Justice, but also with that added weight that will come from the inevitable pressure of all those who have an interest in the just and proper observation of what – through negotiations, compromise, and mutual concessions – has been decided with the concord and final agreement of all.

As so many analysts and political theorists are saying today, the effectiveness of any government at any level always consists less in the fact that its decisions are imposed from above upon its passive subjects, and ever more in the fact that those who have to obey them are called upon continually to implement them.

It is appropriate for the government to call upon the economic sector, enterprises and all the component parts of civil society to participate in the implementation of the directives of common interest. Each person will contribute with his own experience and will commit himself as actively as possible in common action.

In the new praxis which is becoming the norm, the governed are not limited to electing the governors, but take part themselves as well on an ongoing basis in the decisions of the government, daily confronting the ever-new problems as they appear. In this way the government assumes a polycentric way of operating.

The governor is no longer a military type of commander but rather an animator, a mediator, a coordinator.

This much we can say above all, considering the European government, which was the first to formally legitimize the organizations of the civil society: those that support religion, education, the arts; those that provide social services, those that encourage recreation, sports and play, the organizations that defend human rights and encourage recognition of them; the organizations that represent the interests of ethnic minorities, or local communities and their cultures.

The European Union is the place where the movements for civil rights, human rights, women's rights, campaigns against poverty, the pacifist movement, those for animals' rights, consumers' rights, against eugenics, and so forth, have begun to make their voices heard.

The Union has provided room for all these initiatives, protects and encourages them and also supports them, deriving from them a great part of the strength that the imperfection of its political status would deny it.

Besides, is not Europe itself a great movement? It is a movement toward something that goes beyond it: toward a goal that ultimately could not fail to coincide with the political unification of the entire planet.

**17. The American and the European “Dreams”
will nevertheless have to converge and combine
and all the available powers in the world must cooperate
to bring about the realization of this great hope**

According to Rifkin’s analysis, at present the European Union still offers less opportunity for career advancement than the United States, but is far ahead of the United States in terms of quality of life.

Rifkin notes that European businesses dominate a great deal of the world economy. And as a whole, Europe is ahead in the number of graduates in science and technology, in public investment for research and development, in raising new capital, and in the creation of small and medium-size businesses. It is still lagging in value added that high technology can contribute to manufacturing and in the number of technological patents, and in the percentage of adults with some university experience. But it is growing more rapidly than the United States in access to university education, in access to the web and in per capita outlays for information technology.

Rifkin concludes that as a whole Europe is catching up, though it is not close to achieving the goal of overtaking the United States. To tell the truth, not all the experts have the same rosy view of Europe’s comparative situation. Some have expressed the opinion that, although it is true that there have been highs and lows in recent years, all things considered the United States are continuing to outstrip the European Union in terms of presence, productivity and competitiveness in the most innovative and strategic sectors (Castronovo). Although the European Union hopes to become the most dynamic and competitive economy by 2010 (a goal spelled out at the European Council of Lisbon in March, 2000), in fact the gap with the American economy is increasing (Brunetta and Preto).

Can Europe think of itself as a superpower comparable to the United States? I think not. If it is true that in union there is strength, a certain relative weakness of Europe is surely due to its relative lack of unity.

Europe’s national governments often act in pursuit of divergent interests, so that they are slow to make common decisions even on important issues.

Europe’s governments are also divided in their way of understanding the extent of their association: as a matter of principle, Great Britain is opposed to any giving up of sovereignty; small states such as Belgium see in a closer relationship a guarantee against their being overwhelmed by the major powers; in the ambit of cooperation between governments France sees itself favored in its own economic interest, sees itself more protected against a possible reemergence of German expansionism and aspires to a leading role (which could console it for no longer being the great power it once was on the world scene and allows it to take the lead in a Europe freed from American supremacy).

In a situation of this sort communal decisions are more laborious and difficult, but on the other hand they are possibly may be better filtered and balanced.

In principle the European Union is not committed to setting precise borders for itself. Nobody can say exactly where these borders are. The admission of new members or of countries simply associated with it is determined more by standards of values than geographical considerations. The Union is transforming itself by degrees to adapt to

new and even different forms of association, which can represent a bond and a stable relationship with an ever greater number of countries.

Among the countries which are expected to establish relations with the European Union we should not forget those which have been, and still are, in a special relation with the single European nations of which they were once colonies, whose language they speak, and whose culture they have in some degree assimilated. The Commonwealth is still a living reality, and certainly so are the bonds between the nations linked to each other by French, Spanish, and Portuguese language and culture.

Iceland, Norway and Turkey are already “associate members” of the Union, a status through which other countries have passed which are now full members.

While Turkey is a candidate for full membership, some people think Russia is a great country which should also be brought in to some form of association. Some day nations such as Byelorussia, Ukraine, Moldavia, and even Israel may be brought in. The candidate nations are allowed to take part in the work of the European Convention itself.

These are all states which draw unquestionable benefits from being associated in a network of relationships in which no one can continue to think of their neighbours as potential enemies. Another factor that a less-developed country recognizes as a benefit is the opportunity offered to it to enter into a common market, into an area of closer commercial exchange. Belonging to the European Union opens new possibilities to export and import under better terms. It also guarantees to each nation that it will not be left to its own resources to face tensions and crises; it gives each nation a possibility of assistance and a much greater political and economic security.

As for the European Union, it has everything to gain by extending its own network of relationships. By helping certain countries to escape from their present poverty, it helps them to develop and increasingly limits the factors of those crises that could have repercussions on Europe itself. Moreover, it strengthens a democracy that may at times be unstable and in its first steps. A gradual enlargement of the Union cannot fail to lead to greater security, stability and prosperity for all.

The richer nations have to recognize, in the end, how necessary it is to give substantial assistance to the economic, social and political development of the less-developed ones. Within the Union itself there are areas that need help, to which it provides help through the “policy of economic and social cohesion”. And it is no less important to extend aid to areas outside the Union, progressively, by degrees, wherever possible.

This is not simply a matter of solidarity, but a benefit for the generous givers themselves. In a globalized world no one is really sure of his own welfare until everyone else is well-off too. The capital that is spent to help them is the best use of the money in every sense. Here Christian charity and human solidarity join hands with the most enlightened self-interest.

It is a process in which candidate nations are called upon to play an active role by conforming with *quid pro quo* that the Union requires: an adaptation of its own legislation but, even before that, a moderate attitude, peaceful and orderly progress, reforms aimed at protecting human dignity, eliminating historic abuses, advancing freedom, democracy, and social justice.

The enlargement of the Union may work against its deepening in the federal sense. The new members will inevitably bring with them a diversity of political interests, as has already occurred with the entry of Great Britain and Ireland. In particular, the entry of a country like Cyprus will unavoidably make conflicting interests such as those that, on the question of Cyprus, divide Greece from Turkey an internal European problem.

Nevertheless, it is a conflict that their common membership in the Union could help to alleviate a bit at a time.

1. As for Turkey itself, preventing its entry into Europe could mean, for Europe itself, the loss of an important integration in geopolitical and strategic terms. However, admitting it to membership could mean involving Europe in a perilously unstable area such as that of the Middle East. What are we to say, then, of the problems that would arise from admitting Israel if it is in constant conflict with the Arabs? On the other hand, how can we fail to consider that Europe might exercise a positive influence on Palestine itself, assisting in its economic and even political development toward an improved democracy?

2. In Europe disunity is increased by the admission of new members and we can expect that it will keep increasing as more members keep being added to it. This fact could present the European Union with the opportunity to exercise a great function of balancing, of pacification and unification, of promoting civilization, but it cannot fail to interfere with any mere wish Europe may have of assuming a superpower role.

It could not even provide adequately for its own defense, which is guaranteed by NATO and especially by Washington's backing, because the military equipment, including nuclear arms, are provided primarily and essentially by the United States. Any autonomous European defense and ready response force such as the one the French and the Germans proposed constructing would still have to act within the framework of the Atlantic Pact.

The European nations spend for their defense in total only a fraction of what the United States spend. And the United States has a presidential government and a tightly unified command structure, whereas the European nations are many and in discord over their policies, their goals, their actions and on the measures they think are needed.

As in the past, it follows that they need to rely on the United States for any military operation. We are in a situation in which serious procedures need to be adopted and decisions that are made need to be acted upon quickly – something that the intergovernmental structure of the decision-making organs makes it particularly difficult to do, especially when internal problems and disagreements between governments could induce each one to act separately and differently, or even to refuse to participate. The effectiveness of any possible military action would obviously be compromised by this.

We have seen the most glaring examples of this at the time of the crises that developed as a result of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, as well as at the time of the Gulf War and the actions taken by Bush junior against the Taliban and Bin Laden in Afghanistan and Iraq's Saddam Hussein. The Belgian minister who defined the European Community as an economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm was not entirely wrong.

If they intended to match the nuclear and conventional arms that the United States have at their disposal, the Europeans would be forced to commit themselves to unmanageable costs for their economies. And so, in effect, ever since the Cold War they have entrusted the issue of the use of military power and the defense of Europe to NATO, meaning essentially the United States.

On the other hand, the existence of a "policeman of the world" is still a necessity, and this will continue to be the case until the world itself unites and provides itself with a real government. For this reason it is desirable that the world adopt a federal structure similar to that of the United States, with a presidency democratically elected but endowed with adequate power and full control of its own armed forces. Such powers and forces are essential for a world government to take effective action in any possible crisis.

Until that happens the best thing is for the defense of the world to remain in the hands of the United States, as it is now. There are emergency cases in which the “policeman of the world” will need to act alone.

There is no guarantee that these independently taken decisions of the American government will be the best, nor that they will be taken for the common good of the world rather than for the goals of its own power politics. American democracy is based on a patrimony of ethical values and political ideals which are sometimes lost sight of.

Islamic terrorism has provoked a very strong reaction by the United States. The “hawks” have come into power, and a series of unilateral military interventions have resulted.

Some of the European countries have taken part in the war, others have sent peacekeepers, and others have refused to participate. The White House wanted to act quickly and was able to receive assistance only from those who were so disposed.

It has been easier to win wars than to organize the peace and disengage. The American government has gotten entangled in ugly situations and has aroused ever increasing hostility from Islamic Arabs and also from many Europeans, as well as from a large number of American citizens. Today the great problem of the reelected President Bush II is to emerge from the painful isolation that he has gotten himself into.

American politics is becoming increasingly aware of the need to change direction. It cannot continue pursuing its own interests without consulting with anyone and relying crudely and brutally only on the military and economic power in its hands.

American public opinion also needs to grow up, in the sense of supporting a more enlightened political policy, in line with the best American traditions.

3. In this sense European public opinion can exert a positive influence. It can also do so indirectly, by acting on world public opinion, contributing to the formation of an ethical outlook that can be universally shared.

The European Union itself can bring to bear a substantial influence on American politics to the extent that it can express itself with a single spirit and with one voice.

While giving up the idea of assuming a role as a superpower, Europe could choose to take on the role of civil power. This involves functions in which it has already shown itself capable of doing well, granting financial aid, assuming control and civil management of crises, assisting populations in every way possible, restoring peace, acting on a humanitarian plane, advocating respect for human rights, providing administrative and juridical assistance to restore or establish a legal system, monitoring elections and seeing that they are fair, performing police functions, even exerting pressure at the diplomatic level and imposing economic sanctions where needed. These tasks have been performed effectively and even defined and officially regulated. These are functions that Europe could perform better if it were provided with the means, including military ones, to enable it to act more quickly, more effectively in crisis areas where peace literally has to be imposed.

By playing this role of civil power to the fullest extent, Europe would ultimately gain the support of an ever-increasing number of peoples, establishing the most varied range of associative relations with them or at the very least friendship and cooperation. By so doing it could become not only the most important reference point but a center, so to speak, of collection and radiation.

From a Europe that has become in this sense a center of radiation and a force for aggregation, the European Dream could involve the whole world. But this could not happen if it were not able to create a new legend or ideal history of the mission of man on this earth. Here all mankind could together give human evolution the sense of a common journey, even through the largest variety of individual paths.

Now no ideology could really survive and flourish without having a religious basis. But it is precisely this religious dimension properly speaking that is missing in Europeans. The development of a scientific and technological civilization imprinted with rationalism, positivism and materialism has left them more disenchanted and sometimes even cynical. It is a situation that cannot fail to have a severely negative aspect.

Will the Europeans manage to overcome and forget the skepticism, indifference and coldness of the younger generations, selfishness and national rivalries, mistrust and envy and constant litigiousness, crossed vetoes, resurgence of chauvinism and last-ditch defense of sovereignty, adhesion followed by withdrawal, quid pro quo agreements, communist and socialist opposition, the endless reserves and delays to which they have tied the numerous associative steps the continent has taken, ranging from the coal and steel community to the one of common defense and then to the one of the whole economy (including agriculture) up through the European community as a whole and the European Union; from the monetary serpent to a unified currency and a central bank, from the Treaties of Rome to the Constitutional Treaty? From the Europe of the Six to that of the Nine, then Ten, Twelve, Fifteen, and Twenty-five?

Will the Europeans be able to have the faith in their budding Dream that the Americans have always had in their own? Will they be ready to make any sacrifice, even of their life, to defend it? Will their sense of personal responsibility be as strong in them as in the Americans?

From an ideal point of view, the European Union was born with what we could call a sort of birth defect: it was brought into existence out of a need that the various governments had to cooperate on the economic front.

It is true that, subsequently, the cooperation extended into political and social and cultural areas and from there to health, research, protection of the environment, consumer protection, education, human development. Nevertheless, the institution was conceived as “Europe of the Merchants”. It was envisioned primarily as the instrument for great monopoly capital.

Although it gave itself the structure of a *polis*, although it introduced the term “European citizenship” (Maastricht 1992) and defined the basic rights of citizens (Nice 2000), we can nevertheless assert that these citizens have suffered the initiatives taken by their respective governments more than they have supported them actively. Does there really exist something that can be defined as a “European people”, or is that not still an evanescent reality? In the absence of a European people, everything remains unavoidably in the hands of the governments of the nations.

There is a Europe of governments, but not yet a Europe of citizens as such. And it is clear that citizens cannot have the enthusiasm and faith that are by their nature tied to effective participation.

It may be pointed out that such participation develops only by degrees and with great effort. In the old arrangement that precedes the signing of the Constitution the president of the Commission is chosen by the Council of the heads of state and of the government and is then approved by Parliament. In a second stage the president adopts the list of the commissioners as they were chosen by the council on the proposals presented by each member state. Lastly, the Commission so completed is presented to Parliament for its approval. Here, in essence, the commissioners are designated by their respective national governments.

And this is where the changes are made to the Constitution. The Council of heads of state and government selects the president of the Commission and proposes him to the Parliament, which nominates him. The president selects the commissioners, but in

the narrow range of a shortlist of three candidates which each government proposes. Finally the Commission is submitted to a vote of approval by the European Parliament.

It may be said that even after the Constitution in force the president will be able to select his own commissioners and delegate powers to them and direct their activities, but the commissioners themselves will continue to be designated, even if in groups of three, by the governments of their respective nations. It is a small step forward, even if it is not thrilling, in the direction of Europeanization, but we must content ourselves with modest progress.

The European Parliament does get elected via universal suffrage, but it is not granted the power to legislate fully and on its own. It is called upon to decide together with the Council of the Union, which is composed at the highest level by the heads of state and government and at a lower level by their ministers whose portfolios relate to the subject under consideration. And these co-decisions are taken in still limited areas, although their range is gradually expanding.

It is clear that the European Union will become more self-consistent to the extent that the Parliament assumes its own autonomous consistency and the Commission is established by Parliament itself empowered with full autonomy from the national powers. The supranational character of the Union will come to the fore to the extent that not only Parliament but also the Commission will succeed in resisting the Council, which will tend to exercise a braking effect by its very nature, as it will always express the interests of the nations, the particular interests of each one.

But the basic issue still is that the “European people” begin to exist as such and show signs of life. If so many events including even details of ordinary life can have some symbolic value, it may be enough to recall how the ceremony of the signing of the Constitutional Treaty was signed in the Campidoglio in October 2004. Security concerns that were more than justified impelled the authorities to seal off the event and prohibit any public gathering; but how disappointing it was to note the complete absence of the public from the epochal event that took place after all in its name!

The constitutional Treaty has retained the original character of the member states within the European Union far more than it has conferred upon it the spirit of a true community. Beyond what we have already stated, the only changes worth mentioning which give a bit more consistency to the Union as such are that the president of the European Council is elected for two and a half years with the option of being reelected only for a second term; and a European foreign minister who is a member of both the Commission and the Council.

To avoid displeasing those who do not share this idealized vision, the constituents excluded from the preamble any explicit reference to Greek philosophy and culture, to Roman law, to Judeo-Christian spirituality, and even to the Enlightenment rationality as matrices of European civilization. Yet it is precisely a reference to these basic values that clearly demonstrates where the principles of liberty, democracy, secularism, tolerance, and protection of human rights arose from and how they developed. Consequently, the formulation of these principles appeared dry and colorless and drained of the vigor that powerful ideas must have to become compelling.

The European Union cannot be reduced to a mere object in the terms of a contract. It has to have its own spirituality. Europe needs to draw life and strength from a religiously based ideal. The faith of Americans, their religious orientation as a guiding spirit behind their living and working together may well serve as a lesson and an example for the Europeans.

Let us even concede that Americans are more “religious” than Europeans. Nevertheless a certain selfishness of theirs, a certain indifference they have shown for the problems and sufferings of other nations, as well as for their own poor and needy,

are a great deal less “Christian” than the attitudes of the Europeans, who, though they appear to be less “religious”, are much more responsive to the situations and needs of other peoples as well as generally to the condition of the planet Earth.

Americans are naïvely optimistic and certainly need to adjust a certain degree of unpreparedness on their part and adopt a bit of the circumspection, moderation, and shrewdness and balance of the Europeans.

The Europeans in their turn could need a good dose of injections of optimism, enthusiasm, hope and faith. And they should also learn from Americans to do a better job of assuming their individual responsibilities. The Americans in turn should learn to assume their collective responsibilities with regard to all of humanity and the Planet Earth. The American Dream and the European Dream are destined to merge, to give birth together to a shared Dream which will involve all human beings.

Returning to the religion of the Americans, which owes so much to the Calvinist background imported by the Pilgrim Fathers and by others who were persecuted in their quest for freedom, we may recognize a very serious defect in it: a pervasive tendency toward fundamentalism.

I am really unable to find words to comment on a statistic that Jeremy Rifkin cited on the basis of a Gallup poll: that 45% of Americans believe that God created man more or less in the present form about ten thousand years ago. 25% believe that creationism (a doctrine that rejects evolution) should be taught in public schools as a required course, and another 58% believe that it should at least be complementary subject.

Fundamentalism hardens the hearts of believers against a more dispassionate consideration of other religions and of the values of truth of which they also are carriers.

Fundamentalism is the main enemy of ecumenicism. This is made possible only by the belief that grains of Truth can be found in every religion.

Fundamentalism declares that the sacred texts must be taken literally, not realizing that they are shaped through religious experience: through an internal experience that no one can justly refuse to acknowledge in anyone who happens to be an outsider to the church or sect to which he belongs.

An experience of this sort will thus come to represent a common fount over which men and women will be able to meet freely.

Only a strong ecumenical spirit can serve as the basis for an ideology shared by all mankind. And only such an ideology can confer strength to their common commitment to bring to pass by common effort a united and better world.

**18. We have to have faith in our capacity
of jointly reaching the final goal;
and in the meantime the problem is
to promote consciousness and a firm will in ourselves
by cultivating the universal values
that alone can inspire
a strong commitment to world unity**

If we are truly anxious to create common ethico-cultural premises, we have to accept the fact that for the moment these simply do not exist. And I should like to add that, given the present situation, this is still a good thing. It would be very sad if we had to admit that all peoples had become homogenized in the culture – or subculture – of a clearly American stamp that today dominates our technological and consumerist civilization.

This culture is functional for economic expansion. Its expressions are strongly validated by publicity, especially television publicity.

Industrial production needs a large demand created by consumers who will let themselves be meekly guided by the “purchasing advice” given them by publicity and will buy everything that production offers them.

The consumer idealized by publicity and proposed as an exemplary figure of respectability has to be identified with a man who, no longer distracted by moral and civic commitments, is only bent on satisfying all his desires: desires that publicity arouses within him in accordance with prepacked models.

The ideal consumer is a being who is continuously indoctrinated, almost hypnotized, dependent, a kind of consumption machine that uses and throws away and then immediately turns its attention to other consumption objects.

Publicity forms serf-like subjects, maintains people at the lowest level, ready to follow its directives and to accept everything it offers to him, without any capacity of personal re-elaboration or even of imagining and dreaming in a non-commanded manner. Without autonomous discernment. And possibly without taste, so that he will not experience difficulty in chasing after the plasticized junk put on sale after it has been packaged with the greatest possible cost limitation.

Publicity educates its television-dependent mass-men by feeding them bread that is no longer the bread of science, of culture even at the level of the popular traditions, of art, spirituality, good music, genuine humour, and so on, but rather of publicity’s own daily insipidities. Earlier on we talked about the various forms of pollution, air, water, soil, food, thermal and acoustic pollution and so on, but another has to be added to the list, a pollution that is even graver, because it contaminates, intoxicates and corrupts the very spirit of man.

The advent of satellite television will enable three quarters of humanity to gain access to the Westerns, the interminable soap operas, the teleserials about the New York or Los Angeles Police, the prison stories about detainees being vexed by sadistic wardens, the blood-curling sagas of Mafia families, access to an America in pills where shot and punches, and today also the members thereby reduced to pulp, the continuous obscene language, the bed scenes, the orgies of vulgarity, are only rarely interrupted by some bell-ringing at Christmas to enable the audience to consume also a moderate amount of religion.

Jerry Mander reminds us that the Canadian government had wholly forgotten an Eskimo population in the North-West Territories and had let them live in peace until oil was discovered in that area. Labour was needed and thus there arose the problem of transforming these Eskimos into good civilized Canadians. This population of twenty-thousand natives speaking as many as twenty-two different languages was offered the possibility of using television free of charge.

The young generation therefore preferred to follow the little screen rather than listening to their fathers and grandfathers: old people who are devalued and rendered ridiculous by the new mentality, which excessively exalts the young. The schoolboys wanted to learn English, completely neglecting their mother tongue. They no longer wanted to learn hunting and fishing. Local traditions and culture were literally crushed by the steam roller of the new civilization that has television as its principal vehicle. When an archaic people opens itself to modernity, this should never lead to such a traumatic uprooting.

The same author points out that the average viewer in the United States sees some twenty-two thousand publicity spots a year. And then adds that 75 percent of television publicity is paid for by the hundred largest multinational companies. It is they

who decide what Americans have to see in television, what type of spiritual food they are to have as their daily bread.

Mander goes on to note that pop music has today become the sound track of the planet. This music is the monopoly of six businesses hard at work to disseminate it also in Asia and Latin America. One can readily imagine that this dissemination will cause the decline of the traditional music of many countries and, at one and the same time, a terrible destruction of their ethos, their culture and the artistic values associated with it.

This example is typical of an infinity of other situations in the world. In the limit, the cultural homogenization promoted by television tends to cancel the sense of identity of the various peoples whom we call indigenous.

As far as the individual is concerned, arrival at the new “civilization” and assimilation of the new “culture” tend to blunt, together with the religious sense, also the sense of the relations that tie him to the other members of the community, and therefore the sense of his duties. Once solidarity has died, what remains in this estrangement and alienation is economic egoism: the desire to make money in order to buy the goods that are the symbol of attained wellbeing, in short, consumerism.

The consumerist is an individualist who sees nothing beyond his own little family, which he loves for as long as new desires of love do not induce him to break it up. He is a superficial man, endowed with the intelligence of an industrious termite, but only barely accustomed to reflect about the essential things, lacking true spirituality. Bent solely on making money to buy costly toys to vaunt under the eyes of his neighbour, he is the perfect antithesis of the man committed either on the spiritual-religious or the civic and political level. His religiousness consists of a desire for religion that has to be immediately satisfied just like his other desires: not least in order to block any tendency it may contain to become transformed into will and authentic search.

One can well understand why Muslims, those particularly devoted to the traditions, are often tempted to abandon themselves to fundamentalism. It is an attitude of extreme defence of one’s own spiritual values menaced by the consumerism that, in its own particular way, undoubtedly conjures up an earthly paradise that is anything but devoid of seduction.

How can we conciliate our consumerism with the attitude of refusal, of which many manifestations and their sometimes even tragic outcomes may be contested, but which in substance seems to be more than understandable? In actual fact, even though consumerism may prove to be functional for GDP growth, does it not constitute something terribly negative also for us Westerners?

How can we recuperate the sense of the community and the polis, the sense of democracy and all its connected values, the sense of being active citizens committed to promoting the common good, how can we recuperate all this if not in an authentically spiritual and therefore also decidedly anti-consumerist vision?

It is to be hoped that any further industrial development, now that it is imbued and moulded by the Web, will not prolong and aggravate as an ineluctable necessity the present almost hypnotic subjugation of the masses inflicted by production, which would wish to see them confined once and for all in their Boeotia, the blithe obtuseness of consumerism.

Some hope is offered us by Kenichi Ohmae. According to him, the televiewer listens to and passively suffers the publicity that reaches him via his little screen. A person working with a computer, on the other hand, dialogues with the firms and proposes to them the things he desires. It is in this condition that the redemption of the consumer can be implemented.

As Ohmae explains, the new firms who today work with the Web find it convenient to meet the requests of the consumer in a more personalized manner. It is

therefore the consumer who is about to dominate production. It is he who accords or denies his trust and confidence to a given firm on the basis of his past experience with them. It is he who chooses from among many different offers and rewards the firm that seems most advantageous to him. He will thus avail himself of the firm that, more than the others, corresponds to his preferences and can satisfy him individually with an *ad hoc* service.

Enterprises are competing with each other in trying to be capable of serving each customer in his individuality. Here, therefore, we have consumption exercised in an active manner and for good reason, the whole rendered possible by customers who not only dispose of the means, but also have the necessary education.

Ohmae foresees that wherever these conditions exist, the economy will rest on a solid foundation. On-line trading is intrinsically intelligent, concludes the Japanese economist, and also renders the economy intrinsically intelligent.

No matter what may be the future of a consumer who at present is still enmeshed in the practice and mentality of consumerism, the problem that arises is how he can be recuperated. The capacity of choosing and ensuring that the choice will truly be intelligent and valid is not of itself sufficient. It is essential that the consumer should mature and therefore aim at something more than a mere search for egoistic satisfactions. He also has to develop spiritually.

Dialoguing with the peoples who have not yet been fully integrated in the advanced industrial civilization and the dominant consumerist mentality means being open to the possible recovery of spiritual values that are being suffocated by our present way of living.

For all of us, it is therefore a question of turning once again to a spirituality that duly valorizes the human personality and urges us to promote it at all levels. An authentic and participated democracy, with the liberties and the solidarity and the justice that constitute its corollary, can flourish only in the climate of a spirituality conceived and lived in these terms.

We, all of us, have to tend towards this interior reform, and we have to help each other. From the most traditionalist we can learn to rediscover the values of spirituality and the community (which we, in truth, have sadly obliterated), while we can initiate them to the Western values (in truth, likewise in considerable danger) of freedom, democracy, social justice, humanism, active participation, volunteerism, and the primacy of politics over the economy.

A true worldwide commitment can spring only from such an opening and integration. I said earlier that it was essential that certain indispensable premises of an ethical, social and cultural nature should already exist or, at least, be capable of taking shape. It is these that will trigger the process of world unification.

There is one among them that must not be forgotten, for it is of particular importance. We can give it many names that express different aspects of one and the same impulse: the interest, the desire, the aspiration, the will to implement all this.

As I have stressed with a certain insistence, the world federal state could derive from an appropriate evolution of the United Nations, a gradual consolidation of this institution. But who would be most interested in setting this process in motion? The first to benefit from it would surely be the smallest countries, on account of the greater security that would accrue to them, and also the least developed countries, in this case on account of the disinterested aid they would receive from a supranational government that acted above all particularist interests and sought only to promote greater economic equilibrium and greater distributive justice.

The countries of the Third World constitute by far the most numerous group: a group that is showing ever greater repugnance to take the part of individual great

powers or to place themselves unconditionally under their guidance, as also an ever clearer consciousness of their common condition and their common interest.

Cooperating to the point of constituting a solidary force, the countries of the Third World could ask that the United Nations should be strengthened. Within the General Assembly, where each state has one vote, there is taking shape a new majority of states that all seek both greater security and economic development. These are, in particular, the Third World nations.

It is probable that a movement in favour of the world state will come into being within ambit of the Third World countries or, in any case, the weakest countries. And this, in turn, could be sustained by strong movements of public opinion that would form within the more powerful countries, even in the United States. These movements have already conditioned government action in a less “nationalist” sense. They enjoy the solid support of a conspicuous part of public opinion, especially the young generations, to an extent equal to and perhaps even slightly greater than in Europe.

Held and McGrew look forward to a great coalition of political groups. Which would be its principal components? Europeans of strongly liberal and social democratic traditions. And then American liberals who support the rights and just initiatives of all. Men and women of the developing countries who want the international economy to be regulated in a more equitable manner. Non-governmental organizations like Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Doctors without Borders, and innumerable others.

It is not to be excluded that subsequently the more sensible part of American public opinion could induce the government to seek greater integration in the United Nations and gradually to forego aspect of national sovereignty.

The problem may be more difficult where there exist dictatorial regimes and citizens have lesser possibility of exerting active pressure on governments.

Excluding the cases in which a people became unified as a result of conquest, history undoubtedly shows that the various states formed from a single nation decide to merge and bring to life a unitary or federal state only when they are induced to do so by strong pressure of a public opinion that has matured a national consciousness: the consciousness that all belong to one and the same people.

A similar phenomenon could occur at the world level when the irresistible force of a public opinion profoundly aware that we men are united by a bond that is far more important than any national ties will make itself felt in all countries.

Contributing to the formation of such a public opinion is therefore a task that is entrusted to each one of us. It is a question of all of us coming out of the shell of egoism in which individuals and entire families enclose themselves, concerned only with thinking about themselves and flaunting costly toys as symbols of a higher status, with consumerism as their accomplice.

It is only by means of a profound interior transformation that each one of us can come to feel the problems of others, of the community, of the entire world as if they were his own.

The sloth of Dantesque memory, Guicciardinian particularism, abstentionism, phrases like “I have a family”, “Why should I do it?”, “All I want to do is to get by”, “The world has always been like that”, “Why should I take the responsibility?”, “I only mind my own business” will have to give way to that very different and diametrically opposed spirit that finds its expressive formula in Kennedy’s “I care”: I am deeply concerned, I personally want to take care of it, I want to play a diligent part, I want to shoulder my responsibilities, I am committed to the very end.

To be concerned with something that goes beyond the suffocating shell of the private implies a participation in social and public life, be it even as simple but willing citizens. All volunteerism springs from a profoundly spiritual inspiration.

And thus there takes shape a public opinion that is not only illumined and sensible, but also firm in its intentions and appropriately tough in defending human rights against all attacks and the public good against every danger that particularist interests may somewhere prevail.

As far as the unification of the world is concerned, there is a profound and very clear conviction that this public opinion will have to acquire: the national autonomies have to be respected, the local autonomies promoted; nevertheless, with each individual and group and community operating in its peculiar ambit, it is essential that, acting all together, we should bring to life the universal society and also the world federal state that is its political expression.

What will find its political expression in the worldwide federal state is the society to which we belong as men. And therefor the first thing to do is that each one of us should promote a humanist consciousness within himself.

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