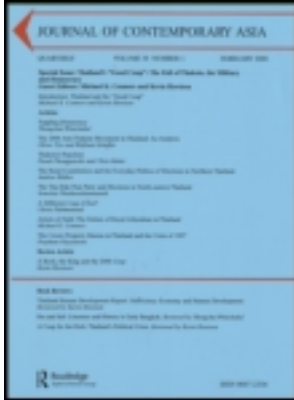


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### NGOs: In the service of imperialism

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## NGOs: In the Service of Imperialism

James Petras\*

Throughout history ruling classes, representing small minorities, have always depended on the coercive state apparatus and social institutions to defend their power, profits and privileges. In the past, particularly in the Third World, imperial ruling classes financed and supported overseas and domestic religious institutions to control exploited people and deflect their discontent into religious and communal rivalries and conflicts.

While these practices continue today, in more recent decades a new social institution emerged that provides the same function of control and ideological mystification - the self-described non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Today there are at least 50,000 NGOs in the Third World receiving over \$10 billion in funding from international financial institutions, Euro-US-Japanese governmental agencies and local governments. The managers of the biggest NGOs manage million dollar budgets with salaries and perks that are comparable to CEOs. They jet to international conferences, confer with top corporate and financial directors and make policy decisions that affect - in the great majority of cases adversely - millions of people ... especially the poor, women and informal sector working people.

The NGOs are significant world-wide political and social actors operating in rural and urban sites of Asia, Latin America and Africa and frequently linked in dependent roles with their principle donors in Europe, the US and Japan. It is symptomatic of the pervasiveness of the NGOs and their economic and political power over the so-called "progressive world" that there have been few systematic Left critiques of the negative impact of NGOs. In a large part this failure is due to the success of the NGOs is displacing and destroying the organized Leftist movements and co-opting their intellectual strategists and organizational leaders.

Today most left movement and popular spokespersons focus their criticism on the IMF, World Bank, multi-national corporations, private banks, etc. who fix the macro-economic agenda for the pillage of the Third World. This is an important task. However, the assault on the industrial base, independence and living standards of the Third World takes place on both the macro-economic and the micro-socio-political

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level. The egregious effects of structural adjustment policies on wages and salaried workers, peasants and small national businesspeople generates potential national-popular discontent. And that is where the NGOs come into the picture to mystify and deflect that discontent away from direct attacks on the corporate/banking power structure and profits toward local micro-projects and apolitical "grass roots" self-exploitation and "popular education" that avoids class analysis of imperialism and capitalist exploitation.

The NGOs world-wide have become the latest vehicle for upward mobility for the ambitious educated classes: academics, journalists, and professionals have abandoned earlier excursions in the poorly rewarded leftists movements for a lucrative career managing an NGO, bringing with them their organizational and rhetorical skills as well as a certain populist vocabulary. Today, there are thousands of NGO directors who drive \$40,000 four wheel drive sports vehicles from their fashionable suburban home or apartment to their well-furnished office or building complex, leaving the children and domestic chores in the hands of servants, their yards tended by gardeners. They are more familiar and spend more time at the overseas sites of their international conferences on poverty (Washington, Bangkok, Tokyo, Brussels, Rome, etc.) than at the muddy villages of their own country. They are more adept at writing up new proposals to bring in hard currency for "deserving professionals" than risking a rap on the head from the police attacking a demonstration of underpaid rural school teachers. The NGO leaders are a new class not based on property ownership or government resources but derived from imperial funding and their capacity to control significant popular groups. The NGO leaders can be conceived of as a kind of neo-compradore group that doesn't produce any useful commodity but does function to produce services for the donor countries - mainly trading in domestic poverty for individual perks.

The formal claims used by NGO directors to justify their position - that they fight poverty, inequality, etc. are self-serving and specious. There is a direct relation between the growth of NGOs and the decline of living standards: the proliferation of NGOs has not reduced structural unemployment, massive displacements of peasants, nor provided liveable wage levels for the growing army of informal workers. What NGOs have done, is provided a thin stratum of professionals with income in hard currency to escape the ravages of the neo-liberal economy that affects their country, people and to climb in the existing social class structure.

This reality contrasts with the self-image that NGO functionaries have of themselves. According to their press releases and public discourses, they represent a Third Way between "authoritarian statism" and "savage market capitalism": they describe themselves as the vanguard of "civil society" operating in the interstices of the "global economy." The common purpose that most resounds at NGO conferences is "alternative development."

The phrase-mongering about “civil society” is an exercise in vacuity. “Civil society” is not a unitary virtuous entity - it is made of classes probably more profoundly divided as ever in this century. Most of the greatest injustices against workers are committed by the wealthy bankers in civil society who squeeze out exorbitant interest payments on internal debt; landlords who throw peasants off the land and industrial capitalists who exhaust workers at starvation wages in sweatshops. By talking about “civil society” NGOers obscure the profound class divisions, class exploitation and class struggle that polarizes contemporary “civil society.” While analytically useless and obfuscating, the concept, “civil society” facilitates NGO collaboration with capitalist interests that finance their institutes and allows them to orient their projects and followers into subordinate relations with the big business interests that direct the neo-liberal economies. In addition, not infrequently the NGOers’ civil society rhetoric is a ploy to attack comprehensive public programs and state institutions delivering social services. The NGOers side with big business’ “anti-statist” rhetoric (one in the name of “civil society” the other in the name of the “market”) to reallocate state resources. The capitalists’ “anti-Statism” is used to increase public funds to subsidize exports and financial bailouts, the NGOers try to grab a junior share via “subcontracts” to deliver inferior services to fewer recipients.

Contrary to the NGOers’ self-image who see themselves as innovative grass roots leaders, they are in reality the grass root reactionaries who complement the work of the IMF by pushing privatization “from below” and demobilizing popular movements, thus undermining resistance.

The ubiquitous NGOs thus present the Left with a serious challenge that requires a critical political analysis of their origins, structure and ideology.

### *Origin Structure and Ideology of the NGOs*

NGOs appear to have a contradictory role in politics. On the one hand they criticize dictatorships and human rights violations. On the other hand they compete with radical socio-political movements, attempting to channel popular movements into collaborative relations with dominant neo-liberal elites. In reality, these political orientations are not so contradictory as they appear.

Surveying the growth and proliferation of NGOs over the past quarter of a century we find that NGOs emerged in three sets of circumstances. First of all, as a safe haven for dissident intellectuals during dictatorships where they could pursue the issue of human rights violations and organize “survival strategies” for victims of harsh austerity programs. These humanitarian NGOs however, were careful not to denounce the role of US and European complicity with the local perpetrators of human rights violations nor did they questions the emerging “free market” policies that impoverished the masses. Thus the NGOers were strategically placed as “demo-

crats” who would be available as political replacements for local ruling classes and imperial policy makers when repressive rulers began to be seriously challenged by popular mass movements. Western funding of the NGOs as critics was a kind of buying insurance in case the incumbent reactionaries faltered. This was the case with the “critical” NGOs that appeared during the Marcos regime in the Philippines, the Pinochet regime in Chile, the Park dictatorship in Korea, etc.

The real boost in NGO mushrooming however, occurs in time of rising mass movements that challenge imperial hegemony. The growth of radical socio-political movements and struggles provided a lucrative commodity which ex-radical and pseudo popular intellectuals could sell to interested, concerned and well-financed private and public foundations closely tied with European and US multi-nationals and governments. The funders were interested in information - social science intelligence - like the “propensity for violence in urban slum areas” (an NGO project in Chile during the mass uprisings of 1983-86), the capacity of NGOers to raid popular communities and direct energy toward self-help projects instead of social transformations and the introduction of a class collaborationist rhetoric packaged as “new identity discourses” that would discredit and isolate revolutionary activists.

Popular revolts loosened the purse strings of overseas agencies and millions poured into Indonesia, Thailand and Peru in the seventies; Nicaragua, Chile, Philippines in the 80s; El Salvador, Guatemala, Korea in the 90s. The NGOers were essentially there to “put out the fires.” Under the guise of constructive projects they argued against engaging in ideological movements thus effectively using foreign funds to recruit local leaders, send them to overseas conferences to give testimonials, while effectively encouraging local groups to adapt to the reality of neo-liberalism.

As outside money became available, NGOs proliferated, dividing communities into warring fiefdoms fighting to get a piece of the action. Each “grass roots activist” cornered a new segment of the poor (women, young people from minorities, etc.) to set up a new NGO and take the pilgrimage to Amsterdam, Stockholm, etc. to “market” their project, activity, constituency and finance their center - and their careers.

The third circumstance in which NGOs multiplied was during the frequent and deepening economic crises provoked by free market capitalism. Intellectuals, academics and professionals saw jobs disappear or salaries decline as budget cuts took hold: a second job became in necessity. NGOs became a job placement agency and consultantships became a safety net for potentially downwardly mobile intellectuals willing to spout the civil society-free market-alternative development line and carry on the collaborative policies with neo-liberal regimes and international financial institutions. When millions are losing their jobs and poverty spreads to important swaths of the population NGOs engage in preventative action: they focus on “survival strategies” not general strikes; they organize soup kitchens not mass demonstrations against food hoarders, neo-liberal regimes or US imperialism.

While NGOs may have initially had a vaguely “progressive” tincture during so-called “democratic transitions” when the old order was crumbling, and corrupt rulers were losing control and popular struggles were advancing. The NGOs become the vehicle for transactions between old regimes and conservative electoral politicians. The NGOs used their grass roots rhetoric, organizational resources and their status as “democratic” human rights advocates to channel popular support behind politicians and parties which confined the transition to legal-political reforms not socio-economic changes. NGOs demobilized the populace and fragmented the movements. In every country that experienced an “electoral transaction,” in the 1980s and 90s, from Chile to the Philippines to South Korea and beyond, the NGOs have played an important role in rounding up votes for regimes which continued or even deepened the socio-economic status quo. In exchange, many ex-NGOers ended up running government agencies or even becoming Ministers with popular sounding titles (women rights, citizen participation, popular power, etc.).

The reactionary political role of NGOs was built into the very structures upon which they were (and are) organized.

*NGO Structure: Internally Elitist, Externally Servile*

In reality NGOs are not “non-governmental” organizations. They receive funds from overseas governments, work as private sub-contractors of local governments and/or are subsidized by corporate funded private foundations with close working relations with the state. Frequently they openly collaborate with governmental agencies at home or overseas. Their programs are not accountable to local people but to overseas donors who “review” and “oversee” the performance of the NGOs according to their criteria and interests. The NGO officials are self-appointed and one of their key tasks is designing proposals that will secure funding. In many cases this requires that NGO leaders find out the issues that most interest the Western funding elites, and shaping proposals accordingly. Thus in the 1980s NGO funds were available to study and provide political proposals on “governability” and “democratic transitions” reflecting the concerns of the imperialist powers that the fall of dictatorships would not lead to “ungovernability” - namely mass movements deepening the struggle and transforming the social system. The NGOs, despite their democratic, grassroots rhetoric are hierarchical - with the director in total control of projects, hiring and firing, as well as deciding who gets their way paid to international conferences. The “grassroots” are essentially the objects of this hierarch; rarely do they see the money that “their” NGO shovels in; nor do they get to travel abroad; nor do they draw the salaries or perks of their “grassroots” leaders. More important none of these decisions are ever voted on. At best after the deals have been cooked by the Director and the overseas funders, the NGO staff will call a meeting of “grassroots activists” of the poor to

approve the project. In most cases the NGOs are not even membership organizations but a self-appointed elite which, under the pretense of being “resource people” for popular movements, in fact, competes with and undermines them. In this sense NGOs undermine democracy by taking social programs and public debate out of the hands of the local people and their elected natural leaders and creating dependence on non-elected, overseas officials and their anointed local officials.

NGOs foster a new type of cultural and economic colonialism - under the guise of a new internationalism. Hundreds of individuals sit in front of high powered PCs exchanging manifestos, proposals and invitations to international conferences with each other. They then meet in well furnished conference halls to discuss the latest struggles and offerings with their “social base” - the paid staff - who then pass on the proposals to the “masses” through flyers and “bulletins.” When overseas funders show up, they are taken on “exposure tours” to showcase projects where the poor are helping themselves and to talk with successful micro-entrepreneurs (omitting the majority who fail the first year).

The way this new colonialism works is not difficult to decipher. Projects are designed based on guidelines and priorities of the imperial centers and their institutions. They are then “sold” to the communities. Evaluations are done by and for the imperial institutions. Shifts of funding priorities or bad evaluations result in the dumping of groups, communities, farmers and cooperatives. Everybody is increasingly disciplined to comply with the donor’s demands and their project evaluators. The NGO directors, as the new viceroys, supervise and ensure conformity with the goals, values and ideology of the donors as well as the proper use of funds.

### *Ideology of NGOs Versus Radical Socio-political Movements*

NGOs emphasize projects not movements; they “mobilize” people to produce at the margins not to struggle to control the basic means of production and wealth; they focus on the technical financial assistance aspects of projects not on structural conditions that shape the everyday lives of people. The NGOs co-opt the language of the Left: “popular power,” “empowerment,” “gender equality,” “sustainable development,” “bottom up leadership,” etc. The problem is that this language is linked to a framework of collaboration with donors and government agencies that subordinate activity to non-confrontational politics. The local nature of NGO activity means “empowerment” never goes beyond influencing small areas of social life with limited resources within the conditions permitted by the neo-liberal state and macro-economy.

The NGOs and their professional staff directly compete with the socio-political movements for influence among the poor, women, racially excluded, etc. Their ideology and practice diverts attention from the sources and solutions of poverty (looking downward and inward instead of upward and outward). To speak of micro-



enterprises instead of the exploitation by the overseas banks, as solutions to poverty is based on the false notion that the problem is one of individual initiative rather than the transference of income overseas. The NGOs "aid" affects small sectors of the population, setting up competition between communities for scarce resources and generating insidious distinction and inter and intra community rivalries thus undermining class solidarity. The same is true among the professionals: each sets up their NGO to solicit overseas funds. They compete by presenting proposals closer to the liking of the overseas donors for lower prices, while claiming to speak for more followers. The net effect is a proliferation of NGOs that fragment poor communities into sectoral and sub-sectoral groupings unable to see the larger social picture that afflicts them and even less able to unite in struggle against the system.

Recent experience also demonstrates that foreign donors finance projects during "crises" - political and social challenges to the status quo. Once the movements have ebbed, they shift funding to NGO - regime "collaboration," fitting the NGO projects into the neo-liberal agenda. Economic development compatible with the "free market" rather than social organization for social change becomes the dominant item on the funding agenda.

The structure and nature of NGOs with their "apolitical" posture and their focus on self-help depoliticizes and demobilizes the poor. They reinforce the electoral processes encouraged by the neo-liberal parties and mass media. Political education about the nature of imperialism, the class basis of neo-liberalism, the class struggle between exporters and temporary workers are avoided. Instead the NGOs discuss "the excluded," the "powerless," "extreme poverty," "gender or racial discrimination," without moving beyond the superficial symptom, to engage the social system that produces these conditions. Incorporating the poor into the neo-liberal economy through purely "private voluntary action" the NGOs create a political world where the appearance of solidarity and social action cloaks a conservative conformity with the international and national structure of power.

It is no coincidence that as NGOs have become dominant in certain regions, independent class political action has declined, and neo-liberalism goes uncontested. The bottom line is that the growth of NGOs coincides with increased funding from neo-liberalism and the deepening of poverty everywhere. Despite its claims of many local successes, the overall power of neo-liberalism stands unchallenged and the NGOs increasingly search for niches in the interstices of power.

The problem of formulating alternatives has been hindered in another way. Many of the former leaders of guerrilla and social movements, trade union and popular women's organizations have been co-opted by the NGOs. The offer is tempting: higher pay (occasionally in hard currency), prestige and recognition by overseas donors, overseas conferences and networks, office staff and relative security from repression. In contrast, the socio-political movements offer few material benefits but

greater respect and independence and more importantly the freedom to challenge the political and economic system. The NGOs and their overseas banking supporters (Inter-American Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank) publish newsletters featuring success stories of micro-enterprises and other self-help projects - without mentioning the high rates of failure as popular consumption declines, low price imports flood the market and as interest rates spiral - as is the case in Brazil and Indonesia today.

Even the "successes" affect only a small fraction of the total poor and succeed only to the degree that others cannot enter into the same market. The propaganda value of individual micro-enterprise success, however is important in fostering the illusion that neo-liberalism is a popular phenomenon. The frequent violent mass outbursts that take place in regions of micro-enterprise promotion suggests that the ideology is not hegemonic and the NGOs have not yet displaced independent class movements.

NGO ideology depends heavily on essentialist identity politics, engaging in a rather dishonest polemic with radical movements based on class analysis. They start from the false assumption that class analysis is "reductionist" overlooking the extensive debates and discussions within Marxism on issues of race, ethnicity and gender equality and avoiding the more serious criticism that identities themselves are clearly and profoundly divided by class differences. Take for example, the Chilean or Indian feminist living in a plush suburb drawing a salary 15-20 times that of her domestic servant who works 6 1/2 days a week. Class differences within gender determine housing, living standards, health, educational opportunities and who appropriates who's surplus value. Yet the great majority of NGOs operate on the basis of identity politics and argue that this is the basic point of departure for the new (post-modern politics). Identity politics does not challenge the male dominated elite world of IMF privatizations, multi-national corporations and local landlords. Rather, it focuses on "patriarchy" in the household, family violence, divorce, family planning, etc. In other words, it fights for gender equality within the micro-world of exploited peoples in which the exploited and impoverished male worker/peasant emerges as the main villain. While no one should support gender exploitation or discrimination at any level, the feminist NGOs do a gross disservice to working women by subordinating them to the greater exploitation of sweatshops which benefit upper class men and women, rent collecting male and female landlords and CEOs of both sexes. The reason the feminist NGOs ignore the "Big Picture" and focus on local issues and personal politics is because billions of dollars flow annually in that direction. If feminist NGOs began to engage in land occupations with men and women landless workers in Brazil or Indonesia or Thailand or the Philippines, if they joined in general strikes of mainly female low-paid rural school teachers against structural adjustment policies, the NGO spigot would get turned off - by their imperial donors.

Better to beat up on the local patriarch scratching out an existence in an isolated village in Luzon.

*Class Solidarity and NGO Solidarity with Foreign Donors*

The word “solidarity” has been abused to the point that in many contexts it has lost meaning. The term “solidarity” for the NGOers includes foreign aid channeled to any designated “impoverished” group. “Research” or “popular education” of the poor by professionals is designated as “solidarity.” In many ways the hierarchical structures and the forms of transmission of “aid” and “training” resemble nineteenth century charity and the promoters are not very different from Christian missionaries.

The NGOers emphasize “self-help” in attacking the “paternalism and dependence” of the state. In this competition among NGOs to capture the victims of neo-liberals, the NGOs receive important subsidies from their counterparts in Europe and the US. The self help ideology emphasizes the replacement of public employees for volunteers and upwardly mobile professionals contracted on a temporary basis. The basic philosophy of the NGO view is to transform “solidarity” into collaboration and subordination to the macro-economy of neo-liberalism by focusing attention away from state resources of the wealthy classes toward self-exploitation of the poor. The poor do not need to be made virtuous by the NGO for what the state obligates them to do.

The Marxist concept of solidarity in contrast emphasizes class solidarity within the class, solidarity of oppressed groups (women and people of color) against their foreign and domestic exploiters. The major focus is not on the donations that divide classes and pacify small groups for a limited time period. The focus of Marxist concept of solidarity is on the common action of the same members of the class sharing their common economic predicament struggling for collective improvement.

It involves intellectuals who write and speak for the social movements in struggle, committed to sharing the same political consequences. The concept of solidarity is linked to “organic” intellectuals who are basically part of the movement - the resource people providing analysis and education for class struggle and taking the same political risks in direct action. In contrast, the NGOers are embedded in the world of institutions, academic seminars, foreign foundations, international conferences speaking a language understood only by those “initiated” into the subjectivist cult of essentialist identities. The Marxists view solidarity as sharing the risks of the movements, not being outside commentators who raise questions and defend nothing. For the NGOers the main object is “getting” the foreign funding for the “project.” The main issue, for the Marxist is the process of political struggle and education in securing social transformation. The movement was everything the objective was important in raising consciousness for societal change: constructing political power

to transform the general condition of the great majority. "Solidarity" for the NGOers is divorced from the general object of liberation; it is merely a way of bringing people together to attend a job retraining seminar, to build a latrine. For the Marxists the solidarity of a collective struggle contains the seeds of the future democratic collectivist society. The larger vision or its absence is what gives the different conceptions of solidarity their distinct meaning.

### *Class Struggle and Co-operation*

The NGOers frequently write of "co-operation" of everyone, near and far, without delving too profoundly on the price and conditions for securing the co-operation of neo-liberal regimes and overseas funding agencies. Class struggle is viewed as an atavism to a past that no longer exists. Today we are told "the poor" are intent on building a new life. They are fed up with traditional politics, ideologies and politicians. So far, so good. The problem is that the NGOers are not so forthcoming in describing their role as mediators and brokers, hustling funds overseas. The concentration of income and the growth of inequalities are greater than ever, after a decade of preaching co-operation and micro-enterprises, and self-help. Today the banks like the World Bank fund the export agro-businesses that exploit and poison millions of farm laborers while providing funds to finance small micro-projects. The role of the NGOs in the micro projects is to neutralize political opposition at the bottom while neo-liberalism is promoted at the top. The ideology of "co-operation" links the poor through the NGOs to neo-liberals at the top.

Intellectually the NGOs are the intellectual policemen who define acceptable research, distribute research funds and filter out topics and perspectives that project class analysis and struggle perspective. Marxists are excluded from the conferences and stigmatized as "ideologues" while NGOs present themselves as "social scientists." The control of intellectual fashion, publications, conferences, research fund provide the post-Marxists with an important power base - but on ultimately dependent on avoiding conflict with their external funding patrons.

Critical Marxist intellectuals have their strength in the fact that their ideas resonate with the evolving social realities. The polarization of classes and the violent confrontations are growing, as their theories would predict. It is from this perspective that the Marxists are tactically weak and strategically strong vis-a-vis the NGOs.

### *Alternative NGOs*

One could argue that there are a great many different type of NGOs and that many do criticize and organize against adjustment policies, the IMF, debt payments, etc. and that its unfair to lump them all in the same bag.

There is a grain of truth in this but this position belies a more fundamental issue. Most peasant leaders from Asia and Latin America that I have spoken to complain bitterly of the divisive and elitist role that even the “progressive” NGOs play: they, the NGOs want to subordinate the peasant leaders to their organizations, they want to lead and speak “for” the poor. They do not accept subordinate roles. Progressive NGOs use peasants and the poor for their research projects, they benefit from the publication - nothing comes back to the movements not even copies of the studies done in their name! Moreover, the peasant leaders ask why the NGOs never risk their neck after their educational seminars? Why do they not study the rich and powerful why us?

Even conceding that within the “progressive NGOs” there are minorities that function as “resource” people to radical socio-political movements, the fact is that the people receive a tiny fraction of the funds that go to the NGO. Furthermore, the great mass of NGOs fit the description outlined above and it is up to the few exceptions to prove otherwise: a major step forward for the “progressive NGOs” is to systematically criticize and critique the ties of their NGO colleagues with imperialism and its local clients, their ideology of adaptation to neo-liberalism and their authoritarian and elitist structures. Then it would be useful for them to tell their western counterpart NGOs to get out of the foundation - government networks and go back to organizing and educating their own people in Europe and North America to form social-political movements that can challenge the dominant regimes and parties that serve the banks and multi-nationals.

In other words, the NGOs should stop being NGOs and convert themselves into members of socio-political movements. That is the best way to avoid being lumped with the tens of thousands of NGOs feeding at the donor’s trough.

### *Conclusion: Notes on a Theory of NGOs*

In social structural terms the proliferation and expansion of NGOs reflects the emergence of a new petit bourgeois distinct from the “old” shopkeepers, free professionals as well as the “new” public employee groups. This subcontracted sector is closer to the earlier “compradore” bourgeoisie insofar as it produces no tangible commodities, but serves to link imperial enterprises with local petty commodity producers engaged in micro-enterprises. This new petty-bourgeois - at least its “middle age variants” is marked by the fact that many are ex-Leftists and bring to bear a “popular rhetoric” and in some cases an elitist “vanguardist” conception to their organizations. Situated without property or a fixed position in the state apparatus it depends heavily on external funding agencies to reproduce themselves. Given its popular constituency however, it has to combine an anti-Marxist, anti-statist appeal with populist rhetoric, hence the concoction of the Third Way and civil society notions which are suffi-

ciently ambiguous to cover both bases. This new petty bourgeois thrives on international gatherings as a main prop of its existence, lacking solid organic support within the country. The “globalist” rhetoric provides a cover for a kind of ersatz “internationalism” devoid of anti-imperialist commitments. In a word, this new petit bourgeois forms the “radical wing”...of the neo-liberal establishment.

Politically the NGOs fit into the new thinking of imperialist strategists. While the IMF - World Bank and MNCs work the domestic elites at the top to pillage the economy, the NGOs engage in complementary activity at the bottom neutralizing and fragmenting the burgeoning discontent resulting from the savaging of the economy. Just as imperialism engages in a two pronged macro-micro strategy of exploitation and containment, radical movements must develop a two prong anti-imperialist strategy.

The mass of NGOs have co-opted most of what used to be the “free floating” public intellectuals who would abandon their class origins and join the popular movements. The result is a temporary gap between the profound crises of capitalism (depressions in Asia and Latin America - collapse in the ex-USSR) and the absence of significant organized revolutionary movements (with the exception of Brazil, Colombia and perhaps South Korea). The fundamental question is whether a new generation of organic intellectuals can emerge from the burgeoning radical social movements which can avoid the NGO temptation and become integral members of the next revolutionary wave.