

The Millennium Development Goals

A Critique from the South

SAMIR AMIN

In September 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, the 191 member countries in the United Nations agreed to a set of eight Millennium Development Goals for the world's poor nations. These goals, targeted for fulfillment by 2015, have since become the fulcrum for public policy discussions and actions concerning economic and social development. Meetings and conferences on the goals under the auspices of the United Nations and the governing bodies of member countries have been held regularly since 2001, most recently at the 2005 Millennium + 5 Summit. The aim of these meetings and conferences has been to reiterate the goals and to reaffirm the commitment of countries to them, as well as to assess the extent to which progress has been made toward their fulfillment. Most of the Millennium Development Goals may seem at first sight unobjectionable. Nevertheless, they were not the result of an initiative from the South itself, but were pushed primarily by the triad (the United States, Europe, and Japan), and were co-sponsored by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. All of this has raised the question of whether they are mainly ideological cover (or worse) for neoliberal initiatives. Samir Amin's systematic and revealing critique of the Millennium Development Goals is therefore of the utmost significance. The goals themselves are appended to this article. The declaration adopted by the general assembly is available at <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>.—Ed.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted by acclamation in September 2000 by a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly called "United Nations Millennium Declaration." This procedural innovation, called "consensus," stands in stark contrast to UN tradition, which always required that texts of this sort be

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James H. Membrez translated the essay from the French.

carefully prepared and discussed at great length in committees. This simply reflects a change in the international balance of power. The United States and its European and Japanese allies are now able to exert hegemony over a domesticated UN. In fact, Ted Gordon, well-known consultant for the CIA, drafted the millennium goals!

The claim is made that the MDGs follow up on the conclusions reached in the cycle of summits organized in the 1990s. That's going a bit too far. The preparatory meetings to these summits had tried something new by organizing assemblies of so-called civil society representatives parallel to the official conferences where only state representatives were seated. Although things had been organized to reserve the best places for the charitable NGO's, which are beneficiaries of financial support from large foundations and states, and largely to exclude popular organizations fighting for social and democratic progress (authentic popular organizations are always poor by definition), the voices of the latter were sometimes heard. In the official conferences themselves, the points of view of the triad and of the South often diverged. It is often forgotten that the triad's proposals were rejected in Seattle not only in the streets, but also by states from the South. It is also important to remember that the reconstruction (or at least the first signs of reconstruction) of a *group* (if not a *front*) of the South took place at Doha. All of these divergences were smoothed away by the supposed synthesis of the MDGs. Instead of forming a genuine committee for the purpose of discussing the document, a draft was prepared in the backroom of some obscure agency. The only common denominator is limited to the expression of the pious hope of reducing poverty. In what follows, I will examine how these goals are formulated and the conditions required to reach them.

The Official Millennium 'Development' Goals

Eight sets of goals were defined for the next fifteen years (2000–15). The accomplishment of each of the targets that specifically define them is based on measurable indicators, generally altogether acceptable in themselves.

Each of these goals is certainly commendable (who would disapprove of reducing poverty or improving health?). Nevertheless, their definition is often extremely vague. Moreover, debates concerning the conditions required to reach the goals are often dispensed with. It is assumed without question that liberalism is perfectly compatible with the achievement of the goals.

Goal 1: Reduce extreme poverty and hunger by half.

This is nothing but an empty incantation as long as the policies that generate poverty are not analyzed and denounced and alternatives proposed.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education.

UNESCO devoted itself to this goal beginning in 1960, hoping to achieve it in ten years. Progress was made during the two decades that followed, but ground has been lost since. The almost obvious relationship between this lost ground, the reduction in public expenditures, and the privatization of education is not examined in fact nor in theory.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.

The equality in question is reduced to access to education and the empowerment is measured by the proportion of wage-earning women. The neoconservative Christian fundamentalists of the United States, Poland and elsewhere, the Muslims of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and other countries, and the fundamentalist Hindus agree on eliminating any reference to the rights of women and the family. Without discussion, declarations on this question are only empty talk.

Goals 4, 5, and 6: (Concerning health) reduce infant mortality by two-thirds and maternal mortality by three-fourths; stop the spread of pandemic diseases (AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis).

The means implemented in these areas are assumed to be completely compatible with extreme privatization and total respect for the “intellectual property rights” of the transnational corporations and, curiously enough, are recommended in Goal 8 concerning the supposed partnership between North and South!

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability.

A general principle is asserted (“to integrate the principles of sustainable development” into national and global policies), but no definite content is made explicit. Moreover, any mention of the refusal of the United States to promote conditions necessary for environmental protection (i.e., their rejection of the Kyoto Protocol) is carefully avoided.

It is presupposed, then, that the rationality of capitalist economic strategy is compatible with the requirements of “sustainable development.” That is obviously not the case since capitalist strategy is founded on the concept of the rapid discounting of economic time (with the

timespan governing investment decisions never exceeding a few years at maximum), while the questions raised here relate to the long term. The specific goals are thus in fact reduced to nothing much: reduce by half the population having no access to clean water, improve living conditions in the slums—two ordinary goals of simple public health.

The criteria for measuring the results (CO₂ emissions, change in the ozone layer) undoubtedly make it possible to monitor the degradation of the environment, but certainly not to curb it. Note the strange timidity of the writers concerning biodiversity (there is no question of infringing on the greater rights of the transnationals!): they propose only “to observe” the evolution of land areas protected from the destruction of biodiversity! But above all not to stop it!

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development.

The writers straightaway establish an equivalence between this “partnership” and the principles of liberalism by declaring that the objective is to establish an open, multilateral commercial and financial system! The partnership thus becomes synonymous with submission to the demands of the imperialist powers. Progress in access to the market is measured by the share of exports in the GDP (an increase in this ratio is thus synonymous with progress regardless of the social price!), progress in the conditions of nondiscrimination by the reduction in subsidies.

To carry out this “liberal partnership” would require, in the end, nothing more than the fight against poverty (the only “social” goal allowed). To this is added, like hair in soup, “good governance,” a phrase favored by the U.S. establishment that is never defined and is taken up uncritically by the Europeans and the institutions of the global system (UN, World Bank, etc.).

Many targets are added to this completely contradictory text, which fill in its gaps and offer recommendations. I am singling out five of them for further examination:

Enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries.

In fact, the program implemented in this regard for the heavily indebted poor countries imposes a genuinely colonial tutelage on them. That the governments of the countries in question have internalized the abandonment of their sovereignty changes nothing. Indeed, in the past, heads of state had sometimes abdicated in the face of colonization. But such abdication had never been accepted as legitimate by the peoples involved.

Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term.

This exhortation is not accompanied by any further information concerning what is to follow (international negotiations? within what framework?) or the principles on which such a measure should be founded. However, certain reasonable things can be said on the subject, such as the necessity for an audit that makes it possible to classify the debts (immoral, illegal, acceptable...) and an elaboration of legislation that makes it possible to define for the future the legal conditions of debts and the creation of courts charged with deciding the law in this area. It is perfectly obvious that all of this is ignored by the writers of the MDGs!

In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.

The significance of the generous intention to provide access to drugs is immediately nullified by the specification that this would be “in cooperation with the pharmaceutical industry,” precisely those who prohibit anyone from calling their abusive monopoly into question!

In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies—especially information and communications technologies.

Here again an intention is subjected to a condition that empties it of any meaning—“in cooperation with the private sector”!

More generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction.

Is there a better comedy than this proposal, endlessly repeated for the last fifty years by those who are responsible for implementing it and yet never do it?

The Real Goals of Dominant Capital

A critical examination of the formulation of the goals as well as the definition of the means that would be required to implement them can only lead to the conclusion that the MDGs cannot be taken seriously. A litany of pious hopes commits no one. And when the expression of these pious hopes is accompanied by conditions that essentially eliminate the possibility of their becoming reality, the question must be

asked: are not the authors of the document actually pursuing other priorities that have nothing to do with “poverty reduction” and all the rest? In this case, should the exercise not be described as pure hypocrisy, as pulling the wool over the eyes of those who are being forced to accept the dictates of liberalism in the service of the quite particular and exclusive interests of dominant globalized capital?

Besides, the MDGs cannot truly be taken seriously by their promoters in the imperialist triad, which implements them only when it is convenient and ignores them otherwise, nor by states in the South that, not wanting to take any risks at the present time, refrain from formally rejecting the proposals. In another time, a text of this type would not have been adopted and the states of the South would have, at least, imposed a compromise.

The MDGs are part of a series of discourses that are intended to legitimize the policies and practices implemented by dominant capital and those who support it, i.e., in the first place the governments of the triad countries, and secondarily governments in the South. The real goals, openly recognized as such, are:

1. Extreme privatization, aimed at opening new fields for the expansion of capital. Such privatization calls into question the existence of national state property, which should be liquidated on open markets, by foreign capital among others. Beyond that, privatization aims at eliminating public services, particularly in education and health. Here, the ideas developed in the MDGs concerning the elimination of illiteracy and the improvement of health lose all credibility. The privatization of property and access to important natural resources, in particular petroleum and water, facilitates the pillage of these resources for the wastefulness of the triad, reducing the discourse of sustainable development to pure, empty rhetoric.

2. The generalization of the private appropriation of agricultural land. Just as with agricultural and food products, land, too, must be subjected to the general law of the market. This general offensive aims at nothing less than extending the policy of “enclosures” (referring to the “enclosures” implemented in England in the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries and then extended to the rest of Europe in the nineteenth) to the entire world. Its success would lead to the destruction of the peasant societies that make up nearly half of humanity. This destruction, now underway (and liberalism would like to see the tempo accelerated), is already the major cause of pauperization in the third world, which results in emigration from the countryside to the urban slums. But that

is of little importance, since the minority of so-called modernized rural producers who will survive the massacre, and be subjected to the demands of agribusiness, will produce the superprofits that the latter aspires to capture. Nothing else matters.

3. Commercial “opening” within a context of maximum deregulation.

This is a way of lifting all obstacles to the expansion of a trade that is as unequal as it can possibly be in conditions characterized by a polarized world development and a growing concentration of power in the hands of the transnationals that control the trade in raw materials and agricultural products. The example of coffee illustrates the disastrous social effects of this systematic choice. Twenty years ago, all coffee producers were paid nine billion dollars and all the consumers paid out twenty billion for this same coffee. Today these two figures are respectively six and thirty billion. The gap between them is the gigantic profit margin captured by a handful of oligopolistic intermediaries. It goes without saying that in these conditions campaigns in favor of so-called fair trade, even when their promoters are moved by the most impeccable moral intentions, are not up to the challenge. The correction of these deteriorating terms of trade for the producers can only be obtained by the political intervention of government authorities—both national legislation and international negotiations and legislation.

4. The equally uncontrolled opening up of capital movement. The fallacious pretext advanced is that deregulation would make it possible to attract foreign capital. Yet it is well known that China, which attracts more of this capital than other countries, has maintained a tighter control over foreign enterprises. Elsewhere, direct foreign investments are targeted at little more than pillaging natural resources. In fact, the IMF imposed the opening of “capital accounts” in order to facilitate the indebtedness of the United States, allow speculative capital to engage in pillaging raids, and subject the currencies of the South to systematic undervaluation. This undervaluation, in turn, makes it possible for local assets in these countries to be purchased for next to nothing, to the evident advantage of the transnational corporations.

5. States are forbidden in principle from interfering in economic affairs. Internally, the state is reduced to narrow police functions. Internationally, it is reduced to guaranteeing debt service, as the first (and almost exclusive!) priority in public expenditures. The debt is hardly anything more than a particularly primitive form of exploitation and pillage.

This model is presented as being without an alternative because it is imposed by the “objective” requirements of globalization, which negate the power of national states. In reality, the causal relation is just the reverse: this particular form (among other possible ones) of globalization is allotted the objective of destroying the ability of nations and states to resist the expansion of transnational capital.

That is why all these principles, openly adopted by the writers of the MDGs, can only produce what I have elsewhere described as apartheid on a world scale, reproducing and deepening global polarization. As a counterpoint, the restoration of a margin of autonomy for states and the recognition of the legitimacy of state intervention (the definition even of democracy) within a multipolar perspective are the inescapable conditions required to attain the social objectives proclaimed by the MDGs.

In fact, then, the social goals proclaimed by the MDGs do not constitute the real goals of the whole exercise. Their supposedly democratic packaging must, in turn, be subject to a legitimate doubt. No democracy can possibly take root if it does not support social progress, but, instead, is associated with social regression. This is undoubtedly the reason why the vapid term “governance” is served up as an accompaniment to the empty rhetoric of the MDGs.

The writers of the document appear to have paid no attention to the facts. In the course of three decades following the Second World War, the highest rate of growth known in history took place, along with full employment and notable upward social movement and, if not always a reduction in inequality, the stabilization of structures aimed at more equitable income distribution. But it appears that because the systems in existence at that time regulated markets, these procedures were “irrational” and their results “bad.” In the course of the following three decades, accompanying the welcome deregulation, there has been a collapse of growth, a breathtaking increase in unemployment, precariousness, and other manifestations of pauperization, and mounting inequalities. Yet it appears that this system is nevertheless better and more rational. That is undoubtedly because in the preceding systems the rate of return for capital was in the range of 4 to 8 percent and since then it has doubled, moving to between 8 and 16 percent.

The New Doctrinaire Liberalism

The central question concerns the concept of development maintained, explicitly or implicitly, in the Millennium Development Goals. It can be formulated in this way: In the successive globalized econom-

ic and political systems of modern times, who was forced to adjust to whom? The subjects in question can be class or social groups, regions or nations.

In capitalist logic founded on private property, it is capital (the firm) that commands and employs labor. Workers do not have direct access to the means of production, which are not used to their liking. In its global expansion, capitalism is polarizing, that is, it is founded on asymmetrical adjustment. The peripheries are shaped to serve the model of accumulation in the dominant centers. The ideology of capitalism ignores the concept of substantive development, for it recognizes only expanding markets.

It is significant that the term “development” appeared only after the Second World War (during the colonial period, the exploitation of the colonies was cynically spoken of), supported by the governments of the Asian and African states that arose from national liberation movements. In this sense, the 1955 conference of Asian and African states at Bandung was the birth place of the project of developing the new third world. It was a multidimensional project of modernization: of the economy (through industrialization), the society, and the state. This modernization project appears within a type of globalization and is not at all an invitation to economic and cultural autarky. But it does imply that in this process the North would adjust to the requirements for the development of the South, development conceptualized as a “catching up.” Globalization in this context is then recognized as having to be the result—beyond the conflicts—of negotiations between partners who recognize the divergence of their interests. In Latin America, *desarrollismo* proposes an analogous model of development.

At each of these steps, capitalist globalization rests on transnational social alliances, without which the models of accumulation in the dominant centers and dominated peripheries could not be reproduced. The “colonial” model, challenged after the Second World War, involved the management of the societies of the peripheries by local comprador classes of a given type (merchant intermediaries, large landowners). The new model resulting from decolonization involved social reforms that deprive the older comprador classes of their power and substitute hegemonic blocs of a new type (national populist). This model is the basis of the successes (not the failures!) of the economic and social transformation of the third world in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. But it was always fought—with violence—by the powers of the imperialist triad.

The turnaround in the political conjuncture beginning in the 1980s brought us back to former times, before development, which has, in effect, been shown the door. It is significant that the new language of the dominant economics even abandons this term and substitutes “structural adjustment,” i.e., adjustment of the societies and economies of the South to the requirements of the pursuit of accumulation in the North. Simultaneously, this turnaround in the balance of power to the benefit of capital appears everywhere—in the North as well as the South—as a strengthening of the subjection of labor to capital. The new doctrinaire liberalism acknowledges only expanding markets, not the deliberate political transformation of social and economic structures.

Although imposed on the societies of the South with extreme brutality, the new model (neocolonial some say, but the term is poor—it is really a question of “paleo-colonial” thought) had to be clothed in a discourse that gives it the appearance of legitimacy. It was necessary to reintroduce the word “development” (as in the Millennium *Development Goals*) but empty it of all meaning. This was done by reducing it to the fight against poverty and for good governance.

A series of documents prepared this revision in the meaning of words. The agencies set up to manage the rest of the world (85 percent of the earth’s population, the dominated peripheries) by collective imperialism (the triad) here fulfilled the functions expected of them. The World Bank (which I call the Ministry of Propaganda for the G7) produced, in this spirit, distressing documents called Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). The IMF (the triad’s collective colonial monetary authority) imposed the priority of debt service, the debt itself being the means of imposing structural adjustment. The WTO, far from being an institution responsible for managing world trade, is devoted to the objective of shaping the productive systems of the peripheries to the needs of the commercial expansion of the North, that is, to operate like a collective ministry of colonies. The European Union—lined up with the general offensive of the imperialist triad—integrates the relations between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) within this same context, pursued literally in the convention for the development of the ACP.

It could be asked why the governments of the countries of the South have subscribed to all of these commandments drafted in the imperialist centers. The response, in general terms, is that we should look to the social hegemonic blocs mentioned above that make possible the reproduction of asymmetric globalization. There is a new comprador class in

the countries of the periphery that actually derives its existence from the new model of globalized liberalism. This comprador class participates in the new government arrangements that followed the erosion of the national populist models inspired by Bandung.

To be more precise, it is possible to distinguish, among the reasons that led the South to “rally to liberalism.” There are those that are probably unique to so-called emerging countries (China in the first place). In these countries, the current governments live on illusions: they think about “catching up” (through strong growth) while they are constructed as the industrialized peripheries of tomorrow, and dominated by the new monopolies on the basis of which the imperialist centers reproduce their domination (monopolies of technology, access to the planet’s natural resources, and weapons of mass destruction). They think of building a “strong and independent nation,” but in that connection must ignore that the United States prepares “preventative wars” against them that will not allow them this opportunity. History will undoubtedly be given the responsibility to dissipate these illusions.

Here I will place more emphasis on the rationales offered with respect to the most vulnerable peripheral regions, Africa in particular. The discourse developed in this regard by dominant thought is well known: Africa is marginalized in the new globalization. This is by its own fault, having sunk into an excessive nationalism during the Bandung period. It can only get out of this difficult situation if it accepts being “more integrated” into globalization by a totally uncontrolled opening that will allow foreign capital to “develop” it. The miseries associated with this option, for which there is no alternative, will only be “transitory” and can be attenuated by programs that “fight against poverty.” This option will require, moreover, democratic political management called “good governance.”

This discourse abounds in contradictions and inadequacies. Africa is no less integrated into globalization than other regions, but it was and is differently integrated. The forms of the new proposed integration, based on agro-mineral specialization, are not new but are, on the contrary, a return to the old (paleo-colonial). These forms can only accentuate the pauperization and exclusion of huge masses of the population, in particular the peasants. But simultaneously and independently, they facilitate the pillage of the continent’s natural resources (petroleum, minerals, and wood), which is probably the principal objective of large transnational capital in Africa. Foreign direct investments will come to Africa for nothing else.

The responsibility of the current government teams—and behind them the new comprador classes—should not be excused. But that does not absolve the dominant forces in the imperialist centers of the global system from responsibility either.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is undoubtedly part of the new liberal thinking, but not with any great conviction it seems. It should be remembered that originally behind this initiative was the justified refusal of the racist “afro-pessimist” discourse and the proclamation by Thabo Mbeki in 1998 that “Africans should and can appropriate modernity,” a way of indicating the renaissance of Africa that he called for. But Mbeki rushed into the same discourse of specifying that that appropriation should be done “in cooperation with the developed countries,” ignoring, or pretending to ignore, that that has never been the case up to now. NEPAD even includes in its title the term “partnership,” commonly used for a long time by the European Union and adopted, in turn, by the Millennium discourse of the United Nations.

In its content, NEPAD's founding document, *New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)* is not, in fact, very coherent.* It identifies the bottlenecks that block development in Africa, which it identifies in all aspects of reality (infrastructure and energy, education and health, family agriculture and environment, and modern technologies, notably computer technology), giving the impression that it takes into consideration the hostile practices of world trade. But at the same time, the document lines up with dominant liberal thought: it abandons the centrality of industry that the Lagos Plan had, in its time and with good reason, taken as the axis of development for this least industrialized of the earth's continents. It adheres to an agro-mineral model of growth (paleo-colonial), and it adopts the discourse on the reduction of poverty.

Unquestionably even more serious, the NEPAD document lines up with liberal thought on the discourse of “good governance.” This is a concept that is useful as a way to dissociate democratic progress from social progress, to deny their equal importance and inextricable connection with one another, and to reduce democracy to good management subjected to the demands of private capital, an “apolitical” management by an anodyne civil society, inspired by the mediocre ideology of the United States. This discourse comes at the very moment

*The NEPAD framework document was adopted by the 37th Summit of the Organization of African Unity in July 2001 at Lusaka, Zambia and is available at <http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/inbrief.php>.

when the interruption in the construction of the state (begun in the Bandung period) imposed by structural adjustment has created, not conditions for a democratic advance but, instead, conditions for the shift towards the primacy of ethnic and religious identities (para-ethnic and para-religious, in fact) that are manipulated by local mafias, benefit external supporters, and often degenerate into atrocious “civil wars” (in fact conflicts between warlords). As Bernard Founou-Tchuigoua argues, it is less a question of a North-South partnership (here EU/ACP) than a new phase in asymmetrical structural adjustment.

The NEPAD document’s exposition, its hesitations or anodyne character, acquires its meaning in this context. For example, the wish to alleviate the debt is expressed, but this is done precisely because the debt has fulfilled its function of imposing structural adjustment. NEPAD also proposes an “integrated” (Pan-African) development, just like the EU, giving its preference to arrangements with regional African groups. But, in the end, this document remains, as far as its proposals on trade, capital transfers, technology, and patents are concerned, aligned with liberal dogmas.

I will say in conclusion that a system of this type hardly has any future. Neither the MDGs nor NEPAD will make it possible to attenuate the seriousness of the problems and curb the resulting processes of political and social involution. The legitimacy of governments has disappeared. Thus conditions are ripe for the emergence of other social hegemonies that make possible a revival of development conceived as it should be: the indissociable combination of social progress, democratic advancement, and the affirmation of national independence within a negotiated multipolar globalization. The possibility of these new social hegemonies is already visible on the horizon. I bet that at the end of 2015, no one will propose a balance sheet of the achievements of the MDGs or NEPAD, which will have been long forgotten.

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Appendix: The UN Millennium Development Goals

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty

- ♦ Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day
- ♦ Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

- ♦ Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

- ♦ Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

- ♦ Reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under five

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

- ♦ Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases

- ♦ Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
- ♦ Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

- ♦ Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources
- ♦ Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water
- ♦ Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth

- ♦ Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory, includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction—nationally and internationally
- ♦ Address the least developed countries' special needs. This includes tariff- and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction
- ♦ Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing States

- ♦ Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term
- ♦ In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth
- ♦ In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
- ♦ In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies—especially information and communications technologies

Source: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/index.html>.

MONTHLY REVIEW *Fifty Years Ago*

A college student came in to see me the other day. He was Catholic, very rich, a member of the ruling class. He told me how a year ago he had been converted to Marxism by listening to a clear, carefully reasoned explanation of the inadequacy of American foreign policy given by a classmate in a bull session in his dormitory. "All at once," he said, "as I was listening, everything that was unclear became clear; a veil was lifted from my eyes. Ever since then, I have been reading and studying Marxist literature. When I have learned enough, I will take my place in the ranks of those who are helping to bring socialism to the United States."

Then with eyes flashing, as he paced nervously across the room, he asked "How was it possible for me to have lived to the age of 25 without ever having learned the truth?"

I pointed out to him that this was not as strange as it seemed. Where was he to learn the truth? From the Church? From the upper class society to which he belonged? From school? From the press and radio?

In the absence of a powerful socialist movement, how do any of us become socialists? Through a friend, a teacher, a book, or an experience in which there is an illuminating flash?—and when it comes, in Debs' phrase, it is "like passing from midnight darkness to the noontide light of day."

Today, when the Left is weak and crumbling, when only a fool thinks we can exert any significant influence on American politics, surely our only course is to do what we can do—to spread the gospel of socialism. If we who believe in socialism don't do it, who will? If socialists work actively for Democrats, who will "lift the veil" from the eyes of those who "live to the age of 25 without ever learning the truth"? What is more "practical" in an election campaign, or any other time, than giving to everyone we know the key to an understanding of our complex world?

—Leo Huberman, "Socialists and Elections," *Monthly Review*, March 1956

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