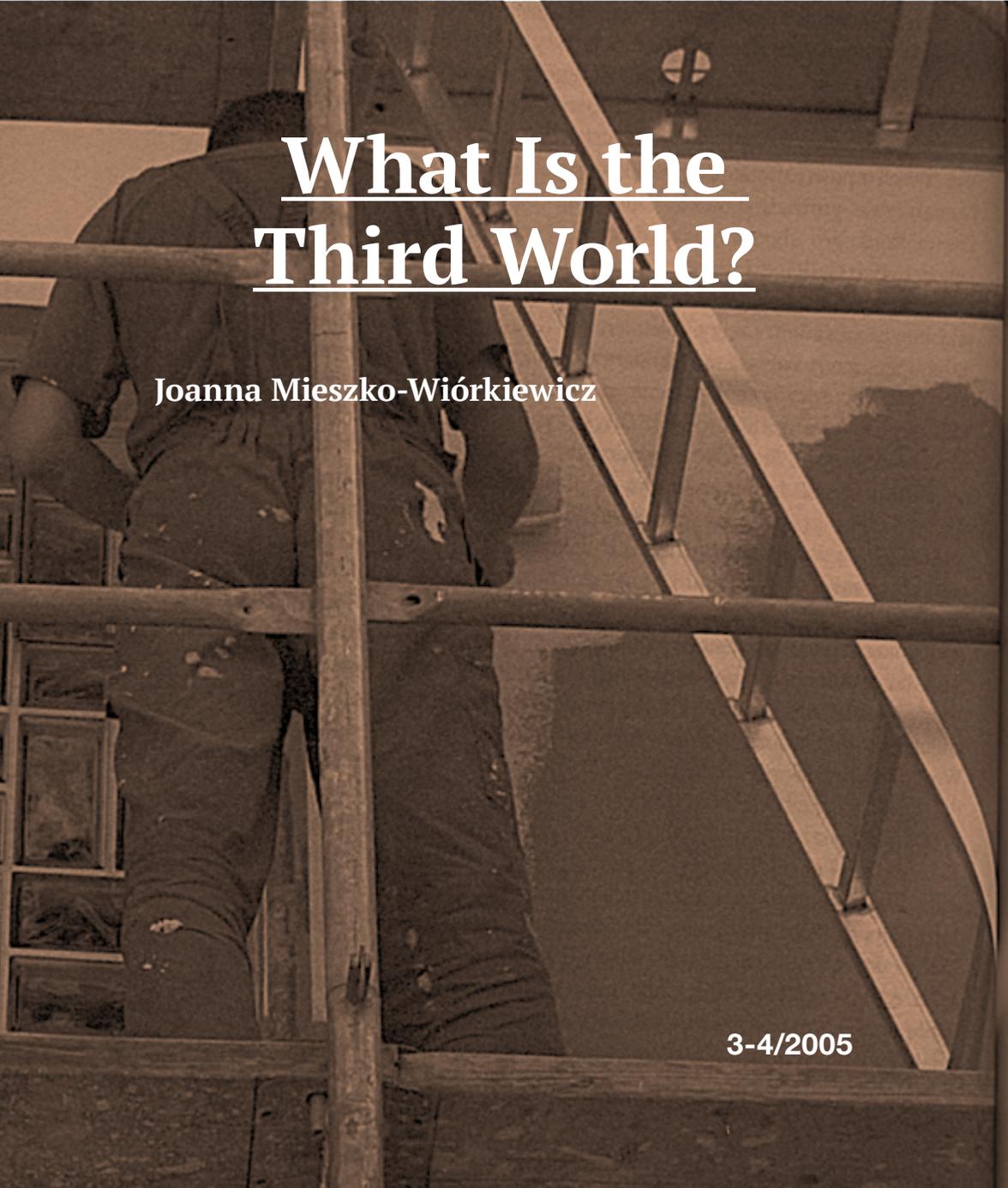


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What Is the
Third World?

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Let us start out mystically, not to say kabbalistically, by pointing out that the number THREE corresponds to the planet Jupiter and according to ancient teachings represents idealism, knowledge at a higher level, a tendency to take long journeys, and religiosity. THREE is also said to be a symbol of optimism, mobility, and expansionism, as well as of the holy trinity of Soul, Body, and Reason. Life in a triangle. Hermes Trismegistus once wrote the famous formula thus: “as above, so below.” Hermes Trismegistus, Master of Masters to the Third Power, is believed to have left behind 1,200 works (numerologically added up, the digits in that figure add up to 3). However, that revolutionary statement is what has endured through the centuries fresh and undiluted. The formula recurs in symbolic form in the six-pointed star – two equilateral triangles one-third superimposed on each other (or interpenetrating each other)... two worlds invading and interpenetrating each other: this one on the bottom and the other one on top... Or us on top and them on the bottom... As you wish. Worlds interconnect, overlap, and remain far away from one another. The inhabitants of the First World carry within them the Second and Third Worlds, while those of

the Third World simultaneously have the First and Second on their chest. Or in their dining room, where the television rules. Or in their housing papers. Every third resident of the Philippines is hungry; the third intifada is raging in Palestine; a third front has opened in Mexico (conducting ideological warfare via the Internet); every third German has existential problems; every third doctor in Berlin is unemployed; in Liberia corruption is cubed...

The three worlds, according to the definition drilled into us in school, are: first – the superpowers, second – the industrialized countries, and third – the developing countries, meaning the poor countries. The remaining superpowers now, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, are the USA and China. The countries of the G-8 want to be grouped within the First World. That is why, when they meet, official press releases speak of meetings among the leaders of the G-8 countries *and* Russia. But are there few examples within this first-ranked world of whatever is typically third world or third-rate? The First World (meaning the G-8 countries *and* Russia) found it in its heart to make a gesture of greatness of the first order – it cancelled the debts of 20 Third World countries. And it will cancel more, under the condition that they begin to fight corruption in their countries. Apparently Bolivia and Ethiopia have done so to tremendous effect. If corruption is the sign of a Third World country, in which world should we place Russia, whose corruption index is on a par with that of Mozambique? What about Ukraine, ranked between Sudan and Cameroon? Or Poland, only

a tenth of a point ahead of Saudi Arabia, Syria, and China? From this perspective, the First World would consist of Finland, New Zealand, and Denmark. If, however, we treat per capita purchasing power as the determinant of worlds (as has traditionally been done), the narrow ranks of the First World would include Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Norway beside the USA and Japan. Poland is closer to the Third than to the First World.

How did the Third World get that way? Poverty? Lack of technology? The loss of self-consciousness and its arduous recovery... Civilizations rose, grew mighty, and... perished. The Atlantis of Hermes Trismegistus, Egypt, the Sumerians, Imperium Romanum and more modern empires. What remains of them and endures beyond time, resists all kinds of collapse and grows into legend, is the awareness that no human organization is isolated from the Great Harmony and that cooperation in working to maintain it, for the dignified survival of the human condition, is the one thing that gives the world meaning.

Shortly after the Second World War, Winston Churchill sketched out his vision for the new world order: “the government of the world must be entrusted to satisfied nations, who wished nothing more for themselves than what they had. If the world-government were in the hands of hungry nations there would always be danger.”

Churchill, born and raised, and therefore automatically programmed, as a citizen of an empire, that is, of the

First World, thus assumed from the outset the necessity for some kind of system of world rule to whose aims the weaker and poorer countries would have to adjust theirs. The weaker and poorer nations had, logically, to be kept in a state of weakness and poverty. That meant that it was permissible and acceptable to plunder their wealth, exploit their people as slaves, and squeeze all the life out of them. What, indeed, was the essence of the colonialism in which Churchill was raised? Violent intervention by Europeans destroyed mature structures, disrupted social equilibrium, and arrested development in the countries invaded. The subjugated population, particularly in places rich in natural resources, was forced, using violent means, to adapt to the European economic system. Europeans obtained new markets and possibilities for settling unemployed or socially “marginal” people. Colonies increased their power. Churchill had the right to feel himself master of the world.

The conquest of the Third World lasted 500 years; the process of its liberation, barely twenty. The liberation began – as some famous historians would have it – with India’s attainment of independence in 1947. Then everything followed like beads falling off a string. The weakening of Europe after the Second World War and the fall of the Third Reich, as well as the general revolution of the political cycle, but also, it seems, a real and widespread desire for a more just world led the former colonies in Latin and South America and in Africa to begin seeking their much longed-for independence. In reality, it was not as romantic

as it sounds. As we know, the main influence determining the new map of the world was the Cold War (meaning arms shipments from the U.S., the U.S.S.R., and China) and the appearance of a third imperial player, China, whose antipathy for both the U.S.S.R. and the United States was borne with intense reciprocity. In 1960 a stunning total of 16 African countries suddenly obtained permanent seats in the U.N., with new names and new borders. Many of the newly created countries defined their systems as socialist; this and their friendly ties with the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries aroused more or less open hostility from the West. It should here be added that these friendships were in no way coerced. The new democracies could at first count only on help from Eastern Bloc countries. In the Federal Republic of Germany, for example, the Hallstein Doctrine, repealed later under Willy Brandt, prohibited not only any kind of aid to Third World countries, but even diplomatic relations with countries who recognized the German Democratic Republic. And so, at least until the mid-1970s, the new countries of Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean became the arena (and victims) of the Cold War.

The Cold War has conventionally been viewed as an East-West conflict, but upon examining it more closely, we see that it was only part of the nearly 500-year history of the conquest of the world by Europeans, a history of aggression, subversion, terror and horror, of total exploitation, now euphemistically marketed as the conflict of “North and South.”

The concept of the Third World was invented by the French demographer Alfred Sauvy, who used it in *L'Observateur* 14 August 1952 analogously to the French concept of the Third Estate (*tiers-état*). When Frantz Fanon in his 1961 book *The Wretched of the Earth* used the term to refer to non-developed countries, it had long been in use. Its dissemination made great advances at the conference organized in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955 at Nehru's initiative. 23 Asian and 16 African countries participated, together representing half of the world's population. At the conference, they set themselves the goal of fighting to end colonialism, racism, and economic backwardness. They voluntarily chose the term Third World to set themselves apart from the Western and Eastern blocs.

We may distinguish among the worlds from each other, first, second, and third, in terms of what they sell. Three quarters of exports from Third World countries are raw materials. Aside from those, cheap labour and services figure prominently. Pani Cesia from Gorzów sells her labour for cheap in Berlin, and her son the lawyer works as a tiler in London. Pani Cesia does not produce anything that she could sell for a higher price. Every month she goes to Berlin for a week, is given brushes, rags, a Hoover, and five plastic bottles containing fluids of various colours and sets about removing the disorder from the flat of her German employer: cleaning, washing, and ironing from dawn until the small hours, and giving the pet poodle a haircut on her break. Pani Cesia doesn't know much about politics and says that she doesn't want to have anything to

do with “all that.” Politics, however, has played and continues to play a decisive role in Pani Cesia’s life: war, resettlement from the eastern borderlands to the western, work on State Farms, then promotion to shop assistant in a butcher’s shop, the zenith of her professional career, followed by vegetation on the reduced pension of the new system, and a search for additional, let us add, illegal, earnings in a richer country, fortunately located next door to hers. Pani Cesia is a typical unconscious inhabitant of the Third World.

Along with the English, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Germans, the Belgians, and the Italians, the French also made a fortune from their colonies and to this day take advantage of their colonial connections. Thus Jean-Paul Sartre, two years after the outbreak of the Algerian war of national liberation against France and six years before Algeria (the third-largest African country, after Congo and Sudan) achieved independence in 1962 (after a bloody eight-year war of independence) would describe what he called the neocolonial mystification:

Neocolonialists think that there are some good colonists and some very wicked ones, and that it is the fault of the latter that the situation of the colonies has deteriorated. This mystification consists of the following: you are taken around Algeria, you are obligingly shown the extreme poverty of the people, which is dreadful, you are told about the humiliation the Muslims suffer at the hands of the wicked colo-

nists. And then, when you are really outraged, they add: 'that is why the best Algerians have taken up arms; they couldn't take any more.' If they go about this in the right way, you will return home convinced: First, that the Algerian problem is first of all economic. It is a question of providing, by means of judicious reforms, food for nine million people. Second, next, that the problem is social: the numbers of schools and doctors must be greatly increased. Third, that the problem is, finally, psychological: you remember De Man and his 'inferiority complex' of the working class. He had discovered at the same time the key to the 'native character': maltreated, malnourished, illiterate, the Algerian has an inferiority complex with regard to his masters. It is by acting upon these three factors that he will be reassured: if he eats enough to satisfy his hunger, if he has work and can read, he will no longer suffer the shame of being a subhuman and we will rediscover that old Franco-Muslim fraternity.

Nobody, however, Sartre observes, wants to bring politics into this.

Politics is abstract: what is the use of voting if you are dying of hunger? Those who come and talk to us about free elections, about a Constituent Assembly, about Algerian independence, are agitators or troublemakers who only cloud the issue, he declares ironically.

Who, then, is a colonizer in the age of post-colonial independence? Capitalism itself – answers Sartre in 1964. New markets are always needed, after all. That means that we cannot let the colonies develop their own industry, since we want to sell them our products. But who is supposed to buy them, since the impoverished fresh batch of nations has no purchasing power? Then our products are sold to them on credit. Even Poland remembers “tie-in transactions” from the Gierek era, together with credits from the West that bind and burden us to this day.

As a result, Poland, after auditing its debts in March 1991 increased it over the next 14 years by another 30 billion dollars and (according to 2004 data) has debts to the West in the amount of 72 billion dollars. That amount ensures that Poland is unable to keep its affairs in order on its own. At the same time, a consistent process of de-industrialization of Polish industry and outflow of capital is taking place. That is a typical situation for a neo-colonial Third World country.

In the building of the Friedrichstrasse station in Berlin, a station where tens of thousands of people daily come and go, we stop with Vilma to look at a World Press Photo exhibit. War, poverty, fear, hunger – human misery is photogenic. Starving children have enormous eyes. The pictures look familiar to me. I seem to recall seeing some of them the year before and earlier. Human misery looks the same over time. Vilma notes with relief that the exhibit has no pictures from Latin America. Vilma is Co-

lombian. (Colombia is three times bigger than Poland and has ten million more inhabitants; its culture is four times older than Poland's.) It so happened that she married a Pole. Marrying a European represents a valuable step upward on the social ladder in South and Central America. In Warsaw, Vilma sometimes gets called a "kacapka" (ka-TSAP-ka, a derogatory Polish word for Russians). She once asked me what that word means. I explained to her. With her exotic features and foreign accent, she is often mistaken for a Ukrainian. In Poland, Ukraine represents the Third World. Vilma, unlike Pani Cesia, does not sell her cheap labour; she has a retail business. In Bogota, steel pots and leather goods are highly valued at the moment, she tells me. I don't know how many steel pots and leather jackets Vilma has exported to Colombia, but we can be sure that it has not changed the structure of trade there or the balance of power. Colombia is divided into three informal but operational zones of influence: American, Russian, and German. Each of those countries works together with a political pressure group, one of the paramilitary groups that de facto rule half of Colombia: the FARC, the ELN and the AUC. The countries of the First World must, after all, protect their interests, i.e., the deposits they have their hands on. Besides emeralds and gold, Colombia chiefly exports petroleum, coffee, coal, bananas and cut flowers. Colombia is a very rich country inhabited by poor people, in which for 50 years a war has raged against the country's own society. Those who act to defend the poor are brutally murdered. In the last decade, 10,000 people were murdered there, of whom over one

fifth were members of trade unions. Not to mention those arrested. Punishment for trade union activity can be up to 40 years' imprisonment. Human life is cheap in Colombia. Having opposition or trade union members murdered costs between \$200 and \$350. (The dollar is the de facto currency of Colombia.) 250,000 people have been thrown out of their own homes due to the occupation of the areas where they lived by paramilitary forces. 4,000 were forced to flee abroad (this number represents official political asylum seekers, not Colombian migrant workers). 180,000 soldiers in the official Colombian army and 120,000 police officers patrol the streets and roads of Colombia. 600,000 mercenaries and members of paramilitary brigades daily carry out their "service." That includes 15,000 commandos. 10,000 reservists and 20,000 paramilitary soldiers stand on call, awaiting President Uribe's orders. The spine of this gigantic war machine consists of a system of civilian denunciation, with over a million paid informers, created over a short time by Uribe. Maintaining a machine of this sort costs astronomical sums, which is why the Uribe regime is the third largest recipient (after Israel and Egypt) of US military aid. Washington spends about \$2 million daily on aid to the Colombian army and surveillance and protection of its strategic areas and companies, allowing it control of the entire Andean region.

Vilma fears for her son. Every Colombian with a lighter complexion or who lives in a nicer neighbourhood risks being kidnapped for the extortion of ransom money. So when she found a school for her son, she immediate-

ly looked for a flat across the street. For five years she watched through her window curtains every day to make sure that her son managed to safely cross the street and enter the school. The same thing repeated itself in the afternoon when he was coming home. When her son finished high school, Vilma could not see any future for him in Colombia. The country, according to data from the International Labour Organization, holds first place among 119 countries in its permanent violation of labour laws.

Each time she returns from Bogota, Vilma brings me a package of the best Colombian coffee as a present. Quite a bit of coffee has accumulated in my cupboard, as I do not have a grinder. But the coffee is just a good example. After oil, coffee beans are the most important export commodity in the world – the classic (neo)colonial commodity.

The pioneer importers of coffee into Europe were the Dutch. The islanders of Java, a Dutch colony, were forced by Dutch administrators to plant and raise 650 coffee trees in their rice fields, and sell the harvest to government-run storehouses for a previously designated price (a price, it should go without saying, well below the product's actual value). In addition, all Javanese had to work for free on the plantations of the Dutch colonists. As a result, their ability to produce rice for their own use was dramatically reduced, leading to catastrophic famine.

We often read and hear about the fighting in Sri Lanka, the former Ceylon, in daily news reports, without knowing

what is really going on. In fact, coffee lies at the historical source of the conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Coffee was brought to Ceylon by the ships of the Dutch East India Company, but its cultivation became important only after the colony was taken over by the British. The numbers speak for themselves: in 1812, 152 tons of coffee were harvested in Ceylon; in 1845, 15,200 tons. In the course of 30 years, production rose a hundredfold. That boom caused a shortage of labour. Sinhalese peasants did not want to work on coffee plantations dirt-cheap. The British therefore brought Tamils from southern India to work there. Since that time, the Tamils have transformed into the largest minority group, and the powerful tensions between Tamils and Sinhalese date to that era. The problem was also inflamed by the armed uprising of the Sinhalese against the British in the mid-19th century. A few years after its bloody suppression, the coffee plantations of Ceylon were stricken with disease. Due to a fall in coffee prices on the markets of London, Hamburg, and Amsterdam, the British replaced coffee production with tea production. Over 20 years, the agrarian structure of Ceylon was completely changed in the interest of the East India Company.

The fact that children work on coffee and tea plantations does not particularly afflict our conscience. After all, in Poland as well, children help with the harvest of grain and potatoes or pick strawberries. Sending whole schools out to pick potatoes used to be a normal pedagogical exercise. Working for one's allowance money is also nothing un-

usual in the so-called First World and surprises no one. Furthermore, no one in the First World is surprised these days to find luxury goods of many worldwide companies produced by children in India, the Philippines or Taiwan. It is children who sew shoes and balls for Adidas and Ecco, and children who produce cheap shoes for Europeans in India, cut and polish precious stones in India and Thailand, polish the cheap marble for our tombstones, squeeze orange juice for us in the factories of Brazil, roll cigars in Indonesia, sew clothes in Guatemala, make rugs in Turkey, Morocco, and Afghanistan, weave labour-intensive materials from cotton and wool – both those that are cheap here, and those that are more expensive, from which the greatest fashion designers develop their costly creations, toys, electronic gadgets, extract wolframite from the earth in the mines of Latin America for our light bulbs, produce bricks, work as servants in houses, and so on. Is there anything children can't do? We can leave aside child prostitution or the child janissaries in Africa for the moment. Bans on employing children change nothing. The scope of child labour is so large that if suddenly all children working throughout the world went on strike in solidarity, it would take a maximum of one week for the world to feel the painful consequences.

A friend of mine, in his search for an escape from the monotony of office life, got a job working for an association that helps Third World countries and travelled to Brazil, where he worked with homeless children for a year. At the end, he organized a collection among the more affluent

members of his circle to ensure his charges a certain level of existence – together, they bought the children a dump at the landfill where the children were already working every day, looking for odds and ends that they could somehow use or sell. The problem was that they had to engage in bloody fights with other children who also wanted to get inside the dump. After his return, he told of children disappearing without a trace, kidnapped for their organs. Was it a coincidence that a month later, on a train from Katowice to Berlin, I met two young women on their way to Germany to sell their kidneys? Was it a coincidence that a few weeks later, ARTE broadcast a report about twelve year-old Lena from Lithuania, who, like the children in South America, spent whole days working at a landfill, looking for useful scraps? Lena's father is an alcoholic and her mother is dying of cancer. She lives with her mother in a shack on the outskirts of town. Lena is very gifted, but is dropping out of school in order to feed herself and her mother. When she goes to school, the others run away from her, since Lena stinks of the landfill.

A friend of mine who is a doctor used her vacation time to travel with Doctors Without Borders to the Colombian city of Kali, where spent three weeks as a volunteer, treating children in the slums. She returned recharged by the children's energy and *joie de vivre* and their parents' gratitude, something sorely missing in her experience in Germany, and to this day basks in the glow of their praise. She did something good. For herself as well. But is charity work the only cure for the world's misery?

Jeffrey Sachs, a 50 year-old Harvard economics professor, works in various capacities, including as a “special advisor” to Kofi Annan; known to post-Communist Poland and several other countries mainly for the outrageous fees he demanded for his priceless advice, he has recently published a book entitled *The End of Poverty. How We Can Make it Happen in Our Lifetime*. This time for a mere 15 euros rather than millions, in a book of fewer than 300 pages, Sachs shares his experiences in Poland, India, China, Africa, and Bolivia. He makes a heartfelt case to readers that poor countries are poor not because people there are lazy, but because they are cursed with a poor climate, poor farming conditions, natural resources that are difficult to extract, a remote (sic!) location from world centres of commerce, and administrative corruption. It is also no accident that they are being decimated by AIDS and malaria, since they have no money for medicine. But all the same, they are no dumber than other inhabitants of planet earth and must work hard to earn their daily dollar.

Such touching stories leave room for doubt as to the real expertise of the economics professor whom the New York Times would have us bow to as the pope of the new world economy. He appears not even to understand what is happening before his eyes – namely, not only why these drugs are so expensive, but also why all attempts by Third or even [formerly] Second World countries to produce their own drugs against AIDS or malaria are opposed with ruthless fury. Furthermore, an appendix to the international TRIPS agreement (relating to international recognition of patents)

states that poor countries – such as, for example, Kenya – have to pay the same price, even for life-saving antibiotics, as (for example) Norwegians. But if in Norway health expenditures amount to \$2,300 per capita annually, in Kenya the figure is \$17. As a result of the TRIPS agreement being concluded, Kenyans are not allowed to import much cheaper antibiotics from countries such as India. Jeffrey D. Sachs, who before coming to Poland in 1989 grew his fortune as an advisor in Bolivia (leading to the recent near-eruption of civil war in that country), writes about the exploitation of resources. He does not write, however, about who exploited those resources and why.

Bolivia – now the poorest country in South America, three times larger than Poland with a population of nearly nine million, heir to the Inca culture – was until recently one of the richest in raw materials on the continent. Deposits of gold, silver, zinc, and lithium have been almost completely plundered, mainly, as the American press likes to euphemistically put it in such cases, “by the northern hemisphere.” A crisis triggered in the 1980s by drastic IMF debt (70% of the nation’s income went toward paying off the debt) and capital flight caused protests among Bolivians, mostly trade-unionists. When the water-supply in the province of Cochabamba was privatized in 2000 (it was sold dirt-cheap to an American company), water prices immediately rose by 300%. In a country where the average family’s yearly income before taxes is around \$50, this was a real shock. It is not surprising, therefore, that the population were spurred to take dramatic action:

there were hunger strikes, general strikes, roadblocks. It was dubbed the “war for water.” Finally, the trade-unions managed to get the state to take back its water deposits. The state water supply is now managed by citizens’ committees throughout Bolivia. In recent years, Bolivians have fought their government over the nationalization of Bolivia’s last remaining natural wealth – its deposits of oil and natural gas. Strikes and widespread pressure from public opinion have yielded no results. The power of the trade-unions has proved limited. The people of Bolivia formed their own political movement– Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS). The government did not keep its promises to the people, because president Carlos Mesa, a decent man and a popular figure, was unable to stand up to the Americans. Then came the drastic tax increase imposed by the IMF (again Jeffrey D. Sachs was responsible). The army met social protests with fire. Some protesters were mortally wounded. Not surprisingly, the radical wing of MAS resolved to arm themselves. Citizens’ committees, who just six months earlier, in December 2004, had taken power in half of the country following municipal elections, mobilized Bolivians to march to La Paz, the seat of the government. On the eve of a potential civil war, the president resigned from office. It was no coincidence that Bolivia’s gigantic debts to the IMF and World Bank were cancelled at almost literally the last second.

The term counterinsurgency is now officially defined as combating uprisings, rebellions, all kinds of partisan or guerrilla groups, more broadly and euphemistically,

terrorism. Unofficially and primarily, it means combating resistance to neo-colonialism. Mainly in the Third World, of course, because it is hungry and angry. The war on terror is being conducted by the United States with the participation of the armies of all the countries allied in NATO, including Poland in the Third World. Monitoring the citizens of a country has always been the task of its authorities, who are in turn monitored by certain sectors whose interests the authorities take seriously. (Power belongs to whoever has his hands on the raw materials.) In his book *World Orders Old and New*, Noam Chomsky writes:

The two superpowers of the Cold War era were at opposite extremes of the contemporary spectrum with regard to internal freedom and democracy, but the problem of population control was common to their domestic power structures: in the Soviet Union, the military-bureaucratic network established by Lenin and Trotsky as they took power in October 1917, moving quickly to crush all socialist and other popular tendencies; in the United States, the industrial-financial-commercial sector, concentrated and interlinked, highly class conscious, and increasingly transnational in the scope of its planning, management, and operations.

The Cold War confrontation provided easy formulas to justify criminal action abroad and entrenchment of privilege and state power at home. [...] apologists

on both sides could explain reflexively that however regrettable, the acts were undertaken for reasons of “national security” in response to the cruel and menacing superpower enemy. [...] The mechanisms of control naturally differ in a totalitarian state and a state capitalist democracy, but there have been striking features in common [...]. When the Russians sent tanks to East Berlin, Budapest, or Prague, or devastated Afghanistan, [...] the United States [...] conducted global programs of violence and subversion while maintaining the Pentagon-based state industrial policy that has been a prime factor in economic growth.

Packaging is more important than its contents – which is why these shameful chapters in American history are sold in the idealistic trimmings of a civilizing mission, taking democracy to the savages.

It was interesting to observe how, with the threat from the USSR dwindling in the late 1980s, a new enemy had to be found: whether it was international terrorism, Latin American drug cartels, Islamic fundamentalism, or instability itself, or the general “decay” of Third World countries.

Today, the Cold War is a matter for the archives, but its model remains active.

Arundhati Roy, an Indian writer known for her civic and social engagement, recently published an essay on the

draconian law introduced by the Indian government after the September 11 attacks, known by the acronym POTA (Prevention of Terrorism Act), used to stifle any kind of resistance. She mentions the province of Tamil Nadu, where the government uses POTA to nip any criticism in the bud; the province of Jharkhand, where 3200 members of the local impoverished Adivasi population were arrested, allegedly for being Maoist rebels; the province of Uttar Pradesh, where the law was used against activists organizing demonstrations against the plunder of their land, and the provinces of Gujarat and Mumbai, where the Muslim population was brutally pacified with the help of the law. "In Gujarat, after the 2002 pogrom in which an estimated 2,000 Muslims were killed, 287 people were accused under Pota: 286 were Muslim and one a Sikh. Pota allows confessions extracted in police custody to be admitted as evidence. Under the Pota regime, torture tends to replace investigation in our police stations [...]."

Arundhati Roy participated in a people's tribunal that investigated the effects of POTA and the methods applied in its implementation. The evidence she confronted is terrifying even for readers a hemisphere away; the range of tortures used in police stations is broad, from verbal abuse and humiliation, being made to strip, being forced to drink urine, being burned with cigarettes, and being anally penetrated with metal rods to electric shocks, kicking, and deathly beatings. Not a single person has yet been indicted or sentenced for implementing such tortures. Arundhati Roy expresses amazement that in spite

of the advances in communication and dissemination of information in the twenty-first century, nobody in the world takes any serious interest in such facts, and India is hailed in the international arena as pretty nearly a model Asian democracy. It is true that without India, global capital would see half as much profit as it currently does.

What, then, is a human being in the Third World? A what, indeed, not a who. Complete dehumanization is typical for the division of worlds. First of all – a human being is a cheap labour force; second – a problem that can't be solved, though one speaks of it with concern; and third – a human being is a terrorist or potential terrorist. The "Third Worlder" need not inhabit Burkina Faso, Brazil, or the Philippines. He may just as well live in the U.S., Japan, or Poland. After all, everywhere on earth, even in Burkina Faso or Haiti, i.e. the poorest countries, there exist forms of social segregation. Low social status inevitably meets with discrimination. The increasing poverty in the world signifies nothing more or less than the growing reproduction of low status. Its most important feature is the lack of education. Education, however, has ceased to be a guarantee of improved status. This is proven by the example of Germany, where the early 2005 "reform" of benefits for the unemployed, called Hartz IV (Niemcy, despite its leading position in Europe, particularly in average income, is currently going through an economic crisis comparable with the state of the nation during the Weimar Republic), flattened support for all unemployed people, whether engineers, doctors, lawyers, economists, computer scientists,

journalists or beggars, to the same minimal level. Education, previous earnings, or work experience no longer matter. At the same time, despite student protests, admission fees were gradually introduced at the hitherto free state universities, closing the doors of higher education to masses of young people. The transfer of profitable production to China or Slovakia and the unbridled excesses, previously seen only in Hollywood films, of hedge-funds buying out perfectly functioning factories and closing them have ruined entire cities, at first economically and then socially. (Germany let this Trojan horse, the culprit in the Asian crisis of 1997 and the total collapse of the Indonesian economy, into its territory in January 2004.) These processes of destruction are made easier by the fact that societies all over the contemporary world, but particularly those of highly industrialized countries, are not communities. Their economic, political, and legal structures offer only weak guidance toward individual cultural identity. The systems by which they function – a capitalist, free-market money economy, nation-state political organization, and the system of schooling responsible for citizens' upbringing – treat individuals as the workforce, as consumers, as patients, pupils, objects of jurisdiction and – when the time for it comes around – voters. Roles are assigned from above, depending on the needs of the authorities. And those authorities are not merely administrative or parliamentary. They are not even primarily that. Our civilization displaces the human being from his life so that he becomes atomized, divided into various fragmentary functions, which for their part are optimized as

absolute goals in themselves – so warned the outstanding French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu before his untimely death. The atomized citizen will not even perceive the moment when he falls from the Second or First World to the Third. And even if he does perceive it and organizes in highly diverse anti- or alter-globalist and antiwar or anti-destruction movements, he is in no position to stop this gigantic, pandemic freeze that will sweep him from the face of the earth as another ice age once swept away the dinosaurs. As Noam Chomsky has warned, the world that is taking shape before our very eyes is an artificial, inhuman, precarious one, engaged in destroying every form of life and itself in the process.

Superpowers like the US are supposedly taking democracy to the Third World to “rescue” it. They are currently instituting democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq. They have established it in such places as Liberia, Haiti, and Sudan, where another war has just broken out (really the same war that has been raging there for 23 years). Does democracy really save people? Here is the answer to that question, from Otfried Höffe, professor of political philosophy at the University of Tübingen:

In a democracy, a citizen is not merely a subject of the law, but also its authority. He is not only subjected to the law, but is also, directly or indirectly, a member of the authority that drafts and legislates the law, the legislature. This is to enable justice to become reality, in accordance with its moral purpose. The determinant

factor in real politics, however, is power, understood, for example, as the ability to play off other interests against one another, or to control the media politically, intellectually or emotionally. Although power may serve the interest of a particular interpretation of justice, more often than not it represents only particular interests. This is opposed by a sense of justice.

Laissez-faire liberalism suppresses the problem because it, firstly, deems every interest to be organisable and, secondly, assumes that the competition of organised interests leads to a balance of power that cannot be assessed by an independent metric of justice. As a result, the state can, thirdly, limit itself to the role of umpire. In reality, certain groups that share interests and convictions are better at organising themselves into associations, becoming effective as lobbyists and presenting themselves in the media. These interests then become relatively too powerful. And thus a phenomenon is brought to life that, in contrast with the usual quantitative variant, may be called a qualitative majority and qualitative minority.

The Third World. Even the most modern societies in the richest countries are similar to the poorest – all of them live with the pressure of competition, all of them feature structural unemployment (with varying intensity), the liquidation of social protections, the marginalization or even exclusion of broad masses of the population, and all of the above intensified by the state's abdication from

its responsibility for the good of its citizens. Then, piled upon that, we have growing economic deregulation, cultural collapse, and, *last but not least*, antiterrorist legislation geared toward social control.

What are the Third World's tasks? They are clearly demarcated: providing services for rich nations, cheap labour, raw materials, surplus markets, investment opportunities, export targets for rubbish and radioactive waste, money laundering, and tourism. What will the society of the near future look like? The Third World is expanding, spilling across the whole globe like oil from a leaky tanker, menacing all of us far more than the pandemonium of bird flu. The Third World is an ocean of poverty and degradation, pacified peoples, controlled, under surveillance by millions of cameras installed on the facades of democracy – with islands of luxury accessible to the chosen few, around 10%.

Unless they manage in time to seize control of their fate. In the name of justice.

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translated by Timothy Williams