

## Entrevista con Victor Krasilshchikov<sup>1</sup>

### **What is your position about the globalization impact in the peripheral regions of the world system? and which is the role of Latin America in this reality?**

At first, I would like, responding to this question, to change it a little. In my opinion, it would be better to clarify whether it is relevant to speak about the impact of globalisation on peripheral regions of the world-system or the recent forms of globalisation are results, to a big degree, of the original world-system's subdivision into the centre (core) and periphery. Instead, the gap, previously rather qualitative than quantifiable by means of various statistical data, between the world core and periphery had risen at dawn of industrial capitalism and continued widening before the recent globalisation. Since the latter, even in its predominantly financial, the most devastating form, is based upon the increasing role of science and technology, it is not surprising that globalisation has been accompanying by 'digital divide' and other shocking disparities. Most peripheral countries cannot be 'promoters' of scientific and technological accomplishments. They are enforced, by many circumstances, to be passively adapting to globalisation. In other words, they are 'globalisation-takers'. In such conditions, the problem of gap is aggravating.

What concerns Latin America, it is difficult to speak about the continent as a whole in the process of globalisation. Today, due, to a big degree, to the increased demand of EU, China and India for Latin American goods over the last years, the role of Latin America looks as very important. Nevertheless, it is incorrect to approach to all countries of the continent with the common, universal measure. For example, Brazil has real chances to make breakthrough to the core, if, of course, the Brazilian politicians will not make mistakes and Brazilian people, ordinary voters will not believe in beautiful tales various political cheats like to tell. Some successes, although contradictory in themselves, can be seen in Mexico. Meanwhile, Haiti or Paraguay, for example, will pertain to the world periphery, and even aid of other Latin American nations to them can be efficient only to small degree.

In this connection, I intend expressing one idea that diverges from widespread approaches to the world-system. Namely, backwardness of many poor Latin American

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<sup>1</sup> Victor Krasilshchikov (Krasilchtchikov), head of the research group of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations in Moscow and convener of the working group "Transformations in the World System - Comparative Studies of Development" of EADI.

countries, in its turn, impedes to the scientific-technological revolution in the developed countries. Indeed, from the point of view of many businessmen in the core, it is unnecessary to worry about new technologies if it is possible to get relatively cheap raw materials and ordinary, non-durable manufacturing goods from poor countries exploiting their labour force.

Therefore, the ever-extending inequality that accompanies the recent stage of globalisation is not only dangerous in social-political respect, it is disadvantageous for the core, too. However, many people who take strategic decisions in the West not always can see an inch beyond their noses. Their greed prevails over their proper long-term interests.

**As a chief of an investigation group in the "Institute of World Economy and International Relations" in Moscow. What's your opinion about the crescent relevance of the energetic resources in the world economy and it's utilization as a power source**

In my opinion, an importance of energy resources is somewhat exaggerated. This exaggeration corresponds to the interests of many players, including OPEC, big petroleum companies and American bankers because, in particular, oil prices are nominated in US dollars, and their uninterrupted increase maintain liquidity of devaluating dollar. Meanwhile, it is well known that if cars in the US would consume as much gasoline as the European Union's vehicles, America could drastically diminish import of petroleum. Then, the prices should have to decrease... Unfortunately, only few people in the US understand how prodigal American economy is...

In addition, the increasing global demand for energy resources is partly conditioned by the fascinating growth in China and India, not speaking about the group of East Asian 'tigers'. However, I think, these countries will stimulate the use of energy-saving technologies.

Hence, the fuel resources are significant as essential elements of the global power only within definite period of contemporaneity. In the long-term prospect those nations, business entities and civil societies' groupings, which worry about saving of resources, will be among the global winners. Prodigality cannot be eternal, permanent feature of the future economies.

Today, what is much more important than the energy resources concerns an access to pure waters. This is the Problem.

**Which is Russia's role nowadays in the world economy? Which are the perspectives of the country in the foreseeable future?**

To our profound sorrow, Russia drifts to periphery of the world economy, though, at the first sight, this drift can be hidden beyond fascinating figures of the economic growth rate. This process began not yesterday. It has been developing since the late-60s – the mid-70s of the past century when the mobilisation, command-administrative model of economy had accomplished its function and it was necessary to transform it into the socially oriented market economy.

Very often, scholars, who are adherent to ideas of Immanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin and Andre Gunder Frank, argue that pertinence of a country to the world periphery is conditioned by its involvement into the world trade. However, sometimes one or another country is obliged, by a set of internal contradictions and disparities, to enlarge its external economic ties because the latter look as the only way to resolve the internal problems (and without reforms!). In particular, it was the case of the former Soviet Union and some other "socialist" countries of Eastern Europe. Over the last decades, already after dissolution of the Soviet Union, influential groups of *lumpen-burguesía* (in words of A.G. Frank), have arisen in Russia. As a result of these groups' activity, a dependence of the country on the exports of gas and petroleum is intensifying. Now, the share of such commodities as gas, petroleum, petroleum products and ferrous metals in the total Russian exports is about 70 per cent (50.3 per cent – in 2000). Really, the so-called prosperity in Russia today is relative and unstable. It is supported by massive inflow of petrodollars. Simultaneously, the total volume of imports of machinery and, mainly, consumer goods of high quality increases (this is similar, in many respects, to the pre-crisis situation in Argentina over 1998-2001). In addition, the yields of prosperity as well as the lion share of high incomes have been concentrating in Moscow and few other big cities. At the same time, inhabitants of small towns and countryside live in poverty. Applying the criteria of poverty proposed by CEPAL/ECLAC for Latin America to an analysis of the Russian situation, we get shocking results: 40-50 per cent of the total Russian population (30-35 per cent of households/homes) live beyond the 'Latin American' poverty line. The wages/salaries of 50 per cent of all working people oscillate within limit of 1.0-2.0 lines of poverty. Even according to the official assessments, about 40 million people (of 142 million in total) cannot feed themselves; they regularly under-eat, from the point of view of medical norms. Many people lost any hope for improvement of their life. It is not surprising that the total population of the Russian Federation is shrinking by 700-

800 thousand people per year. The announced National Project aimed at mass housing and stimulation of natality is failing; it has become a kind of propaganda.

Russia experiences the widening interregional disparities, too. According to the official statistics, the gross regional product (GRP) per capita (at current prices) in the richest region (Tyumen, West Siberia, where most petroleum and gas fields are located) exceeds the same indicator in the poorest one (the autonomous Republic of Ingushetia, North Caucasus) 45-47 times. By GRP per capita measured in US dollars by purchasing parity power, the city of Moscow has reached the level of EU whereas this indicator in neighbour regions (200-300 km from the capital!) is similar to one in Bolivia or Perú.

At last, it has to be noted that the external debt of Russia grows reaching genuinely sky-high magnitude while the government performs radical decrease of the country's indebtedness as outstanding achievement. Yes, of course, the public debt of Russia is small, 47 billion dollars on the 1-st of October. However, the total external debt continues increasing. According to the official data of the Central Bank of Russia, it has reached 385 billion dollars on the 1-st of July and now exceeds 400 billion dollars. At least, a half of this amount is borrowed by the big companies that stay under formal state control: "Gasprom", "Rosneft" (Russian Petroleum Company), etc. It is notable that almost nobody can say how this huge amount of borrowed money has been used. In any case, it is clear that Russia is steadily moving towards the situation of debt trap, which is well described in Argentina and other Latin American countries.

Certainly, Russia is not yet completely peripheral country. There are still some enclaves of the advanced industry, high technologies, science, etc. Nonetheless, the general trend is negative, and it is much more important than the current state. Moreover, I do not see the social actors of modernisation. The so-called middle class residing in big cities can hardly be agent of accelerated development, not only because the ruling circles' interests block real modernisation but also on reason of its social weakness. In many respects, this stratum can be compared with the Argentine middle class described by José Eduardo Abadi y Diego Mileo en el libro "No somos tan buena gente: Un retrato de la clase media Argentina" (Buenos Aires: Debolsillo). It is oriented to prestigious consumption, like shopping, have ambitious pretensions for something non-understandable but is, in essence, extremely egoistic and cannot elaborate strategic vision.

The official intentions to make 'the new energy super-power' from Russia have not solid base. Instead, Russia can experience a shortage of gas and petroleum for domestic consumption over two-three-four years. Hence, it would be more correct not talking about energetic super power but power of insignificant importance. In the long-term prospect, over 10-25 years, Russia risks to be disintegrated and can disappear from the world political map because it is impossible to control such large territory having technologically backward, ineffective economy and inefficient, corrupted state machine.

**The world is at this time *de facto* multipolar although not recognized by the theory, is recognized in diplomatic affairs. Which are the bases of the russian foreign policy in this new state of affairs?**

An idea of transition towards multipolar world seems to me irrelevant. Certainly, if I would occupy position of the Minister of foreign affairs, I should speak about multipolarity but I am not minister, I am social scientist, and all talks about multipolarity, from my point of view, look as a kind of no-scientific fiction. In the best case, multipolarity can be temporary state, inherent to the transition period, but it cannot be stable in the future, over long time. Since we still live in framework of the economic formation of society where labour and production of material goods predominate as fields of human activity, an increasing significance of creativity, scientific knowledge and education notwithstanding, the world-system will continue to be subdivided into the centre (core), periphery and semi-periphery. At the same time, in the centre, one country or region (may be, EU) can inevitably become the scientific-technological leader and, thereby, has to be "more central" than other countries or regions belonging to the world core. The world hegemony (of the US, in the given case) has been based upon undeniable scientific-technological superiority and economic achievements. It is not result of whoever's conscious efforts or "bad will"; it is one of expressions of the capitalist accumulation in the world scale.

Today, the US leadership and hegemony is declining but it does not mean that we are entering the bright epoch of multipolarity. We can hate America following for emotions, we can (and must!) criticise the US policy, in particular, for many stupidities. For example, the US-driven "struggle for democracy" in Asia, whether it is in Iraq or Pakistan, does not lead to triumph of liberal values. On the contrary, it becomes the best form of anti-western propaganda. However, it is impossible to ignore the technological superiority of the United States. The Chinese or Korean factories can

manufacture cheap running-shoes or sportive tights of good quality exporting them to the US, Japanese, or EU markets, but it does not yet mean that the centre of the world economic system is replacing to East Asia. The secrets, *know-hows* of inputting matters for those shoes or tights manufacturing are kept in the US or Italian laboratories. This fact is the most important. Thereby, while *brain-intensity* of the world industry and/or agriculture increases, the West as a whole and the US, in particular, continues to occupy the hegemonic positions in the world-system.

The other regions, whether it will be China in alliance with "tigers" or India together with some of the latter, can be able to pick up the world hegemony heritage from the hands of Uncle Sam, if they will be capable to develop comparable intellectual and technological capacities. And I think, that the so-called period of multipolarity will hardly be very long. It will end in 2015-2035 (twenty years are very short period by meta-historic measures).

Unfortunately, today it is very difficult to speak about the Russian Federation's foreign policy which would be adequate to contemporary, very complicate and anxious, reality. In some respects, Russia attempts resisting to the US hegemonic intentions and proclaims an adherence to the principle of multipolarity. Nevertheless, since the foreign policy of the Russian ruling circles has not been correlating with the strategic task of the country's modernisation (as it can be clearly seen in the cases of China, India, or Brazil), this policy is impulsive and inconsistent. Russia has not strategy of the foreign policy because her rulers have not strategy of the country's development corresponding to the recent global challenges. The only interest they defend and promote anywhere in the world is the interest of gas and petroleum companies' expansion. (Also, Russia exports weaponry, but I am not going to consider this very specific business.)

After dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation affirmed the status of the USSR's successor, including permanent membership in the UN Security Council. The Russian Federation pretends defending the ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking people who remained living in the new states, formerly the Soviet republics. In particular, the Russian government and mass media criticise the authorities of Latvia and Estonia for discrimination of the ethnic Russians residing in these Baltic countries. Indeed, this very serious problem concerns more 1 million people in total. Many of them have passports of "strangers" and deprived of many civil rights. (In 2006, the European Commission decided to admit these people entering the EU countries without visas.) Nevertheless, these people live in incomparably better conditions than Russians do in the Central Asian countries, particularly, in Turkmenistan, where many Russians

were enforced, by the local ethnocratic dictatorship, to refuse their Russian citizenship, often under threat of imprisonment. Meanwhile, the Russian government did nothing to defend these people because "Gasprom", one of the most non-transparent corporations in the world, was interested to maintain good relations with Niyazov ("Turkmen-Bashi"), the dictator of Turkmenistan until his enigmatic death in 2007. The Russians from other former Soviet republics meet a lot of bureaucratic obstacles when they desire to become the citizens of the Russian Federation. For example, sometimes, they have absurdly been requested to submit certificate confirming that such big cities as Baku or Tashkent (the capitals of Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, respectively) were located until 1991 on the territory of the USSR. Then, how is it possible to pretend for succession of the Soviet Union? Meanwhile, the Russian rulers even do not think that their inconsistent policy puts the Russia's status of the permanent member of the UN Security Council under question.

The Russian ruling regime worries about image of Russia in the world. However, its leaders do not understand a banal truth: the best way to create the positive image of Russia is not propaganda but genuine social-economic and technological modernisation of the country. If Russia will become attractive in eyes of her neighbours, then many (though, of course, not all!) problems of reintegration on the post-soviet territory will be resolved. Unfortunately, today we see how relations of Russia with many countries are worsening while Russia does not find new allies and friendly partners, except such specific countries as Iran or Venezuela.

**Science and Technology are essential to understand the "*sustainable development*" of the "*developing countries*", which is the role should Russia occupy in the scientific-technological cooperation with these countries?**

Instead, the role of science and technologies is undoubted. Speaking about the potential contribution of Russia into the scientific-technological cooperation with the developing countries, it is relevant to distinguish "what has to be done?" and "what can really be done?" from each other. Potentially, Russia could become one of the leading scientific-technological powers in the world. Moreover, it should be imperative for us: Russia is northern country, and manufacturing of many goods for mass consumption is disadvantageous, very costly for us from the point of view of expenses for fuel. However, reality is another matter. Once the Russian physicist Jorès Alferov, the Nobel Prize laureate, asked the Minister of energy and industry Victor Khristenko: "What do you think about development of renewable sources of energy and energy-saving

technologies?" "Let this problem worries countries that import gas and petroleum" –, he replied. One remark can be added to these words: the Russian economy expends four times more energy per unit of GDP than the French or Japanese economies do. It is two times more prodigal than the US economy. I think, further comments are unnecessary.

Perhaps, one recommendation can be given in this connection: the scientific-technological cooperation of the developing (semi-peripheral) countries, such ones as Argentina, with Russia has to take place at the level of several scientific-technological centres or institutes, sometimes, with assistance of the regional authorities in big cities, but not with the federal bureaucratic machine in Russia. By the way, Singapore firms and scientific-technological incubators are now very active in Tomsk, the city in the eastern part of West Siberia, where concentration of intellectual capacities per capita of population exceeds that in Moscow or St-Petersburg by its density.

### **Which are the main obstacles to achieve a reasonable natural and human resources development in this new era of multipolar globalization?**

At first, let's modify your question. In my opinion, it is hardly possible to speak about multipolar globalisation. May be, such globalisation will rise in the future but today globalisation has one-polar character. Its impulses come from the US. Certainly, the US-driven globalisation took neoliberal forms because these forms corresponded to the US interests and, in particular, to task of maintaining the US hegemony. Now we see the worldwide decline of neoliberalism, rigidity of neoliberal rhetoric notwithstanding. Moreover, it is very difficult to maintain superiority in science and technologies in the recent conditions, and this is one of expressions of globalisation, too. Today, the scientific-technological achievements have very rapidly been spilling over national boundaries, and we see how other serious players enters the world scene: China and "tigers", India, EU, Brazil. They all are 'globalisation-makers'. However, none of these global players pretends changing the recent model of the world-system. Each of them tends to be successfully adapted to contemporary forms of globalisation, getting some advantages (yields) for themselves, to more or lesser degree, but none of them proposes the alternative project of globalisation. It can be said, assessing this phenomenon from the point of view of the long-term prospects, that this is very dangerous situation because any system without opposition, without alternative(s) variant(s) is unstable and is unable to preserve itself from systemic crises in the future.

Secondly, returning to your question, I would like to note that the main obstacle to radical improvement of the world situation is the recent form of one-polar, neoliberalism-driven globalisation. Nonetheless, let's not charge the responsibility for the recent situation only with the Bretton-Woods institutions, Wall Street, the US Treasury and multinational corporations, mainly the US based. All these actors of neoliberal globalisation have satellites, good allies who are interested maintaining the conditions of 'manageable chaos', too, fighting against 'the World Evil'. We see the rise of "grey communities" – an enlargement of *les zones du non-droit*, speaking by words of the former French Prime Minister Édouard Balladur, increasing number of the 'fragile' or even 'failed' states, and, what is the most essential, mass marginalisation of many people. They all are not only victims of neoliberal globalisation but also its actors who involuntarily shape it, acting, so to speak, from below, from the side of the world under-class. In other words, they represent not alternative to neoliberal globalisation but the reverse side of the latter, making up 'a single team' of reactionary, ultra-conservative forces of the past together with George Bush-jr., the US Treasury and Bretton-Woods institutions. Any real alter-globalisation would mean social-political death not only for the US-based drivers of 'free market and liberal democracy' but also for them, including such figures as Hugo Chávez, Mahmoud Ahmadinedjad, Alexander Lukashenko, and Usama Ben Laden, disobedient financial and political child of the CIA, as well. They can politically survive only criticising neoliberalism, exposing 'snares of devil' and dissipating "*olor de azufre*" in the hall of the UN General Assembly. If 'devil' will suddenly disappear, being defeated, they will lose any attractiveness in eyes of '*the Wretched of the Earth*'/*Les damnés de la Terre*' (here, I use words of Frantz Fanon), remaining denuded in political-ideological respect.

Thus, the obstacles to transition towards another model of globalisation are of twofold social nature. On the one hand, there is an extremely model of prodigal consumption sanctified by neoliberal, pro-market demagogy and mantras of 'free competition and democracy'. On the other hand, there is a broad conglomerate of various social group, political currents, religious confessions, etc., which are resisting to real positive changes. The both groups of reactionary forces belong to 'civilisation of the Second Wave', as Alvin and Heidi Toffler say.

**Lastly, I would like to consult you about the activities and investigation programs of the "Centro de Estudios para el desarrollo del Instituto de Economía Mundial y Relaciones Internacionales de la Academia de Ciencias Rusas", which are currently in process?**

Our Center (Chief – Dr. Vladimir Khoros) produce investigations about problems of developing countries. We study the processes in the big Asian Countries like India and China, and also we pay attention about the “industrial asian tigers”. We have a good tradicion on research in Middle East and Central Asia but last year died our “global super specialist” in Iberoamerica, Kiva Maydanik. Also, we make comparative researchs between Russia and other semi-periferic countries. This studies are very important to understand what happen in Russia.

What concerns myself, I suggest approaching, individually or in small group, to study of ‘anti-modernisation’. Over the last thirty years, we saw the rise of various political currents and, in some cases, the establishment of regimes as well, which operate under the slogans of ‘autochthoneity’ criticising the recent forms of globalisation, capitalism, etc. However, this is a critic from the points of view of reactionary utopianism (see chapter 3 of the Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels). This process is being observed in the CIS, including Russia, and even some East European countries despite their membership in EU, it affects somewhat Latin America and does not go beyond East Asian “tigers”, particularly, after the financial quakes of 1997-98. What are the social-economic foundations of these phenomena, what is changing in the social structure of countries under scrutiny, how do globalisation affect everyday life? These and many other questions expect for researchers who can be able to answer to them.

In conclusion, I would like to note that our social sciences have a juvenile character. We study the rise of new social systems and their functioning at the stage of maturity but we do not like studying the stages of social systems’ decline. I think, now it is time to fill this ‘white field’ in our knowledges.