



**ROUTINE RESOLUTION IN ROME:
CONTINUED RISING RESISTANCE IN THE WORLD**

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The recent World Food Summit in Rome closed without dealing with the real causes of the food crisis in the world, opting instead to promise, as predicted, to provide more emergency and dependency-creating aid, and to invest more in agriculture in developing countries without conceding that the meager things offered only increase debt and dependence and without making the key commitment to cancel and rewrite the so-called “free trade” treaties which grossly disadvantage developing countries, flood their economies with subsidized produce and goods, disrupt and destroy their local agricultures, national economies and ecosystems and drive millions from the rural areas to problem-ridden cities and suffering-filled slums. The rich donor nations duly debated the complexity and multifaceted nature of the current food crisis, offering reasons which range from rising energy costs and drought in large agricultural regions to war, civil conflict and the increasing demands of a growing meat-eating middle class in China and India which requires more grain and land use for raising animals and less for agriculture to supply food and sustain humans.

Discussion of the diminishing availability of grain for food brought up increasing use by countries, especially the U.S., of grain for fuel. It is estimated that biofuels, especially U.S. ethanol from corn, caused almost half the increase in the worldwide demand for major food crops last year. And this year, approximately one-third of U.S. corn will be used to make ethanol. It is in this context that the Cuban and other delegates rightfully raised the issue of the moral obscenity of using grain for fuel rather than food, especially in the face of impending famine and starvation. Following the established and previous practice of the U.S. president, the U.S. delegation went immedi-

ately into acute denial, rejecting the evidence of the statistics and actual state of things. But as I’ve argued, the problem of globalization is at the heart of not only higher prices and the current food crisis, but also a triple process of domination—oppression in various forms; deprivation—resource robbery and imposed poverty; and degradation—structured denial of the right to a life and livelihood of dignity and decency for the majority of the peoples of the world.

At the center of globalization is the goal of ongoing structured dependence of vulnerable countries in spite of talk of free trade, transparency, structural adjustment, accountability, and canned happiness and hope for everyone. Indeed, there is a whole vocabulary of illusionary practices and promised benefits to disguise the real imperial project which, like a science fiction movie metamorph from outer space, transforms into a monster of dedicated destruction after making preliminary moves to seem human. In cultural conversation, the category “Western” is used to disguise White domination and in economics the geographical term “Northern” is employed to accomplish this, rendering the racial element less repulsive and consoling those concerned with exclusive class discourse, as if White domination is not a combined race/class project and problem.

Having hidden the racial element for the post-racial advocates, one encounters an Orwellian use of the category “free”, i.e., some are more “free” and “more equal” than others and the practice of this specious freedom can and does involve domination, deprivation and degradation of others less equal. Thus, “free enterprise” means that a few Northern corporations control the majority of grain-trading, livestock, poultry, seeds,

milling and food processing in the world; and the International Monetary Fund and World Bank and other Northern institutions monopolize and control international trade and development funding for vulnerable Southern countries, cultivating desperation and dependence.

Moreover, “free trade”, “economic liberalization” and “open markets” mean opening of African, Asian and Latin American markets to the North, not vice versa; protective trade barriers and subsidies (welfare) for farmers of Northern countries to lower production costs, and prohibition of those for Southern countries, thus making them unable to compete and vulnerable to the demands and impositions of the North just to feed their people. These impositions also translate as so-called structural adjustment programs which block and ban social services, human development and support for local agriculture and foster transformation of agriculture into cash crops for export, wiping out local food production for local use and creating structured dependency on donor, dominant and exploiting countries.

But where there is oppression, resistance always rises, and thus countries, peoples and especially peasant or small farmer organizations are continually rising in resistance to the systematic destruction of their farming and food systems and the structured dependence imposed by the process of globalization. Malawi’s courageous rejection of the failed devastating and famine-inducing policies of the IMF and World Bank and restoring support of small farmers which produced a million-ton corn surplus and capacity for supplying Southern Africa serves as an important model of resistance. Also, the resistance movement must expand to address issues of removing dictators and graft-

ridden governments, securing health and human services, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, and increasing empowerment and support of women, not only as food providers, but also as equal partners in rebuilding the countries and the world. It also must explore the possibilities of leverage and alternatives provided by the emergence of China and India as major economic actors.

And we, who understand ourselves as progressives or radicals and perhaps, still as self-defined revolutionaries, owe it to the suffering, oppressed and struggling peoples of the world, ourselves and future generations to stand and act in solidarity with them in their assertion of the right to food security and food sovereignty. Living in a world where waste of food and resources is normal and too often unnoticed and where changing fashion and cheap and expensive fantasies, not food security, form a core of our daily concerns, many of us might miss the meaning of this struggle as a matter of life and death. But such turning of a blind eye to injustice, a deaf ear to truth, and a cold and uncaring heart to human suffering anywhere, also makes us insensitive to the continuing catastrophes and suffering among us, such as the victims of the Katrina flood and governmental neglect. And if we do this, we leave unhonored the lessons of Malcolm X, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Martin Luther King, that we understand and assert ourselves as a world historical people, recognize the web of interdependence in life and struggle and in self-conscious solidarity with others, dare to struggle to heal, repair and transform the world in the interests of a new history of humankind—one founded in freedom, rooted in justice and dedicated to human flourishing in its fullest form.

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