IV387 - March 2007

Sectarian headcount in Irish election sees Paisley triumphant

29 March 2007, by John McAnulty

BELFAST — The 7th March election in the north of Ireland marked the end phase in a long period of Irish history, stretching back to the end of the republican hunger strikes of the 1980s. The decades since have seen the Irish republican movement shift from a strategy of armed struggle to an alliance with native capital (the nationalist family) and seeking a settlement with imperialism.

Gerry Adams (right) with Ian Paisley

The settlement, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, promised "equality of the two traditions" - that there would be an equal share of community rights in the Northern colony.

Of course, that promise was illusory. Even ignoring the replacement of civil rights with community rights, the colony could not exist on an equality of sectarianism. There had to be a Unionist top dog.

The period since has been one of instability and political collapse, with the process moving steadily to the right. In October 2006 the Good Friday Agreement was replaced by the St Andrews settlement, with structural adjustments to meet unionist demands. It has now degenerated into an auction to meet the demands of the rabid sectarian Ian Paisley and his ultra-right party, the Democratic Unionist party.

The recent election opened with Sinn Fein, driven by pressure from the DUP, the British and the Dublin government, declaring active support for the police, state and judicial structures in the colony. This retreat was supposed to be matched by a DUP declaration that they would join a coalition government, but this was not forthcoming and further reactionary demands have been made by the unionists since.

The election ended in electoral triumph for Sinn Fein, who saw off a challenge from traditional republicanism and increased their vote yet again. Their triumph was eclipsed by that of the DUP, now firmly established as the majority party of unionism after unionist voters consigned the UUP, formerly led by David Trimble, to the dustbin of history. Behind the scenes the British government still struggle to establish stability in their colony and set up a local administration, but have the satisfaction of knowing that the anti-imperialist consciousness necessary to fight their rule is at an historic low.

With all 108 seats declared, the DUP have 36 members elected, and Sinn Féin 28. The Ulster Unionists have 18 MLAs, and the SDLP has 16 MLAs. The Alliance Party has 7 MLAs. The loyalist Progressive Unionists held on their East Belfast seat. One Green Party MLA was elected. Independent Dr Kieran Deeny retained his seat in West Tyrone.

This was an election about bread and butter issues, said Tony Blair after the elections. Now its time to get down to business, to implement the bread and butter policies, to co-operate in a new local assembly, he said. It was a view repeated by British secretary of state Hain, by Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and ad nauseam by the local media, which had earnest debates, features and phone-ins about education, water charges and rural affairs. Like most of what emerges from the Blair orifice, all of the above is a lie, in utter contradiction to the reality on the ground.

Sectarian

This was an election that had so little to do with bread and butter that the two candidates who stood solely as "bread and butter" candidates - the Socialist Party/don't pay water charges group - gained only a few hundred votes. In the vast majority of constituencies the outcome could be easily calculated from a sectarian headcount of the population.

Even one of the minor upsets of the campaign - the relatively good showing of the liberal unionist Alliance party, seemed to be a by-blow of overall sectarianism, based on a large section of the Ulster Unionist

party conceding that their party was finished but unable to reconcile themselves to voting for Paisley. They then decamped en masse to Alliance.

The election was so sectarian that this extended into the two camps, with gains being made by Sinn Fein, and, to an even greater extent, by Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist party, on the calculation by the electorate that, if you were going to vote on the basis of religious affiliation, it was better to vote for the biggest party and the one most fervently defending "your" slice of the cake.

The outcome was the collapse of the Ulster Unionist Party and the absorption of its right wing into the DUP, making this group of rabid bigots and reactionaries the largest party in the North.

A similar process occurred on the nationalist side, with the difference that the SDLP suffered a more limited decline and Sinn Fein is engaged in a process of damping down nationalist expectations rather than amplifying them - indeed chief negotiator Martin McGuinness, immediately following the count, pleaded with Paisley to take his place as first minister and promised Sinn Fein's 'full cooperation' if he did so.

British aims

Not only was the election the most sectarian since the days of the old Stormont [1], it was so by intent. The British government announced that they were calling the election specifically to get a big vote for Sinn Fein and the DUP and confirm them as parties of government and the electorate duly obliged. A process supposed to promote reconciliation and be based on moderate unionism has now become a drive to get the arch-bigot Paisley into power at the head of a mass reaction and with demands for greater sectarian privilege from Loyalism.

It is worth recalling the purpose of the election. It was called to finally bury the Good Friday agreement and establish some democratic legitimacy for its successor, the St Andrews 'agreement'. In the event the process was bent further to the right and new concessions to Paisley mean that it has already morphed into St. Andrews mark II.

Initially Sinn Fein wanted a referendum, as with the Good Friday agreement, in order to reclaim the invisible all-Ireland dimension that vanished long ago. They then realised, along with the DUP, that it would be dangerous to put the terms directly to the electorate. Those who would vote Sinn Fein would be less likely to vote yes to the RUC/PSNI [2] if asked in a referendum. Those who would vote DUP would be less likely to vote yes to a government including Sinn Fein. The election had the further advantage of rewarding the two parties by allowing them to absorb a larger section of the vote from the former leading nationalist and unionist parties.

So the election is not to elect a government that will then decide policies based on their manifestos, but to put the parties into a position where they can implement policies secretly agreed with the British. For that reason the various media forums about water charges and so on doubly confused the picture; firstly by disguising the fact that the major parties have already agreed to support water charges and water privatisation and secondly by ignoring the process on which the election was actually built - humiliating pledges of loyalty to the police and the state squeezed from Sinn Fein without even the cover of reciprocal pledges from Paisley that they would be rewarded with junior partnership to the DUP in government.

"Battle a day"

The outcome succeeded in producing the sectarian divide that the British designed. It has not yet produced a government. It has produced a new agreement weighted heavily towards the demands of the DUP, but not an agreement that coincides with their programme - the old cry of a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people.

Any Sinn Féin presence in government is likely to split the DUP. The internal debate is not whether or not the DUP will accept power-sharing, but if they can accept it on a tactical basis in order to get into government and then seek ways of expelling the Catholics. A section of the party refuses to contemplate a Sinn Féin presence. Those, led by Paisley, who are willing to do a deal so heavily weighted in their favour, stress the temporary nature of a power-sharing government, demand a mechanism for expelling Sinn Fein and promise a "battle a day" with Sinn Féin.

The indications are that Paisley will enter government if he is able to contain the opposition of major layers of the DUP leadership. Given that all his demands have been met except the demand for the old Stormont majority rule government, he is struggling to find grounds on which to refuse. Paisley's strategy will be to frustrate Sinn Fein, ensure DUP control of finances, and search for a way to eventually force Sinn Féin out of government..

The new assembly would resemble the old Stormont parliament that kicked off the Troubles [3] more than the Good Friday assembly with its equal division of ministries.

The DUP will have four positions and Sinn Féin three, leaving three jobs to be divided between the SDLP and the Ulster Unionists. The positions are shared out on the basis of Assembly seats won and the Ulster Unionists have more seats than the SDLP. The unionist bloc - four DUP ministers and two from the UUP - compares to Sinn Féin's three and the SDLP one, a total of four. A nationalist minority in a majority unionist assembly filled with hatred and determined to force the nationalist out of government sounds very like a programme of back to the future.

Reaction

The new St. Andrews structure will greatly facilitate the Paisley strategy. Assembly legislation has been changed to avoid the need for the DUP to vote in favour of the deputy first minister. It has also been changed to ensure that all ministerial decisions can be taken to the assembly as a whole - preventing a repeat of past

incidents that enraged unionists such as Sinn Féin health minister Bairbre de Brun awarding a new maternity centre to the Royal hospital or education minister Martin McGuinness abolishing the 11+ exam for school children to determine which secondary school they should attend. Even under the existing rules Sinn Fein can be easily frustrated - the last assembly failed to discuss RUC support for a loyalist death squads and involvement in sectarian murder of Catholics because the unionists were able to refuse agreement to a debate.

There will be a reactionary social agenda. A leading DUP figure spent the election denouncing integrated schooling of Catholics and Protestants as evil. The organisation is famous for its homophobia. It's sectarianism remains rabid. In a breathtakingly cynical move the British government gave control of the reform of the 11+ to the assembly. Leading DUP figure Sammy Wilson boasts that all the DUP has to do is to block a decision. The result will be each grammar school organising its own admissions and the de facto retention of selection.

For its part, Sinn Fein has agreed a system of seven local councils that will feed in a Sinn Fein majority in each council west of the Bann and a corresponding Loyalist majority in eastern councils..

There is a reactionary economic agenda. All of the parties have signed up to water privatisation and to a massive increase in rates used to finance public borrowing. The Review of public administration will do away with local councils and involve job cuts. The DUP is making much of calls for a subvention from the treasury, but this will be used to ameliorate the worst effects of a privatisation agenda, especially among its own supporters rather than to prevent deregulation and privatisation.

Sinn Fein and the DUP are united in support of a Thatcherite economic vision that sees corporation tax on multinationals slashed and a corresponding cut in the number of public service workers and the wage rates and conditions that have been associated with public service.

There will be further side-deals to conciliate loyalism. During the election, secretary of state Hain met the Orange Order [4] and accepted a shopping list of demands from them, with the central one being that they retain their traditional right to intimidate Catholics with their annual parades through Catholic areas. More money will follow the millions pumped into Loyalist paramilitary groups.

The arrest of Gerry McGeough, a dissident republican candidate, at the polling station and the subsequent charges against him are a signal of just how little toleration there will be for any form of republicanism in the new order. Even more shocking is the announcement that there is to be an enquiry into police collaboration with republicanism.

This follows a damning enquiry into the police use of a UVF death squad and connivance in sectarian killings. Nothing came of the report, but it emerged that senior police officials had refused to collaborate with the police ombudsman and a number have issued defiant statements since, with the full support of the entire unionist political establishment. The unionist line is not that collaboration did not take place, but that it was entirely justified.

The British enquiry, seeking to draw an equals sign between running IRA agents and the use of the death squads, means that the whole history of the troubles in consigned to oblivion and it will remain open to the state to use the same methods if it is threatened again.

Absence of the opposition

With such a disastrous prospect why did Sinn Fein's vote increase at the polls? Why did the left and the traditional republican current have a limited impact? Why did more people not abstain?

The failure of the left and the republicans was predicable. One group didn't think the question of Sinn Féin capitulation worth answering. The other didn't have an answer.

They only vote of any size on the left was for the SWP in the guise of two different fronts. [5] As a spokesperson seemed to believe that sectarianism and colonialism had been "sorted" and their views on the endorsement of the colonial police force were "police won't solve poverty" it's difficult to know what the vote represented. Troops out (of Iraq, not Ireland) seems the best answer.

The traditional republicans, a mixture of people just leaving Sinn Fein, traditional physical force republicans and those politically opposed to the continuing partition of Ireland have been unable to build a political alternative in the past ten years, have often spent their time lobbying the Sinn Féin to change direction or alternatively denouncing the capitulation as contrary to republican principle. The unstated background has been the assumption that there was nothing wrong with the physical force tradition and that one more offensive would have sapped the British will. This view is so deeply unpopular that it actually reinforces Sinn Fein's support. The republicans have a role to play in establishing that the Sinn Féin is no longer republican. They are big enough to constitute a small opposition, but the vote shows that the electorate don't care about the nature of the Sinn Féin - they now believe that constitutional nationalism can achieve equality in the North.

So why no abstention?

The predictions of a fall in the Sinn Féin vote (made by this correspondent among others) seemed sound given the massive political retreat from the Good Friday Agreement to St Andrews. Why didn't it happen?

In part this was because nationalist workers simply haven't noticed. The GFA itself was never the subject of discussion. Most activists gave a vote of confidence to the Sinn Féin and welcomed the end of horrendous bloodletting and decades of repression, with a miniboom in employment and a promise of equality.

The institutions have collapsed and

workers have simply waited for them to be restored. In this depoliticised atmosphere of complacency and a benign sectarianism that accepts the division of the working class as a given, they have accepted Sinn Féin assurances that forcing Paisley to become first minister will in some way force him to concede equality.

Such a view was supported by the election itself. It was totally absent from everyday debate - silence followed by a sudden rush to the polls. To a certain extent, in the absence of genuine debate, voters sleepwalked in a sectarian fog to vote for 'their' party. Workers in general, and nationalist workers in particular, are in for something of a shock. If the British succeed in levering Paisley into the assembly a provincial government will emerge with a unionist majority, led by a bigot forced by internal party divisions to prove himself the hammer of the Catholic opposition and with the rules changed to reduce the power of nationalist to effect change. Sinn Féin claims of equality will be reduced to claims of a veto - a veto much reduced by British and unionist pressure.
The difficulty then will be to shake off the paralysis of the sectarian mindset and build a new socialist organisation and policy that pushes aside the decayed ruins of republicanism.

The political parties in the North of Ireland

The Nationalist Parties are Sinn Féin and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). The SDLP is the traditional party of the Catholic church and the Catholic middle class, campaigning for a share of political power within the Northern colony, while in practice accepting partition and British rule.

Sinn Féin (translating as Ourselves Alone) is the traditional party of revolutionary nationalism and the physical force tradition, giving political expression to the views of the armed wing, the IRA.

During the peace process Sinn Féin has moved closer to the Dublin government and right-wing politicians in the US. Its policies are now very similar to those of the SDLP and it has eclipsed the SDLP at the polls.

The unionist parties were once united in one hegemonic bloc in perpetual government in the Northern colony. The Nationalist revolt of the late 1960s and early 1970s fragmented into a small, relatively nonsectarian Alliance party, a bourgeois Ulster Unionist Party and a petty-bourgeois and extremely sectarian, violent and vicious Democratic Unionist party led by Ian Paisley.

Unionists opposed the Good Friday agreement because it appeared to offer an equal share of sectarian privilege to Catholics, undermining the rationale of Protestant privilege on which the colony rested. The UUP and DUP were locked in vicious rivalry because the UUP leader, David Trimble, the UUP leader, joined a power-sharing government, arguing that it was necessary to undermine the agreement from inside, otherwise Britain would punish Unionism. Paisley argued that the best was to bring the agreement down was to refuse agreement.

In the event the British, by constantly bowing to Unionist pressure and moving the deal to the right, proved Paisley right and Trimble wrong. The UUP were reduced to the minority party of unionism at the last election and the collapse of their vote continued in this one.

Footnotes

[1] The Northern colony was established by the British to limit Irish Independence following the Anglo-Irish War of Independence and maintain a base for occupation. The local parliament, set up at Stormont, just outside Belfast, had a permanent unionist majority, a local police force that it controlled (the Royal Ulster Constabulary or RUC) and paramilitary death squads (the B specials). It ruled the colony until a nationalist revolt and calls for civil rights led to its suspension in 1972 and the establishment of direct rule by Westminster.

[2] RUC/PSNI Royal Ulster Constabulary/Police Service of Northern Ireland. Traditionally the republican nationalist movement refused to recognise the police service in the North. The Sinn Féin conference on policing in January 2007, which recognised the legitimacy of the police force ,was one of the concessions demanded by the DUP to enable power sharing with Sinn Féin.

[3] The Troubles began in the 1960s as a mobilisation for civil rights which was violently suppressed by anti-Catholic armed pogroms, the deployment of the British army and the introduction of special laws and internment. The initial struggle then became a demand for troops out and Irish unity, and armed republicanism came to the fore. This came to an end with the collapse of the IRA campaign and Sinn Féin's endorsement of a peace process in the 1990s.

[4] The Orange Order is a sectarian protestant organisation that unites members of that community over and above their political parties. It organises the notorious July and August marches that are frequently a cause of tension between the communities as they insist on marching through Catholic areas.

[5] The Socialist Workers Party ran two candidates in the election using two different fronts. One candidate stood in Derry as a Socialist Environmental Alliance (SEA) candidate and another in Belfast as a People before Profit candidate. The difference was in name only. The main political point they had to make about one of the major issues in the election - the Sinn Féin decision to support the police and state forces - was "Poverty is the issue - not policing" managing to dismiss the Sinn Féin

collusion and the sectarian nature of the local police in one slogan.

Post-Kyoto is likely to be very liberal...

25 March 2007, by Daniel Tanuro

Little by little, the elements of the rapprochement between supporters and opponents of Kyoto in the imperialist world are beginning to emerge. On the one hand, the European Union has adopted most of the neo-liberal dispositions originally put forward by Washington; on the other, a whole series of trans-Atlantic signals indicate that the United States will end up by coming over to the idea of quantified objectives for reduction, accompanied by a calendar for their application.

Taking another look at a hybrid Protocol

Signed in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol is very insufficient and contains a certain number of perverse aspects, while at the same time presenting some positive ones. It is important to grasp this hybrid reality in order to understand the evolutions that are taking place.

The insufficiencies of the Protocol are well known:

- the 5.2 per cent of reduction of emissions that the developed countries have committed themselves to carry out during the period 2008-2012 only represent a miniscule first step;

- even if the Protocol was respected in its entirety by all those who have ratified it, its non-ratification by Australia and the United States would imply a real reduction of scarcely 1.7 per cent for the whole of the industrialized countries; [1]

- Kyoto is chock full of loopholes that have been conceived in order to attenuate the effort required: the three "flexible mechanisms" enable the big companies in the developed countries and the states where they are based to replace part of the efforts that need to be made by investments in the countries of the South or the East, or to acquire emission rights on the world market. [2] Some of these rights - in particular those which correspond to the famous masses of "Russian hot air", [3] or to the "carbon sinks" (see below) - do not correspond to any effort at structural reduction;

- In particular, in the case of a free allocation of emission quotas to the big companies which are included in the planned reductions, the door is open to multiple arrangements, resulting from the complicity of governments and administrations with the employers (in the name of competitiveness). Presented as the model to be followed, the European system of emission trading provides an example of the frauds that are possible and of their implications: for the first year of the system, the authorities have distributed rights for 1848.6 million tons of CO2, whereas the emissions of the 11,500 companies concerned were only 1785 million tons. The British electricity sector alone thus made a profit of 800 million pounds sterling. [4]

The principal perverse effects of Kyoto are the following:

- Kyoto considers as equivalent the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions on the one hand, and on the other the sequestration of CO2. Now, only reductions in emissions provide a really structural answer to the greenhouse effect. Most forms of sequestration - absorption by ecosystems (what are known as "carbon sinks": forests, the ground and oceans) and the capture of CO2 on the level of electric power stations (with subsequent storing of gas in certain geological formations, for example) - are only at best temporary responses, ways of gaining time; [5]

- The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and the Joint implementation (JI) give off a strong neo-colonial odour, since they enable the North to get its hands on the simplest and least costly means of reducing emissions.

The consequences of this disposition are:

1. To reduce the costs of carbon on the market and so to encourage the developed countries to buy rights rather than reduce their emissions;

2. To handicap the future capacity of developing countries to reduce their emissions, when international negotiations oblige them to:

- The distribution among nations of emission quotas corresponding to the volumes of greenhouse gas produced in 1990, minus the reduction commitments (adopted in the framework of Kyoto), is in fact equivalent to a distribution of semi-permanent property rights on fractions of the atmosphere. This distribution accepts the inequality of development between North and the South and this is in contradiction with the definition of air as common property;

- Kyoto does not provide for taking into account the efforts that the big developing countries could make from here and now, so as to anticipate their future responsibilities when they will be subject to an agreement. This defect of the protocol gives the ruling classes of these countries a handy pretext for burning fossil combustibles for as long as possible;

- The emissions of air and maritime transport are not counted.

Positive Aspects

However, certain positive aspects of the Protocol cannot be neglected:

– The Protocol is based on the notion of "joint but differentiated responsibility": all nations are concerned, but the developed countries, since they are responsible for 75 per cent of the problem, must make the bulk of the efforts and transfer technologies to developing countries;

– The reduction in emissions is quantified and linked to specific dates: each country is allocated an objective to be reached in the course of a commitment period;

– The flexibility mechanisms can only be used as a "complement" to domestic measures. [6] Furthermore, investments in nuclear energy do not qualify in the framework of CDM. As for the CDM projects for the forests, the developed countries can only have recourse to them to a limited extent;

– Sanctions are provided for. A country which does not respect its objective for reduction would have it carried forward to the following period, with an added penalty of 30%. Furthermore, this country could no longer have recourse to the emission trading system.

Towards a Less Rigid Agreement

The defenders of the Protocol hope that it is only the beginning of a movement which will be amplified. It is true that things are moving. Several European countries have announced their intention, in time, to reduce their emissions to a very considerable extent. We must however distinguish between declarations that play to the gallery and policies that are really implemented. The European Union, for example, has announced that it is willing to maintain global warming below 2?C. But the 25 heads of state and of government, during their Council in March 2005, did not adopt the corresponding objective of a reduction in emissions of between 60 per cent and 80 per cent in 2050 (which was however suggested by the Ministers of the Environment). The communiqué of the Council avoided giving any firm undertaking: it "was appropriate to envisage" a reduction of between 15 per cent and 30 per cent between now and 2020. And even this range will have to be the object of an examination "into the conditions under which the objective can be achieved, including the question of costs and profits".

In reality, the developed countries are not succeeding in respecting Kyoto: Canada is 30 per cent in excess of its objectives, Italy is hardly better off, Spain's emissions are exploding. [7] Britain will descend below its ceiling, but it will be thanks to the conversion from coal to gas: after that, things will start seriously… It is the same diagnosis for Germany: the fact that it is in the course of respecting its commitments (thanks to the dismantlement of industry in the East!) has not prevented the employers' federation BDI from walking out of the negotiations on the national allocation plan for emissions. In Denmark, in spite of the boom in wind farms, the plan seems to be 21 per cent short of the national quota. [8] Etcetera.

So simply prolonging Kyoto with tighter quotas seems highly unlikely. That is why the EU, in 2005, announced its "firm will to give a new élan to international negotiations" and " to obtain the broadest cooperation from all countries", in particular "the big energy consuming countries, including those who belong to the category of emerging and developing countries". We are certainly moving towards a new agreement, freed from certain "rigidities" of Kyoto. An agreement in which the participation of the big developing countries will change "conditions in terms of costs and profits", to quote the words of the Council... The "Gleneagles dialogue on climate change, clean energy and sustainable development", must be seen in this framework. Launched during the G8 summit in Scotland and involving the 20 countries who have the biggest consumption of energy, it is obviously not by accident that this dialogue has the aim of "informally discussing innovative ideas", outside the official framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC).

The Stern Report: A Marker

As we have explained elsewhere [9], the Stern report on the economics of climate change seems to represent an important marker on the road to a new global agreement. That justifies paying a little attention to it. The following points should be borne in mind:

1 - Contrary to other economists, Sir Nicholas Stern does not quibble about the analysis of the climatologist: "Climate change is a series and urgent question. (…) The level of 550 ppmv CO2eq could be reached as early as 2035. At this level, there is at least 77 per cent of chance - and perhaps up to a 99 per cent chance, depending on the climate model used - of a global average rise temperature rise exceeding 2?C. If nothing is done, the stock of greenhouse gases could triple between now and the end of the century, leading to at least a 50 per cent risk that the rise will exceed 5?C in the course of the following decades". Etcetera. The social and ecological consequences are examined in detail.

2 - The evaluation of the costs of warming is much higher than in other publications. According to Stern, the "business as usual" scenario could reduce average per capita consumption by up to 20 per cent between now and the end of the 22nd century. This staggering figure is explained by the following factors:

– the report includes not only strictly economic costs (a 5 per cent reduction in GDP per capita) but also a monetary evaluation of the impact on health (the number of victims…) and on the environment;
– account is taken of the fact that global warming could accelerate global warming (for example if the melting of the permafrost brusquely unleashed large quantities of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas);
– the discount rate used to evaluate the costs of the damage is around

twice as low as the usual rate (in order to concretize intergenerational solidarity, they give future damage a higher cost than in other studies of this kind);
– lastly, Stern and his collaborators have called ethics to the rescue to correct the fact that, from a strictly accounting point of view, the damage in the countries of the South does not cost very much (it is evaluated based on the "willingness of the victims to pay", which obviously varies according to income)...

3 - Stern compares the bill for global warming with the cost of mitigation (attenuation) and adaptation. This cost obviously depends on the level of stabilization chosen for the concentration of greenhouses gases. Instead of a stabilisation at 450 ppmv, the report opts for 550 ppmv. This choice noticeably increases the danger, [10] but the authors suddenly change their tone: "The lesson here is to avoid doing too much, too fast (...). For example, great uncertainty remains as to the costs of very deep reductions. Digging down to emissions reductions of 60 to 80 per cent or more relative to baseline will require progress in reducing emissions from industrial processes, aviation, and a number of areas where it is presently hard to envisage cost-effective approaches". [11]

Stabilization at 550 ppmv would cost one per cent of world GDP and stabilization at 450 ppmv would cost three times more. Faced with damage estimated at 20 per cent of GDP, stabilization at 450 ppmv would in spite of everything remain "profitable" (according to the cost/profit logic of the report). Why is it excluded? Because the additional cost would be supported by "industrial processes, aviation, and a certain number of areas"... which concern particularly the developed economies. It is difficult to exclude the idea that this choice is related to the appreciation that is also made that, up to 3?C of rise in temperature, the effects of global warming may be rather positive in these countries. The negative effects will be especially concentrated in tropical and sub-tropical countries, which, given their "geography", "are already too hot", according to the report. [12] The ethics of Sir Nicholas Stern decidedly have their limits...

4 - One per cent of world GDP is equal to 350-400 billion dollars. So, if we accept Stern's estimates, stabilization at 450 ppmv would cost between 1,050 and 1200 billion dollars per year. This sum would be easily covered by a combination of cuts in the defense budgets (1,037 billion dollars in 2004, of which 47 per cent come from the United States) [13] and in advertising, not to speak of the fantastic oil rent. But these means do not figure in the panoply of a former chief economist of the World Bank. Outside of the development of nuclear power - promoted to the rank of clean technology, this panoply only comprises neo-liberal instruments: a single world price for carbon; a tax on carbon (transferred to consumers via prices and compensated by a lowering of charges for companies); total flexibility in the choice of the place, the moment and the means of reducing emissions, anywhere in the world, at the lowest cost; deepening and widening of the emissions trading; imposition by the WTO of total freedom of circulation for low-carbon products and services, etc....

This approach has three implications which should be very attractive for the developed countries and the multinationals:

1 - Between now and 2050 more than 50% of the reduction in emissions of the North will be delocalized to the South. Either in the form of a stop to deforestation (which is obviously desirable), or in the form of clean investments evaluated at 40 billion dollars per year (40 times the present day market in CDM); [14]

2 - While taking advantage of this largesse, in the North, the big energy automobile, petrochemical and other groups will have 20 to 30 years to amortize their installations then re-orient towards new technologies (which will be developed thanks to a doubling of public budgets for research) without paying a cent for the catastrophe that they will have provoked; [15]

3 - The bill will be paid by the workers, the peasants, and the poor of the whole world, by the tax on CO2, public subsidies to private enterprise and the incorporation of the price of carbon into the prices of consumer goods.

A Global Political Project

Beyond its economic construction, the Stern report is a very political document. As we read it, we find an ambitious strategic project: to use the fear of global warming to bring public opinion to accept objectives which are very far from being only climatic.

"A key issue for credibility is whether the policy commands support from a range of interest groups. Public opinion is particularly important: sustained pressure from the public for action on climate change gives politicians the confidence to take measures that they might otherwise deem too risky or unpopular". [16] The CO2 tax, for example, is compensated for employers by a lowering of charges...

Further on, we find this other revealing passage: "Much of public policy is actually about changing attitudes. In particular, there are two broad areas where policy makers may focus in the context of climate change: seeking to change notions of responsible behaviour, and promoting the willingness to co-operate. Examples of the former in other areas include policies towards pensions, smoking and recycling, while those of the latter include neighborhood watch schemes on crime and community services more generally". [17] The example of policies concerning pensions (the offensive in favour of retirement pensions by capitalization, against state pensions, in the name of the fact that each individual, and not the collectivity, must be "responsible" for his or her old age) is particularly significant...

The enthusiastic commentaries that these reports provoked among many environmental NGOs (the WWF, for example, is asking for "a strengthened carbon market") [18] and in certain "left" parties [19] need to be questioned. There is certainly urgency. But Stern himself affirms:

climate change is “the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen”. Either we will make the market pay for this failure, or else “the market” will make the exploited and oppressed of the world pay for it. The Stern report, unsurprisingly has chosen the second road. It gives us a foretaste of future capitalist policies in the face of climate change.

Cinema: “An inconvenient truth”… for capitalism!

Contrary to the very waggish “day after” of the director Roland Emmerich, the film “A truth that unsettles” represents a good presentation of climate change. The force of the images is astounding and the commentary is of a high scientific quality. Let us not reject this production on the pretext that this is the work of the former Vice-President of the US, former candidate for President (against George W. Bush) or because publicity in the media might make it ideologically suspect. Who can be surprised that Al Gore does not argue in favour of anti-capitalist solutions? Beyond its obvious political limits, this film has the merit of stimulating a broad consciousness of the major issue of the warming of the planet, which can only increase the pressure on the political decision makers.

Schwarzenegger prepares Post-Kyoto

On August 31st 2006 the representatives of the state of California adopted the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA). Whereas George W. Bush refuses any system of compulsory reductions in emissions and de facto excludes making an effort as long as the emissions of the big developing countries will not also be subject to undertakings, the GWSA is distinguish by these two points: California decides to reduce its own emissions by 25per cent by the year 2020, and to do so independently of the decisions of other countries.

It is not the first to do so. Before it, nine states in the Northeast United States had adopted objectives of obligatory reduction and constituted a system of exchange of rights analogous to the one that operates in Europe. Since then, the polemic over the climate has considerable increased on the other side of the Atlantic, in particular after Katrina. At federal level the projected laws remain blocked, but 279 towns and cities have decided to respect the objectives of Kyoto. George W. Bush is increasingly contested on this dossier. The favourites in the race for the investiture of the two big parties, Hilary Clinton and John McCain, are both supporters of a compulsory reduction in emissions.

Does this mean that the climate dossier is on the way to being solved? No! California’s commitment is in fact extremely timid: the 25 per cent reduction is calculated in relation to the tonnage of greenhouse gases that California would emit in 2020 in the absence of any measures being taken. Apparently radical, this decision aims only to bring emissions back to their 1990 level…8 years after the first period of engagement of Kyoto. To put things into perspective, the Protocol assigned the United States a reduction of 7 per cent by 2012.

The Law of Value Breaks Down

The acrobatics of economists trying to put a price on things which have no exchange value (human life and natural ecosystems), and to make this price seem to conform to “ethics”, clearly shows that the law of value is less and less appropriate as a measure of social wealth.

The Stern report provides many illustrations of this, in its manner of dealing with what it calls “difficult ethical problems”. On page 156 the authors make reference to studies which increase the overall costs of global warming by 33 per cent, or even double them, in order to give more correct emphasis to the impact in the Third World. Without these corrections, the climatic catastrophes in these regions would go unnoticed in the eyes of the economists: for a whole period, they would even be swamped by global growth…another example is found on page 410: to put a cost on the probable transfer of 200 million people, Stern multiplies the average income of these people by three. Why by three, when the majority of the victims will lose everything and when many of them will die?

For an Anthology of Capitalist Stupidity

Enterprises of the oil and energy sector, giants of the building industry, lemonade producers, makers of ice cream, tour operators: they are all taking out insurance against climatic caprices (winters that are too mild or too harsh, summers that are too wet or too hot).

Weather derivatives are the financial products derived from this insurance. Products for speculation on the stock exchange. Compared to other derived products, the exchanges remain limited. But investors are banking on strong growth. The Chicago Stock Exchange intends to invest 1.8 million dollars in the next three years in the development of these markets. Coriolis Capital, which manages patrimonies, has bought 350 million dollars of weather derivatives. “The

climate is our new frontier", commented Terry Duffy, President of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange.

For the holders of capital, the trick consists in holding weather derivatives linked to the climate of different countries in different continents. In reality, climatic extremes are often spread about in a very contrasted fashion. During the 2003 heat wave, for example, the East of the United States experienced a wet and cool summer. With diversified weather derivatives, luck, and the advice of a meteorologist, a clever financier can make quite a lot of profit.

The financial perspectives are all the more attractive because the warming of the planet leads to increased climatic variability. The multiplication of extreme phenomena, in particular, can only encourage enterprises to ensure themselves against such and such a phenomenon. Now, when you say more climatic insurance, you are saying more weather derivatives, therefore more profit for the financial market.

The title of the article from which this information comes should take its place in an anthology of market stupidity: "letting nature run its course, and making money from it". That is a very concrete example of the way in which competition leads to judgments which are opposed to simple common sense, and even to the instinct for survival. Or, to quote Karl Marx: "From the viewpoint of competition, everything appears thus distorted and turned topsy-turvy." [20]

Footnotes

[1] EEA (European Environment Agency) Report, No. 8/2005, p.9.

[2] These three mechanisms are the "Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), the "Joint Implementation (JI)" and "Emission trading".

[3] The expression "Russian hot air" designates the mass of emission rights attributed to Russia and eth Ukraine because of the fact that the reference year for Kyoto is 1990, just before the economic collapse of the former Soviet Union. See Daniel Tanuro, "A new phase of the climate poker game".

[4] The European Commission and The Economist, 9 September 2006.

[5] Estimates of the length of time of geological sequestration vary widely. Sequestration for several centuries seems possible if the sites are well chosen for their sealing. Sequestration in the oceans must be ruled out for ecological reasons (acidification).

[6] This notion of "complement" gives rise to different interpretations, the American negotiators considering that 90 per cent is the complement of 10 per cent.

[7] Madrid is the worst student in the European class: its emissions in 2008-2012 could be 33.7 per cent higher than the level of 1990, instead of the 15 per cent higher intended by the EU, and the bill could reach 5 points of GDP. The employers' federation CEOE has demanded a renegotiation of the quotas.

[8] See http://www.eceee.org..

[9] In the article "The devil makes the saucepans, but not the lids: defense of the climate and anti-capitalism".

[10] Depending on the models, the rise in temperature would be between +1 degrees Celsius and +3.8 degrees Celsius for 450 ppmv, and between +1.4 degrees and +4.6 degrees for 550 ppmv.

[11] Stern Review, p. 247.

[12] Stern Review, pp. 94-95.

[13] Figure from SIPRI, Stockholm.

[14] These 50 per cent of reductions from the North "delocalized" to the South correspond to an estimate of the European Environmental Agency, according to which the EU will only be able to reduce its emissions by 40 per cent in 2030 by buying half of it in the form of rights (EEA Report, No. 7, p. 12).

[15] The passage in the report on the reductions of emissions in the energy sector was written by Professor Dennis Anderson, former Chief Economist at Shell. As if by chance, he only advocates reducing the emissions of this sector from 24 to 18Gt between now and 2050.

[16] Stern Review, p. 325.

[17] Stern Review, p. 395.

[18] WWF Communique, 9/11/2006.

[19] The French Socialist Party believed it could 'note with interest that the measures of economic policy proposed by Nicholas Stern are not confined to just the instruments that are compatible with the laws of the market, and that he clearly envisages constraining regulations, such as taxes" (Communique of the National Bureau, 31/10/2006).

[20] Marx, Capital, Vol. 3.. *Source: New York Times, August 15, 2003*

The Student Mobilizations Continue

25 March 2007, by Maria Louka

Maria Louka was interviewed by Andreas Sartzekis in Athens, 11th March 2007.

Can you explain the reason for this new mobilization?

The victory that was won last summer was in fact a tactical victory, forcing the right-wing government of Karamanlis to freeze its plan of "reform" of the universities. But in January, it returned to the attack, with the intention of modifying Article 16 of the Constitution, which guarantees the public and free character of higher education. Beyond that, the objective was, if not an attempt at privatizing the sector, at least the imposition of market logic on the university world.

So there very quickly developed a big mobilization, with occupation of universities, and its character was so massive that we won a first victory: the PASOK (the Greek Socialist Party) withdrew from the process of revision of Article 16. But just after that the government demonstrated its intransigence by proposing in parliament the draft law that had been frozen since last summer! The contents of this project concern the universities and the technological institutes:
o putting in question, in a restrictive sense, the sanctuary of the university;
o limiting the number of years of studies to "the number of years of the student's course multiplied by two";
o abolition of rights, such as the right to free manuals;
o introduction of rules of functioning of the universities along the lines of a workplace, with the appointment of managers.

The student movement reacted to this new attempt by Karamanlis and fought back with even more strength.

What form has this mobilization taken?

It follows on from the struggle last June: in fact the struggle has been going on for nearly a year! Whether it is against Article 16 or against the draft law, it is the same battle against the dislocation of higher education. What we are seeing is an ongoing process in which the movement becomes stronger and takes on a mass character: if we take the demonstrations as a barometer, we can see today several demonstrations of 30,000 to 40,000 participants, and almost all the university departments are occupied.

Why do you think there is such violence on the part of the police?

There has in fact been a "qualitative" leap in the level of repression: massive arrests, students being beaten with clubs, use of tear gas against demonstrations: the government is trying in this way to terrorize the students. Since it sees a growing wave of exasperation, it is trying to use the tactic of suffocating the movement by repression, to dissuade the students from demonstrating on the streets.

But it is also trying on this occasion to implement a pilot program of repression which would be applicable against all future struggles in any social sector. It would like in this way to create the framework of an authoritarian state, against any form of struggle, so it is trying to put the across the message that whoever contests its policies will find themselves confronted with the police violence that we see today.

What are the links between the movement and the trade unions?

This is the most difficult point for our movement. Let me begin, however, by underlining that POSDEP, the union of university teachers, has called an unlimited strike for the whole of the present period. In spite of that the movement remains relatively isolated: the union of primary school teachers (DOE) and the union of secondary school teachers (OLME) have conducted solidarity actions: work stoppages, two days on strike since the beginning of January, but that is not up to the level of the dynamic and of the needs of the movement. The federation of public sector unions (ADEDY) has contributed a certain amount of solidarity, but we have to note the pure and simple absence of the (single) confederation of trade unions GSEE: since the beginning of January, GSEE has not even called a work stoppage so that workers could take part in demonstrations, as has often been pointed out by critics of the bureaucratic leadership of GSEE (where PASOK has a majority). At this point, the demand of the student movement is that this mobilization should not remain isolated and that there should be an immediate call for a general strike which would ensure a perspective of victory. And so the most important priority is that the workers' movement should enter into struggle with this kind of solidarity.

Can we already draw some lessons?

Yes! First of all: we can see taking shape, in very difficult conditions, a new militant generation which, far from submitting to the government's projects, is becoming politicized and radicalized in a lasting way. This is a very positive fact, since this generation, in whatever work situation it finds itself tomorrow, will not hesitate to launch struggles!

A second lesson is what is happening within the student movement, where several currents have played a crucial role so that the mobilization could be unleashed. The radical Left, represented mainly by the EAAK tendency, has been in the front rank: by taking care to work in a coordinated way, it has succeeded in regrouping the student movement and giving the mobilization a mass character, and thanks to a united front tactic, it came to an agreement and cooperated with all the left forces who refuse the Karamanlis plan. By doing so it has succeeded in establishing a

front against the policies of New Democracy (the party of the Right) in the sphere of education.

I think that we must underline the indispensable character of having a united front tactic in the movement, and also the role that the radical Left can play, on condition that it knows how to overcome its blockages inherited from the past.

What is the place of the students of OKDE-Spartakos in the movement?

We intervene within EAAK, which, in the framework of the movement, has functioned overall in a way that we can be happy with. Having said that, there have been some situations and some problems on which we have raised questions and made proposals, with the aim of improving the intervention of the tendency. The main question for us is that of internal democracy: in reality, here and there, structures of EAAK have functioned in a way that we can call bureaucratic! That is to say that we have seen some cases where structures of EAAK have themselves taken initiatives whose effect has been to substitute for the movement. When such things happen, we criticize and we differentiate ourselves from it, and we try to act so that there is direct democracy within the movement, because that is what makes possible the involvement of everyone and control by the rank and file over the development of the movement.

What proposals for international solidarity would you make?

At this moment the question of internationalism is very important to us: we know to what extent the struggle against the First Employment Contract (CPE) strengthened our struggle in June 2006. So trade unions, organizations, sectors of the left and of the mass movement in Europe should adopt solidarity messages with the student movement and with those arrested - I would remind you that there have been very many arrests. What is also necessary is to succeed in establishing coordination between radical sectors of the student movement on a European level which would lead to concrete actions: for example, we could fix dates for common mobilizations and there could be solidarity actions in front of the Greek embassies in the capitals of Europe.

“The devil makes the saucepans, but not the lids”

17 March 2007, by Daniel Tanuro

The quantity of carbon emitted annually by the world economy represents around double that which the ecosystems (oceans, soils, vegetation) are capable of absorbing. The natural cycle tends towards saturation. Accumulating in the atmosphere, the surplus provokes an intensification of the natural greenhouse effect, and thus a warming of the surface of the planet. The phenomenon began with the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism. Its two main causes are the combustion of fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas) and changes in land use (clearances, ploughing and so on). The first of these causes has become the most important with the explosion of the car population in the 1950s. More than 75% of the historic responsibility for climate change lies with the developed countries but emissions from the developing countries are rapidly increasing (above all those of the bigger countries like India, China, Brazil) (fig. 1). According to the specialists, we should aim at maintaining the increase in average temperature of the surface of the globe below 2°C in relation to the pre-industrial period, [1] failing which the consequences would become very serious for the ecosystems and for humanity (in particular the countries of the South and the poor in general, according to the IPCC [2]).

To measure the full extent of the challenge, we should be aware that currently the limitation of the rise in temperature to 2°C can no longer be ensured by the action of the developed countries alone: in the hypothetical case where these latter could immediately bring down all their emissions to zero, and where the developing countries took no measures, the rise in temperature could nonetheless tend to 4° to 5°C in a century, or a thermal range as significant as that which separates our epoch from the last glaciation. In a gigantic reversal of capitalist “progress”, the human race risks entering into a situation that it has never known and whose consequences would be to say the least formidable.

Physical constraints and social laws

The warnings issued for more than 20 years have not been heard, it is too late today to avoid climate change: it is underway and will make its effects felt for several centuries. The question posed is: how to limit the damage? The response is framed by unavoidable physical constraints. According to climate models, the atmospheric concentration in greenhouse gases corresponding to a maximum rise of 2°C would be from 450 to 550 “parts per million by volume of CO2 equivalent”. [3] The high part of this range corresponds to approximately double the concentration before 1780.

The current concentration, all gases together, already places us in the

dangerous zone 465 ppmvCO2eq (of which 370 ppmv of CO2 alone). Its increase seems increasingly rapid. [4] To restabilise the temperature of the globe implies stabilising as quickly as possible the atmospheric concentrations of the gases concerned. Indeed, given the lifetime of these latter and the thermic inertia of the oceans, [5] notably, it would not suffice to stabilise the emissions: these latter should be reduced in a very drastic and very rapid fashion.

Fig. 1. Historic responsibility of groups of countries in climate change. Changes in volumes of carbon emitted from 1870 to 2000, by region of the world. . The current volume of emissions is near to 8 gigatonnes of carbon per year (28.8 Gt of CO2). Source: Oakridge National Laboratory.

The figures below illustrate this link between temporal timescales, temperature, concentration and emissions for a stabilisation at 550 ppmv of CO2 alone (fig. 2). Because of the precautionary principle, and considering all the greenhouse gases, the objective of a stabilisation at 450 ppmvCO2eq should be adopted, to take account of the unknowns of the climate system. According to the Stern report, [6] this objective requires that emissions (42 gigatonnes/year currently) reach a peak in 10 years then fall by at least 5% per year, giving by 2050 a 75% of reduction in relation to1990, on the world scale. A stabilisation at 550 ppmv (the high part of the range) implies a peak in 20 years, then a decrease of 1 to 3% per year (but, in this scenario, there is more than 50% risk of crossing the threshold of a 2°C warming). In all the cases, over the next century, annual global emissions should be brought to 5GtCO2eq, indeed less, that is to say divided by around eight.

Fig. 2. Source: GIEC.

The most significant greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide (CO2). As this gas is an inevitable product of any combustion, the reduction of its emissions is not as easy as that of an atmospheric pollutant like sulphur, which can be eliminated from smoke. [7] Is it possible, then, to respect such draconian physical constraints without throwing humanity several centuries backwards? To avoid panic reactions, ostrich reflexes, or other forms of irrational behaviour (that reactionary forces could take advantage of), it is extremely important to hammer home the fact that the response, on the technical-scientific level, is: yes! Yes, the struggle against energy waste, increased energy efficiency, the replacement of fossil sources by renewable sources, as well as the protection of soils and forests allow the challenge to be met (read "*Myths and technological realities, social challenges*").

Given the importance of the process of combustion, the energy question is at the centre of the debate. Indeed, the flows of solar energy which reach the surface of the Earth, and which will do so for at least 5 billion years, are equal to 7,000 to 8,000 times world energy consumption. A thousandth of this flow can be converted into usable energy with the aid of current technologies. This technical potential will increase with scientific progress (if it is given the resources). That does not mean that there are no problems, that it is "enough" to replace fossil fuels by renewable sources. In the short term, the transition involves numerous difficulties. In the longer term, as solar flows constitute a source of scattered energy, its use requires a high degree of decentralisation, thus of social participation and collective responsibility.

Changes should notably take place in the individualist lifestyles of the wealthier fractions of society, in particular in the developed countries, which make a great use of ecologically unsustainable technologies which cannot be generalised to humanity as a whole. But these changes are not fatally synonyms of "regression". If the climate to be saved in social justice, this can involve a better quality of life for the immense majority of the population, even in the "rich countries".

The painful character of climate change stems from the fact that solutions are being implemented much too meagrely. Why? Because they reduce the profitability of capital, imply the suppression of profitable activities, challenge economic rents and the situations of power linked to energy centralisation, necessitate planning and public initiative, imply a relocation of activity, overturning the infernal overproduction/overconsumption spiral of some/under-consumption of others... and so on. These reasons are economic, and thus social. They do not flow from unavoidable natural laws but from social laws, that humanity can change.

The specialised literature characterises climate change as a phenomenon of "*anthropic*" origin. This expression is in fact erroneous. Warming is not the poisoned fruit of "human activity" in general, or of "technology" in general, but of capitalist activity and of capitalist technology (that the bureaucratic regimes of the former Soviet bloc essentially only mimicked). It is the product of a system which "*increasingly resembles its concept*", according to Michel Husson's fine expression. [8]

The philosopher Hans Jonas, in his famous "*Responsibility principle*" was one of the first to grasp the major importance of climatic limits to the development of human societies. Written in 1979, his warning on this precise point went too much unheard, although his theses in general had a great influence. [9] But Jonas's ideology led him to stand the problem on its head. Instead of seeing the rise of the greenhouse effect as a consequence of the frenzy of capitalist growth, he attempted a supreme and unanswerable scientific argument against the "Marxist utopia". The "*Responsibility principle*" charges "utopia" with wishing to completely suppress the fetters on "technology" whereas this would be intrinsically destructive of the environment. [10]

Contrary to this thesis, Marxist analysis views climate change as the result of a mode of production which

is unsustainable because its goal is purely quantitative: the accumulation of value. Marx notes it from the first pages of Capital: these are the characteristics of value as the specific historic form of wealth which raises the illusion that a movement of unlimited material accumulation would be possible. Consequently, in this generalised mode of production of commodities, "*production for production's sake*" inevitably leads to "*consumption for consumption's sake*". [11]

The energy bulimia is one specific manifestation of this dynamic, and the technologies that it implements, contrary to what Hans Jonas and many others have said, are not neutral: they are made to measure to satisfy the thirst of surplus-value. Recourse to fossil fuels and nuclear energy is completely exemplary in this respect. This recourse is not the result of some technological automatism but of a choice in favour of energy sources which can be appropriated, because they generate economic rent, that is superprofits.

If the photovoltaic effect (the generation of electric current in certain semi-conductor materials when light is run through them) discovered by Edmond Becquerel in 1839 has never been the subject of a will for systematic development, it is notably because solar energy is not appropriable as easily as reserves of hard coal or oilfields. Today, after two and a half centuries of capitalism based on fossil fuels, the use of these latter has proved to be fundamentally antagonistic to the rational regulation of the exchanges of materials between humanity and nature (which Marx described as the "*the only possible freedom*").

Through climate change, nature itself seems to wish to make us understand that the imperious necessity of this rational regulation has become a major reason to abolish this mode of production. Let us stipulate that relative diminutions of intensity in energy and in carbon of the economy (that is to say the quantities of energy and carbon necessary to produce a unit of GDP), observed for two centuries, change nothing in this necessity: they have been more than made up for by the absolute enlargement of production. Indeed, the underlying law here is well known: to compensate for the tendential fall in the rate of profit, capitalism must conquer constantly new regions, create new needs, new markets.

This frenzy of growth, if allowed, will burn the last barrel of oil, the last tonne of coal. To count on the eventual "depletion" of these resources so that environmental damage ceases would be an error: if obliged to abandon fossil fuels, [12] the capitalist dynamic of accumulation would transform entire regions into ecological deserts by the plantation of enormous monocultures producing biofuel, or would erect nuclear power stations everywhere it could. The ITER [13] project constitutes the last avatar of madness, well described by Jean-Paul DELEAGE et al., [14] of a system fundamentally incompatible with the rhythms of functioning of the biosphere.

Three interlinked difficulties

In spite of its logic of accumulation, can capitalism respect in time the physical constraints conditioning a stabilisation of the climate to a point which allows human and ecological catastrophe to be avoided? Given the level already reached by greenhouse gases and the inertia of the climatic system, that seems unhappily highly improbable, indeed ruled out. Catastrophe, in reality, is already on the march and can be seen through a series of events whose interconnected nature is obvious (read "*a major political and social stake*"). Faced with the apparent acceleration of warming, the question today is rather whether the system is capable of limiting the damage and stabilising the situation, and under what social conditions. To give a concrete response to that, we need to take the measure of three interlinked difficulties: the breadth of the changes to be realised within a very short timescale, the rigidity of the energy system, as well as the competition expressed in the relations between states (in particular North-South relations).

First difficulty: the combination between very strong imperatives and very short timescales. The breadth of the changes to be carried out in barely a few decades is dizzying: it amounts to "decarbonising" the economy almost completely. That involves moving away from fossil fuels in general as sources of energy, but also oil in particular as raw material of the petrochemical industry (see box: "decarbonisation and energy decrement"). Renewable sources can fill the gap, but not under any conditions whatever. Not in the framework of a pursuit of energy bulimia in the area of transport, or of a plethoric production of plastics, for example.

In any case, given their higher cost and that of fossil fuels, and given the briefness of the timescales, the passage to renewables should absolutely go hand in hand with a significant fall in the primary demand of the developed countries (of the order of 50%, indeed more in the more energy-consuming countries). Thus with a war on waste and a raising of energy efficiency. Indeed, a war on waste and raising of efficiency concerns not only installations, individual equipment and the behaviour of individuals, but also and above all the global energy system, which determines the whole. From a rational viewpoint, entire sectors of the economy would be purely and simply suppressed because they are useless, indeed damaging (production of weapons, advertising and so on), whereas others would be rationalised to suppress the duplication of competition. That, capitalism cannot even envisage, inasmuch as this would be contrary to its logic… But it will not escape the fact that considerable changes will be necessary in areas as diverse as land development, transport, agriculture, housing, leisure, tourism and so on. Indeed, to realise them in the time period needed would necessitate a strong centralisation and democratic elaboration of a well thought through plan. All these elements are hardly compatible with neoliberal management of a febrile mode of production, having competition as it motor and the political exclusion of the masses as its corollary.

Second difficulty: the capitalist energy system is characterised by a great rigidity and a strong centralisation. These do not flow only form the lifetime of investments (30-40 years for an electric power station) but also and above all from the fact that powerful lobbies are attached to the goose that lays the golden eggs... and permanently create new needs which "justify" the fact that the goose is put in battery to lay more. The annual turnover for the sale of refined products in the oil industry is estimated at 2,000 billion euros per year at the world level, including all products together, total costs, from prospecting to refining via extraction, represent barely 500 billion. The difference between the two (1,500 billion euros per year!) constitutes the mass of profits, and above all superprofits n the form of economic rent [15] accumulated thanks to the private appropriation of the resource.

To this colossal power should be added that of the sectors linked to oil. Cars, chemicals, petrochemicals, aeronautics, naval construction and so on. : all these branches rely on a continued expansion of the world market, and thus of material consumption and exchanges. In such a configuration, although it is rapid, the development of investment in wind and sun technologies (where situations of rent do not seem envisageable) can only delay bringing a solution. Largely controlled by big groups like Shell, BP, and so on, the renewables sector currently serves mainly to supply a complement to fossil fuels, instead of replacing them. With that of the individual car, the explosion of air transport and the consumption habits which flow from it illustrate wonderfully the manner in which this logic of the sorcerer's apprentice is legitimised through the needs that it creates and leads us still more quickly into the wall, while obscuring our vision of reality.

Third difficulty: competition as it expresses itself in relations between states. CO2 produced at any point of the globe contributes to planetary reheating. Given this global character of the menace, the riposte should be thought through, planned and articulated at the world level, privileging collaboration in the interests of all, in a long term perspective. This work should aim centrally at bringing a united response to the key question: how to share resources to combine the drastic and rapid reduction of emissions at the world level with the right to development of the countries of the South, where the vast majority of the human race lives? Indeed, in spite of the efforts deployed by numerous scientists, domination and competition systematically prevail over collaboration, and the scooping up of resources (including by means of war) over the sharing of the latter.

The attitude of the main imperialist protagonists (USA, European Union, Japan) in the climatic negotiations is clearly determined by the interests of their business and the geo-strategic objectives of the different bourgeoisies on the world market, in particular on the energy market. The same is true for Russia, for each member state of the European Union taken separately, and for the big developing countries (not to mention the oil monarchies!). The interminable difficulties, the slowness and setbacks of the climate negotiations are thus the expression of the contradiction, insoluble under capitalism, between the increasingly globalised character of the economy and the maintenance of rival nation states (or combinations of states) entirely devoted to the defence of the interests of their bourgeoisie, and of which some dominate others. This imbroglio, in which the fate of the victims of climate change does not matter, could have irreversible consequences. For example if the conflict of interests between the imperialist powers and the dominant classes of the big developing countries provoked a prolonged stalemate in negotiations on the sequel to Kyoto. Or if the future US administration, against all expectations, prolonged the Bush line for several more years...

From Kyoto to Nairobi and beyond: the capitalist response

From all this, it should not be deduced that the capitalist Moloch will remain with arms folded faced with a phenomenon which, if it primarily affects the exploited, also presents the threat of a massive devalorisation of capital and rising instability. But its struggle, against climate change, for fourteen years, [16] is carried out according to the rhythms dictated by capital - too slowly - and according to neoliberal modalities - which increase social inequalities, North-South tensions, as well as the appropriation and the pillage of natural resources. Slowness and perverse effects: despite some positive traits, Kyoto incarnates these two characteristics (see attached article on the sequel to Kyoto). Indeed, not only is the objective of 5.2% reduction of emissions of the developed countries very minimal, and not to be realised until 2012, but moreover the "flexible mechanisms" included in the protocol have negative social and environmental consequences (see "(The new green clothes of colonial domination"). The negotiations on the post 2012 period do not seem to change anything. If soon the White House is emptied of George W. Bush, the EU and USA will probably reach a compromise. This corresponds to the increasingly pressing demands of numerous multinationals who, convinced of the ineluctability of measures, desire a united and stable regulatory framework at the world level as quickly as possible. But this rapprochement of climatic enemy brothers could well accentuate the neoliberal character of the Protocol, to reduce its relative regulatory force (quotas, dates, sanctions in case of non-respect) and to put other positive aspects under pressure.

This tendency is clearly apparent in the intense diplomatic activity of Tony Blair and his designated successor, Gordon Brown. At the G8 summit which he chaired, the denizen of 10, Downing Street revealed his ambition : to make Great Britain the pivot of a new climatic agreement that would strengthen the position of his country as candidate to the leadership of the enlarged European Union. [17]

Published on October 31, 2006, just before the UN climate conference in Nairobi (Kenya), the Stern report on the economics of climate change can be seen in this framework. [18] The originality of this report resides in that, for the first time, a team of economists commissioned by a government is taking the warnings of the scientific community seriously and attempting to provide a global response. Sir Nicholas Stern has indisputably the merit of having projected the climate change to the front pages of the media with a shock figure: if nothing is done, the impact of the reheating could be as severe as that of the two world wars and the Great Depression, and represent a fall of up to 20% in GNP. "Better to act immediately and all together, this would be less expensive, and this would offer openings to companies": such is the logic of his report. But, under cover of an ambitious long-term strategy, Stern tends to erode the positive aspects of Kyoto to the profit of a policy which is 100% neoliberal (see the article on sequel to Kyoto). Paradoxically, whereas he defines climate change as "*the greatest and widest market failure ever seen until now*", the solutions that he puts forward can be summed up in a hackneyed formula: more market, more growth, more nuclear energy, more liberalisation of trade, less social protection and democracy... in short: more of this policy which destroys the environment and for which the countries of the South, the poor and the workers pay the costs...

The North/South question is decisive, as we have seen. In freeing itself from the constricting schedule of Kyoto, the Stern report emerges from the trench warfare between big developing countries and imperialist metropolises, where the first say to the second: "You are responsible, you act" and the second retort : "You will emit soon more greenhouse gases than us, act also". But the relationship for forces for the dominated countries is not obviously better outside of the trenches than within... At least for the next decades, the plan proposed by the former chief economist of the World Bank involves the essential part of the effort of reduction, imposed through a world price for carbon, being realised in the South thanks to investment from the North, generators of emission rights for the North. [19] Thus, whereas it was until now "complementary" to the so-called "domestic" measures, the "flexibility" envisaged by Kyoto would become total. Indeed, starting from the moment where it can be totally delocalised, the reduction of emissions, for the enterprises of the North, would no longer obviously represent a cost, but a gigantic export market for equipment and services. [20]

A market governed by unequal exchange, in which the developing countries would be srongly "encouraged" to commit themselves either by a tax on carbon, or by quotas, and which would increase the imperialist domination of their economies. Certain decisions taken at the recent UN Climate Conference (Nairobi, November 2006) gain from being analysed in the light of this analysis. At Nairobi, the developed countries accepted the idea of a reduction "*much higher than 50%*" of their emissions between now and 2050, but stipulating that they would not get there "*all alone*". These little words are an obvious allusion to an extension of the "Clean Development Mechanism" (CDM, one of the flexible arrangements of Kyoto). [21] On the other hand, it has been decided that the adaptation funds would be provided by a tax on investments in the framework of the CDM (read article on sequel to Kyoto). In short: the financing of the projects of protection will not be a function of the needs of the most exposed populations, but a function of the successes of the multinationals in the conquest of the big market in "low carbon" technologies.

Can a policy of the kind proposed by Stern save the climate? It would first be necessary to adopt an objective of reduction of emissions compatible with the physical constraints. It is not the case in the report presented to the British government and it is increasingly doubtful that such an objective will be adopted in time. It would also be necessary that a strong world "governance" is capable of imposing a world price for carbon determined by the evaluation of the damage from long term warming, and not by the short-term law of the market. This is not obvious either...Whatever the precise contours of the post-Kyoto, it is then probable that neoliberal climate policy, from here to 20-30 years time, will end in defeat. What could happen then? The response smacks of political fiction.

Faced with timescales which have become terribly pressing, it is not ruled out, for example, that the dominant powers change course suddenly and use their state apparatuses to mobilise and centralise all resources, indeed impose rationing, as in a period of war. The comparison is not fortuitous: this turning point could effectively accompany imperialist military adventures, indeed inter-imperialist confrontations, or other types of murderous conflict. But this is speculative: if wars for energy resources are already part of reality, nothing indicates any abandonment of neoliberalism for a more state-centred policy. In any case, such a mobilisation would obviously not have the goal of saving the climate for all, but saving it to the extent of the possible in protecting the social privileges of the exploiters. That would lead to inestimable human suffering, an increase in exploitation, an aggravation of the pillage of the dominated countries and a challenge to democratic rights.

Global rationality vs. rationality of capital

In the absence of a credible alternative to neoliberal policies, urgency pushes certain milieus and personalities to elaborate proposals to accelerate the defence of the climate in equity, but without breaking with market mechanisms when these latter seem to rest on an undoubted consensus. Whatever their desire to be realistic, these proposals postulate the realisation of a series of conditions which, when one looks at them, seem highly utopian. In the eyes of the system, they have the fault of resting on the force of conviction of an overall rationality. Indeed, capital, as "many capitals" in competition with each other, is characterised by the

contradiction between its innumerable partial rationalities and its growing irrationality as a system. Global rationality can only convince it temporarily and in the very last extremity, when its survival is threatened (but at that moment, in general, it is already too late for the survival of numerous members of the less favoured classes and layers).

This quid pro quo between global reason and the reason of capital characterises notably the mechanism suggested to bring to an end the proposal known as "Contraction and Convergence" (C&C). Formulated by the Indian ecologist Anil Agarwal, [22] taken up by the Global Commons Institute of Aubrey Meyer [23] and popularised by eminent scientists like Sir John Houghton [24] or Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, [25] this proposal has the merit of settling the dilemma of the developing countries to the advantage of the latter. Let's take up the terms of the problem: if growth based on fossil fuels is pursued, even admitting that the combined character of development would mean they would not follow exactly the road followed by the imperialist countries since 1780, these countries will accentuate the climate change of which their peoples will be (are already!) the main victims. The poor are right to not wish to remain poor in order to save the climate which has been wrecked by the rich, C&C advocates a radical reduction of global emissions ("contraction") combined with an equalisation of emissions per inhabitant ("convergence") and a catching up of the development of the North by the South thanks to clean technologies (fig. 3). We subscribe to this egalitarian perspective, but how could it be put into practice?

Fig. 3. . Source : Global Commons Institute and J. Houghton.

By way of a response, it is suggested that exchangeable emission rights are distributed to the developing countries inasmuch as they are below their quota per inhabitant. The countries of the North who do not reduce their emissions enough should buy these rights. The corresponding income would allow the countries of the South to procure the technologies necessary to a development without carbon. This scenario raises many practical questions. To whom would the rights be distributed? Who would guarantee that their liquidation would effectively benefit the peoples (and not pay the servicing of the debt, or to fatten the "local elites")? These are significant questions. But the mechanism also has a fundamental weak point.

In his presentation of the C&C scenario, the climatologist Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, whose commitment to a solidarity-based rescue of the climate is indisputable (see interview), writes this : "*If the initial sharing of the rights was based on equity, permits could constitute, in certain conditions, a formidable vector of aid to developing countries. And on condition that the total quantity of permits is determined by a concern to protect the climate for the centuries to come, such a system would allow the carrying out of the necessary reductions in emissions at least cost*". [26] The problem resides obviously in the little word "if" and in the expression "on condition that".

Capitalism built itself historically by appropriating natural resources. To distribute freely equal rights to dispose of resources is completely opposed to its nature (that is why, in practice, the distribution of emission rights is neither equitable nor ethical, as shown by the experience of the European Exchange System of rights - see article on sequel to Kyoto). In itself, it is obviously not a reason to cast aside the demand (on the contrary). But the question to pose is: who would impose respect of the prior conditions in the area of equity and quantity of permits? The political representatives of the big developing countries? Would they worry about ethics and the climate more than the imperialist masters? Supposing that they had the will to impose such a solution, it would be necessary that they rest on a very broad popular mobilisation.

Is it realistic to think that the poor masses of the South would mobilise on a demand as ethereal as the distribution of exchangeable rights to emit carbon dioxide in the atmosphere? If they adopted it, in any case, that would be in the framework of overall demands which would be much more simple and direct: abolition of the debt, agrarian reform, nationalisation of energy resources (as in Venezuela and in Bolivia), community rights over water and other resources, and so on. Indeed, most of these demands break with the market... in the framework of which C&C, out of realism, wishes to remain. We are back at our point of departure.

What this discussion reveals is that the objective and subjective difficulties in the rescue of the climate are indissolubly linked : we cannot resolve one without resolving the other. To save the climate in social justice, with a world population of 6 billion human beings, implies bringing the average emissions down to around 0.4-0.5 tonnes of carbon per person and per year. An American or an Australian emit nearly six tonnes, a Belgian or a Dane three tonnes, a Mexican one tonne, a Chinese a little less, and an Indian... 0.4 tonnes (Fig. 4). The only "durable" logic worthy of the name consists in making the demi-tonne of carbon per person and per year the quota of annual emission to be reached in each country at a certain date. A rational world strategy must then have four combined aspects: 1°) to reduce radically the primary demand for fossil energy sources of the developed countries (divide it by four, six or eight - according to the country); 2°) replace systematically fossil sources by renewable sources, beginning with these countries; 3°) constitute a world fund for adaptation financed uniquely according to the needs of the most threatened countries (see "A major social and political challenge"); 4°) transfer massively clean technologies towards the countries of the South, so that their development does not bring about a new destabilisation of the climate. If we want these four aspects to have the necessary breadth, be realised in the time limits necessary and be applied in social justice and equality, then the solution cannot simply flow from market mechanisms like the distribution of exchangeable rights, or the progressive and spontaneous lowering of the cost of renewables in a context of

competition. [27]

Fig. 4. Emissions of CO2 due to the combustion of fossil fuels (in tonnes of carbon) by person and by country (the other greenhouse gases are not taken into account) and level of stabilisation for a population of six billion human beings (0.5 tonnes of carbon/person and per year). Source : A. Berger, 2005.

It is necessary that the four aspects above are missions of public service, confided to public enterprises, realised independently of cost. According to specifications drawn up on the basis of real needs, and considering natural resources as the collective property of humanity. A radical redistribution of wealth (abolition of the debt of the countries of the South, an exceptional tax on wealth on a world scale, a tax bite on the profits of the oil companies, suppression of arms expenditure) and a radical deepening of democratic rights are then indispensable. Global rationality needs an anti-capitalist perspective.

For a world movement to rescue the climate

It will be objected that this perspective is not realistic either in the current conjuncture. That's right : the development of an anti-capitalist strategy for the climate is handicapped by the historic crisis of legitimacy of the socialist project. Whereas they appear indispensable to avoid climatic catastrophes, proposals like planning for the satisfaction of needs, public industrial initiative and the nationalisation of the energy sector (or any other form of adoption of public status to be elaborated at an international scale) are discredited. These responses are largely amalgamated with the waste of the ineffective command economy, wasteful, productivist and ultra-centralised, [28] as well as the material privileges of the bureaucracy and the monopoly of the latter over political decisions. Revolutionary Marxists can certainly explain that this amalgam is abusive but their explanations will be convincing only whey they show their rupture with productivism, by raising the flag of an "ecosocialism" where resources - notably energy resources - are self-managed by a supple linking of local communities, coupled with "planning at the local, national, regional, and world level". [29] However, even under this flag, it is obvious that these explanations can win support from a limited number of people only.

Fraudulent market solutions on the one hand, discredited anti-capitalist solutions on the other... What is the way out? Social mobilisation. Instead of privileging lobbying (as do so many environmental associations trapped in the apparatus of governance), this means building a relationship of forces. Instead of wasting efforts attempting to convince employers and governments, it means putting our energies into a work of rank and file consciousness raising. Instead of vainly seeking the chimerical recipe of salvaging the climate by exchanges of rights and other complicated market mechanisms it means propagating the simple idea that the climate should be saved in justice and equality, independently of cost, by taking the money from where it is. Instead of bringing everything down to sole individual responsibility, it means creating in action the social emancipator link which alone can generate a new individual and collective responsibility of humanity in its metabolism with nature.

As major global challenge (similar to the threat of destruction by nuclear war), the question of the climate can bring millions of people onto the streets. As we can see in these pages, the list of social problematics raised is long: access to resources, rights to employment, women's rights, rejection of racism, the fight against deregulation of public services, defence of refugees, support to peasant agriculture, promotion of public transport, the rights of indigenous communities, urban development, rejection of GMOs, the struggle against flexibility and *just in time*, defence of biodiversity, maintenance of social security, without forgetting war against war and the abolition of the third world debt... This diversity is a strength. The path to follow involves federating all these movements of résistance in an overall action, concretised by world days of action and demonstration. The specific mobilisation of youth so that this planet is habitable and beautiful for all can catalyse a world articulation of social movements. The initiatives of the *Climate Action Network* can be a point of departure. The demonstration organised in London on November 4, at the initiative of the *Campaign against Climate Change*, is an example to follow for all the left.

This strategy has its demands. In a system based on the individual struggle of all against all, the legitimate will of the exploited to improve their immediate conditions of existence and their children will be more important than the dangers which threaten tomorrow or the day after tomorrow - including if the ineluctability of these dangers is scientifically demonstrated. That is why the mobilisation for the climate should be linked to the satisfaction of the immediate needs of the social majority: employment, land, housing, a decent income, heating, potable water, employment status, working conditions, security of existence... The very breadth of the climate threat creates multiple possibilities for establishing this link in an organic manner, starting from the struggles on the ground. On one condition : it is necessary to cease to place action in a strategy of accompaniment of capitalist growth, as do the traditional political and trade union leaderships of the workers' movement. We should on the contrary open our eyes to the fact that this growth - which no longer creates jobs and engenders exclusion - takes us straight towards ecological catastrophes of which the workers and the poor will be the main victims. It is starting from this note that the left in general, and revolutionary Marxists in particular, should try to commit the workers' movement in convergence for the climate. It is not easy but it is possible, as shown notably by the campaign of Quebecois trades unionists for the nationalisation of

wind energy (see box). Other paths can be evoked: workers' control as means of contesting capitalist underhand dealing, on the one hand, and the demand that public enterprises create jobs in the area of energy efficiency and the implementation of renewables, on the other. [30] Faced with the gigantic coalition of interests that lead humanity to catastrophe and corrupt some layers of the population in the illusory delights of a phoney petit-bourgeois happiness, mobilisation for the climate can contribute to reconstructing a bridge towards anti-capitalism. It means reanimating the desire for a concrete utopia in showing how a collective well-being can appear very rapidly once one accepts the idea of emerging from capitalist cul-de-sac on energy.

Climate or development ? Climate or well-being? It is not the first time that capitalism has confronted humanity with a choice between plague and cholera. But the frenzy of accumulation carries the infernal dilemma to a global level, without precedent. This situation threatens barbaric solutions of a terrible breadth, affecting tens of millions, indeed hundreds of millions of people. "*Il diavolo fa le pentole ma no i coperchi*" ("The devil makes the saucepans, but not the lids"), says an Italian proverb. It is time to extinguish the diabolical fire of accumulation : the capitalist has no lid, and humanity risks being burnt.

I thank Marijke Colle, Jane Kelly, Manolo Gari, Michel Husson and Michaël Löwy who have commented on an initial version of this text. The final version is my responsibility alone.

Footnotes

[1] Several recent studies state that the maximum increase should even be lower than 2°C. James Hansen, chief climatologist for NASA, believes the temperature cannot rise by more than 1°C in relation to today, which represents a rise of 1.6°C in relation to 1780.

[2] The IPCC will bring out its fourth evaluation report in early 2007. Its documents are available online at the following address :http://www.ipcc.ch/.

[3] In addition to steam, whose quantities in the atmosphere are little influenced by human activity, the main greenhouse effect gases are carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), nitrous oxide (N2O) and the three fluorine furnace gases. Parts per million, in volume (ppmv), are a measure of concentration: 450 ppmv of CO2 means that, out of a million atmospheric molecules, 450 will be molecules of CO2. For reasons of convenience, greenhouse gas emissions are expressed in CO2 equivalent (ppmvCO2eq), which means that the quantity of each gas is converted into the quantity of CO2 which would have the same effect of trapping infrared rays (" radiation power").

[4] 2000-2001: +1,5 ppmvCO2; 2001-2002: +2 ppmvCO2; 2002-2003: + 2,5 ppmvCO2; 2003-2004 : + 3 ppmvCO2.

[5] As the warming of the mass of oceanic water is very slow, the current warming will in any case have an impact for around a millennium.

[6] Stern Review on The Economics of Climate Change. http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/sternreview_index.cfm.

[7] Sulphur oxides are responsible for the acidification of rain.

[8] "Comprendre le capitalisme actuel". Text for the "Séminaire Marx au XXIème siècle - http://hussonet.free.fr/mhsorbon.pdf.

[9] Hans JONAS, "Principe responsabilité", Champs Flammarion

[10] It is not without importance to note that this approach leads to deeply reactionary conclusions: eulogies to the "*mystification of the masses*" as means of avoiding "*imposing politically*" and with "*a maximum of discipline*" the "*unpopular measures*" necessary to save the climate. And Jonas stipulates that these measures will flow from "*laws of ecology that Malthus was the first to recognise*"...

[11] MARX, "Théories sur la plus-value", Tome I, Ed. Sociales, Paris 1974, pages 321-322.

[12] The thesis of the imminence of a peak of production before the depletion of oil and gas is defended notably by the ASPO (http://www.peakoil.net/). In reality, it is wrong to introduce this question into the debate on climate. Indeed: 1) the peak is an economic, not a physical concept; 2) oil which is still exploitable is amply sufficient to deregulate the climate; 3) known reserves of coal allow at least 300 years of exploitation; 4) significant oil resources exist in the oil shales, notably, whose exploitation is very ecologically damaging.

[13] ITER is the acronym of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor. Based in Cadarache (France) this project of common research should lead to a prototype of a controlled fusion power station "Like the sun" it was said in the media. This comparison, in reality, is inexact, solar fusion works very slowly and recycles its waste. Read in particular Sylvie Vauclair, "La naissance des éléments. Du big bang à la terre", Odile Jacob 2006.

[14] Jean-Claude DEBEIR, Jean-Paul DELEAGE and Daniel HEMERY, "*Les servitudes de la puissance. Une histoire de l'énergie*". Flammarion, Paris, 1986.

[15] Jean-Marie Chevalier, "Les grandes batailles de l'énergie", Gallimard 2004.

[16] The UN framework agreement on climate change was adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992.

[17] The G8 motion "Climate Clean Energy and Sustainable Development " can be read on line at http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/PostG8_Gleneagles_CCChapeau.pdf.

[18] "Stern Review", op. cit.

[19] The phasing would be determined by cost: the market will orient itself first to measures demanding the least investment, like improved energy efficiency in the developing countries, an end to deforestation, the development of biofuels, then wind and solar energy;

[20] The world eco-industry market is estimated at 550 billion euros. The experts predict its enlargement in the next five years, above all in the emergent countries, with growth rates of 5 to 8%. Source: Analysis of the EU ecoindustries, their employment and export potential. http//www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/enveco/industry_employment/ ecotec_exec_sum.pdf.

[21] The flexible mechanisms of Kyoto are described in our article "Petit pas compromis, effets pervers garantis". This can be read online at http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article648.

[22] Anil Agarwal & Sunita Nairin, "The Atmospheric Rights of All People on Earth", www.cseindia.org.

[23] Seehttp://www.gci.org.uk/.

[24] John Houghton, "Overview of the Climate Change Issue", http://www.jri.org.uk/resource/climatechangeoverview.htm#carbon.

[25] Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, "L'injustice fondamentale des changements climatiques", in Alternatives Sud, Vol 13-2006
[26] JP van Ypersele, op. cit.

[27] The Stern report squashes the idea that renewables impose themselves spontaneously when their cost is equivalent to that of oil. According to the report, at that time, the prices of oil products could fall to remain competitive. The existence of a huge economic rent, in addition to profits, effectively renders this scenario possible.

[28] A particularly striking mess in the area of climate change, to the extent that these economies had a very high intensity in energy and in carbon.

[29] Michaël Löwy, "Qu'est-ce que 'l'écosocialisme?" http://www.iire.org/lowyeco.html.

[30] A demand of this kind was put forward in the early 1980s by the surplus workers of the multinational Glaverbel in the region of Charleroi (Belgium). A public company for the isolation and renovation of buildings was even created but the government subsequently undermined it.

There is a need for a new Ungdomshus in Copenhagen

12 March 2007, by SAP (Denmark)

The responsibility for this lies with the Social Democrats and the right wing parties in the municipality, who sold Ungdomshuset at Jagtvej - a house which the conservative mayor of culture Thustrup-Hansen in 1999 admitted had been given to the youth as a present and "you cannot give a present and then take it back".

Still the political majority chose to sell the house and after that to give the Christian sect Faderhuset permission to throw out the young users and tear down the house. These politicians have created the problem and they have opposed any obvious solution. The users of Ungdomshuset have not only been forced to observe this political stubbornness; they have been evicted from their refuge and now they have been forced to witness the house being smashed by cranes and bulldozers.

The government has also chosen to try to score some cheap points on this conflict and stands as those who defend the state of law from the spoiled terrorist-kids. With complete support to the police and statements saying it's the responsibility of the parents and that they should be made economically responsible for the damages, any political and societal responsibility is denied and the conflict is being reduced to being the expression of the individual problems and lack of "bringing-up" of some few youths while the protests against the mainstreaming and individualization that young people experiences is being ignored.

The press also holds a responsibility. The use that this conflict has had for the newly started TV2-News cannot be measured in advertising budgets - and with 24 hour "Breaking News" and a helicopter in the air above Nørrebro the station has used this chance to its full potential. The rest of the press has followed with headlines that has been more or less well documented - but always dramatic.

That the police have lead themselves be used as a tool in a political conflict cannot (alas) come as a surprise. The police holds part of the responsibility for the escalation of the conflict by using a strategy of “striking first” and dissolve legal demonstrations, make arrests and teargas attacks on until then peaceful demonstrations. At the same time the police have generally raised the tension and tried to undermine the freedom of gathering and of speech by calling on people to stay away from the streets of Nørrebro. Also searches of private homes and the locations of political organisations - in some cases without court orders - and mass arrests and convictions, that are being made on a factori line scale and without individual court treatment, have contributed to raise the tensions and undermine the state of law, that the police are being said to guarantee.

In this situation it is not strange that some people become frustrated and uses violence and vandalism. Nor is it strange that some groups develops ideas that this is the only and best way to fight the system. It is not hard to understand that some people react like this. But this understanding does not change the fact that breaking store windows, smashing ordinary citizens cars and vandalising a high school is not the way to build solidarity from ordinary people. And it has along with fires in the streets and throwing of stones turned a lot of those who supported Ungdomshuset and its users against them, and made others stay at home instead of joining demonstrations.

There were other options. Maybe it was not possible to save Jagtvej 69. But a reaction could have been for instance a prepared squatting of one of those buildings which have been mentioned as a new Ungdomshus with the call for supporters and sympathisers to form a shield around the house. Maybe the police would have cleared out this house as well. But for each new house it would be more difficult for the police and for each new squatting the pressure on the politicians would be bigger. In many ways that was the method that got Ungdomshuset at Jagtvej 25 years ago. But that would require that the users of Ungdomshuset joined in abandoning the idea that everybody should be allowed to take action in each their way and with each their methods and that all methods are equally good. This nearly total freedom can work on an everyday basis in a self-governing Ungdomshus and create the free space that is needed. But this form of organisation does not work, when it comes to fighting. It does not create results, among other reasons because it isolates the activists from the broad masses in the society which could otherwise be convinced to support them. The struggle has not been made political. As long as the theme of the struggle is unclear the police will easily be viewed as the enemy and then the violence is in focus. And that is destructive towards creating support. It is therfor an important lesson to learn that while the anarchistic method is good when it comes to create and strengthen creativity, it is less good when it comes an aimed confrontation with the entire societal machinery.

The battle is not lost!

There is a need for creative and social free spaces - also in Copenhagen. There is a need for selfgoverning Ungdomshuse. It is the responsibility of the municipality to secure and finance the existence of these along with gym-halls, kindergartens and day care centers for the elderly. That responsibility rests on the politicians of the municipality and that is a responsibility that they cannot escape, because of the violence - even meaningless violence - in the streets.

Right now we can put the maximal amount of pressure on the politicians by:
- Defending and explaining the idea of a self-governing Ungdomshus among our friends, family, at our workplaces and in our schools.
- Mobilising as many people as possible to the peaceful demonstrations.
- Making happenings and taking actions that does not cause ordinary people severe bother and where the responsibility for a violent turn clearly and visibly lies with the politicians and the police - for instance new squats.
- Continuing the political work that the Red-Green Alliance in Copenhagen has been doing for a long time, to try and make a political majority for the establishing of a new Ungdomshus.

On the Middle East

6 March 2007

1. The bipartisan consensus with which the US ruling class had approved of the military campaign of the Bush administration after September 11, 2001, including the invasion of Iraq, has crumbled in the face of the setbacks suffered during the occupation of that country. The debates which are taking place in the US establishment are not, however, about what continues to have unanimous support within it: the major strategic importance of controlling the Gulf region and Iraq. What is involved are rather debates about the best way to limit the damage of the Iraq operation, while ensuring the long-term hold of Washington over this part of the world. Also included are debates on how to confront Iran. The regime of the Iranian mullahs is seen by the Bush administration as an Islamic equivalent of Hugo Chavez’s Venezuela: a regime that relies on the margin of autonomy with which its oil resources provide it to reject the domination of Washington and to oppose its regional hegemony.

Members of the US establishment prefer to stress the possibility of coming to a modus vivendi with Tehran, pointing out the opening of the Iranian regime to neo-liberalism, which strongly distinguishes it from the social radicalisation that is under way in Latin America.

2. The balance sheet of the imperialist expeditions conducted by the Bush administration since the attacks on United States soil is absolutely disastrous. Even in Afghanistan, it is today the Talibans who are on the offensive: a considerable part of the country is once again under their control, and the presence of US and allied troops has become the main cause of the new expansion of this movement from which Washington had claimed to have "liberated" the country. The life of the Afghan population under the rule of the Islamic fundamentalist warlords of the Northern Alliance and under the domination of the Western occupation forces, far removed from the lying claims of the democratization and modernization of Afghanistan and of the liberation of Afghan women, has pulled off the exploit of making entire regions of the country regret the Talibans.

II - Iraq

1. It is, however, Iraq that was the main objective of the imperial offensive, and it is the Iraqi fiasco that represents the most serious failure of the Bush administration. Its initial - neo-conservative - plan aimed at the establishment in Iraq of a regime with a "democratic" façade, with a majority social base and dominated by the allies of Washington. It was quickly understood that the base for that did not exist and that the dominant forces among the Iraqi Shiites - the community that was supposed to be grateful to the United States - were the pro-Iranian forces. The failure of this plan led the administration, in the absence of reliable partners for a real scenario of "Iraqisation" of the conflict, to play on the religious and ethnic divisions in order to maintain its hegemony. This practice ended up by encouraging a dynamic of religion-based civil war, which took a tragic turn after February 2006 (the anti-Shiite bombing in Samara) - a tragedy of which women were some of the main victims. In return, this dynamic made the failure of the Bush administration all the more obvious.

2. The Bush administration has decided to stake everything on a military escalation aimed at taking military control of the capital, Baghdad, while trying to isolate its main enemy: the movement led by Moqtada al-Sadr. In order to succeed this tactic requires Washington to be able to break the alliance of the Shiite forces. At the same time the Bush administration is considerably increasing its pressure on Tehran, multiplying military gesticulations which give the impression that it is preparing an attack against Iran. All of this is vertebrated by a regional policy whose aim is to counter the influence of Iran by stirring up religious tensions between Shiites and Sunnis on the level of the whole of the Middle East. In this criminal enterprise Washington is acting in collusion with its Sunni Arab allies: the oil monarchies of the Gulf, led by the Saudi kingdom, which is ultra-fundamentalist and dependent on Washington, as well as Egypt and Jordan. The question of Iran's nuclear power is being exploited by Washington in order to scare its regional and international partners. The imperialist motivation for this attitude is all the more clear in that Israel, the privileged ally of the United States, has been, for a long time already, a nuclear power and on top of that a state which, unlike Iran, has not signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

3. The policy of the Bush administration amounts to a dangerous forward flight, which is not surprising on the part of a government which has already demonstrated an adventurism that is today denounced by a growing majority of the United States ruling class. The other major option in the ranks of the establishment (Baker-Hamilton) calls for looking for a way out of the impasse for the United States by means that are above all political, in particular by negotiating compromises with Iran and Syria. The objective is in this way to limit the damage and to try to consolidate a hegemony less absolute and less authoritarian than that envisaged by the Bush administration. The latter rejects such an option as representing a major defeat for the project of unipolar world hegemony of the United States, which it has been pursuing since it came to power.

4. The events of recent months have confirmed a characteristic of the Iraqi "resistance" that has been apparent since the beginning: it is not only a national resistance to the imperialist occupier, but also a force for religious civil war. The armed organizations created in the Sunni Arab regions of Iraq have been conducting from the beginning both a legitimate struggle against the occupation and a reactionary struggle against the rule of the Shiite majority. For the last year the principal movement acting against the occupation among the Shiite Arabs has in its turn engaged in a bloody practice of religious reprisals. The project of Moqtada al-Sadr, of unifying the Iraqi Arabs in a common nationalist opposition to the occupier, seems definitely compromised. The only force conducting a struggle that is still today capable of finding support in all the Iraqi communities is a class force: the union of oil workers. This struggle is all the more important in that it centres on the main reason for the invasion of Iraq. It must be supported by anti-imperialists and by the workers' movement in every country.

III - Lebanon

1. The Israeli offensive against the Lebanese Hezbollah in July and August 2006 fits into the desire of the United States to break Iranian influence in the Middle East. As soon as the Bush administration had carried out its invasion of Iraq, it concerned itself as a priority with confronting Iran and it chose as the principal terrain for this confrontation Lebanon, which presented two targets that were allied to Tehran: the Syrian presence and the Hezbollah. On this question, unlike the question of Iraq, Washington could count on the active collaboration of Paris. However, the inability of Washington's Lebanese allies to defeat the Hezbollah convinced the United States to turn to

Israel for this task.

2. The Israeli offensive suffered a resounding failure: not only did the Hezbollah largely demonstrate its capacity for dissuasion in the face of Israel, but it even succeeded in carrying the battle inside the Israeli state itself, for the first time in the history of Israeli-Arab wars. Washington and Paris were forced to have recourse to a "B plan": the deployment of NATO forces (Germany, Spain, France, Italy, and Turkey in particular) in southern Lebanon, under the cover of the United Nations, while waiting for a suitable occasion for these forces to help the Lebanese government, which is dominated by the allies of Washington and Paris, in a new attempt to defeat and disarm the Hezbollah.

3. Since then, political tensions have increased considerably in Lebanon between the allies of Washington and Paris and the allies of Damascus and Tehran. The forces making up the opposition bloc, on the side of the Hezbollah, are not qualitatively different from those which make up the majority. They are conducting a battle for a re-distribution of power between the opposition and the majority in such a way as to "associate" the opposition with governmental decisions. The way in which the opposition avoided organizing a real mobilization, against the neo-liberal program that was adopted in the perspective of the so-called "Paris 3" conference on Lebanon and its debt, clearly demonstrates its socio-political nature. The battle that is underway therefore aims as a priority to negotiate a compromise within the ruling class, even though the opposition puts forward at the same time the democratic demand for a new electoral law and for early parliamentary election. Nevertheless the Bush administration is inciting its Lebanese allies to adopt an intransigent attitude: its closest allies even have a provocative attitude which reveals Washington's desire to push the Lebanese people into a civil war.

4. In spite of the fact that it is a fundamentalist Islamic organization, the Hezbollah cannot be put on the same level as the terrorist currents of Islamic fundamentalism: the way in which the Bush administration and Israel are trying to associate it with Al-Qaeda must be firmly denounced. The Hezbollah is a mass party that has become the principal armed wing of the Shiite community, which makes up the majority in the poor layers of the Lebanese population, in its resistance to Israel's repeated attacks. In this sense, the armed resistance conducted by the Hezbollah is a legitimate struggle, and this organization cannot be put on the same level as the factions of the "Iraqi resistance". So it is legitimate for the Lebanese left to ally with the Hezbollah in resisting Israel and the imperialist forces. The international anti-imperialist Left has a duty to give political support to the Lebanese resistance, independently of the social and political nature of its leadership, and although it is led by the Hezbollah - while criticizing this organization for its fundamental and communalist nature and for its attitude on social and political questions. However, it is to the Lebanese left - and in particular to its principal organization, the Lebanese Communist Party, itself engaged in the resistance - that the international anti-imperialist forces and the workers' movement must give their support in priority.

IV - Palestine

1. The Israeli offensive that has been conducted against Gaza since June 2006 also fits into the same regional strategic framework as the one that determined events in Lebanon: the action of the Bush administration against Iran and its allies. The victory of Hamas in the legislative election of January 2006 was seen as a serious setback by Washington, which immediately put strong pressure on its European allies to treat with ostracism the new democratically elected Palestinian government. At the same time Washington put strong pressure on its Palestinian partner, Mahmoud Abbas, and the right wing sectors who are dominant in the apparatus of Fatah, to reject any perspective of compromise and of a government of national union with Hamas. It was to prevent such a development that the Israeli offensive was launched.

2. The alliance with Hamas, a Sunni Islamic fundamentalist organization, is a precious gain for Tehran: it enables Shiite Iran to give a demonstration of its pan-Islamism and to counter the attempts to isolate it, as a Shiite power, from the Sunnis who make the big majority in the Arab world and within Islam. It is for this reason that it is a priority target of Washington and Israel in the same way as the Hezbollah is, and also because of the radically anti-Israeli attitude that it shares with its Lebanese ally. As in Lebanon, Israel has shown itself incapable of defeating Hamas in its principal bastion, Gaza, without re-occupying the sector, which would have a prohibitive military and political cost. So the principal tactic consists of combining the blows struck from the outside by the Israel with inciting the Palestinian to civil war, in particular by arming the forces allied to Washington within Fatah and by pushing them towards intransigence and provocation. The setbacks of the Bush administration have encouraged Washington's Arab allies to be more in favour of a compromise between the Palestinian factions, so that Tehran can no longer draw political profit from its support for Hamas.

3. Like the Hezbollah, Hamas is a movement with a mass base, which has become the expression of the desire for resistance of an important part of the Palestinian population. Its reputation for dedication and honesty contrasts with the Mafia-style reputation and reality of the apparatus of the Palestinian authority that is dominated by Fatah. However, its programmatic nature is expressed in a profound inability to formulate a policy that could help to break the Zionist consensus: even further, Hamas has for a long time contributed to producing and consolidating this consensus by having recourse to suicide attacks that threatened Israeli civilians without any distinction. In one sense, Hamas is "the preferred enemy" of the Zionist right, which has contributed in no small way to strengthening it by its military provocations and by humiliating its opponents at the head of the Palestinian authority.

4. Anti-imperialists and the workers' movement must support the rights of the Palestinian people to freely choose its government, and fight energetically against the strangling of the Hamas government by Israel, the United States, and their European allies. They must act in solidarity with the legitimate resistance of the Palestinian people to Israeli attacks, independently of the nature of the forces which are conducting this resistance. However, they must establish particular links of solidarity with the organizations of the Palestinian left who are conducting an independent political battle against the Palestinian right which is allied to Washington, and an ideological battle against Islamic fundamentalism within the Palestinian population.

V -Tasks

The military and political setbacks suffered by the imperialist offensive in the Middle East are quite clearly creating a framework that is particularly favourable for energetically re-launching the anti-war movement. Today the United States and its allies are engaged, with combinations that vary, in three regional wars - Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine - to which must be added a war that is for the moment latent in Lebanon. At the same time the Bush administration has very ostentatiously engaged in preparations for war against Iran and does not hesitate to broaden the regional scope of its military action, as was recently demonstrated by its intervention in Somalia. The Bush administration has its back to the wall, but like a ferocious animal with its back to the wall, it is all the more dangerous. It is urgent to re-double efforts to build a powerful anti-war movement for an immediate and unconditional end to imperialist expeditions, around the following priority axes:

â€¢ against any attack on Iran

â€¢ for the withdrawal of occupying troops from Iraq

â€¢ for the withdrawal of the troops who are intervening in Afghanistan

â€¢ for the withdrawal of NATO forces from Lebanon

â€¢ for an end to interference in Palestinian internal affairs and for the lifting of sanctions on the Palestinians.

In this battle, the Fourth International will establish particular links of solidarity with the trade union and political forces that are conducting a progressive struggle in the region. It will seek to favour the re-emergence of a Left in the Middle East that is at once democratic, feminist and anti-imperialist.

Agreed by the Fourth International International Committee - Feburary 2007

On the Tamil National Question

6 March 2007

The Petition

To: those national governments and international institutions that support the Sri Lanka government

No war in Sri Lanka - self determination for the Tamil people

The Sri Lanka government is carrying out an undeclared war against the Tamil people who have been struggling for more than two decades for the legitimate right to self-rule.

The government of Mahinda Rajapaksa, elected on a Sinhala chauvinist basis in November 2005, has consistently breached the 2002 cease-fire agreement with the LTTE. They have been conducting aerial bombardments, specifically outlawed under the agreement.

In August, the Sri Lankan air force destroyed an orphanage in Sencholai, killing 50 children. The anti-war opposition has been put under extreme pressure. Tamil MP Nadaraja Raviraj was gunned down in Colombo on November 9 and other activists have received serious death threats.

External support for the Mahinda regime is essential in allowing it to carry out this war mongering. The Sri Lankan army leadership is trained at the British army training school at Sandhurst while the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) are banned as a supposedly "terrorist" organisation across Europe.

We therefore call on our governments and international institutions to lift any bans on the LTTE and to demand that the Sri Lankan government:

â€¢ End the aerial bombardments;

â€¢ End the disappearances and stop support for paramilitaries;

â€¢ Open the A9 road and other access routes so that essential humanitarian supplies can get through to the Tamil areas in the north;

â€¢ Re-open negotiations with the LTTE for a just solution acceptable to the Tamil people.

Defend Tamils' democratic rights

This speech by Dr. Vickramabahu Karunarathne, the President of the Left Front, to a London public meeting was appended to the resolution.

After more than fifty years of gaining independence from British

rule still we are not really free. This was symbolised by the Independence Day celebrations where the president was surrounded by a military wall with people kept in abeyance. We are neither free to decide our economic development programme, nor are we free to decide our political future. We have borrowed heavily and we are seriously in debt. Hence leaders of global capital, America, Europe and Japan, are dictating terms to us. Though elected, the government is a puppet that works according to their rules: the decision making is in their hand.

Secondly, we are tied down by a national, or communal, civil war. We are unable to resolve the national question and to arrive at a constitution that can accommodate all national and religious aspirations. We are still a prison house of nationalities. We are not a free, united republic.

The United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) led alliances ruled this country since independence. Hence they are responsible for this misery and the oppressive situation. At the beginning the UNP and the SLFP had different policies. The UNP was close to the foreign capital and the English-speaking urban elites while the SLFP represented interests of the local capital and the majority Sinhala Buddhist lower classes. Hence it was the reformist party.

However today, with the rise of neoliberal economic policies, both have the same economic policies. Even though they differ on the solution to the national question they have come together to give strength to the ongoing war of oppression.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa came to power using three different and somewhat contradictory campaigns.

Firstly, it was the chauvinist campaign led by the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) and the JVP. Though they both represented the Sinhala chauvinist ideology there is a social difference between them. Hela Urumaya is a capitalist organisation that accepts the neo liberal economics of global capitalism. It has no conflict with the American policy, while the JVP shouts slogans against the Americans in the name of the plebeians of the world. They explained that the victory of Mahinda will be the end of the peace agreement and that there will be a real war against theTamil Tigers (LTTE). The armed struggle against the state is led by the LTTE though it accepts the neoliberal policies of the global capital.

Sinhala racist forces claimed that the hegemony of the Sinhala Buddhists will be restored and the unitary state will be consolidated once Mahinda is in power. Of course there will be discussions to make Tamils and Muslims understand how to work within this system, they said. In Sinhala majority areas Mahinda made use of this campaign.

Secondly, he made use of the social reform campaign led by the old left and the populists of the SLFP. The JVP also helped them. With coalition politics the old left has reduced themselves to a mere noise within the coalition. They said that Mahinda will change the neoliberal economic policies continued by the Chandrika rule. There will be protection for the local industries. Development will be centred on village regeneration. Agrarian revolution through village self rule. Resources will be directed towards the peasant and the fisher men and other small producers. Social services such as education health and transport will be protected. Privatisation will be turned back. Dependency on global capital will be changed.

Finally he made use of the trade union campaign for wage increase to balance the rise of cost of living. In addition to the old left trade union leaders, this campaign included Thondaman, Chandarsekaran, etc. They believed that the victory of Mahinda will benefit the workers movement. They were of the view that he will consult the Trade Unions regularly and that Trade Union and media freedom will be protected.

Having come to power he turned against the social and Trade Union campaigns but continued with the chauvinist military policy. Aerial bombing, combined with missile attacks at areas suspected of LTTE activity, devastated the Tamil homeland. Whole villages were uprooted, killing thousands, while several hundreds of thousands of people were displaced and became refugees. Mahinda joyfully claims that the east is cleared of LTTE. Before the Independence Day celebrations he made a special visit to Vakarai to inspect the spoils of the war of national suppression. He also boasts that once the victory is consolidated it will be continued in the North as well. At the same time he makes bogus appeals for discussions. On the other hand assassinations and disappearances continue all over the country. At least 2,000 have disappeared.

However he has retraced the promises given to the social and trade union movements. He has implemented the tasks given in the Regaining Sri Lanka programme of the UNP. Indirectly he has used the military chauvinist policy against the Trade Unions. Mahinda claims that any trade union campaign at this juncture, when the government is involved in a "war to defend the nation", is a crime against the nation; a treachery. Hence the anti-LTTE repression can be used against the Trade Unions as well. Mahinda assumes that the chauvinist campaign and the consolidation of the state forces can stand against the social and trade union unrest. Already he has used these against both Trade Unions and media. Global capital is satisfied with his economic policies and the ability to face the social unrest. He was given the $3.5 billion promised in 2005.

Last week they promised to give 4.5 billion for his future programme. They all stressed the need of peace. But this help is unconditional and, in their peace appeal, there is no mention of the autonomy of the Tamil-speaking people. The Sri Lanka Development Forum held in Galle showed clearly that the global capital is keen only arriving at peace (because) war is a hindrance to their development programme. LTTE and the Tamil liberation leaders expected global capitalist leaders to intervene and flex their muscles to stop geniocidal attacks on Tamil people. But that did

not happen at Galle. Global capitalist leaders gave indirect approval to similar attacks in Lebanon and the Mahinda state doesn't come second to the Israel state in loyalty to western powers.

With the backing of global capitalists UNP has almost totally come over to Mahinda. With the rest of the party, Ranil Wickremasinghe, the leader of the opposition, will be trailing behind Mahinda. Jathika Hela Urumaya has accepted the American dictates. Hence they have accepted portfolios in the government to implement their Sinhala chauvinist policy. Some UNPers have joined the government with a view to talk about Federal solutions. However, these Federal solutions must first be approved by Champika Ranawaka. Social pressure on the JVP has forced them to move out of the government, but they cannot break away from the chauvinist policy that ties them to the Sinhala educated youth. This will create a crisis in the JVP ranks in the coming period.

The current attitude of the western powers and the global capital in general has created a new challenge for the LTTE leadership. Global leaders easily blame both sides, as if oppressor and oppressed are equal. Then they ban the oppressed and appeal to both sides to come to the discussion table. How ridiculous they are?

LTTEs must turn to the workers movement both locally as well as internationally. It must seek support for democratic rights of the Tamil people from the workers' movement, especially of Lankan and Indian. Thus there is a good opportunity for the Left to intervene.

The struggles of workers in ports, petroleum, railway, telecoms and plantations show that workers are not fooled by the military chauvinism. Other social campaigns are also breaking out. Mahinda regime will not be able to cope with the break down of the system.

The left should be prepared to take up the challenge. We must tell the workers at large that this is the time to help the just struggle of Tamils. One can have loads of criticism against the LTTE, but that should not stop one from coming out against geneocidal attacks on Tamil people. We must build a social movement through out the world to defend the democratic rights of the Tamil people.

We are all Franco Turigliatto!

6 March 2007, by Critical Left

Today, we are all Franco Turigliatto!

Franco's expulsion appears to us to have been a choice dictated by the governing arrangement and the outcome of unconditional support to the Prodi government, which does not foresee or tolerate any form of dissent. It is a decision closely linked to the new left unity line Bertinotti launched in his recent interview in Liberazione, aiming for the formation of a governing left, by definition incompatible with any type of dissident element.

We believe that the current crisis the party is experiencing demonstrates the failure of the political line set forth at the last Congress, centred on a completely erroneous analysis of the relationship of social forces (do your remember "the wind is changing"?). This has come to the fore with the "non-victory" of the Union in the last elections, which has left us with a minority Government, holed up in the governing Palace, and not at all open to decision-making bodies of social movements. For this reason we call for the convening of an *EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS OF THE PRC* which will acknowledge this failure and call upon the activists to discuss the party's future.

We express our most absolute solidarity with Franco: our human and moral solidarity but above all our political solidarity. Therefore Critical Left is preparing to follow the political guidelines set forth in its declaration to the Senate, with a confidence in the government equivalent to external support and which has already determined to oppose the anti-popular and war measures of the Prodi government, starting with Afghanistan. From this day on, Critical Left will be actively involved, in society as in parliament, in building a left opposition to the Prodi Government and its 12 points. For this reason we reiterate our no, with no ifs and or buts, to new credits for the military mission in Afghanistan, to the TAV project [1], to any type of pension counter-reform, as we will continue to struggle, with the movement, against the doubling in size of the US base in Vicenza.

Thus, we will be more committed than ever before in the social movements and the struggle aiming to get back to the original spirit of the Social Forums; public arenas where different political and social forces can come to an agreement on common actions and platforms. For this reason, we intend to contribute to building genuine social opposition forums.

We are telling Rifondazione Comunista, the party which so many of us founded and built loyally throughout many years, that ***WE WILL DISOBEY ACTIVELY AND EN MASSE*** the decision taken, by not following the line of unconditional support to the government but practising another, the social opposition line. Therefore our disobedience entails the straightforward and determined construction of the Critical Left Association, a political instrument in the service of the social movements, which does not desert the

anticapitalist left camp.

Footnotes

[1] A rapid railway line between Lyon and Turin that is an environmental threat to fragile Alpine valleys.

Lebanon and the Middle East Crisis

1 March 2007, by Gilbert Achcar

IT IS already a fact that the whole conflict is increasingly taking on a sectarian character. But it is not the sectarian or religious divide that we were accustomed to in Lebanon's past-I'm referring to the fifteen-year civil war of 1975-90, which mainly pitted a predominantly Christian camp against a predominantly Muslim one-although things were never as pure or as simple as that. The sectarian division this time is taking a form that is unprecedented in Lebanon: it looks more like an extension to Lebanon of the division that prevails in Iraq, opposing the two major branches of Islam, Sunni and Shiite.

The tension between the two communities is indeed quite sharp at present in Lebanon itself. True, neither the opposition nor the so-called majority-they have the parliamentary majority, but they cannot claim to represent the majority of the population-is religiously homogenous. Both involve various groups belonging to different sects and religions. The overwhelming majority of Lebanese Shiites stand in the opposition: they are organized by Hezbollah on the one hand, and Amal on the other hand. They are allied with one of the two major forces among the Christian Maronites, led by former General Michel Aoun. You can add to that a motley collection of various other groups-Christian forces, a minor force among the Druze community and some small Sunni forces, which have mainly in common the fact that they are linked to the Syrian regime.

Facing that in the "majority" camp, there is the Hariri clan, which enjoys a clear majority among Sunni Muslims, plus the majority leadership among the Druze sect, represented by Walid Jumblatt, and a section of the Christians, composed of various groups, among whom the most prominent are the Lebanese Forces, far Right forces that were very vicious during the fifteen-year civil war. Basically, in sectarian terms, the Christians are the only community that is really split in almost two halves. As for the other communities, it is clear that on the one hand, the overwhelming majority of the Shiites stand in the opposition, while the majority of Sunnis and Druze stand in the "majority" camp. The opposition is demanding a larger representation in the government with blocking power (that means one-third of seats according to the constitution), as well as a new electoral law and early elections.

THIS SEEMS like a shift since the Israeli invasion last year. After Hezbollah repulsed the aggression, Hezbollah were the heroes of the hour in Lebanon, and throughout the Middle East. It sounds like what you are saying is that things have shifted back again toward greater division. What accounts for it?

YES, THERE has definitely been a shift, but there were also over optimistic expectations or readings into the situation at that time. During the war, the brutality and the terrible fury of the Israeli onslaught had the effect of more or less unifying the Lebanese people in their condemnation of Israel. But, if one had followed things more closely, it would have been clear that there was no radical shift in the political situation. Quickly after the war, due to the internal political dynamics and the attitude of the various leaderships, the divisions that existed before the Israeli onslaught prevailed again-with even more intensity due to the situation created by the war itself. The political struggle after the war became much more sensitive and much more crucial for everyone.
For Hezbollah, the present political confrontation is absolutely vital. The party has been the target of Israel's attempt to destroy it. The attempt failed, but the project has not been discarded.

Washington took over from Israel and is trying to continue the war by other means. It pressed for UN security council resolution 1701, through which it got NATO forces to deploy in southern Lebanon as standby forces to be used in case of domestic confrontation in the country; that is, in order to give a helping hand to Washington's partners. Since then, Washington has been constantly and actively pushing toward civil war in Lebanon. Actually, if one had to summarize Washington's policy toward Lebanon as well as toward Palestine, it could be accurately described as "incitement to civil war": civil war between Palestinians and civil war between Lebanese, not to mention the unfolding civil war in Iraq.

In both Lebanon and Palestine, there is a force that Washington sees as a major enemy-Hamas among Palestinians, Hezbollah in Lebanon. Behind these two forces, Washington targets Iran (Syria, too, but Iran is Washington's main concern). And in both countries there are partners of Washington: the "majority" and the Siniora government in Lebanon, Fatah and Mahmoud Abbas in Palestine.

THAT'S WHY the U.S. and Israel are releasing money to Fatah in Palestine.

EXACTLY. THEY are even sending

them weapons. So these are twin situations, and at the same time they are symmetrical, like a reflection in a mirror. In Lebanon, the opposition is fighting against the government (the council of ministers), which is dominated by Washington's partners holding the parliamentary majority, whereas the president (General Emile Lahoud) is in the opposition. In Palestine it is exactly the reverse: The government and parliamentary majority are dominated by Hamas, and the president (Fatah leader Mahmud Abbas) is Washington's partner. In both countries, Washington is pushing for civil war. In the case of Lebanon, it is resorting to the only ideological weapon that the United States and its Arab partners have found to counter Iran's influence in the area-which is sectarianism.

In its effort to shield itself from the U.S. war drive and threats against it, Iran has used pan-Islamic rhetoric; it has been outbidding all Arab regimes in anti-Israeli rhetoric-including provocative stances on the Holocaust. Tehran is also building up a protective shield in the form of a network of alliances going beyond Shiite forces. The Iranian-led alliance is not a "Shiite axis," as it is presented to Sunnis by Washington and its Arab allies. It involves forces that are not Shiite. Hamas is definitely not Shiite-even the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the largest organization of Sunni Islamic fundamentalism, came out politically in support of Iran. Nor is the Syrian regime a "Shiite regime"-it is actually quite far from Iranian Khomeinist ideology, as it shares the secular ideology of Tehran's previous bitter foe, the Iraqi Baathist regime.

ARE WASHINGTON and its allies using the whole idea of a "Shiite crescent" as an ideological weapon?

IT IS absolutey that. The only tool they have to counter Tehran is to use sectarianism, and denounce Iran and its arc of influence as a "Shiite crescent"-to the point that there were even demonstrations in the Palestinian territories recently, where Fatah demonstrators against Hamas were chanting slogans denouncing Hamas as Shiites, using "Shiites" pejoratively as anti-Semites use "Jews."

WHY IS this having any success?

UNFORTUNATELY, IN the absence of a Left, of class forces, of progressive consciousness-when the dominant forces on both sides are religious forces-it is quite easy to stir up such feelings. If they were facing a class party that crossed sectarian lines, it wouldn't be so easy to counter it with sectarian arguments. But they are facing religious forces, of which the main organization have a sectarian character: Iran and Hezbollah are religious Shiite forces. In such conditions, even though Hamas is part of the alliance, it becomes credible to use the sectarian argument. And this has been very much fueled by the unfolding civil war in Iraq, which is pitting Sunnis against Shiites.

HAS SECTARIAN tension gone up in the wake of the execution of Saddam Hussein?

WASHINGTON'S ARAB partners used it as a further opportunity to whip up the sectarian Sunni versus Shiite division. The execution was conducted very clumsily by the Iraqi government. One gets the impression that Washington actually wanted it to happen that way, knowing that this would be used by its allies in the area to isolate Iran and denounce its influence and its allies. I wouldn't be surprised at all if some U.S. hand was behind the video of Saddam Hussein's hanging-it circulated so quickly and was exploited in such a blatant manner. Suddenly, all kinds of people, many of whom used to hate Saddam Hussein when he was in power, turned him into a martyr of Sunnism. That was quite grotesque!

TO WHAT extent has Hezbollah attempted to act against, or overcome sectarian divisions-or at least project itself as part of a broad opposition? It seems like Hezbollah at least in some respects tries to present itself as part of a broader political opposition. Would you say that there's an element of that, but that it isn't going to succeed because the sectarian logic is too deep?

YES, DEFINITELY. There is an element of that. Hezbollah is keen on not appearing as a purely sectarian force, and trying to enlarge its alliances. That's why they are quite happy to have the alliance with Aoun, who is a major force among Christians; and they try to cozy up to some Sunni forces, including Lebanese Sunni Islamic fundamentalists, and to whatever kind of allies they can find in communities other than the Shiite community. But basically, they are a Shiite organization. In order to be a member of Hezbollah, you have to be a Shiite. It is by nature not only a religious organization, but a sectarian one.

It has built itself in the Shiite community and never bothered in any serious manner to build itself outside it. Its set of priorities is, first, unity among the Shiites-hence, their alliance with Amal, the other major Shiite organization. Then they are keen on avoiding clashes with other Muslims-the Sunnis-because it is neither in their interest, nor in Iran's interest. Hence their conciliatory stances. Inciting sectarianism, actually, is only in the interests of the Saudi, Egyptian, and Jordanian regimes, and of Washington behind them, because that's the only effective ideological tool they've got. And for the reasons mentioned, Hezbollah-although it tries to prevent the situation from deteriorating into sectarianism-is, by its very nature, an easy target for those wanting to whip up sectarianism.

IS THAT why Hezbollah called off the demonstrations in January-for fear of sectarian violence spiraling out of control?

HEZBOLLAH UNDERSTANDS that some of Washington's partners, Jumblatt and the Lebanese Forces in particular, are tools of a strategy that aims at provoking civil war. There is a difference here within the "majority" between the forces just mentioned and the Hariri clan, that is, the Saudi-linked forces: The latter are more "moderate" in the sense that they are more cautious. It's somewhat like the difference you have in Washington between the Bush administration and the Baker-Hamilton "realist" camp. The Saudi rulers are certainly much

more in tune with Baker-Hamilton generally than with the present Bush administration. They were very happy with the Bush Sr. administration, but Bush Jr. is a problem for them because his administration is way too adventuristic. They can see how disastrous the Bush administration's balance sheet is for them already.

WHAT IS the role of Syria in all this?

SYRIA IS still very much involved in Lebanon, of course. This is also one of the problems with Hezbollah's strategy: its links with Syria. Most of the forces in the opposition are pro-Syrian forces-all of them actually, except Aoun who used to be Syria's fiercest enemy in Lebanon. Hezbollah is an ally of Syria, there's no mystery about that. Amal is even more closely linked to the Syrian regime. And the other opposition forces too are closely linked to the Syrian regime. One of the purposes of the movement now is to block the international tribunal on Rafik Hariri's assassination (Hariri was killed on February 14, 2005, by a car bomb, and Syrian services are accused of being behind the assassination), which Washington is pushing through the UN in order to use it as a tool to exert blackmail on Damascus. This is one of the obvious purposes of what is going on, and because of that, the Hariri clan is able to tell its social constituency, its sectarian constituency, "Look, these people want to protect the Syrian regime, the murderers of Rafik Hariri. They want to protect the murderers of the great leader of the Sunni community," and so on.

AND THEY want to make Lebanon a protectorate of Syria…

YES, OF course. They use this kind of rhetoric. And unfortunately it is credible because of the fact that major chunks of the opposition are made up of completely rotten pro-Syrian forces. That's a huge problem, quite far from the way some people on the left worldwide have romanticized Hezbollah during the war. Of course, Hezbollah waged a truly heroic resistance. It had fighters really defending their land, their homes, their families, admirably: no discussion about that! But to go beyond and believe that Hezbollah is in a way a left-wing force is not warranted at all in reality.

IN THE press there's been talk of union protests against neoliberal policies and a new agreement in Paris, which is about imposing neoliberal policies in Lebanon. Has Hezbollah attempted to organize resistance around it?

HERE WE come to the issue of the January 25 Paris III meeting. It was a meeting of donors, rich donors, both Western and oil countries, gathered to supposedly help Lebanon. It was called by French president Jacques Chirac, who has been working in very close alliance with Washington on the Lebanese issue since 2004. Chirac is one of the strongest backers of Siniora's government and of the Hariri clan-he used to have very close links with Rafik Hariri. The conference was organized around an economic and social program that is a classical "Washington consensus" program. I'm referring here to the IMF-World Bank standard neoliberal measures that were forced on so many countries during the 1980s and 1990s and are still enforced.

The program of the Siniora government for the Paris III conference is a crude version of that. You name it you get it: privatization, and value added taxes instead of progressive income tax. The plan contains all the classical recipes through which the poorest layers of society are made to bear the brunt of measures that are supposed to lead to a healthier financial equilibrium and enable the government to pay back its debt. Lebanon has accumulated a huge debt over the years (currently over $40 billion). So this is on the one hand a classic IMF-World Bank kind of program. On the other hand, this conference was a political tool. It was meant by Chirac, and with him Bush, as a way of giving strong support to the Siniora government and the "majority" in Lebanon.

The way the opposition dealt with this development is very telling. Various forces of the opposition-Hezbollah, Aoun-criticized the program of the Paris III conference, but quite moderately in fact. They criticized the government's program, as any parliamentary opposition would do, but without rejecting its core logic. And then you had the leadership of the unions' confederation calling for a mobilization against the governmental program. This leadership is actually closely linked to the opposition and to Syria: it is a product of the period of Syrian domination over the country.

The demonstration called by the confederation on January 9 against the Paris III agenda proved completely ridiculous-2,000 people, in a country now used to demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of people. That's because the opposition did not mobilize in any serious manner. Although they proclaimed their support, they did not actually mobilize, for the obvious reason that fighting neoliberalism is definitely not their real concern. They actually explained that they did not want to jeopardize the Paris conference!

IT SEEMS that one way you could cut across the sectarian divide would be through political and union organizations that posed a non-sectarian alternative based on resisting these neoliberal policies.

THAT'S EXACTLY the point. You've got people trying to do that, fortunately. That's what the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) is trying to do. The LCP did not participate in the sit-in of the opposition since it started in downtown Beirut last December. They stood out of it, stating that they don't share the opposition's views, which are aimed at cutting a deal with the majority. The communists said, "That's not our program, we don't think the way out in Lebanon will come through a deal between sectarian leaderships. What we are ready to fight for together with the opposition are democratic demands-a new electoral law, new elections. But we don't want to be involved in a fight for a deal between sectarian forces that would end up forming a joint government." And then, when it came to opposition to Paris III, the LCP refused to participate in the day of demonstration called by the union confederation and supported by the opposition because, they said, it was not credible. They decided to organize their own demonstration, but the

deterioration of the situation obliged them to cancel it.

THE SECTARIAN clashes in Beirut?

YES, INDEED. So the Lebanese Communist Party is trying to stand outside the two camps and constitute a third force on the basis of a left-wing program. They've been doing so from the beginning of the period that started after the assassination of Rafik Hariri in 2005, when you had the two demonstrations in March, one by Hezbollah and the other by what is now called the "majority," or the "March 14 coalition." The LCP did not take part in either of the two demonstrations, and called for a third one on another day-with a few thousand marchers.

It was not much compared to the huge half-million demonstrations that you had from the two major camps. But, still, it was not completely negligible to have a few thousand people demonstrating with red flags and slogans devoid of any sectarian character-progressive slogans. In the recent war, the Lebanese CP did not stay neutral, of course. It took part in the mobilization and fighting against the Israeli aggression, in alliance with Hezbollah-an alliance without subordination, as the CP's general secretary put it. It was an alliance from an independent position against Israel, but not an alliance around the goal of forming a joint venture of sectarian forces for a new government; the latter is not the CP's program.

BECAUSE OF the sectarian set-up of the Lebanese political system, can one say that it's not possible to negotiate deals that don't involve an acceptance of that set-up?

WHAT IS possible is to wage a campaign that is based on democratic slogans, such as a new electoral law and new elections. The existing electoral law was designed by the Syrian authorities, it distorts the representation of various forces. Originally, it was mainly meant to under-represent the force of Aoun's supporters, when the latter was the fiercest enemy of the Syrian presence in Lebanon. That's why the first thing Aoun demanded-after he came back from exile when Syrian troops went out-was a change in the electoral law. But Washington's partners refused to grant him that, and went to the elections in a coalition with Hezbollah and Amal.

One shouldn't forget that it is Hezbollah that brought this majority to power. Aoun got completely ostracized in the 2005 elections by Washington's partners, although his role had been very active against the Syrian forces. So he moved into the opposition and, a few months later, he went into an alliance with Hezbollah. His ambition is very clearly to become president. (By the electoral rules in Lebanon, the president is a Maronite Christian, and Aoun is a Maronite.) Aoun thought that the best way to fulfill his ambition was to cut a deal with Hezbollah, given the huge electoral force they represent as the largest force within the largest community in Lebanon.

OF THE CP or any other secular Left forces, are there any that put forward demands to completely rejig the system so it's no longer based on sectarian identification and parties?

IN FACT, the idea that the institutions should be transformed so as to get rid of the sectarian distribution of seats and power was agreed upon by the consensus of the Lebanese establishment when the civil war ended in the years 1989-90. A conference of Lebanese representatives was held in Saudi Arabia, and they agreed on an agenda for political reform, the Taif Agreement. Officially, everybody in Lebanon stands for that, but that's purely formal.

Some people however are more serious about changing the political system, like Aoun for instance. Hezbollah are officially for it, but given that they are very much a sectarian force, they are torn between their sectarian character, which fits into the sectarian system, and the fact that since the Shiites are the largest minority, they therefore stand to gain from a system in which you don't have a predefined sectarian distribution of seats and power-where the distribution is settled instead through elections and parliamentary deals. So, you see the situation is ambiguous. As a matter of fact, it is the Left, the communists who are most energetically dedicated to a secularization of the country, beyond the mere abolition of "political sectarianism."

WHAT ARE the origins of sectarian-based politics in Lebanon? Can it be traced back to the French Occupation?

IT WOULD be too reductive to say that. Sectarian conflict has its origins in Ottoman Empire-ruled Mount Lebanon in the nineteenth century. Before you had Lebanon in its present borders, you had a sectarian division between the two major communities in Mount Lebanon, which were the Maronites and the Druze. These were two minorities in a region under Sunni Muslim domination. They coexisted in peace for a very long time. But it was in the nineteenth century that the first sectarian war broke out in Lebanon, coming in the wake-and this is interesting-of a peasant uprising against feudal landlords that took place in 1858.

The peasant uprising, which started among Maronite peasants and threatened to spread to the whole peasantry, was channeled into a religious conflict between Maronites and Druze. The horizontal division between sects replaced the vertical one between peasants and landlords. This led to the French landing in Lebanon, as Napoleon III sent his fleet in 1860 to "protect" the Maronite Catholics. Thus, a historical pattern emerged in the nineteenth century whereby sectarian divisions were used to prevent other political and social dynamics, and exploited by foreign powers in order to control the country.

DIDN'T THE French aid in the establishment of the political system based on sectarian divisions?

THE FRENCH came back only after the First World War, with a colonial

mandate from the League of Nations. When the French settled in Lebanon as a colonial power, they defined Lebanon's present borders, enlarging them so that they had a larger and more precarious mixture of sectarian communities, and they designed institutions based on a sectarian distribution of power according to the classical recipe of "divide and rule." And that was indeed the origin of the present Lebanese institutions.

YOU'VE TALKED about a strategy by Washington and its allies in the region to foment civil wars. You also talk about the U.S. trying to isolate Iran. Combine this with the fact that the U.S. is sending more naval forces to the Gulf and with the "surge" in Iraq, which seems to be connected with a plan to go after the Mahdi Army, or sections of it-is this part of a coordinated strategy? Is there any possibility, in your view, that this might be some kind of a prelude to a limited military action against Iran? How would you fit all these things together in terms of U.S. policy?

IF YOU try to think of U.S. imperial interests in any kind of rational manner, you would exclude it. But the problem is that you've got an administration in Washington that doesn't respond to any rational standards. It's one of the most irrational teams ever found at the head of the U.S. Empire in its history. These people are crazy enough to really consider attacking Iran, all the more that they are in dire straights, stuck in a quagmire in Iraq. Like a wounded beast getting nastier, they are in such a bad political position, losing ground so rapidly, that they might very well be tempted into some kind of poker-like gamble-double or nothing.

IT DOES seem almost to be a plan of rule or ruin. Iraq is going badly-just blow the whole thing up.

THAT'S WHAT they call the "surge," isn't it? I guess that, for the time being, the countervailing forces within the establishment-all the old "realists," the likes of Baker-Hamilton who represent a bipartisan, more rational imperialist consensus-are holding that back. But the Bush administration-and the remnants of the neoconservative circles around the administration-are obviously tempted to try what is actually the equivalent of accelerating a car into a massive roadblock.

IT'S NOT a perfect analogy, but remember how after the Tet Offensive, when a majority turned against the war and it was clear that it was unwinnable, the U.S. actually spread the war into Laos and Cambodia.

YES, OF course. And then, after that, Nixon-Kissinger drew the lessons of the situation and basically thought, "We're losing ground, we're stuck in a quagmire. Let's talk to the sponsors of the Vietnamese resistance, the Soviets and the Chinese." That's indeed what they did, and they then disentangled from Vietnam. And that's what the Baker-Hamilton proposal is about, actually-"Let's talk to Syria and Iran." But the Bush administration doesn't want to hear about it, because that would contradict every bit of doctrinal views they've been putting forward at least since 9/11, not to mention the views expressed by the neocons long before Bush came to power.

THE ELECTIONS here were a clear message. Even though the only other choice was to vote for Democrats who are supporters of American imperialism-it was clearly a vote against the U.S. in Iraq. And here it looks like it may lead to a revival of the antiwar movement, which has been pretty dormant. Is there any sense where you are, in Europe, for example, of the developments here reigniting organized opposition to the war?

THE ELECTORAL defeat of the Bushies has emboldened the opposition to their policies, of course. The important thing, as you say, is not who won the election, but who lost it. The fact that this administration is reacting as if no election had been held, and as if it had not been defeated, just being stubborn and sticking to its own line and rejecting the majority bipartisan consensus of the U.S. imperialist establishment-this way of behaving is isolating this administration even among the U.S. ruling class itself. Thus, there is now definitely a new space opening up for the antiwar movement, which is probably the largest political space you've had since Vietnam. Not since Vietnam have you had such a sharp division within the ruling class, with the executive so isolated, and such a mounting opposition to the escalation. So, yes, this is a great moment for the antiwar movement to put all its forces into the balance.

This interview by Paul D'Amato first appeared in International Socialist Review (US).

IV387 - March 2007 pdf

1 March 2007