



IV390 - June 2007

The 15 Jail Days

21 June 2007, by **Farooq Tariq**

Most importantly, a write petition at Lahore High Court was to be heard on 20th June. One of the most prominent advocates and former president of Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan Abid Hassan Minto was to argue my case against the detention. Abid Hassan Minto is also head of National Workers Party and convener of the Awami Jamhoori Tehreek (Peoples Democratic Movement), a left alliance of seven political parties. Labour Party Pakistan is part of the alliance.



Police came to my house on 4th June at 4am to pick me up. While at police station Harbancepura, I repeatedly asked if there was any formal detention order. There was no reply by the local police officer. He kept telling me that you will be free this evening and that at the most in three days. That lie was told to over 600 political prisoners who were rounded up from their houses, in the same way and at the same time.

Our advocates that included Syed Mohammed Shah, president District Courts Bar Association and Ijaz Hussain. The advocates went to Lahore Session Judge that morning and filed a petition for my recovery from illegal detention. Unfortunately, the Session Judge did not issue orders

for a bailiff to recover me, but issued notices to the police for the next morning. This was the turning point for the change of police behavior towards me.

Until they received a court notice, the police officers were polite and I was even allowed to keep my mobile and receive visits of my comrades and friends at the police station. The my ordeal has started. I was immediately removed from the Harbancepura police station and then after nearly two hours in a moving police van, I was finally de-loaded at Bagbanpura police station.

After spending the night at this police station, I was once again asked to sit in a police van which drove me to a private place. This was the time when police had to tell the Session Judge that Farooq Tariq is not arrested and is not with them. I was in fact not with them in formal terms. I was like a kidnapped person, not by private gangs, but state gangsters. The place belonged to an elected counselor of ruling party Muslim League. It was a store of a plastics factory where I was kept for the next 24 hours, under the strict vigilance of two armed men from local police.

I protested again and again for being kept in a private place instead of a police station. But the two armed men told me that is a order by my high ups and they have to obey the orders. The

two police officers who came to collect me late at night in plain cloths told me that our senior police officers are very angry with you because of your petition in the court.

I was brought back to the same police station and then put behind bars with over 13 persons charged for different criminal activities.

On June 6th, I was again removed from the police station and sent to another private place near Harbancepura police station. By then, the police had got my detention order from the home department of Punjab for three months and had to tell the Session Judge that morning that Farooq has already been sent to Bahawalpur jail.

The Bahawalpur is nearly 450 kilometer from Lahore. The jail is famous for its cruelties and strictness. Most of the prominent political prisoners have been kept in this jail during the past many years.

The police van had another political prisoner from Pakistan Peoples Party when we left at 12 noon to Bahawalpur in the company of seven police men. The temperature was over 47 degree and the driver was over speeding the van. It was one of the worst travels I did during my life. A heat wave with bumpy over speeding van was an experience that I can not take off my mind.

We arrived at 7pm and immediately were sent to Block A of Bahawalpur Jail.

There were four more political prisoners from Muslim League (N) who were there for three weeks already. Noshad Hameed, an activist of MLN immediately shouted "Labour Party has arrived". We both had shared the same jail barrack at Lahore Kot Lakhpat jail in 2001.

We the two political prisoners from Lahore were put in separate cells. I asked the jail authorities that allow us to share one cell. "two are not allowed to share one cell; they might be involved in homosexual activities" I was told by one jail warden. "It has to be three or more than three or single in one cell" he told me.

Bahawalpur is one of most hot areas of Pakistan. We had to experience that for next seven days. I was alone in the cage. There was small room, a small veranda and something you can call a bath room. One woolen blanket was thrown inside the cell. That was to put on the floor to sleep, nothing else.

We were not allowed to bring any paper or pen. I had three pair of my Shalwar Qameez, the traditional dress in Pakistan for summer. No towel or tooth paste and brush. I was like a lion in a cage moving from one corner to another all the time, then sitting in one place, eating what the jail has to offer, something like food. It just remembered me of Lahore zoo where I normally go with my 6 year old son Abdullah to see the lions.

Next day in the evening, 22 more political prisoners arrived from Lahore to share these four cells in Bloc A. I was absolute pleased to see more people. Seven of them, all from Pakistan Peoples Party were pushed in my cell. This ended my solitary confinement, much to my pleasure. At least there were some to talk to.

We were sent to Bahawalpur from Lahore as a punishment. This was to isolate us from our friends, families and community. This was to teach us a lesson for our opposition to a military dictatorship.

The Musharaf regime was acting like

his British colonial masters who used to send the political prisoners to Andaman Islands while they ruled the Indian sub continent for over 200 years. The Island was known in common terminology as Kala Paani (black waters). Many freedom fighters that were sent there never came back to their homes, most of them died while serving the life long prison terms.

This was to break our will to fight the military regime. This was to tell us that we are in a prison and a prison in Pakistan under military regime. When ever we asked the jail wardens, please take us out of our cages to have a little walk inside the Bloc, they told us, it is a prison and not a garden. The jail authorities treated us like animals.

The heat wave went up to 52. The electricity always went off, some time 14 hours a day. The floor of the cell was heated all the time. Even the water will be off while the electricity went off. We had one fan and the air of the fan came down to the floor after hours. It was only after three days of protest that our defected fan was changed with a better one and one more fan was installed in the veranda. We paid from our pockets for the fan. It was PPP leaders who had some amount deposited with the jail authorities while they arrived. There was no newspaper allowed inside. So we were totally blank from the outside world.

We had to go on hunger strike after four days in the cell. This was to demand water. One morning there was absolute no water coming in. Earlier, there was very little water coming in from the pipe but we could fill a little plastic bottle in half an hour. This paid off. The jail management had to change the pipes and replace the age old motor. The water problem was at least solved. The only remedy to save the body from heat was to put some water on the body all the times.

On the sixth day, my two elder brothers Ahmad Yaseen and Ahmed Saeed were able to visit me at Bahawalpur jail. They got the permission to visit me from home department in Lahore. They brought fruit, soft drinks and some cloths,

tooth paste and brush etc. they also deposited some amount in my jail account, so I could order some basics from the jail shop. It was my first contact from the outside world. My brothers told me that I was going to be shifted to Lahore Kot Lakhpat Jail tomorrow. They had heard the news from the home department.

Comrades from LPP in Lodhran, a city 20 kilometer from Bahawalpur, had tried their best to contact me; they were able to send some fruit and sweets inside the cell the next morning. The comrades were close friends of an assistant jail superintendent of Bahawalpur jail, but he was unable to help me. He came several times to visit me and asked me what can I do for you, I always asked him to bring me some blank papers to write down something, but he was not able to do that. Next morning when he arrived, I asked him if he can arrange my travel to Lahore at night time instead day time if I shift to Lahore jail. That is what he was able to do and I left to Lahore next evening in a police van at 11pm. This was to avoid the heat of the day time.

Police at the jail gate was waiting for me to take me to Lahore. They tried to hand cuff me. I refused to do that. It took one hour before they were able to do that because of my resistance. I told them I am not criminal, I am not going to be treated like criminals. I am not running away from here in the presence of dozens of policemen.

After whole night travel, We arrived at Kot Lakhpat jail in Lahore. Here I was put together with other political prisoners who were brought in from other districts. I shared a very small cell, small than Bahawalpur jail with eight others political prisoners. But the difference was the out side door was open and we could stroll in the lawn of the Qasuri Chakki number three.

A 52 year political activist Sarmad Mansoor from the Pakistan Peoples Party had died a day earlier in this jail dispensary after he was denied proper medical facilities. It was murder by the government of Punjab with the help of jail authorities. He was arrested from a hospital in Gujrat district and was admitted to a jail

dispensary with no adequate facilities. He died of a heart attack in this dispensary on 14th June. When I arrived on 15th June morning, all the 32 political prisoners from different political parties were on hunger strike, so I join in as well.

Here the next five day till my release on 19th June was OK. We had to sleep inside the very tiny cell but from morning till evening we were allowed to move around. But no one from outside was allowed to visit me. Although, on 16th June, several comrades waited outside the jail for several hours with a permission to visit me, but were not allowed to visit me.

After the death of one political prisoner which became a national issue, the attitude of the government changed. They started releasing the political prisoners. I was the last political prisoner to be released on 19th June. While I was coming

towards the jail gate, I had to collect the amount, I had deposited at the jails accountant.

While I was standing there, I was approached by one political prisoner. He was shouting already that I want to see Farooq of Labour Party Pakistan. When I heard this, I told him, it is me, he could not recognize me immediately but then he hugged me several times. He was Iqbal from India. An Indian prisoner, whom I had met in 2001 in the same jail. On his request, I was able to send a Human Rights Commission Pakistan delegation to jail afterward. The HRC delegation was able to help in release of several Indian prisoners who had completed there sentences but waiting for an exchange of prisoners between the two countries.

Iqbal has heard that I am in jail and he also knew that I could be released today, so he was able to come out of his barrack to greet me in the lobby. We spoke for some minutes; he

wanted me to do the same. Get some Indian prisoners out of jail. I promised to do what I could do. I also gave him some five hundred Rupees to buy some fruit for the Indian prisoners. This was touching time for me. I was remembered even after six years by the Indian prisoners. Good work is not forgotten for long times.

Outside the jail, several dozens of LPP and social organization s activists were waiting to welcome me. They had heard only few hours earlier that I be released today. "Go Musharaf Go" was the chant that might even be heard by people inside the jail. The red flags of LPP were waving and slogans to continue the struggle against military dictatorship were raised. Many more were waiting at Shimla Pehari Chouck near LPP office. I was brought to LPP office in a procession. At 5pm, I addressed a press conference at Lahore Press Club. So straight from jail to the thick of political activities.

The Crisis in Gaza: Made in Israel

19 June 2007, by **Michel Warschawski**



Many Israeli journalists are analyzing Israel's responsibility as indirect: "1.4 million people closed in a small territory like Gaza, without any possibility to have normal economic life, but also without the possibility of escape, are doomed to kill each other... like mice closed in a box." That zoological explanation is not only typically racist, but also based on a huge understatement. For, the Israeli and US role in the present confrontations was much more than simply "creating the conditions" for an inner-Palestinian conflict.

For months, the US State Department has been pushing the Fatah leadership to launch a military offensive against Hamas, and two weeks ago, Israel was

giving a green light to the entry of huge quantity of arms for Fatah militias in Gaza. In that sense, the Israeli part in the present situation is not only conjectural, but an active role.

Who is the Aggressor?

"Hamas is taking over," "A Hamas coup d'etat"â€"these are some of the headlines from the Israeli newspapers in the last days, repeating the big lies of the Tel Aviv and Washington administrations. It appears that there is a need to make clear what should be obvious: Hamas smashed Fatah in the last Palestinian elections, after an electoral process that the whole international community, including Washington, hailed as "the most

democratic ever in the Middle East." Unquestionable democratic process and massive popular support, few regimes can claim such legitimacy.

Despite their huge victory, Hamas accepted to share the power with Fatah in a national unity government formed under the hospices of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and hailed by the entire international community, with the exception of Washington and Israel. The political platform of the new government gave de facto recognition the State of Israel and endorsed the strategy of peaceful negotiations, based on the mechanism of Oslo.

The priority of the new government was to deal with the burning domestic issuesâ€"economic improvement, restoration of law and order in Gaza, fighting the endemic corruption of the

old Fatah-led administration” while allowing President Mahmoud Abbas and the PLO to continue the negotiation process, if and when Israel would accept to renew it.

Hamas’ moderate government platform, however, was confronted by two powerful enemies: a segment of the Fatah cadres who are not ready to renounce their monopoly in the political power, and the material privileges connected to that monopoly, and the US-Israeli neoconservative governments, which are conducting a global crusade against political Islam. Muhammad Dahlan, former Preventive Security chief and present Security Adviser of Mahmoud Abbas represent both: they are the executioners of Washington’s plans in the Palestinian leadership, as well as the representatives of those corrupt Fatah leaders who are ready to do everything in order not to lose their economic resources.

Since the electoral victory of Hamas, Dahlan’s militia has been provoking the government, attacking Hamas militias and refusing to let the government control the Palestinian police forces. Despite Dahlan’s aggression, Hamas has been doing its best to reach an agreement with Dahlan, asking its own activists to refrain from counter-violence. However, when it became clear that Dahlan was not looking for a compromise, but indeed attempting to liquidate Hamas, the Islamic organization had no alternative but to defend itself and fight back.

The Algerian Model

The US-Israeli plan is part of a global strategy aimed at imposing

governments which are loyal to their interests, against the will of the local population. Algeria provides an example of such a strategy, but also of its failure and its colossal human cost: the unquestionable electoral victory of the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) over the corrupted and discredited FLN, in 1991, was followed by a coup d’etat, supported by France and the US, which paved the way for a civil war that lasted for more than a decade and provoked more than one hundred thousand civilian victims.

Hamas has clearly learned from the Algerian tragedy, and decided not to let Dahlan’s plans succeed in his attempt to take power by force. Enjoying the support of the majority of the local population, Hamas militants smashed Fatah in less than two days, despite the arms supplied, indirectly, by Israel: a corrupt militia without any popular support could not face a relatively disciplined and highly motivated organization.

Even after its smashing victory on Fatah, Hamas leadership has reiterated its intention to keep a national unity government and not to exploit the failed coup d’etat of Fatah as a pretext to eradicate the organization or to exclude it from the government. Fatah leadership, however, decided to cut any kind of relation with Hamas, and to establish a government without Hamas... in the West Bank. Another dream of Ariel Sharon is becoming a reality: total separation between the West Bank and Gaza, the later being considered a hopeless “Hamastan,” a terrorist entity in which there are no civilians, but only terrorists which can be put under a total state of siege, and doomed to starvation.

Washington, which fully endorses this policy, promised its full support to

Mahmoud Abbas and his new Bantustan in the West Bank, and Ehud Olmert decided to release some of the Palestinian money that is in the Israeli government hands.

Not a Civil War

One of the Israeli and US administrations’ objectives failed however: there is no chaos in Gaza. On the contrary. As one Palestinian security officer told *Haaretz* (17 June): “For a very long time the city has not been quiet. I prefer the present situation to the previous one. I can, finally, go out from my house...” The eradication of Fatah gangs from Gaza may put an end to a long period of anarchy, and allow for a return to a certain level of normal life. The latest events confirmed that Hamas does have the power to impose it.

Israeli talks about a “Palestinian civil war” are no more than wishful thinking. The armed confrontation was between armed militia only, and if, unfortunately, there were civilian casualties, there were what the US army calls “collateral damage.” The population is indeed politically divided—in the West Bank as well as in Gaza—but not fighting each other, in the meantime at least.

With Gaza being defined as a hostile entity and its whole population as allied to Hamas, there is no doubt that it will be, in the near future, the target of a brutal Israeli aggression: eventual military incursions, bombardments and starvation.

This is why our top priority, in Israel as well as throughout the world, is to organize solidarity with Gaza and its population.

(This article appeared originally at www.alternativenews.org.)

The Watershed of June 9

18 June 2007, by **Sinistra Critica (Critical Left)**



This is how the correspondent of the radio station RFI described the two initiatives: "‘Bush! Bush! Bush! Out!’ ‘No Bush-No War!’. Thousands of global justice activists and sympathizers of the far left, from all over Italy, shouted these slogans throughout the anti-Bush demonstration which started at Esedra Square, close to the Termini central station, and ended at Navone Square in the heart of the Eternal City, not far from the Square of the People where there took place, without much of a crowd present, a real musical happening in favour of peace, organized by the radical wing of the left parties who are in the government". The two photographs which we reproduce here give a better idea than long speeches of the impact of the two initiatives.

For the Italian social movements and for the Left, a watershed clearly appeared on Saturday June 9, 2007. Several undeniable facts make it possible to affirm this. First of all, the large demonstration which went from Esedra Square to Navona Square; the figure of 12 000 demonstrators given out by the Prefecture of Police makes no sense, because in order to contradict it, it is enough just to know that when the head of the demonstration was in Venezia Square, the tail was only turning into Via Cavour, which means that there were between 80,000 and 100,000 demonstrators, if not more. And on the other hand the flop, in every sense of the term, of what took place in the Square of the People.

Then there were the confrontations with the police, whose scale was excessively inflated, well beyond their modest dimensions, whereas nobody wanted to remark the ability of the demonstration to defend itself and to continue as planned to Navona Square in spite of the clouds of teargas, the clashes and the "revolutionary aestheticism". From this day there emerge three fundamental aspects.

First of all, we succeeded in the objective that we fixed at the assembly of the Critical Left on April 15 in

Rome, when we decided to build a social opposition and to do it in total opposition to the government. The demonstration really opened up a space of action for the movement and re-launched the process of mobilization against the war. There is a continuity in ideas and in on the ground with the mobilization of February 17 in Vicenza . [1] and it is not an accident that in the demonstration you could not fail to see the compact and active presence of the "No Dal Molin" committees. The dynamic of the movement was confirmed, even "excessively" by the massive presence of participants outside of the organized forces which had sponsored the demonstration and which made up the core of it. Their presence around the organised contingents was important, they were not afraid, and they gave confidence to the demonstration, to its platform, without even imagining or intending to try and link the two squares or to go from one to the other. It was a demonstration against the war, "with no ‘ifs’ and no ‘buts’", so it was a demonstration against Prodi and against those who were so few to assemble in the Square of the People.

The Critical Left played an important part in this dynamic, just as it did at the time of the events of February 21, when it voted against the Prodi government, provoking the "Turigliatto case " [2] This choice, which seemed at the time to be isolated, contributed to reopening the debate, made it possible to build a polarization and thus to offer everyone a space for action, a space that was gradually occupied, leading to the success of the June 9 demonstration. It is difficult to foresee how this space will be occupied in the future. For the moment we can only note that an energy has been awakened, after a year of torpor, and that choices will have to be made such as, for example, going back to Vicenza in order to block the construction of the base there. And that will have to be the first national initiative after June 9.

We then move on, obviously, to more political elements. First of all, it is the first time that the left opposition to the Prodi government has been visible. An opposition linked to a precise content - the war - very direct

and which cannot be generalised, but in any event an opposition which, and it is no accident, was situated outside - if not against - the governmental Left. Precisely, the governmental Left! This element helps to counterbalance, even though it is still in an insufficient and limited way, the offensive of the Right, which has important repercussions in the front of the Centre-left.



The reasons for the demonstration were, besides, absolutely confirmed at the end of the meeting between Prodi and Bush. We saw the full and complete confirmation of the alliance with the United States, the confirmation of the engagement in Afghanistan, Lebanon and in Kosovo, the reaffirmation of the continuity of the foreign policy conducted by Berlusconi and, as Prodi affirmed at the press conference, "a shared conception of the future destinies of the world". The government committed itself even more to the war and the immediate decision in favour of the US base in Vicenza represents the first concrete expression of this. On this terrain, the contradictions will continue to develop.

The third aspect is the relationship between the different lefts, the comparison between the two squares and the developments which result from this. On this terrain no ambiguity is possible. There was a united mass demonstration. And then there was a Square of the People without the people. An operation from on high in which, unfortunately, important organizations allowed themselves to be involved, in the first place the FIOM [3]. These organisations wanted to maintain a protest without causing any problems for the government. The bankruptcy of the Square of the People is the bankruptcy of the line of the "party of struggles and of government" and the more general bankruptcy of the position that came out of Venice congress concerning the Party of Communist Refounding (PRC) [4] , a position which has reached the end of the road. There is no mediation possible between the struggles and the government, nor any possibility of building "bridges"

between these two dynamics. It is this reality which is feeding the whole crisis of the PRC and the other parties to the left of the Democratic Party, who have chosen to come together in order to mask the state of weakness in which they find themselves.

The absence of the PRC from Navona Square demonstrates where this party has ended up. It has reached a point from which there is no longer any possible return. This is combined with a ruinous line and a blind and incapable leading group, which has led it into this dead-end, which it is now so difficult to get out of.

We cannot foresee what will come out of this 9 June, but it is certain that we have created the necessary conditions for a less fragmented course for the

alternative Left, for the opposition Left. The networks, associations and organizations that represent this Left have started to define both what makes their unity and what contrasts there are - and whoever says that the project that unites them is that of a "small party against the PRC", has quite simply not understood anything: there is a social base to be developed (but the parties of the governmental left do not do any better). It is certain that if all that produced in return an effect on social questions, such as pensions or job insecurity for example, we would see a real modification of the relationship of forces between the movements and the government, between the movements and the institutions, in other words, in the society.

As far as we are concerned, this

political year has been dense in events and successive key dates. We set up the Critical Left Association, then we determinedly turned ourselves towards the movement by proposing the Forum for Social Opposition, which we are re-launching. Something has appeared. And even, for the first time really in the June 9 demonstration, you could see the capacity of the Critical Left to provide organization and initiative, to present itself as a means of resisting the crisis of the PRC and the "radical" left in general. There is no doubt that this is the road on which we have to continue, with even greater determination and speed.

The first National Conference of the Critical Left, which we will hold after the summer, will represent an important moment in this process.

Padding and shaving

18 June 2007, by **Clara Maria Sanchez**



The diffusion of the tape led to widespread protests and attempts to impeach Arroyo, which failed because the opposition was unable to secure the necessary number of votes in Congress. One of the things at stake in these elections is to prevent the opposition winning enough seats to change that. That would require it to win eight of the twelve (out of twenty-four) Senate seats that are up for re-election. It is not looking good for Arroyo. Current estimates of the votes counted give the pro-Arroyo Team Unity (TU) just two seats, with eight going to the Genuine Opposition (GO) slate, and two to independents. At least one of these, retired army officer and serial coup plotter Gregorio â€˜Gringo' Honasan, is no friend of Arroyo. He is currently awaiting trial for an alleged coup attempt last year.

Fraud occurs throughout the country, as elections take place under the sway

of â€˜guns, goons and gold'. By intimidation and/or bribery, the contents of ballot boxes are changed. Some candidates' votes are â€˜shaved'(reduced), others are â€˜padded'(increased). Indeed in some particularly blatant cases, no actual voting takes place. Ballots are filled in with the names of the appropriate candidate by the local warlord or corrupt village chief and handed over to the election authorities.

But much of the fraud is concentrated in the southern island of Mindanao, the second biggest in the Philippines. Mindanao and the adjacent islands have been the scene of armed conflict for more than thirty years. The resulting instability largely favours election-rigging. Populations have been displaced, accurate records of the number of voters are unavailable or intentionally concealed. The heavy presence of the army and police (two-thirds of the Philippine armed forces are concentrated in Mindanao) does

nothing to guarantee fair elections, quite the contrary. At present, counting still has to begin in seven provinces of Mindanao. This is a common feature of Philippine elections, and these late counts are used to â€˜adjust' the overall results and increase the votes of pro-government candidates.

A glance at the country's main newspaper, the Philippine Daily Inquirer, provides daily evidence of cheating. One of the most picturesque concerns the island province of Basilan, off the coast of Mindanao. Teachers assigned to supervise the elections were taking ballot papers over in a motor boat. They were surprised to be accompanied by armed goons in the hire of a local mayor. Half way across, these men ordered the ferryman to stop, confiscated the ballot papers at gunpoint and began to fill them in with the name of their candidate. Only heavy waves forced them to stop and continue in a house on the island. Voters in the precincts

concerned never saw a ballot paper.

All 252 seats in the House of Representatives are up for re-election. Most are elected in constituencies, and Arroyo is fairly sure of winning a majority by hook or by crook. But 20 per cent are allocated to party lists, by proportional representation. Previously used mainly by radical left groups unable to compete financially

in the constituencies, this election has seen a flurry of government-inspired ‘parties’ take part. The votes of the really independent party lists are particularly vulnerable to fraud, and they have to try and physically protect their votes up to the time of the proclamation of the results.

In Mindanao, the radical left party list Anak Mindanao (Amin), which fights for peace and cooperation between

the ‘tri-people’ of the island (Muslim Moros, indigenous peoples, Christian settlers and their descendants), and which has at present one Congressman, is having to combat widespread fraud. Votes in its bastions are being attributed to government-sponsored party lists that no one in Mindanao has heard of – including a Manila-based list of...tricycle drivers.

Cannavã’s farewell

16 June 2007, by **Fabrizio Roncone**



“And now the few hours have passed, indeed”. Precisely. “And yes, in sum I spoke of my relationship with Rifondazione Comunista. A relationship that, unhappily, is broken” Broken? It’s a rather vague term, Mr Deputy. “I mean that so far as I am concerned, I consider that the experience of Rifondazione has come to its end, that it is over. Naturally, I should in any case discuss that with the comrades of my current...”. The “Critical Left”. “In September we will hold our first national conference”.

These words and projects could be a harsh blow for his party.

“Look, to be sincere, my relationship with the party has already profoundly changed following the expulsion of senator Turigliatto.” It was indeed known... “I no longer participated, in reality, in the life of the party. I did not take part in its leadership and I was outside of the everyday life of the parliamentary group.”

And then on Saturday he found himself at the head of a demonstration.

“What I saw, and what I felt, it confirmed what I had experienced...” He tries to explain. “While me and other comrades of Rifondazione were

in this magnificent demonstration of the movement, which had nothing to do with these fifty hooligans, this gang... the leadership of the party was on the contrary isolated, terribly isolated, at the Piazza del Popolo” The scene was eloquent, he says. “I know it. I sent one of my comrades to see. Giordano [secretary of the PRC] was surrounded by a few dozen people. The truth is that, this Saturday, under a photographic, plastic, mode we have been confronted with the bankruptcy of the political line of Rifondazione.”

In what does it consist? “To be both in the struggle and in the government. You see, it is an unwritten rule of Italian politics...” Which? “You cannot be at the same time in the government and in the movement. In Italy such an operation cannot succeed. And Rifondazione, not by chance, has for several months no longer succeeded in speaking with the movements in struggle, with the workers...”

You are thinking of the chilly welcome that the workers at Mirafiori [Fiat] gave a few days ago to Franco Giordano and to the minister Paolo Ferrero. “Completely. It was a terrible day. If your comrades, your electorate no longer recognises you, that means that you have failed.”

Who is responsible for this policy? “All of the leading group”. Can you be more precise? “Fausto Bertinotti” What are the errors he has

committed? “Two. Above all he has underestimated the real relationship of forces in this country. He was convinced on the eve of the elections that the centre-left was going to sweep all before it whereas we said that we would see a substantial equilibrium.” Then? “He believed that mass mobilisations would condition the activity of the government. But on the contrary, he did not want to know what we had succeeded in building in the north east, against the US base in Vicenza”.

Some in the party begin to think that proposing Bertinotti for the presidency of the Chamber of Deputies was a strategic error. “This was an error. Sensational. Inane. I said so immediately. But I remember that a number of comrades smiled, looked at me with an air of self-importance, as if something obvious had eluded me, as if I didn’t understand”.

And you say that now between Rifondazione and the movement there is a fracture. “Think about it, if the leaders of Rifondazione had the slightest perception of reality, they would immediately call a special congress.” The professor Massimo Cacciari argues that Rifondazione has now become a weight for the Olive Tree. “You’ve noticed it? Cacciari notices that Rifondazione is in difficulties and he attacks it. But them, no. They are trying to resolve the

problem of their weakness by allying with other weak forces. With the Greens, with the PdCI [5], with the Mussiani [6]? Do you know where that will end up?" No, where? "They will become an external current of the Democratic Party."

And you, on the other hand? "What about us?" What do you expect to bring from Rifondazione? And to do what? "We will see in September, at our national conference."

On Saturday, on the demonstration, there were at least fifty thousand people. "Stop there! What you are saying is a trap... We didn't organise this demonstration to found a party".

And what will you do now in the Chamber? "You want to know how I'm going to vote?" At least. "I will decide case by case. And to be better understood: I will fight so that the proposed Bersani legislation, on liberalisation, cannot pass if it is not changed." You are truly a fighter. "I am coherent. There was a time, you know, when coherence was a value inside Rifondazione."

And today, how do you prefer to define yourself? "Write that I was and I remain a Communist."

Read the [Corriere della Sera](#) original

APPENDIX - Article by the Italian press agency ANSA

According to Cannav  , the left's break with the movements is irreversible

Rome, June 11.

"The governmental left has broken in an irreversible manner its relationship with the movements. What happened on June 9 is only the consequence of a situation which has developed for several years, even before the government inside of which they have made so many errors". Thus Salvatore Cannav  , spokesperson of the Critical Left, drew the balance sheet of the situation of the parties of the radical left after the flop of their initiative at the Piazza del Popolo.

"The fundamental project of the PRC has failed. The problem relates as much to the political line as to the inadequate leading group". For Cannav   "the archipelago of the governmental left was crushed by the strategic pact made with the Democratic Party".



The spokesperson of the Critical Left also said that he had sent a letter to the leadership of the party to announce "the suspension of the financing of the party". "Some days ago they let me know verbally that they had suspended the financing of the tendency because it was now external to the party and because it participated in the No War demonstration, against the war. Flavia D'Angeli asked for explanations inside the leadership of the PRC but obtained no response. so I decided to suspend my financing of the party. I will henceforth pay my share into a special account, separate from mine, awaiting clarification."

When asked if his link with the PRC was now definitively broken, the PRC deputy responded: "If there was only me, Salvatore Cannav  , the relation would already be broken, but I cannot take such a responsibility without the decision of the whole of the Critical Left. In autumn we will hold a national conference at which we will decide what to do".

ANSA is the main Italian press agency.

Appeal for the release of Farooq Tariq

16 June 2007



Several hundred people were arrested on suspicion on June 5th and 6th and many others are subject to judicial procedures. The regime is trying to break by force the democratic mobilizations which followed the suspension on March 9th of the President of the Supreme Court, Judge Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudry. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets to protest against this arbitrary measure. Repression by the regime was already

responsible for 41 deaths and many injured in Karachi on May 12th and 13th. President Pervez Musharraf almost decreed a state of emergency and no one knows how far the military regime is ready to go to stamp out the democratic contestation.

Farooq Tariq was arrested because he was fully engaged in these mobilizations, in particular in support of the Lawyers' Movement that was created after the suspension of Judge Chaudry. Farooq Tariq is also known for his solidarity activities on the international level. He contributed to the organization of the World Social

Forum of Karachi in 2006. He took an active part in other World Forums, like those in Mumbai (India) and Nairobi (Kenya), as well as European Forums, including the last one in Athens (Greece). He is also an activist of the international anti-war movement.

The situation is all the more worrying because the regime does not hesitate to use intolerable measures against Farooq Tariq and other prisoners: psychological pressures, inhuman conditions of detention (over-populated cells in very hot weather, lack of water and sanitary facilities...),

prohibition of visits ETC.

We call for the respect of human rights and freedoms in Pakistan.

We demand the immediate release of Farooq Tariq and all those who have been imprisoned for having taken part in the democratic mobilizations.

First signatures:

Gilbert Achcar, Professor, SOAS, University of London, Great Britain

Daniel Bensaïd, University of Paris VIII, France.

Olivier Besancenot, spokesperson of the LCR (France)

Vincent Charbonnier, trade unionist (SNASUB-FSU, Vénissieux), France.

Jean Pierre Debourdeau, FSU, vice-president of Attac 21, France

Chris Harman (editor International Socialism journal), Great Britain

Alain Krivine, former member of the European Parliament, spokesperson of

the LCR, France

Luc Quintin, Physiology (CNRS UMR 5123), France

Pierre Rousset, Europe Solidaire sans Frontieres (ESSF), France.

Roseline Vachetta, former member of the European Parliament, spokesperson of the LCR, France.

Sign this appeal now and get others to do the same. Send your signatures to: Pierre. Rousset@ras.eu.org

Exporting domestic labour - the Philippines' participation in globalisation?

15 June 2007, by **Eva Oler Ferraren**



The aggressiveness of this human trading was even shown during the wars in Lebanon and Iraq when President Arroyo announced that she was sending more "supermaids" to Middle East countries, while other governments were sending rescue vehicles for their citizens living in these countries.

According to Philippine economic indicators, the remittances of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) exceed foreign direct investment in the country. Remittances per annum amount to about US\$12-14 billion, which only includes those working legally abroad, whereas many OFWs working in domestic and other service work are undocumented.

The Philippine government relies heavily on the remittances the OFWs send to their families to compensate for the lack of spending on social services such as health and education, to boost domestic consumption and to cover its yearly budget deficits. And the sad truth is that the income from

the labour migration business is mostly spent in this way and not on productive investments, which means that the migrant workers will work forever abroad, in order that their families can simply survive and because there are even fewer options for them to return to the country, whose economy is bankrupt and corrupt.

This dramatic increase in labour migration has created a large population of transnational migrant families. Thousands of children now grow up apart from one or both parents, as the parents are forced to work outside the country in order to send their children to school, give them access to quality health care, or, in some cases, just provide them with enough food.

The Feminization of the Export of Human Labour

Philippine labour migration has a woman's face. According to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), in 2003, more than 70% of the total number of workers abroad were women. Most of them are between 25-29 years old.

Women migrants live and work in more than 192 countries. They work as professional and technical employees, nurses, clerical and sales workers, entertainers, caregivers, and domestic workers. Many are employed in jobs which have traditionally been undertaken by women.

Most of these women migrants who work in the service and domestic sectors leave families behind and their children are taken care of by their parents, male partners, or relatives. The function of reproduction of labour that was performed by migrant women is passed on to their male partners and women relatives.

The paradox of this feminization of migrant labour is that the women who have left this reproductive function in their own family to join the global working force are still performing the same function for families in First World countries. The effects of the feminization of labour migration on the families of the migrant women from poor countries demonstrate how the global economy is structured to benefit the rich countries of the world.

The migrant women who work in

domestic households in the countries of Europe, the Middle East, US and Asia are mostly undocumented and are basically denied their rights as workers and human beings. The worst cases are encountered in Middle East countries where these undocumented domestic workers are locked up in the houses of their employers, treated inhumanely and sometimes even killed. An increasing number of migrant women are victims of sexual abuse, trafficking, and prostitution. Despite the reports of these abuses many Filipina women still migrate and work in these countries, putting their chances of survival at the mercy of their employers.

Most of the migrant women's families are run by their male partners. Research shows that the spending habits of the family increase - shopping sprees, spending more on luxurious items and other non-essential buying. Consumerist practices have become prevalent among migrant families and so they become a target for commercial capital.

In its discourse about labour migration, the Philippine government proudly makes the OFWs the country's new heroes, because they salvage the dwindling economy and sacrifice themselves as victims of this global capitalism. However, the remittances of the OFWs have only benefited the state, because of its cuts in social service spending, and global capitalists because they can easily dump their goods and commodities on Third World countries whose economies have been liberalized.

OFW Remittances: Do they compensate the social costs of migration?

The most often-used argument in favour of labour migration is that remittances play an extraordinary role in the economies of many developing countries, far more important than official development assistance or even the country's foreign direct investment.

Worldwide, remittances are estimated at about US \$167 billion per year, and

approximately 60 percent of this sum goes to developing countries. Remittance estimates are imprecise, however, because remittances often move through private, unrecorded channels.

Yes, the Philippines has annual OFW remittances of 12-14 billion US dollars, excluding the non-formal channels, and NO that does not compensate for the social costs of migration and the development of the country. Despite this enormous amount of remittance or cash inflow, labour migration does not significantly improve the development prospects of the country of origin. The Philippines have had great difficulty in converting remittance income into sustainable productive capacity. In addition, most Third World countries are able to exercise little control over the composition of their labour exports - rather, they are determined by foreign labour markets, and may bear no relation to "surplus" labour at home. The Philippines has focused quite deliberately on "producing" skilled labour for foreign markets, but remains passive in the face of international supply and demand.

As we have said, remittance income is rarely used for productive purposes. Remittances go in small amounts to poor people (the average size of a transfer from the US or Europe to the Philippines is about \$200 or ~150 per month), and are used mostly to support direct consumption and spending on housing, healthcare, and education.

Only a very small proportion of remitted funds seem to go into income-earning, job-creating investment and property acquisition. Remittances may not constitute a rising tide that raises all boats, but they do have a very important effect on the standard of living of the households that receive them, constituting a significant portion of household income. They represent the most important social safety net of poor families, especially in times of disasters or difficult times.

Far from being productive, remittances increase inequality, encourage consumption of imports, increases domestic prices for

education and health and create dependency. Other than that, the real value of money has been reduced, given the fact that foreign exchange rates are too low for weak currencies and also because of the costs incurred in transferring money. Thus, remittances increase the profits of foreign banks and have led to the proliferation of money transfer and exchange businesses. Much more money goes to the financial markets and on consumer spending than on productive investments that could enhance labour productivity and sustainable development.

Aside from the economic aspects, labour migration affects families. It has contributed to the malfunctioning of family structures. Cases of marital infidelity and juvenile delinquency are prevalent among migrant families and a relationship of dependency on the migrants is created.

Conclusion: Migration and Globalization: who are the servants of the global economy?

Migrant women work around the clock taking care of the families of the workers of global companies. Global capitalists are the principal beneficiaries of the labour of migrant women in the domestic households, because they do not have to pay for the reproduction of the labour force. This is especially the case with undocumented migrants, whose monetary compensation is low and who have no social benefits - health care, sick pay, retirement pensions, paid holidays.

For a long time invisible, undocumented workers are now organising in many countries. The movement of the 'sans papiers' in France began over ten years ago. More recently there have been demonstrations in the US and Britain. In the Netherlands a campaign is underway for the recognition of overwhelmingly female domestic labour as real work and for the regularization of migrant domestic workers. It is vital that these workers receive the full support of the left and the workers movement.

June 13, 2007

The presidential election and debates on the Left

6 June 2007, by **François Duval**



A new political situation

The main issue, of course, is the election of Nicolas Sarkozy and the meaning of that event for the Left. Sarkozy was elected with a clear advance mainly because he was able to bring together the right and to convince a significant number of former far right voters. He first won the ideological battle for hegemony and then the electoral battle. Ségolène Royal - the candidate of the SP - didn't propose a really different programme and was unable to personify the hope of a better life, better jobs, better wages.

At this point, Sarkozy's victory is an electoral victory. His biggest challenge is to change it into a social victory, into a defeat of the working class in order to accelerate implementation of the neo-liberal agenda that has been delayed in France (compared to others developed countries) by social resistance. Whether he can win that challenge or not is exactly what is at stake in the coming months.

Social and political background

We can all consider that the election of Sarkozy and the circumstances of this election will significantly help the offensive of the MEDEF (bosses' association) and the right wing parties against workers' rights. In a certain way, the high number of voters for this election as well as the really very rightist proposals Sarkozy made

publicly during his electoral campaign are new and important obstacles to popular resistance because his politics have gained a kind of legitimacy on a broad scale.

But there is more controversy about another issue: this election obviously shows an evolution towards the right of the political superstructures (both right wing and left wing parties). But is that global trend another evidence of a deep gap between the genuine mood of ordinary people and the different political apparatus? Or is this election the logical concretization of an already damaged status of the relationship of forces between social classes and of left ideas in society? In other words: after a social and political period of increasing popular resistance, are we now faced with a kind of "downturn"? This issue can remain open for a while.

My view is that we should remember that the outcome of most of the explosions of resistance - from 1995 to 2006 - has not been a victory and that the neo-liberal agenda has effectively been implemented in France, though at a slower rhythm than in other imperialist countries.

I have summarized a more detailed analysis of these issues in a document for the LCR National Leadership "Remarques post 6 mai", available on request (but, unfortunately, only in French ...).

In his document - "The French presidential election" - Murray Smith considers it "a very lucid and realistic contribution on the extent and limits of resistance to neo-liberalism and the relationship of class forces in France today". But he states that, despite that "objective" situation, important items to be underlined are "the level of political consciousness", "a greater mobilisation and politicisation of

young people". Consequently, he argues, the main issue to be addressed is "a credible political alternative". And he adds: "In the first place, the lack of such an alternative makes social resistance harder".

Yes, we have to build a credible political alternative! But is the lack of this political alternative the main reason for our difficulties in building a broad movement of resistance? One can also think exactly... the other way round! The difficulties in organising resistance are significant obstacles to building a political alternative. These difficulties - and the defeat of some of the widest movements of resistance (such as the demonstrations and strikes in 2003) - can explain the difficulties in building a political alternative, as well! Most probably, the conclusion will be that the tasks of building resistances AND building a political alternative are interrelated and have to be carried out simultaneously.

Fairy tales

These points - relationship of forces, political situation, and so on - are very important and have to be clarified. A correct analysis of the social and political situation, including a realistic analysis of the relation of forces between classes, between left and right wing parties, between radical left and neo-liberal left is useful. But, anyhow, an accurate analysis will not automatically guarantee a clever political orientation. Of course, if it was so, life would be easier for us! Unfortunately, a correct analysis cannot by itself provide an orientation. But it can specify what is possible. And what is NOT possible.

And, according to the real situation of French society in 2007, some

hypotheses that have been brandished in diverse debates among the anti-liberal Left were simply... not possible. For example, some of the self-proclaimed leaders of the anti-liberal Left have supported the idea that a joint single candidate of the anti-liberal Left would have been able to get more than 10% of the votes for the first round of the presidential election.

Some even stated that a single anti-liberal candidate could get a better result than the candidate of the SP! Under such circumstances, being suspicious about a "secondary" issue such as the supposed and contingent relations with the SP would have been out of place! And the insistence of the LCR in raising that issue would only have been additional evidence that the LCR actually didn't want a common candidate because the LCR was only looking for pretexts in order to stand Olivier Besancenot as its own candidate...

And you can oppose nothing to that, not even the genuine results of the election! For the supporters of a single anti-neoliberal candidature, whatever the political cost should be, the results of the election are just an evidence of the mess caused by the absence of such a candidature. And the "apparatus" of the CP and the LCR are (necessarily) guilty for that mess. A mess that would not have taken occurred in the case of a common candidature...

They don't try to explain why, in the framework of a global disaster for the anti-liberal Left, Olivier Besancenot and the LCR have been able to resist and obtain a "relative success". They don't try to explain it because it is not so easy to do so and, mainly, because they are not interested in doing so. They prefer to feed the regrets of lost illusions.

But, of course, more than 10% for an anti-liberal candidate - or even more votes than the candidate of the SP! - were just absurd statements. Nevertheless, AFTER the 22nd of April, some of the leaders of the former anti-liberal coalition, mainly those who supported José Bové, are still "explaining" what could have happened ... "if".

For instance, in the daily *Liberation* (11/05/2007), Yves Salesse - former candidate to be the candidate of the anti-liberal Left and a spokesman of José Bové's campaign - wrote: "The failure of the left doesn't end with the failure of the social-liberalism. Because it doesn't provide any accurate answer, the division of those who are supporting another orientation for the Left has been devastating. The surprise of this election should not have been Bayrou but the breakthrough of this alternative Left. The leaderships of the LCR and the CP have made a different choice."

For instance, Pierre Khalfa, a former leader of SUD and a leading member of the French global justice movement, in the course of [his debate with Pierre Rousset](#) wrote: "For me, it was possible to be involved in unitive dynamics which would have won more than 15% of the votes, asserting its will to win the majority in the Left space. Of course, this is not what has happened. But this fact doesn't invalidate my position, except if it's a case of wishful thinking: I analyse that it is not possible; I act in order for that not to be possible; it didn't happen; so, I was right to think it was not possible!"

For instance Murray Smith wrote: "I have never found convincing the wilder surges of enthusiasm by the partisans of unity, going so far as to predict that a unitary candidate could have got more votes than the SP. But I think he or she would certainly have got more than 8.5 per cent. Between 10 and 15 per cent seems a perfectly realisable objective. At that level, the relationship of forces on the left starts to change, and a serious marker is laid down for the future".

Before the first round of the presidential election, you could consider these analyses just as (serious) political mistakes or ridiculous polemical speeches in order to denounce the "sectarianism of the apparatus of the CP and the LCR" and to please the average mood of the numerous activists of the No campaign who were yearning for unity. But, AFTER the results of the election, we are faced to something qualitatively different: a desperate

attempt to find a magic explanation of what has gone wrong, a pathetic denial of reality. And, of course, a very comfortable reading of the election that protects you from any self-criticism! Actually, they prefer to borrow an "explanation" once used by the SP. Just as the SP tried to "explain the 21st April 2002" by the dispersion of the left (too many candidates), they explain the failure of the anti-liberal left in 2007 by its dispersion...

Back to reality

The attempt of José Bové to present his campaign as a unitary campaign failed. Even his decision to stand was not, in any case, the result of a democratic debate in the "movement" or in the framework of the remaining anti-liberal collectives. When it was possible for him to be designated as candidate by at least a part of the anti-liberal collectives, he withdrew his candidature. He has been able to be "designated" only after the explosion of the movement (after the takeover of the CP in order to impose its general secretary as unitary candidate) via a very anti-democratic process through a web-petition.

Some of his rallies were successes, while others were not. He failed to express a really broad anti-liberal orientation and confined himself to very specific - though legitimate - issues (such as the fight against dissemination of genetically modified crops). It also must be noticed that he attacked LCR publicly in a very nasty way, while Olivier Besancenot never attacked the other candidates of the anti-liberal Left. He even counterposed its candidature to the "eleven others" presented as "candidates of the system"!

Between the two rounds of the presidential election, he even accepted a "mission" from the SP candidate (Segolène Royal) about "food sovereignty". He also had a very indulgent evaluation of her openings towards François Bayrou and the centre right. That doesn't "prove" he was under the control of the SP. But it proves that the issue about being independent from the SP that the LCR had raised was not... superfluous. The electoral results were bad (483,000

votes; 1.32%) and left many of its supporters disappointed. Anyhow, one point must not be discarded: he really did have a significant number of supporters, some of them being radical activists of the social movements, a necessary component to build a political alternative, a broad anti-capitalist party. A problem that has to be dealt with now...

The campaign of Marie-George Buffet was an impossible challenge from the start. The CP desperately tried to convince people to vote for her - and not for the SP candidate - by criticising the neo-liberal orientation of the SP. But, at the same time, the CP never explicitly rejected the idea of a governmental or parliamentary coalition with the SP, feeding the illusion that it would be possible to have a government bringing together "all the left"... on an anti-liberal basis! The CP obtained its worst ever result: 707,000 votes; 1.93%. Then it has tried (without success) with the SP leadership in order to rescue a handful of its MPs. No doubt about it: this is a new step in the endless crisis of the CP. And the anti-capitalist Left has to deal with that...

Another issue we have to think about is the result of Arlette Laguiller, the candidate for Lutte Ouvrière (LO), the main other revolutionary organisation in France: from more than 5% in 2002 to 1.33% in 2007. There are several explanations for that. It was the sixth (!) campaign of Arlette Laguiller for presidential election and that was not the best way to show how revolutionary organisations deal with the renewal of politics.

This was made worse by the competition with Olivier Besancenot, of course. Some former voters for LO were also angry about its attitude after the 21st April 2002 when LO refused to be part of the movement against Le Pen. And during the 2007 campaign, LO sometimes gave the impression of calling on the SP to defend genuine left measures rather than opposing it. Anyhow, the anti-capitalist left should now consider that LO will remain a significant revolutionary organisation that will not disappear just like that...

New responsibilities, new opportunities

Obviously, the political situation after this presidential election gives new responsibilities to the LCR. As noticed before, we have to deal with the disappointment and the bitterness of the activists who supported José Bové; we also have to deal with the deepening crisis of the CP and the former supporters of LO who are more or less orphans. But in order to decide what to do, it is necessary to analyse our own results and understand why we have been able to resist better than the others candidates of the anti-liberal Left. Because we now have to build mainly on that basis.

There are at least three reasons of the success and they make the difference with the other candidates:

- The defence of a radical anti-capitalist programme,
- The ability to personify the renewal of the radical left,
- Absolute independence from any hint that we would support a government of the neoliberal SP "Left".

Our programme - for the presidential campaign and for the general elections - was a set of emergency measures that were at the same time concrete answers to the situation of millions of people and a bridge towards another world. The LCR has not invented anything: most of these measures were borrowed from social movements or, at least, from the most advanced sectors of the social movements. But supporting them without any compromise made the difference: they are not items of a programme just for elections; they have been and they will be the core of the forthcoming struggles.

Personifying the renewal of the Left needs a clear political profile and a candidate appropriate for that. Olivier Besancenot was that candidate because he is young - and able to be understood by young people - and because he is a worker, not a professional politician. In 2002, one of the slogans of the campaign was:

"Olivier Besancenot, 27 years old, postman". At that time, he was the youngest candidate by large. In 2007, of course, he was five years older... but he was still the youngest candidate. And he was still a postman, as well. It's not about "casting" or political "communication". It's about our ideas of political fight.

Absolute independence has been the most disputed issue. It's the most important one. It's both correct and... efficient! Many new voters and many former voters for the radical Left in 2002 (even the majority of voters for Olivier Besancenot) voted for Ségolène Royal in April 2007, even without any enthusiasm for her programme and campaign: the pressure for "useful vote", the will to avoid another "21st of April", the opposition to Nicolas Sarkozy were very high. And these reasons explain to a large extent the average bad results of the radical Left. More than the fact that this anti-liberal Left was divided, anyway. And those voters who nevertheless wanted to vote "more to the left" that the SP chose to vote for the most independent candidate from the SP, Olivier Besancenot. Actually, having 280,000 votes more than in 2002 means, at least, he has convinced between 800,000 and 900,000 new voters.

Considering what would have happened if - if a common candidate would have stood, if the CP have supported José Bové or another non communist candidate, if the LCR had supported José Bové, and so on - make no sense, because these hypotheses have just no basis in reality. But, anyhow, I believe that Marie-George Buffet featuring a common anti-liberal candidate, supported by LCR and anti-liberal collectives, would have got more or less the same result she reached as a candidate of the CP.

José Bové, supported by the LCR and CP, would have got, more or less, the same results he got on its own. Nowadays, none of the parties of the anti-liberal and/or anti-capitalist Left has a stabilised electorate. For every election, you have to win every voter by convincing them it is useful to vote for you. And arithmetic is not politics...

Anyhow, the results of the first round of the presidential election, the number of people who sent letters or e-mails in order to join and resist against Sarkozy have given the LCR a broad credibility. And new responsibilities! After the general elections that, most probably, will be a severe defeat for the SP and its allies, a debate will begin about the future of the Left. For many activists inside the traditional Left and among workers and young people, the question is: what had happened? Why have we been defeated? How can we avoid new forthcoming defeats?

The different leaders of the SP are already arguing of the necessity for an "aggiornamento", a realignment of the French SP on the political orientation already shared by the other parties of the European social-democracy. They underlined the contrast between their defeat and the victories of Tony Blair in the UK or Romano Prodi in Italy. They suggest they lost the election

because they were linked to old-fashioned ideas about socialism, class struggle and so on. And they begin to think about the kind of relationship they must have with the centre right.

The challenge we have to answer is to show that, in face of that neo-liberal left, there is another left, a left "100% left", which thinks that in order to oppose Sarkozy you must refuse any evolution towards centre and clearly defend workers' rights. A Left entirely committed to struggles and socialist alternatives. A Left whose main purpose will be to organise resistance and contest the hegemony of the SP rather than trying to pressure it.

The LCR doesn't intend to be sectarian or arrogant. But there is absolutely no reason to apologize for not having been marginalised like the other candidates and parties of the anti-liberal Left! Now, we have to move and offer a genuine alternative to failed orientations. We have to do it in an open manner, with the genuine

will to associate as many people as possible.

How can the LCR - a small revolutionary organisation - in practice help a significant number of people to make a new step towards a broad anti-capitalist party? This issue will now be discussed among our members (old and new) and be clarified during the preparation of our national Congress (December 2007). But, during that discussion, we will keep in mind the reasons why we are faced with such a challenge (rather than sadly discussing about our failure): commitment to a radical anti-capitalist programme and absolute independence from the institutional left.

Visit the site of the [LCR's parliamentary elections campaign](#) featuring in particular videos of Alain Krivine at a campaign meeting in Le Havre and Olivier Besancenot on the breakfast TV programme Tele-Matin.

Preparing for the presidential elections - a minority report

5 June 2007, by **Alain Mathieu, Patrick Tamerlan**



The context of the 2007 elections in France cannot be understood without reference to two political and social events which happened in the last two last years: - the victory of the "no" in the referendum on the liberal constitution for Europe, a victory obtained by the voters of the left (a majority of Socialist Party voters voted "no" whereas the leadership of the PS defended "yes") and by a mobilization of the anti-liberal Left (PCF, LCR, left socialists, global justice campaigners, left ecologists).

For months, Olivier Besancenot, Marie George Buffet (PCF), José Bové, figure

of the global justice movement, J.L.Mélenchon (left wing of the PS) multiplied joint meetings, mobilizing thousands of participants. Consequently, the question was widely posed: how to concretize this relationship of forces, this overturn within the left, to the disadvantage of the social-liberal orientation defended by the leadership of the Socialist Party.

- The powerful movement of workers and youth, in spring 2006, for the first time made the government of the liberal Right retreat. The government wanted to impose on everyone under 25 insecure employment contracts (First Employment Contract, C.P.E., which gave employers the right to sack them without giving any

justification). On two occasions, three million demonstrators took to the streets, after 3 months of massive mobilizations, making it the strongest movement, in term of demonstrations, since 1968. This movement confirmed that resistance to liberalism was dominant within the country, a year after the referendum.

There then arose on the left, on a mass scale, an immense hope that we could succeed in expressing this anti-liberal aspiration on the electoral terrain in 2007. The idea of "Unity of the anti-liberal left" was popular, as opposed to the multiplication and the dispersion of candidacies just for the sake of it, which would defend virtually identical political proposals. The idea was born of an electoral

coalition between all these forces, to present candidates in common for the 2007 elections – presidential (April), and legislative (June).

A new appeal was made, calling to bring together all the forces that were in agreement with this objective and to create unitary collectives at the base in the localities. At their height there were between 600 and 700 collectives, spread across the whole country, involving approximately 15.000 people. Not only did we see the whole arc of forces that had made the common campaign for a "no" from the left in the referendum, but especially many militants, trade unionists and organizers of social movements, who saw, at last, the outlines of a political space in which they could take their place, to express on the political level their day-to-day struggles.

It was then necessary to move from a campaign based on refusal of liberalism to the positive formulation of an alternative programme, of political proposals, of a strategy implying the clarification of the relationship with the Socialist Party, the attitude towards the Right and towards a government of the Left and a left parliamentary majority.

It was also necessary to solve a difficult problem within the specific framework of the institutions of the Fifth République: in France, elections take place in two rounds.

For the legislative elections, there are approximately 580 constituencies, which each elect a deputy, in a uninominal system with two rounds. There is no proportional representation. And France is one of the rare European countries to elect its president by direct universal suffrage. There is not even, as in the USA, a vice-president, which makes it possible to compose a "ticket" of two candidates; there is only one name on the ballot paper. It is a hang-over of Gaullism and the strong state, where the candidate-president meets the people and the citizens over the head of the parties and the elected assemblies, is able to name the Prime Minister, has exorbitant powers, not controlled by a parliament which he even has the right to dissolve if he wants to. These institutions have

modelled political life for many years, and the political parties have almost all had to adapt to this framework.

Everyone then thought that if the political questions were resolved, we would find a solution for the candidate: find a personality accepted by all, a name on the ballot paper, around whom the best-known figures (Buffet, Besancenot, Bové, etc...) would gather, in meetings and common media interventions.

For the legislative elections, it would be possible to vary the candidates coming from the various political forces in the 580 constituencies.

The LCR did not play the game

While affirming that it was in favour of such candidatures, the LCR organised a national conference in June 2006. A majority (60%) decided to launch the candidacy of Olivier Besancenot, while affirming that it would withdraw it if a unity agreement was concluded later. The minority (40%) defended the idea that it was necessary first of all to be integrated into the unitary movement and to throw all our weight into obtaining the best possible agreement, before launching our Besancenot campaign, which made us appear to not really want unity.

This divergence within the LCR was concretized in two possible orientations. And differently from preceding debates in the LCR – which is however accustomed to internal debates – the divergence was expressed publicly, by different interventions in public meetings and in the movement of the collectives, by the "majority of the LCR", and by the minorities who spoke in the name of the "unitary current of the LCR". The unfolding of events accentuated these different public expressions, without up until now calling into question the unity of the organization, because the two orientations each had legitimacy, in the LCR and outside it.

In September a first stage was accomplished: a meeting of 500 delegates from collectives and from political forces adopted a document

which specified the political framework:

- To regroup all the forces for an alternative anti-liberal Left in the elections in order to challenge within the electorate of the left the domination of the social-liberal policies of the PS.

- To defeat the Right and the far Right in the second round of the elections by voting for the best-placed left-wing candidate, without conditions or negotiations. It was obvious that it was necessary to respond to the powerful desire to beat Sarkozy: if the Right was victorious again, following on 2002, we would see a situation which would resemble the second term of Mrs. Thatcher in the United Kingdom, with an offensive aiming to destroy the powerful resistance to liberalism.

- To define an attitude towards a government of the Left, after the experience of the "plural Left" between 1997 and 2002, when the PCF took part in the government of Lionel Jospin. It was a key question, to verify what the PCF's policy was. The text of the agreement specified clearly:

"We will not be part of a government dominated by social-liberalism, which, by its composition and by its project, would not give itself the means of finally breaking with liberalism, would not respond to what people were waiting for. The Socialist Party, in particular, has adopted a programme which turns its back on a clear break with liberalism. It is out of the question, for us, to negotiate on this basis a contract of government whose action, letting people down once again, would lead ineluctably to the return of a harder Right"

The text further specified:

"If we do not take part in the government, our group in Parliament will not take part in a majority made up to support this government, but will vote in favour of any legislative provisions going in the direction of the interests of the population. We will also use our parliamentary strength, along with all those who will take part in social mobilizations, to get a certain number of positive measures adopted

or to get negative measures withdrawn; to translate our programme into law and reality. We reserve the right to judge and to discuss publicly how the government and its majority act in the course of the legislature".

So we were very far, for example, from what Rifondazione had accepted in Italy: to take part in a government of coalition, not only with the social-liberal Left, but also with the centre-right of Prodi, and in a majority that supported it. The refusal of the PCF to take part in a social-liberal government demonstrated a certain break with its traditional positions. Having fallen to a very low electoral level, it did not want to go even lower by endorsing unpopular social-liberal governmental policies. Of course, that did not mean that the PCF, on another occasion, would not change its mind, nor that there were not within it currents which regretted abandoning this policy of alliance with the PS. But the success of the "no" and the anti-liberal resistance had convinced it that it should use the coming period to regain strength and credit and to win again the positions it had acquired, by relying on the unitary anti-liberal movement, in which it wanted to remain dominant.

It was however an important occasion, for the LCR, to take a full part in this movement, to act and to exert pressure on the contradictions that it entailed within one of the two big left parties in France.

The LCR withdrew

The majority of the LCR clumsily put forward two amendments to the agreement, which were unconvincing: that participation in a government and a majority with the PS was excluded, but since the text of the agreement already said that, it seemed like a pretext. It asked for the passages to be removed which envisaged defeating the Right by calling for a second-round vote for the best-placed left-wing candidate, but this was rejected as unacceptable in the current situation. From then on, the majority of the LCR put itself in a situation of "observer" in the movement, and stopped being

seriously involved in the collectives, while the minority "unitary LCR" continued to act within the movement to push it in the right direction.

In October, another stage was reached: a national meeting of 600 representatives of the unitary collectives adopted a document of 125 programmatic proposals, taking up the best of the demands elaborated by the social, anti-war and global justice movements. All the principal measures proposed by the Left that was in favour of social transformation and by the social movements were there (on sackings, wages, services, immigration, the right to vote for foreigners, refusal of any military intervention, in the Middle-East as well as in Africa, support for Palestine etc...).

Only one important point continued to provoke debate and was resolved by a positive compromise: on civil nuclear power, between the traditional position of the PCF, favourable to nuclear power, and the ending of nuclear power that was defended by us and the ecologists, it was proposed that the question would be decided by a referendum after a public discussion throughout society, accompanied by a moratorium on the construction of new power stations during this debate.

The majority of the LCR did not have much to say in this debate, it did not take part in it, having put itself on the sidelines in September. The minority was there, strongly present, defending the traditional political positions of the LCR, generally successfully.

It remained, after the political agreement, to solve the question of the candidacy by a debate within the collectives. Olivier Besancenot and the LCR put themselves on the sidelines, Olivier never wanted to be a candidate for the candidacy within the movement, but in spite of that, during all these months there were very many calls for the LCR to come back into the movement. In addition to the two principal figures (Bové and Buffet) the debates saw the emergence of other candidates who did not represent a particular party, but could be agreed by all: Clementine Autain, Yves Sallesse, Claude Debons, figures of the

unitary movement. It was necessary to make the PCF understand that the candidacy of its general secretary could not unite the movement, because she would reduce it, people thought, to a small circle around the Communist Party.

The discussion and the consultation began in the collectives. José Bové withdrew without much explanation, criticizing the practices of the PCF which wanted to impose its general secretary, but especially taking note that his candidacy was not being chosen in priority in the collectives. He would remain absent from the movement for two months, reappearing in mid-January supported by a petition initiated outside of the movement.

It only remained to make the PCF agree to a non-PCF candidacy, in a situation where it had become the dominant force within the movement after the withdrawal of Besancenot and Bové, with the aim of making the two of them come back. On December 9-10, an assembly of more than 800 delegates did not succeed in solving the question, but the movement was strong enough to prevent the PCF, which was in a majority in the meeting, from imposing Marie-George Buffet as the candidate of the collectives.

The PCF then underwent an unprecedented crisis: it decided just afterwards to force its way through, against the will of the unitary movement, and to present Buffet as candidate, in the name of the party, by having recourse to an internal vote. In this internal vote, 10.000, out of the 50.000 militants of the PCF consulted, voted against the candidacy of the general secretary, preferring another candidate who would respect the unity of the unitary movement. Entire federations, sections, those most committed to the movement, voted against the majority of the leadership, which, knowing the internal workings of the PCF, was an event. Some left the party, but still more still decided to organise to continue the debate. Those who call themselves "unitary communists" are organised in a public association.

It was the first time that the PCF had

undergone such a crisis, and the opposition was organised on a basis that was anti-liberal and left. Once again, the majority of the LCR was absent from this confrontation and this debate, and by its refusal of a unitary policy it missed an occasion to influence and make links with this movement of contestation. The unitary minority of the LCR was by the side of the unitary militants of the PCF and the collectives.

Rancour against the leaderships of the parties held responsible for the failure

Immediately after this failure, many militants, but also many voters, were disappointed and felt great bitterness. The political logics proper to the parties were judged to be responsible for the division, whereas a political agreement was possible and would have produced a considerable electoral and political dynamic.

The LCR found itself isolated: not only in broad sectors of its electorate, but also among the sympathizers and actors of the social movements who had previously looked on it with sympathy. Within the LCR, well-known militants, of long standing, leading representatives of the political influence of the LCR, even if they were not members of the minorities, repudiated this policy of wanting to impose an LCR candidate at all costs, in direct opposition to the unitary dynamic.

The leadership of the PCF was considered to be responsible for the failure, the crisis is open, and the solitary campaign of Buffet does not have any dynamic behind it.

Why did the PCF choose to force its way through?

The PCF is paying for forcing its way through by a crisis without precedent. Initially, many people thought that it made this choice in order to return to its policy of alliance with the Socialist Party. An influential current within the

party and its leadership defend this perspective, but the present leadership does not seem to be following it on this issue. It appears that the PCF, already reduced to the lowest level in electoral terms and with a decreased number of elected officials (22 deputies, whom it is not guaranteed to keep, and municipalities which are threatened with being taken from it by the Socialist Party), considers that a "cure of opposition" would be more beneficial to it. All the more so as the situation after the presidential election does not offer many other choices; either the Right wins, and the question of going into government is not posed. Or the candidate of the PS wins, and it will be rather an opening to the "centre" that a recentred PS will seek. The refusal to give way to another unitary candidature is due to two reasons:

- For the PCF, the interest of this movement was not only to find itself with the radical Left, but to lay the foundations of a movement which would include sectors of the opposition within the PS, and to thus aim at the heart of the left electorate. Many references by the PCF to the German situation attest to this, as does the presence of Oskar Lafontaine at the meetings of M.G. Buffet. The PCF was waiting to see how the currents of the PS which had defended the "no" to the constitution would react, after the designation of Ségolène Royal as candidate of the PS, which demonstrated an inflection to the right on the part of the PS. In fact, precisely nothing happened: after this designation, the "no" currents, apart from some very minority exceptions, have had to agree to form a united bloc with the party against the Right. The only current present as such in the movement, the PRS group of Mélenchon, gave up at the end of December. It is certain that the contradictions within the PS were attenuated on the eve of an election where it is a question of defeating a government of the Right, and that they will re-appear with even more force if the PS is confronted with applying its policies in government. That was the case of Germany, it was in fact under a Schröder government that the rupture around Lafontaine occurred. Taking note, moreover, of the

withdrawal of Besancenot and Bové, it only remained to the PCF to accept a coalition with small currents of the radical Left, without any counterweight coming from the Socialist Left. The PCF preferred to run its own campaign, breaking the consensus of the collectives. More than a disagreement about participation in government, the real difference between the PCF and the LCR lay there: what should be the contours of the movement? "Radical anti-liberal Left", or "left of the plural Left" as Olivier Besancenot argued, or "left of the Left" as the PCF proposed? It is a debate to be continued, but it was not an irremediable divergence which prevented the LCR from entering a coalition - on the contrary, the debate would have unfolded in the course of the campaign.

- the second reason is due to the traditions of this party. To leave behind it the Stalinist period which marked its functioning and its conception of the party that had to be built, the current leadership undertook only a timid reform which did not go far. The "opening" of the PCF was limited to agreeing, during preceding elections, to make common lists with some small forces around the PCF, which remained the centre of gravity. By wanting to reproduce this schema with a powerful unitary movement, it ran head-on against this movement, showing its incapacity to understand the meaning of it. As for reflection and debate within the party on "transcending" itself to build another force, there are only some mumblings. The culture of the party and its militants remains very attached to its "identity", in defence of the "Party", and these reflexes also pushed towards a clash with the collectives.

It remains the case that the crisis that has opened up is extremely profound. The future of the PCF remains a question that is impossible to circumvent for all those who pose the question of a new political organization on the left. The PCF, in spite of its decline, remains one of the forces on the left which still has the most links with ordinary working-class people (much more than the LCR with its equivalent presidential results, and not yet supplanted by a PS which is

struggling to implant itself among these layers of the population at the same time as it regularly takes on government responsibilities...)

The candidacy of José Bové cannot be the candidacy of the unitary movement

After having withdrawn his candidacy in the collectives, José Bové came back at the end of January, announcing that he was now a candidate. He was backed by a double movement: a petition of 30,000 signatures organised outside of the collectives by militants who had either a project of creating a political current behind him (some particular currents of the ecologist and global justice movement), or the idea that this was the last chance to force the PCF and the LCR to unite around him. A part of the collectives, on the basis of the rancour that had accumulated against the LCR and the PCF, chose to use this candidacy, hoping to maintain the unitary pressure, while another part of the collectives chose not to support any candidate, maintaining the objective of uniting the whole anti-liberal Left.

Bové's candidacy did not shake the LCR: when the minorities proposed that Besancenot should meet Bové to discuss a common candidacy, thus effecting at least partial unity, the majority of the LCR refused. So the Bové candidacy, legitimate for a layer of militants, cannot appear as enabling the unity of the movement. By establishing itself as the third candidacy coming from the unitary movement, it underlines even more its failure. In the opinion polls, the three or four candidates who speak in the name of anti-liberalism are stagnating, with between 2 and 3 per cent each. The collectives are divided on the appropriateness of the Bové candidacy. Some are trying through it to constitute an alternative political force which would occupy a space by building itself between and against the PCF and the LCR, giving up the

objective of a unitary movement for an objective that is still not very well defined.

So there will be no unitary anti-liberal candidate at the 2007 presidential election, and that is a failure, felt as such by thousands of militants and millions of voters.

Why did the LCR stick to its course?

The political differences invoked by the leadership of the LCR have been seen as pretexts to justify at all costs its separate candidacy. All the more so as the agreement made it possible to accept a coalition where each party or political force would keep its autonomy. The reasons, in our opinion, for the refusal of the majority of the LCR to integrate into the movement, are of several kinds:

- the majority of the LCR did not draw the balance-sheet of the policy that it pursued in 2003-2004, based on a far-left agreement with Lutte Ouvrière, which had led to an electoral failure, and had subsequently not produced any effect of political regroupment. Going from 10 per cent of the votes in 2002 to 4 per cent at the 2004 regional elections and 2,5 per cent at the European elections, this policy led to isolation, equating the Right and the Left, refusing to enter into dialogue with the anti-liberal forces existing on the political scene.

- the LCR has also become a victim of the French presidential system: having a young and media-friendly candidate, it overruled the political objections of its sympathisers, hoping that at the end of the day its candidate would obtain an honourable result (between 3 and 4 per cent), and reduced its objective to a competition with LO and the PCF. Rather than making it possible to take a step forward in the building of a unitary movement, (which would have been able to unleash a dynamic and to get more than 10 per cent of the votes), it preferred the affirmation of a candidacy guaranteeing the identity of the current which we represent. That will not lead to any step forward in regrouping activists, and even a good result will not be repeated, since we know that in the legislative elections, the LCR has neither the political

implantation nor the popular support to attain the same relationship of forces.

- Especially, the LCR has been a victim of a form of conservatism. With 2500 members and results which can sometimes be up to 4 per cent of the electorate, many sections of the International could envy this situation. However, it is not the sign that we have reached the Promised Land, and that it is enough for us to occupy this space while waiting for the social crisis in which we will make a revolutionary party emerge. Years ago, in the LCR and the International, we became convinced that it was necessary to unite currents and militants in order to create broad parties, mass parties, to carry forward the perspective of a radical change of society, even if revolutionaries were in a minority to start with. We no longer thought of the building of the revolutionary party as a linear growth of our sections. It is this political advance, which was common to us, which is being called into question by the majority of the LCR. However, it is not a question, in France in 2006-2007, of starting by discussing the building of a new party. The anti-liberal unitary movement did not resemble the processes which have given rise to what we have called "broad parties" of the anti-capitalist Left. In several European countries, groups coming from the far-left have been capable of pursuing an intelligent, open policy (Portugal, Britain, Scotland, Denmark...). In France, all the attempts at a broad party with the forces of the far Left have failed, all the attempts at agreement between the LCR and LO ran up against the sectarian politics of L.O.. This time, it was a question of something else: of building an electoral coalition, to test out an initial stage of broader unity, on the basis of an anti-liberal anti-capitalism, rather like in Germany with the WASG coalition at the elections in 2005. Of course, if the electoral coalition had materialised in France, immediately afterwards the question would have been posed of the political space that had to be organised, passing perhaps through a stage of a federation of parties, currents and collectives, and in any case moving in time towards a united political movement. But the

LCR refused to enter into even the electoral coalition, did not want to take the first step, the first stage. For fear of being "sucked in", in order not to take any risks, it preferred to fall back on organising its own space around its party and its candidate.

This policy poses the question: if we do not have confidence in our ideas, in our programme (which is not intended to be kept in the refrigerator, but whose function is to convince a significant sector of the working class so as to become a force for action and transformation), if we are not able then to confront it with social reality, if we do not seek to change the relationship of political forces within the Left, then that becomes a form of conservatism that is not very compatible with our announced objective of transformation of society.

Comrades in the International have a tendency, in discussion, to isolate the building of a political movement and the question of social struggles: it is enough, according to them, to have a nucleus that is determined and firm on principles, in order to intervene in social struggles, which will in the end be the decisive element. That is to forget that the concretization of an alternative on the political terrain encourages social struggles, and that, reciprocally, social struggles should help political construction. To build a useful political space, in the sense of providing a vehicle for thousands of activists in the trade unions and associations, to organise a political space with which they can identify and which will organise a significant part of the working class and youth, we need regroupment: militants who are not in parties, currents coming from different traditions and with different histories, coming from the far Left, from the Communist and Socialist parties, from ecologist and alternative currents. A regroupment which will have to confront the questions that every party that begins to represent an important sector of the population has to face: questions of government, parliamentary majority, presence in local and regional councils, without betraying its anti-liberal principles, without compromising itself by alliances which would denature the struggle that has been undertaken and

would prevent new social conquests.

The abandonment of such an active unitary policy in France will have repercussions in Europe. It is necessary to avoid a generalization of a "French turn" which would put us on the margins of phenomena of recomposition in Europe. We do not need to make the demonstration that in the country where Trotskyist political forces have acquired sizeable autonomous strength, they "freeze" any possibility of unitary regroupment for an alternative on the left.

The end of the story has not yet been written

It is still possible to modify the policy of the LCR, and we are going to try to do that. There will be no unitary candidate in the presidential election, and in these conditions it is necessary that Olivier Besancenot is present. But it is still possible to discuss an approach and an agreement for the legislative elections in June. There will be 580 candidates, there can be an agreement, so that in 150 to 300 constituencies, the LCR, the PCF, the forces around José Bové, the unitary collectives which have survived these turbulences (and there are many of them), would agree to present common candidates. It is of course necessary to have an agreement to defeat the Right, to defend an anti-liberal policy in complete independence in Parliament, not to take part in a government and a parliamentary majority on the basis of social-liberal policies. The French situation is unstable.

If the Right wins, the entire Left, including the PS, will explode and have to be rebuilt. If the Left wins, an agreement between part of the PS and the "centre" of the Right (Bayrou and the UDF) is possible, as in Italy or Germany. A "unitary turn" by the LCR, after the candidacy of Besancenot, is necessary. The failure to achieve unity for the presidential election does not invalidate the need to persevere with this type of regroupment, on the level of the immediate situation in France,

but also, no doubt, for a whole period in Europe. If an agreement was reached for the legislative elections in France, the anti-liberal Left would also become the non-governmental left, since for the moment the PCF does not envisage going into a Socialist government (if it changed its mind, the crisis in the party would be at its height, and once again thousands of militants would rise up against the leadership of the party. It would then be necessary to be there, in the process of discussion, to have some influence on this crisis).

Furthermore, it is a situation which is tending to be found on a European scale: the more the liberal offensive develops, the more the traditional parties are under pressure and accentuate their social-liberal turn. But even more, in reaction, crises of perspectives take shape within these parties. In Germany, the policy of Schröder in government, and then the establishment of the grand coalition, led to the unification of a wing of the SPD with the PDS and a part of the radical Left. In Italy, the coalition government of Prodi is provoking a crisis within Rifondazione. In France, unable and unwilling to repeat the experience of the "plural Left", the PCF today, and the PS tomorrow, will face strong contradictions. It is necessary to be ready to intervene actively in these crises, which will multiply.

What our Italian comrades are doing is a good example. Considering their limited forces, it was necessary for them, 15 years ago, to go into Rifondazione, which was a product of the breaking up of the Italian CP. Confronted with Rifondazione joining the Prodi government, they demonstrated at the same time their independence in relation to the government and their loyalty to the social movement, without however creating a worst case scenario and becoming responsible for a return to power of Berlusconi. This Italian debate will be important in France for the legislative elections, with a PCF which for the moment refuses to follow the road of Rifondazione, but remains hesitant on what policy to carry out. All these debates will involve the European Left. It is up to us to know how to respond, not only

not by the reaffirmation of principles that we declaim from the side of the road, but by a policy of concretely building regroupments which respect

the principles of class independence and encourage workers to get involved in the discussion on alternative policies to those of social liberalism. In

these processes, we will put forward our ideas.

February 27, 2007

IV390 - June 2007 pdf

1 June 2007