



IV425 - June 2010

The politics of the poor - socialism in Indonesia

30 June 2010, by **Alex de Jong**

I'm a spokesperson for an organisation called Komite Politik Rakyat Miskin - Partai Rakyat Demokratik (Political Committee of the Poor - Democratic People's Party, KPRM-PRD). Besides work for my organization I have also been active in workers movements in Semarang, Central Java and Sidoarjo, East Java, and in student movements in Jakarta, on Java. In 2004 I was still a member of PRD and I was a member of the board. Later, in 2006, I became the general secretary of the National Student League for Democracy. I was active in the student movement until this year.

Can you tell us something about the daily issues facing people in Indonesia?

A large problem is unemployment - above thirty per cent. Especially workers from the textile industry have been losing their jobs. After 1998 many textile factories in Bandung, Java, went bankrupt because they couldn't pay for raw materials, imported for example from China, because the Indonesian Rupiah sharply declined in value. After 1998, the import taxes on textile from China were abolished or sharply lowered - many Indonesian producers couldn't compete and went out of business. The Asia China Free Trade Agreement means that many products from China can be imported to Indonesia under no

or very low import taxes - and just like with textile, the Indonesian industry has trouble competing with this. Education and health care are also problems for many people who can hardly afford them.

1998 is the year Suharto's regime ended but why was this also such an economic turning point?

Earlier, Suharto had already made huge debts to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). At the end of the nineties, Asia was hit by an economic crisis, caused for a large part by economic speculation. The IMF lend money to Indonesia on the condition it would implement so-called Structural Adjustment Programs. The agreement for these programs was signed by Suharto but these SAP's were implemented by his successor, Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie. Habibie also entered into new agreements with the IMF, just like Gus Dur, Megawati Soekarnoputri and the presidents after them, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. These programs meant a drastic liberalization of the Indonesian economy. The Worldbank also made liberalization and deregularization of the economy a precondition for aid. During the Suharto regime, the so-called New Order, Indonesia was quite popular among foreign investors. But Suharto and his cronies had controlled large parts of the economy. Now,

everything had to be privatized and government subsidies on health care, education, public transport and food were slashed. This meant that many people had to pay more for these daily needs after the fall of Suharto and the cost of living is rising. When I was studying in Yogyakarta at the turn of the century, a good meal would cost less than 2000 rupiah - now, it would cost you over 4500.

Since 1998 Indonesia is officially a democracy but in reality, democratic rights are lacking.

Indeed. Left-wing movements are regularly confronted with militia that are indirectly working for members of the elite. Many members of the Indonesian elite rose to power during the New Order era and still hold a lot of influence - you can even see that in some parts of the country they are gaining more power again. There also still exist laws outlawing Marxist movements. The democratic space is contracting. Another threat are religious conservatives. In Aceh, there exist a civil police that forces women to wear headscarves, in Banten there are laws that are very close to Islamic religious law, Syariah, and severely limit the freedom of women. Women are for instance not allowed to go out in the evening without a man accompanying them. In Jakarta, a meeting about the human rights of

sexual minorities was attacked by a militia of Islamic fundamentalists (FPI). This kind of militia was often set-up by the army in the nineties to attack the democratic movement. This led to fierce confrontations between the militia and the protestors who defended themselves with stones, sticks et cetera. In the end, the militia were defeated and the military regime had to step down.

During the massive protest against the Suharto regime in the late nineties, the PRD emerged as the most significant radical left organization in Indonesia. Why are you no longer active in the PRD?

We had two objections against the way in which the PRD operated. The first was the lack of internal democracy. And secondly we didn't agree with the electoral strategy of the PRD majority. To explain this, I need to tell something about the electoral system in Indonesia. To be allowed to participate in elections, a party has to be present in fifty per cent of the provinces and cities and in the cities be present in a quarter of the districts. This makes it for a small party almost impossible to participate.

After a number of failed attempts to participate on our own, the PRD decided to organize an electoral front, Papernas. This front didn't support an entire socialist program but put forward a number of minimum demands: nonpayment of the national debt, nationalizing the oil, energy and mining industries and a national program of industrialization.

This way, we tried to create a larger organization. We had some successes but encountered many problems. Several meetings of Papernas were attacked by Islamic fundamentalists. The group that is now the KPRM-PRD questioned certain choices that were made. We felt that the organizing of

actions in the streets, the kind of actions that can radicalize people, were given less priority than the building of an electoral organization. In the end, Papernas couldn't participate in the elections. The majority of the PRD then decided to enter into an alliance with a reactionary religious establishment party, the Partai Bintang Reformasi (Star Reform Party)

This enabled them to participate in the elections but the price they paid was very high - like giving up their own demands and entering into an alliance with traditional politicians and with generals that are responsible for human rights violations. When the elections were approaching we were expelled because we objected to these maneuvers.

In Indonesia, hundreds of activists from the democracy movement have become candidates of powerful parties. Others joined NGO's and now limit themselves to objectives that remain in the framework of the status-quo.

What is the main focus of your activism now?

Most of our cadres are active in workers organizations, in alliance called Alliance of Workers Demands. This is an alliance of workers from different industries like textile, transport, electricity et cetera. The alliance campaigns for good wages, against outsourcing, organizes strikes and takes part in political campaigns. The alliance also has its own publications and organizes discussion meetings. The KPRM-PRD organizes public meetings to discuss with the workers what demands we should raise in the campaigns. The building of movements is the first priority.

We also take part in the student movement and we formed a women's

organization, called Women's Liberation. Women from various layers of the population, like workers, students and farmers, are active in this group. In terms of numbers, the workers movement is by far the largest movement in the country - but workers can not mobilize very quickly, they have jobs after all. The student movement is important because they can mobilize quickly and it has a tradition of political mobilizations, especially around issues like democracy, abuses of power, or corruption. During the first of May celebration in Jakarta the Alliance of Workers Demands mobilized almost 7000 people - other groups also brought thousands of people into the streets. The total in Jakarta was almost 24.000.

Since 1998, political mobilizations have become part of Indonesian culture - this is an important heritage from the movement that ousted Suharto. Almost daily, there is new about rallies and demonstrations, often spontaneous. This willingness to mobilize is everywhere, not just in the cities but also in the countryside. Peasants for example resist being evicted from their land, sometimes in very radical mobilizations in which people use primitive weapons to resist the army.

We think the left can form an alternative to the traditional elite in Indonesia, if we cooperate we can be strong enough for this. The faith of the people in traditional politicians is declining and the ruling class is divided. The recent economic crisis hit Indonesia hard as well. All of this means people are looking for alternatives; there is a lot of interest in socialist ideas and in the progressive governments in Latin-America. I think that if we manage to make to different movements converge, we can win new victories.

“When injustice becomes the law, resistance

is a duty!"

30 June 2010, by Andreas Sartzekis , Tassos Anastassiadis

This resistance seems obvious, and the enormous mobilizations of the past weeks could confirm it, but we should not have any illusions: it is a difficult battle that we are engaged in, the outcome of which will mainly depend on the ability of the trade-union and political left to offer credible perspectives to the population, split between mass combativeness and the risk of giving in to discouragement faced with the size of the obstacles, and on the ability of the European working class to counter this offensive of European capital.

In what is already now a race between classes, the brutal aggravation of the crisis in Greece presents a series of extremely opposite paradoxes quite contradictory with each other. On the one hand we can indeed say, like Alain Krivine on May 15 in Athens, that "what is happening in Greece, which will lead to situations of distress for millions of people, is from a certain point of view positive for all European revolutionaries, because from a certain point of view, you (the Greeks) are in the forefront of what all of us will experience in Europe in the coming months and years (...) and because today, the majority of people are suddenly becoming aware that the European Union, far from being the saviour of the peoples, is a machine for oppressing and exploiting them." But on the other hand, one should not underestimate the significance of the remarks of Prime Minister Papandreou, stressing that the crisis represents a great opportunity to change Greek society: "We must now ensure that our country has solid foundations for a better future. We have to speak openly and honestly about the problems for which we Greeks are responsible." Now, Papandreou could in this way concentrate popular anger on a real cause, though obviously minor in the crisis that is taking place: the tax

evasion in which various rich sections of society have been engaged for years has led over the last few days to big revelations in the press and on TV: after hearing about doctors, we have been promised that in the coming days we will know the names of tax-dodging sportsmen, lawyers and show business people, and Papandreou did not hesitate to sacrifice one of his ministers, whose husband, a popular singer, had the unfortunate idea of owing 5.5 million euros to the tax office! This challenging of practices that are intolerable to impoverished workers is of course important, but it in no way represents an answer to the deep roots of the crisis and is an attempt to send a population which is starting to take its problems in hand back to playing the role of passive spectator!

Measures that take us back to the Middle Ages

Let us recall [1] that in February and March, workers had already been hit by "packages" of measures. The worst was to come: pressured by speculation that was free and unrestricted (as competition is in the European Constitution...), the government negotiated with the European Union (EU), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the IMF a loan of 110 billion euros which was agreed in principle at the beginning of May. The details are well-known:

- a rate of interest of almost 5 per cent: the countries of the EU which lend money themselves borrow at a rate of 3 per cent from the banks, which alone have the right to borrow from the ECB at a rate of one per cent! As the French Economy Minister Christine Lagarde shamelessly

admitted, this solidarity of the countries of the eurozone will earn France 150 million euros a year.

- putting all the sectors of the Greek economy under the control of the EU-ECB-IMF "troika": this real political dispossession of a sovereign state reinforces the anger of a population which does not hesitate to use the word "junta", knowing full well what it is saying, having experienced from 1967 to 1974 a military junta backed and kept in place by the United States. It is however important not to forget that the Greek employers, who are big investors in the countries of the Balkans and of whom certain sectors (ship-owners) are world leaders, takes its full share of this plan, which it wishes to make harsher just as much as the IMF does!

The measures, voted by the Parliament on May 6, result from the memorandum set out by the troika: they sharply aggravate the preceding packages and correspond to a search for savings of the order of 30 billion euros...exclusively on the back of the workers. Among those which have already been implemented: an immediate 15 per cent wage cut (which takes the form, in the civil service, of the suppression of the thirteenth and fourteenth months); the same for pensions, with a maximum payment of 800 euros a month 800 euros maximum; new tax increases (with an increase in VAT, with an increase in two months from 19 to 23 per cent on certain products); a virtual freeze on recruitment in the public sector (one worker hired for every five who leave)... But this is only a part of the picture: since these measures were adopted a project for the reform of the pension system is under discussion (lengthening of the duration of contributions, towards 40 years of instalments, which means an increase of between 2 and 7 years

compared to the existing situation, level of pension calculated on the total wages of a working life and no longer on the last years...) and other attacks are coming: in June, a draft law on the labour code, which is too generous in the eyes of the EU, the IMF... and SEV, the Greek employers' organization. Already, it has been made possible to sack employees of the state education system, but what the IMF in particular demands, as announced by its very socialist president, is more flexibility in order to "offer" more competition and possibilities of removing the current limits on sackings (even though it has been decided to raise from 2 to 4 per cent the monthly percentage of dismissals that are authorised in a company, that is not enough!). In the same way, whatever his entourage says, the same Strauss-Kahn insists that the wage measures inflicted on the public sector should also apply to the private sector, and the government wants to be able to reduce the minimum wage from 740 to 592 euros! The memorandum signed by the PASOK government thus envisages the implementation of about thirty measures between now and 2012: among them, a reduction of 500 million euros in the financing of the unemployment agency, in a situation where the unemployment figures, officially around 10 per cent, unofficially 18 per cent, will rise dramatically; a three-year wage freeze in both private and public sectors, wages that are flexible, taking account of productivity, lower payment for overtime, a rise in the prices of public services, not forgetting that they are going to be privatized... The character of these measures is recognized by the Prime Minister himself: hard, unjust measures for workers who are not responsible for the crisis... but for Papandreou it is the only possible way! To transform social skills into a field of ruins, that is the only possible policy for the leader of PASOK!

However, even economists who are not necessarily on the left question the effectiveness of such a plan: Joseph Stiglitz underlines this in *Le Monde* of May 24: "Europe needs solidarity, empathy. Not an austerity which will make unemployment shoot up and lead to a depression. (...) Today, these countries (Spain, Greece) will only

recover if European growth returns. That is why it is necessary to support the economy by investing and not cripple it by austerity programmes." And the recession is calculated (by the troika and the IMF) for this year at about 4 per cent, and the same for 2011... proof, if it was necessary, that what European bourgeoisie wants, in the case of Greece, is not a way out of the crisis, but a sharply increased superexploitation of workers, which will become the European social model...

Under these conditions, one of the first preoccupations of the population is of course unemployment, made worse by the fact that one worker in four is not declared by his or her employer. Poverty, already present in the big cities and in some regions, will rapidly increase, but it is in particular for young people (and the elderly) that the prospects are quite simply terrifying: whereas the unemployment rate for those under 24 is 32 per cent, the future holds at best a job paid at less than 600 euros a month in the first two years, a prospect of retirement calculated on the wages of their entire life. Meanwhile, the annual salary of Strauss Kahn is 300,000 euros... That explains the strength of popular anger!

Massive mobilisations

Of course, it is interesting to examine the various surveys which show a contrasted, even contradictory image of the state of mind of the population in the face of a degradation of their conditions of existence on a scale that they had never experienced: the surveys show both the determination to protest and the feeling of the difficulty of the task, made worse in Greece by the neglect of previous governments: this last point is important, it explains why PASOK, shaken, does not collapse. But that is not what is most important: in four months, Greece has experienced four one-day general strikes, in a particular framework of mobilization, without forgetting the very combative demonstrations of particular sectors, or those demonstrations called at a day's notice. Indeed, whereas the

leaderships of GSEE (the confederation of private sector workers) and ADEDY (the federation of public sector workers), in both of which PASOK is in the majority, have every reason not to mobilize against "their" government, they had no choice but to give in to the pressure exerted since December by the trade-union left. Admittedly, after the big strikes of February 24 and March 11, they have "played for time", but with the strike of May 5, which immobilized the country, we saw hundreds of thousands of demonstrators (the figure was given of 200,000 in Athens). It was the biggest workers' demonstration since the fall of the dictatorship, in 1974, and comparable to the huge demonstration which in 2001 forced PASOK to retreat on its projected law on pensions). It will represent a key date in the history of the Greek workers' movement. Such an open and massive outpouring of anger had seldom been seen; an anger that directly challenged the capitalist system and its agents: no question of paying for "their" crisis, no to the PASOK-EU-IMF-ECB measures, that was the tone of the demonstrations. In Athens, the gigantic demonstration was marked by two facts: on the one hand, the tragic death of three employees of the Marfin Bank, owned by one of the most powerful Greek employers, because of the attitude of the employers and the government, which was denounced by the Federation of bank workers (OTOE) and of the criminal violence of those who threw Molotov cocktails in spite of the visible presence of a score of employees in the building. This act, very strongly denounced, in particular by many anarchist groups, led on the one hand to an incredible level of police violence that was a worrying indication of the state of bourgeois democracy, and was of course exploited by the government and the owner of the bank, obviously putting brakes on the possibility of a rapid extension of the mobilizations. Because on the other hand, we saw thousands of demonstrators, young and old, of all political tendencies, attacking the Parliament as the symbolic site where the pro-capitalist measures had been adopted, openly confronting the "forces of order". And the following day, in spite of the

emotion caused by the death of the three workers, more than 10,000 demonstrators assembled in front of the Parliament when the first section of the terrible measures ordered by the troika was being adopted.

On May 20, a new general strike took place, also well supported, even though the demonstrations, while massive, were not as big as on May 5. What will happen now? It is difficult to see, but at present, we should note the following elements:

- the trade-union leaderships linked to PASOK have been forced to follow the movement and to call for mobilizations. Once again, it has been demonstrated that these bureaucrats know how to adapt and use left language. Let us listen to the president of GSEE, Giannis Panagopoulos: "the IMF will not stop asking for sacrifices from the working class. Its recipes are catastrophic. The government must firmly reject them. In Greece, we cannot say that in fact the wages of the private sector create a problem of competitiveness of the economy...", and the leadership of GSEE can chant, as on May 1, that this it is not up to the workers to pay for "their" crisis! However, it is clear that it is trying to temporize: a month and a half between the general strike in March and the one on May 5, then they had to speed things up very quickly. And with the strike of May 20, it is to be feared that the tactics are from now on to call a series of one-day strikes, well spaced out, which we know will end up by not being supported.

The division between workers is fostered by the trade-union fraction of the KKE (with its trade-union front PAME), which systematically invites issues calls to demonstrate elsewhere and often at different times from the majority of the unions. Nevertheless, this tactic started to be countered on the ground on May 5, where the different contingents found themselves side by side, with no animosity on either side. This was a bad example in the eyes of the Stalinist leadership, which made a call on May 20 to demonstrate in another direction from the march called by GSEE and ADEDY, who called for a demonstration to the Parliament...

A very important role has been played over the last few months by local trade union structures (workplace branches, regional committees) in pushing for mobilization: for one-day general strikes, and today for ongoing strikes, which could be launched in some sectors. A coordinating committee of these local union structures has been set up. We should also mention some combative and unitary federations: for example OLME and DOE - with the new measures teachers will lose at least an entire month's wages because of the measures, not to mention the threats to their status and the readiness of the IMF to take advantage of the crisis to impose more private education in Greece, something which has been denounced by the president of Education International (a worldwide trade union body of workers in education). These federations are openly discussing the perspectives for ongoing strikes. All these organizations are of course very combative poles in the demonstrations!

What made the success of mobilizations like the one on May 5 is obviously that fact that hundreds of thousands of workers who give the majority in the unions to the PASOK current took to the streets en masse, angry, to say the least, at having been betrayed by "their" government. However, this anger does not result in a disavowal of the unions, nor indeed of their political loyalties. But on the other hand, this immense force is very ready for united action.

What perspectives for the mobilizations?

It is obvious that mass combativeness will be strengthened or weakened depending on the mobilisations that take place, either those launched by GSEE and ADEDY, or the extension of an exemplary ongoing strike, something which is cruelly lacking at present, because it could also be a concrete point of support for European solidarity in action. Today, the risk is of course that the trade-union leaderships on the one hand, and on the other hand the government

with its campaigns of tracking down those guilty of tax evasion, try to put the brakes on possible mobilizations. Many political and trade-union cadres consider that it is especially after the summer holidays that the mobilizations will begin again, after everyone has seen the scale of the disaster, with the systematic implementation of the measures that have been adopted (for example, the suppression of the fourteenth month's salary paid in summer, a kind of holiday pay). That is possible, but the risk also exists that the cost of a strike slows down the workers more in autumn. So it is important that the mobilization continues and if possible deepens now, but that also implies a clarification of the political perspectives, which gives confidence for a victorious conclusion of the mobilizations. However, on this front, things are moving forward, certainly, but very slowly...

Today it is becoming seen as correct on the left of to address the PASOK "people": so much the better, it was not always the case! At the same time, it is clear that possible differentiations will not lead inevitably to the strengthening of the anti-capitalist or anti-liberal left! Discontent can be seen especially on the level of the apparatus: thus, 3 MPs refused to vote for the vicious measures, and they were expelled. They do not however constitute the core of a future left opposition. Their attitude has more to do with a mood of discontent that has even affected some ministers, who are worried about their political future. However, the opinion polls show that, alongside a phenomenon - which could become serious - of rejection of political parties, PASOK is well ahead, accentuating even its lead over the Right. Even the student elections, which have just been held, show a progression of the PASOK current (which came out against the measures...). On the other hand, it is in PASKE, the trade-union current of PASOK, that we are starting to hear more or less strong criticism: even the president of ADEDY challenges the government's line that there is only one way to deal with the crisis. The leader of PASKE in the public services has declared that "we need social justice and class solidarity". PASKE trade unionists in several ministries

are making accusations of tax evasions, of the existence of offshore companies, and thus showing that the money is there. PASKE trade unionists in DEI (Greece's electricity company) declare: "We oppose everything that has just been officially smashed, but we also oppose the new attacks that are coming... Our perspective remains that of a more just society, freed from the economic and moral wretchedness of the present time." It is difficult to know what echo these declarations have (we have taken the information from Eleftherotypia, May 23), but they express an undeniable fact: PASOK, which has survived all the (many) scandals and the austerity policies of Papandreou's father and Simitis, has just crossed a red line, on the other side of which it continued to be seen as an instrument to defeat the Right. The consequences could be radical, if the anti-liberal and anti-capitalist left know how to propose united action and to open clear programmatic perspectives.

What is clear is that the Right is for the moment less than ever in a position to pull itself together, and its leader, the nationalist Antonis Samaras, continues to dig a deeper hole for it, by explaining like Papandreou that faced with the crisis, national unity is needed, but refusing to vote for the measures... which he would of course have taken with even more zeal! By expelling the former Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis, he is leading his party further into a dead end which leaves a bit more space to the far-right party, LAOS, whose leader voted without hesitation for all the PASOK measures, while baying at the Left which was setting the street against parliamentary legality. Coming from a movement that shelters some real fascists, this accusation may seem laughable, but it is clear that the calculation of the Greek caudillo is to play the game of responsibility while hoping to collect disillusioned voters from PASOK and the Right. More than ever, anti-fascist vigilance is necessary in Greece...

One of the factors blocking the situation, especially for future mobilizations, is a Greek particularity, an object of derision for some people, but in fact an element that is at the same time a factor of combativeness

and a brake on the hopes of victorious mobilizations: the KKE is more than ever playing this double role, and that is rather tragic when you look at the mess that it results in. In fact, the KKE, directly or through its trade-union current PAME, succeeds in organizing big mobilizations: on May 15, it even made a successful national mobilization of between 20 and 30,000 activists, including quite a lot of young people - a party that had "lost" all its youth at the beginning of the 1990s, after its participation in the government of national union with the Right. Today, the tone is set resolutely on the left, with anti-capitalist accents which would be good news if they were not accompanied by a sectarianism from another age, but also by a political analysis of rare poverty, and thus by the absence of a political perspective, an absence which will soon or later make its sympathisers want to stay at home: in reality, the only reason to mobilize is to reinforce the KKE to the point where it can constitute the popular government (around itself!). When you look at this from outside Greece, it might leave you dumbfounded, but here, such ineptitudes in fact render a service to the system that KKE leader Aleka Papariga claims to be fighting. Her discourse is an invaluable object for archaeologists: all the Stalinist stereotypes are to be found there. So, the government conducts its campaign and secret services mount provocations against the KKE (this is to contradict the fact that militants of PAME clashed with the police in front of the Parliament on May 5!); the workers are in a bad situation because they did not pay sufficient attention to the timely warnings that the Party made on what Maastricht meant (the people is wrong, the party is always right!). The governmental formula is "an anti-monopolist popular alliance for people's power" ... Obviously, the regroupments and parties to the left of PASOK are only traps for the unwary, and the KKE never misses an occasion to remind people that Synaspismos (left reformist, the core of the Syriza regroupment) voted for the treaty of Maastricht (which is, besides, true!), but avoids pointing out its own participation in a government around the Right! And beyond the speeches, the current radical line of the KKE

quickly shows its limits: although she quite correctly refused to go to a meeting of national unity, of party leaders around the president of the Republic, Papariga eagerly went to meet Samaras, to discuss with the leader of the Right, who was only too happy for this lucky break, since he was able in this way to show a kind of coalition of those who had refused to vote for the measures!

Concerning the KKE, the question is of course to know what oppositions exist in the face of this blindly sectarian line. There is no answer, except signs from time to time: thus, cadres of the KNE (the youth wing of the KKE) were recently expelled, which could explain a drop in the KKE's vote in the student elections. In any event, the objective is more than ever to propose unity of action to the KKE, and to make these proposals known to its militants. It seems difficult to imagine in the present context a victorious mobilization against PASOK's policies without the unitary participation of the KKE current.

It is indisputable that the anti-liberal and anti-capitalist Left is playing a big role in the mobilizations that are taking place, whether in Syriza or in the anti-capitalist regroupment Antarsya. The organization of the local trade union structures that we mentioned above depends in general on the active presence of these currents, and their contingents in the recent demonstrations were very sizeable. In the same way, coming from certain currents of Syriza or Antarsya, the proposal for unitary committees against the measures goes in the direction of an "all together" movement which could be prepared in the workplaces, in the neighbourhoods, in the university. But beyond these very important initiatives (even though the unitary committees remain far from numerous today), there begin the deficiencies in terms of credible political perspectives, and we must underline them quickly here. As far as Syriza is concerned, the problem is that there is a de facto splintering: even though Syriza appears as a bloc in the demonstrations, the tensions are today very sharp between the majority of Synaspismos and various revolutionary groups. And within Synaspismos, other tensions exist

between the “renovator” current, accused by the revolutionary groups of being responsible for everything that goes wrong in Syriza, and the majority current, today itself divided. All that of course makes the political message very confused, and it is difficult to know what the line is, between the leader, Tsipras, who started by protesting against the lack of measures for development in the PASOK plan, then asked for the organization of a referendum on the measures (at the moment when the mobilization was taking place in the streets!), and the former spokesperson Alavanos, who has been demanding for at least two months the resignation of the government. The participation of Alavanos in a recent meeting of Tsipras was refused, and the regroupment that he organized with forces like DEA, KOE and KEDA is organizing a meeting this week in Athens. Officially, everyone wants to continue Syriza... but by refounding it. While we wait for the congress of Synaspismos, which can be a decisive factor [2], the political message of Syriza remains confused, and Alexis Tsipras did exactly like Papariga: he refused to go to the meeting of the party leaders, but got involved in the political manoeuvre of Samaras, who explained, straight-faced, that of course they were not in agreement, but that the situation required a dialogue between the Right and the Left. Very simply, the newspaper Eleftherotypia (centre-left) explained

that Samaras had scored a political point by showing that he had succeeded in doing what PASOK could not do: discuss with the Left!

So we can see that in the present context the responsibilities of the Antarsya regroupment are enormous, and the tasks are innumerable. What is sure is that for this regroupment, founded in particular by the two biggest organizations of the revolutionary left and coming from a history where left organizations did not often act together, the past two years show the progress that has been made, with all due respect to those who swear only by electoral results. First of all in the serious character of the analyses: this week again, Panayotis Mavroeidis, a leader of NAR and a cadre of Antarsya, analyzed in a platform the crisis of the left as a crisis of strategy, stressing that unity of action on the left is obviously the minimum that has to be attained. For anyone who knows the long Greek history of self-proclaimed parties which act alone, this development is fundamental, and Antarsya is very actively involved in unitary frameworks, in particular with Syriza or with forces from Syriza. Of course, the analysis of the crisis is a subject of debate within Antarsya, as is the question, actively debated, of whether or not to leave the European Union, and if so how. But what plays an increasingly important role, and represents decisive progress, is that, over and above its ability to mobilize,

which meant that for example on May 1, Antarsya had the biggest contingent in the demonstration, there is the conception of Antarsya as an instrument which must serve to address all the other left forces, not excluding, moreover, the KKE, in order to move forward on the question which weighs heavily today on the mobilizations: it is becoming obvious for thousands of workers that the only way to defeat the government’s “plan of stability and development” is to overthrow capitalism, there are no half-measures possible. Consequently, the questions which arise are both enormous and concrete: beyond the correct slogans on the nationalization of the banks, the banning of sackings, wage increases and reduction of working hours..., what government can we form tomorrow to concretize such tasks? In the framework of extending mobilizations and precisely winning these demands, in fact such questions start to arise very concretely, and it is also essential to conduct this discussion in order to avoid the discouragement which could otherwise develop very quickly. But such a discussion now has to be conducted on a European level; it goes without saying that at the moment when the Greek model of anti-working class measures is being extended to other countries of Europe, the anti-capitalist response cannot but have at least a European dimension!

Athens, May 24, 2010

For a broader solidarity against political repression in Morocco

28 June 2010, by Revolutionary Students Trend

This Charter is supported by another document that began to work out the beginning of school year 2009-2010. It is the “emergency plan”. The aim of this attack, similar to what is happening in many countries subject to the logic of the neoliberal World Bank, is to hit at the rest of the mass,

free, knowledge, and public character of the Moroccan University, and to consolidate the bases of a selective and elite university under the grip of the capital and subject to its logic and requirements.

In response to this attack, the

students’ movement within its organization, the National Union of Students of Morocco (NUSM), has organised heroic struggles in which the currents of the revolutionary left have played a leading role in recent years, and which have known a brutal suppression by the Moroccan regime.

Thus, over the last two years, dozens of militants have been arrested and prosecuted in Fez, Taza, Meknes, Oujda, Tangier, Marrakech, and Agadir.

University of Agadir in 2010: The dynamic of mass and democratic struggle

The University of Agadir, this year, has known continued struggles under the slogan: "All against the emergency plan"; against the conditions of schooling and living of students: the absence of transport, delayed payment of scholarships, the militarization of the campus and the absence of a restaurant for the residents, a lack of teachers, overcrowding, the catastrophic results of examinations with no credibility, the folly in the management, etc. It is a catastrophic situation condemned even by the trade union of the university professors, which fought a two-day strike declaring its solidarity with the students. Struggles reached its mass facets at the university in February and March to demand the abolition of certain items unfair to students during examinations: the right of everyone to pass the "reminded" session, calculating the catch-all point obtained during this session, etc. These struggles, which took place in all the faculties of the university, have been characterized by a broad public participation based on a democratic self-government organization of the struggle to ensure real participation of students in the report and management. They are also defined by a significant participation of the female students - struggles were led by two female students in the Faculties of Law and Science. Thanks to their steadfastness, the students were able to achieve an important part of their demands; particularly in the faculty of Law.

This dynamic, which aroused the hatred of administration and police

and made them turn the vicinity of the university to a permanent camp of the various overt and covert forces of repression, restored confidence to the feasibility of the struggle in the ranks of students and credibility to the militants of the NUSM in university.

Thus; immediately after the cessation of study in the Faculty of Law, the administration announced the conduct of examinations on June 2nd, 2010, as if in retaliation against the students. In order to impose the delay of the exams to June 14th so that they can prepare well, the students struggled for more than ten days in late May. This imposed on the administration to delay them to June 7th; which the students saw to be not enough and decided on May 22nd to boycott exams of June 7th if the subjective condition was available; that is to say, if the majority of the students were convinced. They then organized a march that went through the surroundings of the university to protest against the police siege, which grew into a confrontation with stones with the forces of oppression. The mobilization and surveys to boycott the exams continued for a week.

University of Agadir, June 2010: Continued struggle, siege and arrests

In the morning of June 7th; under an exceptional police siege, students held a mass circle where they decided, in a democratic way, to implement the decision to boycott the exams and left the faculty all at once at 10:00 a.m. This is contrary to the claims of the police, administration and their ilk pretending that the boycott was imposed by some "disruptive" students by force.

In the afternoon; while the students were about to open a panel discussion to continue the decision of boycott, the forces of police repression stormed the campus at the request of the Dean of the Faculty. They were confronted

by the students who organised a mass battle which continued till half past seven at night in the neighbourhoods surrounding the faculty. In front of the eyes and ears of administration staff and teachers, the forces of repression booked a very small number of students in the faculty's halls and terraces and obliged them to pass the exams under threats, insults and beatings and against their wish. During these four hours, more than 30 students were arrested before releasing them around midnight and retaining five of them; they are Souad Alhouti, Amine Bassir, Hicham Laaraibi, Abdel-Fattah Ait Belkacem, and Mohamed Mejdouf. The police also brutally stormed the Faculty of Arts which led to the drop of the student Fatima Maggie from the second floor, she suffered from serious fractures.

In this atmosphere of oppression and police siege, the repression foiled the Battle of the boycott by separating the forefront from the masses of students. The acts of chasing students, storming their rooms and arresting them were continued: the arrest of Kamal Boutbagha in the Faculty of Law, Muhammad Chewis, Hassan Ben Zwin (unemployed) and Mbarek Lkadi (a primary school teacher continuing his studies in the Faculty of Law), and Abdel-Aziz Ahdib in the morning of June 8th in front of the Court of Appeal.

The ten detainees have been provided to the justice of the rich on Thursday, June 10th, in a file full of heavy condemnations: "humiliation and violence against public officials and the use of violence against them, resisting the staff of public authority by means of violence and rebellion, damage to the possessions of others, and faultfinding things intended for the public benefit intentionally". Their court ruled that each of Kamal Boutbagha, Lehen Ben Zwin, Muhammad Chwis, and Abdel-Aziz Ahdib are going to be observed in the case of a temporary release; while Souad and others are arrested in prison of Inezgane the ill. The trial was postponed to 14th and 21st June, 2010.

However, both Mohammed Chwis and Abdel-Aziz Ahdib were not released

because they are prosecuted also in another file related to the violent events that took place during March and April, 2010 between "the Democratic Basic Direction - Agadir" and "the Amazigh Cultural Movement - Agadir". It has been a constant confrontation, since 2003, that has resulted many detainees and disabled as well as the assassination of two of the DBDs in 2007: Elhasnawi and Assassawi.

The list of the arrested students in Agadir, due to the Battle of the exams' boycotting and protection of the campus, is expected to rise by virtue of that complaint / slander that was provided by the Dean of the Faculty of Law to the police. It included an explicit demand to arrest ten students. Four of them were arrested on June 7th and 8th, while the police is still chasing militants to arrest the others. Indeed, on June 14th, both Zahira Boulmsiteri and Saadia Edhaim were arrested in the Campus and will be brought to trial in the case of temporary release on Wednesday, June 16th, 2010. The number of the prosecuted, so far, is three female students and nine male students.

Morocco, June 2010: One month of the bullet of the "New Testament"

The Moroccan regime is showing an increasing hatred towards the resistance of the students at all universities of Morocco. On June 14th, 2010 after the storming of the University of Marrakech, the police arrested Younes Essalmi and Mohammed Elaarabi Jeddi before they were released temporarily. On June 12th, the militant Abdel- Ellah Alilbet was released at the University of Tangier after five months in detention, while there are still two militant students of Marrakech and four of Oujda in jail in reaction to their participation in the struggles of the students in, respectively, 2008 and 2010.

The political situation in its whole is

going to further tightening the grip of repression after a bit of softening that witnessed the transition of power to Mohammed VI. All that is happening with the blessing of the parties of the king of all parties, including "the liberal opposition" parties which moved all to the interface site tools to implement the extreme liberal policy established by the kingdom under the guidance of the international financial institutions. Such a policy is passed also through the drag of the trade union leaders to the corridors of "social peace" and the maze of "social dialogue" destroying the gains and morale, and seeking to destroy all forms of the embryonic and unrestrained popular and labour resistance. Only during the month of June, 13 phosphate workers in Khribgua were prosecuted and sentenced to four months in prison, five unemployed militants and trade unionists were arrested; two of them in Figuig will be prosecuted in the case of release on June 29th, and bloody suppression of the masses of the people of Akley in Missouri; arresting and prosecuting 11 citizens struggling to get back the lands wrested from them.

For closer cooperation between those unified by struggle against the regime of oppression and tyranny

The struggles taking place in the Moroccan University, in spite of the heroism shown by the students, are still very modest due to their local, partial and fragmented nature. This is also as a result of breaking the devices of the Moroccan students' union the National Union of Students of Morocco (NUSM) by the police repression in the eighties, the erosion of the democratic traditions in the ranks of the students' movement, and the reverse of the common field work traditions nationally and even sometimes locally between the

NUSM's components. But it came to a dangerous level, which only delights the police and those with no insight, by the resolving the political differences via using sharp instruments.

However, the students' movement has taken an important step during this year to overcome this break with the traditions of democracy and militancy of the NUSM when four NUSM trends met at a national and public symposium on March 23rd in Marrakech to discuss issues of factional violence, political arrests and the prospects for the consolidation of students' resistance. A progressive position on the problem of violence is resulted from that meeting. It is the act of no initiation of violence against any students' left trend and the formation of a national follow-up committee. It is a qualitative step that should be fortified and moved forward by seeking to extend its range to include the other militant left currents; whether those who did not participate in the seminar or those that have taken so far an isolationist and even a hostile position that is unjustified from the militant standpoint that truly make the benefits of the students' movement above all.

This dynamic, at the level of the organization of the national students' left debate and that of combative struggle of students, is one of the important factors behind this frenetic campaign against the National Union of Students of Morocco in Agadir, Marrakech, and the other universities of Morocco.

The regime of oppression, tyranny and subordination works on the dumping of this dynamic in a sea of bloodshed, repression and arrests. The responsibility of the militant NUSM trends is to make of this situation a lever to strengthen the bridges of the responsible and comrade debate with no courtesy or Prejudice, to radicalize the national struggle of the students on democratic and combative bases that ensure the democratic right for the students in governance and report, and to seek the widest possible integration of this dynamic with the labour and popular struggles; especially on the floor of defence of

trade-union and political freedoms and the right for education, employment and organization. This dynamic also places a strong burden on the shoulders of the forces of struggle in Morocco and abroad. It is the responsibility of organizing a wider campaign of solidarity, nationally and internationally, with all the victims of political repression in Morocco and the detainees of the students' movement in Oujda, Marrakech and Agadir in the front.

Let our motto be:

Lift your oppression against the masses of students in Agadir and Marrakech!

Release all the political detainees and those being prosecuted!

Victory for the struggles of the Moroccan common people and their children!

Victory for the struggles of the students' movement!

Freedom for all the political detainees and those being prosecuted in Khribgua, Figuig, Missouri, Oujda, Marrakech, and Agadir!

June 16th, 2010

to express your solidarity:

webmaster@almounadil-a.info

almounadila@gmail.com]

mounadil_new@yahoo.fr

to sign the [petition](#)

Launch of an Appeal against Repression in Thailand

21 June 2010, by Danielle Sabai, Pierre Rousset

News from Thailand is alarming: hundreds of people detained for violations of the Emergency Decree, including children; injured people are chained to their hospital bed, several assassinations of local leaders of the Red Shirts have taken place. The country is moving deeper into an authoritarian and military regime. The elite are even considering postponing the elections for six years, thus giving the Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva the possibility of leading the country for ten years against the will of the majority of Thai citizens.

Thai society is deeply unequal in every respect. The red shirts have expressed loud and clear their determination to fight the injustices they suffer: they express a class movement as well as one defending regional diversity, against the establishment in Bangkok.

The Red Shirts movement is not without divisions and problems. Some support the return of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, a corrupt politician. But overwhelmingly, the movement expresses the revolt of the downtrodden of society whose demands are democracy and social justice.

By demonstrating in the streets of Bangkok, the Red Shirts have only been exercising a basic right: the right to express one's political views and demands. Abhisit Vejjajiva bears full responsibility for the repression and the casualties because, rather than holding meaningful negotiations, he gambled, in vain, on the disintegration of the movement. He then used the repressive legal arsenal (accusations of conspiracy against the monarchy and of terrorism), and finally organized a bloodbath.

This appeal has two simple aims: kick-starting solidarity on the international level, and calling for the Thai regime to stop the repression against the Red Shirts, and to respect fundamental freedoms.

More than a hundred university lecturers, researchers, writers, journalists, trade union and political activists, and elected representatives from all regions of the world have already signed the appeal. New signatures are expected.

Against Repression in Thailand

For more than two months, the Red Shirts have mobilised with decisiveness and purpose in the streets of Bangkok to support their demands of democracy and social justice.

The government led by Abhisit Vejjajiva chose to respond to these demands with violence and repression. It committed a serious violation against human rights when it authorised the use of military hardware to dissolve the demonstrations. The result was extremely serious: there were at least 89 dead and nearly 2000 wounded.

Today, democratic rights are not respected: there are 99 arrest warrants against opponents. The places where most of the detainees are held are kept secret. The government has imposed censorship on the alternative media. The penalties incurred are especially severe: from 3 to 15 years for "lese-

majesty" to the death penalty for "terrorism".

The Red Shirts are being treated by the government as if they were "terrorists". It is a complex movement, but its members are mainly ordinary poor people whose most elementary political rights –like the respect due to the result of an election– have been ignored.

The Thai government can continue to repress the Thai people freely, because its constant violations against human rights have not been confronted by international solidarity and condemnation. We make a call to all progressive and democratic organizations to demand the end of the repression and the respect of fundamental rights in Thailand; to start an international campaign to obtain the freedom of political prisoners and the end of intimidation and incultation of the Red Shirts.

We demand from the Thai government that it raises the State of Urgency and immediately re-establishes democratic freedoms in the country; that it ends the repression against the Red Shirts and that all prisoners are freed without any delay.

First signatories:

1. Samir ABI, General Secretary, Attac (Togo)
2. Gilbert ACHCAR, SOAS, Professor of the University of London (UK)
3. Christophe AGUITON, Researcher (France)
4. Osman AKINHAY, Writer and editor of Mesele Revue (Turkey)
5. Greg ALBO, Professor at the York University, Toronto (Canada)
6. Josep Maria ANTENTAS, Professor of sociology, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Catalonia)
7. Daniel ANTONINI, International Secretary of PRCF (France)
8. Zely ARIANE, Spokesperson of KPRM-PRD (Indonesia)
9. Salvador LOPEZ ARNAL, Writer and Professor-tutor of Mathematics ,

UNED (Spain)

10. AU Loongyu, Editorial board member of China Labor Net (Hong Kong)

11. Walter BAIER, Coordinator of the European network Transform ! Editor of the magazine Transform !, Vienne (Austria)

12. Jean BATOU, Professor at the University of Lausanne (Switzerland)

13. Pierre BEAUDET, Professor at the University of Ottawa (Canada)

14. Walden BELLO, Member of the Congress, Akbayan representative (Philippines)

15. Paul BENEDEK, Thai Red Australia (Australia)

16. Olivier BESANCENOT, Spokesperson of NPA (France)

17. Hugo BLANCO, Director of «Lucha Indígena», (Peru)

18. Saumen BOSE, Radical Socialist (India)

19. Tapan BOSE, Radical Socialist (India)

20. Peter Boyle, National Convener, Socialist Alliance (Australia)

21. Alex Callinicos, Professor, chair of European Studies at King's College London (UK)

22. Porferia CARPINA, KASAMMAKA (Philippines)

23. Mabel CARUMBA, Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement (Philippines)

24. Kunal CHATTOPADHYAY, Professor of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Radical Socialist (India)

25. Kamal Mitra CHENOY, Chair, Centre for Comparative Politics & Political Theory, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India)

26. Ashok CHOUDHARY, National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (India)

27. Annick COUPÉ, Spokesperson of Union Syndicale Solidaires (France)

28. Cyc CUABO, ERDAC, Inc. (Philippines)

29. Lucile DAUMAS, Attac (Morocco)

30. Sushovan DHAR, Radical Socialist (India)

31. Jean-Michel DOLIVO, Lawyer and MP, Lausanne (Switzerland)

32. Jacques FATH, international head, PCF (France)

33. Paulina FERNANDEZ CHRISTLIEB, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Mexico)

34. Carlos FERNANDEZ LIRIA, Professor of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain)

35. Mano GANESAN, Convener of Civil Monitoring Commission (Sri Lanka)

36. George GASTAUD, Philosopher, National Secretary of PRCF (France)

37. Franck GAUDICHAUD - University of Grenoble (France)

38. Elisabeth GAUTHIER, Managing Director of Espaces Marx, co-Editor of the European revue Transform ! (France)

39. P.T. GEORGE, Intercultural Resources, Delhi (India)

40. Susan GEORGE, Writer (France)

41. Jocelyne HALLER, Member of the Constitutional Assembly of Geneva county (Switzerland)

42. Adolfo GILLY, Historian, Professor at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Mexico)

43. Sam GINDIN, Packer Visitor in Social Justice, York University (Canada)

44. Rufino GONZAGA, Ranao Tri-People Movement for Genuine Peace and Development (Philippines)

45. Karl GRÄNBERG, Trade-Union Secretary, SSP, Geneva (Switzerland)

46. Sébastien GUEX, Professor at the

- University of Lausanne (Switzerland)
47. Priyani GUNARATNA, Rural Services of SLBC (Sri Lanka)
48. Shubhra GURURANI, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, York University, Toronto (Canada)
49. Jean-Marie HARRIBEY, Economist, Professor at the Université Bordeaux IV (France)
50. Nasir HASHIM, State Assemblyman (Malaysia)
51. Mazher HUSSAIN, COVA (India)
52. Linus JAYATILAKE, President of the United Federation of Labor (Sri Lanka)
53. Andrée JELK-PEILA, President of the Public Service Trade-Union Cartel, Geneva (Switzerland)
54. Dr. JEYAKUMAR, Member of Parliament (Malaysia)
55. Abdul KHALID, Focal Person, CADTM-Pakistan (Pakistan)
56. Alain KRIVINE, Former European MP (France)
57. Hayri KOZANOGLU, Professor at the Istanbul University of Marmara, former President of the A-DP (Turkey)
58. Zbigniew Marcin KOWALEWSKI, Researcher and editor (Poland)
59. Herman KUMARA, National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (Sri Lanka)
60. Kenji KUNITOMI, JCRL (Japan)
61. Max LANE, Asian Studies, University of Sydney (Australia)
62. Bernard LANGLOIS, researcher North/South relations (France)
63. Ronald LARA, IIRE-Manila (Philippines)
64. Cha N. LAVANDER, Mindanao Tri-People Youth Center (Philippines)
65. Doug LORIMER, Editor of Direct Action (Australia)
66. Francisco LOUCA, MP, Bloc de Gauche representative (Portugal)
67. Javier MAESTRO, Professor at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, (Spain)
68. Michael Löwy, Professor, Emerited research director, CNRS (France)
69. Acmad MACATIMBOL, Lanao Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (Philippines)
70. Lisa MACDONALD, International Relations Convener, Socialist Alliance (Australia)
71. Ign MAHENDRA K, Chairperson, Working People Association (PRP) (Indonesia)
72. Claire MARTENOT, member of the Constitutional Assembly of the Geneva county (Switzerland)
73. Soma MARIK, Associate Professor of History, RKSM Vivekananda Vidyabhavan, member, Nari Nirjatan Pratirodh Mancha (Forum Against Women's Oppression, Calcutta) (India)
74. Emre A-NGUN, Assistant Professor of the European University of Lefke, Head of Applied Sciences School (Northern Cyprus)
75. Gustave MASSIAH, Founding member of CEDETIM/IPAM (France)
76. Roberto MONTOYA, Writer, Madrid (Spain)
77. Braulio MORO, Journalist, Radio France Internationale, Latin America Section (France)
78. Aldjia MOULAË , ACOR SOS Racisme (Switzerland)
79. P.K. MURTHY, Citu (India)
80. Saïd NAJHI, Attac (Marocco)
81. Alessandro PELIZZARI, Trade-union secretary, Unia, Geneva (Switzerland)
82. William A. PELZ, Doctor at the Institute of Working Class History, Chicago (USA)
83. John PERCY, RSP National Secretary (Australia)
84. Manuel PEREZ ROCHA, Associate Fellow, Global Economy Project. Institut for Policy Studies, Washington (USA)
85. Philippe PIGNARRE, Editor (France)
86. Tommy ARDIAN PRATAMA, Institute for Crisis and Alternative Development Strategy (Indonesia)
87. Mimoun RAHMANI, Economist, ATTAC and CADTM Maroc (Morocco)
88. Pierre ROUSSET, Europe solidaire sans frontières (France)
89. Danielle SABAI, Journalist (France)
90. Enis Riza SAKIZLI, Film Director (Turkey)
91. Ma. Gittel SAQUILABON, Sumpay Mindanao (Philippines)
92. Mehmet SOGANCI, President of the Chamber of Engineers and Architects (Turkey)
93. Tanie SUANO, CONZARRD (Philippines)
94. Aparna SUNDAR, Assistant Professor, Department of Politics and Public Administration, Ryerson University, Toronto (Canada)
95. Hakan TAHMEZ, Spokesperson of the Peace Assembly (Turkey)
96. Farooq TARIQ, Spokesperson of the LPP (Pakistan)
97. Alper TAS, President of A-DP (Turkey)
98. Eric TOUSSAINT, CADTM (Belgium)
99. Terry TOWNSEND, Editor, Links International Journal of Socialist Renewal (Australia)
100. Enzo TRAVERSO, Assistant Professor at the University of Picardie (France)
101. Charles-André UDRY, Editor (Switzerland)
102. Ahmet AÖMIT, Writer (Turkey)
103. Murat UYURKULAK, Writer (Turkey)
104. Achin VANAİK, Professor of International Relations and Global

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105. Pierre VANEK, Secretary of solidarités and former MP of the Federal Parliament (Switzerland)
106. Vikramabahu KARUNARATNE, University of Peradeniya (Sri Lanka)
107. Esther VIVAS, member of the Centro de Estudios sobre Movimientos Sociales de la Universidad Pompeu Fabra (Catalonia)
108. Peter WATERMAN, Reinventing Labour (Netherlands)
- NEW signatures:
109. Yigit BENER, Writer, (Turkey)
110. Wilfred DCOSTA, Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF) (India)
111. Sonny MELENCIO, Chairperson Partido Lakas ng Masa, (Party of the Laboring Masses) (Philippines)
112. Reihana MOHIDEEN, Transform Asia (Philippines)
113. Kevin HEWISON, Director, Carolina Asia Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA)
114. Molo ROMOLO, lawyer, Genève (Switzerland)
115. Charles BARBEY, physicist, Genève (Switzerland)
- 116 Nicola CLANFERONI, researcher, Genève (Switzerland)
117. Béatrice BARBEY, Public Services Trade-Union (SSP), Genève (Switzerland)
118. Alain GONTHIER, District Counsellor, Vevey (Switzerland)
119. Matteo PRONZINI, national representative of UNIA trade-union, Bellinzona (Switzerland)
120. Dr. Peter STRECKEISEN, sociologist, University of Bâle, Bâle (Switzerland)
121. Sarah SCHILLIGER, senior lecturer University of Bâle, Bâle (Switzerland)
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123. Krauer ROLF, UNIA trade-union, Zurich (Switzerland)
124. Marie-Christine BERNA, SSP trade-union, Lausanne (Switzerland)
125. Zuppinger URS, urbaniste, Lausanne (Switzerland)
126. David BROWN, Wanneroo, Western (Australia)
127. Alain CASTAN, NPA (France)
128. Carlos Sardiña Galache, Journalist (Spain)
129. Adam Whiteley, artist, (formally Bangkok) New York (USA)
130. Giles Ji Ungpakorn (U.K.)
131. Monique Crinon Cedetim/Ipam (France)
132. Belle Kukreja, Education management and training, Bangkok (Thailand)
133. Anan Sirisombattwattana (USA)
134. Christian Mahieux, spokesperson, Union syndicale Solidaires (France)
135. Piyabut Burikham, lecturer at Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)
136. Anourack Phipaksa (Germany)
137. Maisuwan Nichakun, Architect (Singapore)
138. Than Than May, researcher, Paris (France)
139. Connie Shaw, Madison, Wisconsin (USA)
140. Jean-François Marquis, trade-unionist SSP, Lausanne (Switzerland)
141. Geneviève De Rham, Prof. HES, Lausanne (Switzerland)
142. Bernard Bovay, actuaire ASA, Lausanne (Switzerland)
143. Jirat Satjipanon, PHD Student (South Korea)
144. Tanni Renmark, Photographer & Student (Sweden)
145. Phised Naphachaithep, Thai Red Australia Group for Democracy (Australia)
146. Numchai Sukumvanich, Engineer, Khon Thai (U.S.A)
147. Peach Sukumvanich, Airport Passenger Service Representative, Khon Thai (U.S.A)
148. Dr Paniti Sukumvanich, Doctor and Professor in Medicine, Khon Thai (U.S.A)
149. Dr. Siam Sukumvanich, Doctor in Medicine, Khon Thai (U.S.A)
150. Chamai Chatchvasvimol, Hannover (Germany)
151. Pacharin Sribhud, retired business owner, Bangkok & New York (Thailand-USA)
152. Peter Limqueco, Manila (Philippines)
153. Dr Jim Taylor, Senior Lecturer in Anthropology, The University of Adelaide, South Australia (Australia)
154. Jaruke Tharuk, Sarabury (Thailand)
155. Viriya Loewisetkun, and my family (Thailand)
156. Sean Smith, CAW (Canada)
157. Phongsan Meekunnasombat, Ph.D, Freelance Writer (Thailand)
158. Arnaud Dubus, French journaliste based in Thailand (France-Thailand)
159. Il-bung Choi, Member of All Together (South Korea)
160. Seong-jin Jeong, Professor of Economics, Gyeongsang National University (South Korea)
162. Alexis Bertolino (France)
163. Jean-Michel Hennequin, gardien d'immeuble, Paris (France)
164. Silvia Cattori, journaliste (France)
165. Alvin Lim, University of Hawaii at Manoa (USA)
166. Chatchawal POONPUN, Faculty of Science, Chiang Mai University

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| (Thailand) | Design, Bangkok (Thailand) | 211. Vassana Prasitjutrakul (Thailand) |
| 167. Yongyos Jariya MD. Retired officer from Government hospital (Thailand) | 189. Laurence BEAUPAIN, Le Fayet (France) | 212. Stef Nootz, Stef, bloggeur Agde, (France) |
| 168. I , Somphong , Banker, Lao PDR (Laos) | 190. Jacques de Rostolan, retired, 41500 MER (France) | 213. Tanaporn Tornros (Sweden) |
| 169. Yaoline Butang, Assistante, Bangkok (Thaïlande) | 191. David POTENT - Artiste numérique (France) | 214. Anan Misterreal (Thailand) |
| 170. Henri Descomptes, retraité, Bangkok (Thaïlande) | 192. Léopold Goossens, retired, Khon Kaen (Thailand) | 215. Davor Colic, Barcelona (Spain) |
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| 172. Sevim Hazine, lawyer, Bern (Switzerland) | 194. Mohamed Achbani, Intérimaire, Angers (France) | 217. Sarinthip Homthong (Thailand) |
| 173. Kemal Pekoz, Editor, Istanbul (Turkey) | 195. Shawn Bosin, IT Director, Reno NV (USA) | 218. Rittee Homthong (Thailand) |
| 174. Dr Sekan Saruhan, Diyarbakir (Turkey) | 196. Klaus Hartmann, Vice President of World Union of Freethinkers, Offenbach (Germany) | 219. Mr. Chayathorn Buasuwan (Thailand) |
| 175. Prof Narmin Muhamed Amin, Erbil (Irak) | 197. Christine M ZABALA (France) | 220. Mr. Promma Phumpan, Public Relations, The Textile and Leather Worker's Federation of Thailand (TWFT) (Thailand) |
| 176. Dr Gulen Iletmis, Diyarbakir (Turkey) | 198. Mrs. Anchana SPECK-KONGPATANAYUEN, Ossingen (Switzerland) | 221. Nuanvirinth Udomwathavee (Thailand) |
| 177. Fadil Ozcelik, Journalist, Bonn (Germany) | 199. Pascal Engelmajer, retired, Hua Hin (Thailand) | 222. SomPOCH Kanlux (Thailand) |
| 178. Hem-i Tazi Engineer, Ottawa (Canada) | 200. Lyliane Rivera, Cannes (France) | 223. Monson Ondang, medical student (Thailand) |
| 179. Jean-Robert VELVETH, web freelancer, NPA (France) | 201. Jacques de Rostolan, retired, 41500 MER (France) | 224. Ms Waraporn Thamcharoen employee, Bangkok (Thailand) |
| 180. Hap Sendelbach, gesellschafter im ruhestand, Bangkok 10120 (Thailand) | 202. Herbert Docena, graduate student, UC Berkeley (Philippines-USA) | 225. Benjamin, New Mexico (U.S.A) |
| 181. Sakol Srihakam, Lampang (Thailand) | 203. Christine Swayne, Tinahely, Co. Wicklow (Ireland) | 226. John Crocker (Australia) |
| 182. Sujeera Pengya (Thailand) | 204. Pongsak Phusitsakul M.D., General Surgeon (Thailand) | 227. Lukkana Onsalung (UK) |
| 183. Dominic Armand Meyer, Citizen, Zurich (Switzerland) | 205. Mr. Chiravat Thienngern, Employee, Bangkok (Thailand) | 228. Albert Feldewert (Germany) |
| 184. Diane Largs (UK) | 206. Choomphol Srisura (Thailand) | 229. Nathaniel Thomas, Student, Toronto (Canada) |
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Cochabamba Summit of the Peoples: Some critical comments on the Final Declaration

19 June 2010, by **Daniel Tanuro, Sandra Invernizzi**

The Final Declaration of the Summit [3], which synthesizes this work, constitutes an important advance on the road of a convergence of social and environmental struggles from an anti-productivist and internationalist point of view. As ecosocialist militants, we can only express our satisfaction. At the same time, we think it is necessary to begin a fraternal debate on some lacunae in the document, which ought to be surmounted in the future, on the occasion of a future meeting of this type.

Following the declarations of Evo Morales and Hugo Chavez at the United Nations Summit, in December in Copenhagen, the Final Declaration of the conference clearly points to the capitalist origin of the deregulation of the climate that is taking place. The document denounces governments which discuss climate change as a simple question of temperature, as if the problem could be settled without calling into question the socio-economic system responsible for it. It underlines the complete incompatibility between a model based on the logic of competition, therefore of unlimited growth, on the one hand, and on the other the pressing need to respect the limits of the ecosystems and their rhythms: "the capitalist system has imposed on us a logic of competition, (...) and of unlimited growth. This mode of production and consumption seeks profit without limits, by separating human beings from nature, by establishing a logic of domination over nature, by converting everything into commodities: water, land, the human genome, ancestral cultures, biodiversity, justice, ethics, the rights of the people, death and life themselves".

After having stigmatized the

transformation of natural resources and human beings into commodities, the declaration denounces imperialist colonization, then concludes logically that it would be "irresponsible to leave in the hands of the market the care (cuidado) and protection of humankind and of our Mother Earth". This strategic positioning is then translated into a series of concrete demands which link the ecological and the social: against the market in carbon, the REDD mechanism [4] (+ and ++), biofuels, GMOs, intellectual property laws on living organisms, Free Trade Treaties; for a world fund for adaptation and funds for clean technologies, for water to be recognized as a fundamental human right, for the respect of the rights of indigenous people, for support for peasant agriculture,...

Uncovering the cynicism of governments which do not envisage doing anything, while 100 million people could become "climatic refugees" in the next decades, the document demands the end of the restrictive and repressive immigration policies of Western countries, and demands that the funds assigned to military budgets be invested in the protection of the climate. It also denounces the flexible mechanisms which, under cover of technology transfers, actually aim at allowing the big companies of the North to continue to pollute, while making superprofits on the market in carbon. Faced with this new form of colonial exploitation, the declaration affirms that "knowledge is universal and can in no case be an object of private property and private use". Consequently it argues for the sharing of technologies and their development in the service of "living well".

Lastly, the document proposes concretely the installation of a

sovereign international legal framework, equitably run by the populations of the world, whose goal would be to put an end to aberrations concerning the overexploitation of resources, environmental irresponsibility and inhuman treatment of migrant populations.

Although this anti-capitalist position is remarkable, we must however deplore certain lacunae. The most striking point is that the oil, gas and coal oligarchies, as well as the big multinationals of the energy sector, are not accused of anything, nor even mentioned, whereas their responsibility for climate change is overwhelming. The document goes into detail on the harmful role of agribusiness in the degradation of the climate, but the word "oil" appears only once in the declaration, and even then only within the framework of the demand for non-exploitation of the deposits located in forest zones, in the name of the protection of the forests and the rights of indigenous people (which is a correct and legitimate but completely insufficient demand). The words "coal" and "natural gas" are simply not mentioned. The expression "renewable energies" is also absent. Moreover, the document contains neither rejection of nuclear power nor advice to be prudent about the possible risks of geological storage of CO₂... Putting all that together, we cannot avoid having the impression that the Declaration overlooks the struggle against the capitalist energy lobbies and the sectors linked to it (cars, petrochemicals, shipbuilding, the aeronautics industry, transport,...), whereas this is obviously the key question in the framework of an anti-capitalist strategy of stabilization of the climate.

We can also see the astonishing contrast between this absence and the

radical nature of the objective of reduction in greenhouse gases that is advocated by the Declaration. It proposes, without touching on the question of the choice of energy resources, to commit itself to a reduction on a much greater scale than the most radical of the scenarios of the IPCC: 300 CO₂ equivalents ppm, not to exceed 1°C of rise in temperature compared to the preindustrial era.

However, to reach this level of stabilization, it is necessary to follow a series of stages that are impossible to circumvent, which relate mainly to the energy sector and the question of resources:

- the obligation to abandon fossil energy in the short term;
- the need to plan the replacement of fossil energy by renewable energy;
- the need to reduce the overall production and transport of raw materials so that this replacement is possible in practice;
- to do all of the above while bearing in mind the risk of obstructing the satisfaction of the legitimate needs of the three billion human beings who lack the essentials of life;
- to solve this problem in a human way, it is necessary and urgent to make energy common property, so that investments can be carried out according to needs and independently of costs, without social conflict;
- finally, putting energy under social ownership must be coupled with a redistribution of wealth, in order to mobilize the resources that are essential for the energy transition.

Of all that, the Declaration says nothing. However, without these radical measures, it will be quite simply impossible to stabilize the climate on the best possible level, not to mention satisfy the legitimate rights of the South with a development centred on the needs of the populations.

We can understand that the ultra-radical objective of 300 ppm CO₂ equivalent is put forward with the aim of limiting to the maximum the injustice of climate change for the

populations which do not have any responsibility for the damage done. But unfortunately truth requires us to say that the limit of a 1°C rise can no longer be attained: the temperature has increased by 0.8°C since 1850, an additional rise of 0.6°C is "in the pipeline" (delayed only by thermal inertia from the oceans) and every year we add 2 to 3 ppm CO₂ to the atmosphere... In fact, even a rise of 2°C can probably no longer be avoided. The atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases (all such gases) is currently higher than 460 ppm CO₂ equivalent. The most radical of the stabilization scenarios mentioned in the 4th report of the IPCC estimates that there will be a concentration of between 445 and 490 ppm in 2050, corresponding to a rise in temperature of between 2 and 2.4°C and to a rise of the level of the oceans of between 0.4 and 1.4 m (on balance). We could possibly return one day to 300 ppm, and a difference in temperature of 1°C compared to the preindustrial era, as the Declaration demands, but certainly not in the course of this century: that will demand a very long-term effort.

This problem is related to that of the distribution of effort between the developed countries and the rest of the world. As is known, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) urges taking account of the fact that the responsibility for global warming is common but differentiated. The respect of this principle is obviously crucial for the countries of the South, but the contradiction is that the more drastic the objective of stabilization is, the more it is necessary that the developing countries take part in the effort. Thus the most radical scenario of the IPCC implies that the developed countries reduce their emissions by between 80 and 95 per cent between now and 2050 (including a reduction of between 25 and 40 per cent by 2020), which means, roughly speaking, that they have forty years to dispense with fossil fuels and to reduce by half their final consumption of energy. In the name of the precaution principle, it is only logical and right to demand that the North make at least 40 per cent of reduction by 2020 and 95 per cent by 2050, not counting the purchases of carbon

credits. But two remarks need to be made: 1) in this scenario, the effort of the countries of the South is not negligible, since their emissions should differ by between 15 and 30 per cent compared to the scenario of reference; 2) to go further, the countries of the North would need to have recourse to dangerous and socially doubtful technologies such as clean coal, biofuels and nuclear power... without even being certain that that would be enough.

So there is something unrealistic about the Declaration when it demands that the countries of the North not only go further than the most radical scenario of the IPCC, but are furthermore the only ones who have to make an effort. A precise figure is proposed: 50 per cent reduction in the developed capitalist countries between now and 2017. Even though we understand and share the indignation of the Declaration concerning the governments of these countries, we cannot remain silent on the exaggerated nature of this scenario. For it to be practicable, it would in fact be necessary for an anti-productivist socialist revolution to triumph tomorrow, simultaneously in all the developed capitalist countries (and even then!). This possibility is unfortunately not very probable, so that the question is: how do we address the working class of North so that it becomes aware of its crucial responsibility for the rescue of the climate?

To this question, the Declaration does not answer in a convincing way. The reason for this is that it establishes a dichotomy between the exploiting North and the exploited South, and thus fails to grasp the urgency of unifying the struggles of the exploited in the "developed" and "developing" countries. In the case of the South, the way in which the Declaration proposes to concretize the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities tends to ignore the necessary criticism of the productivist development strategies of certain ruling classes, such as those of Brazil, China or ... Venezuela, for example, as a large oil producer. This "third-worldist" manner of tackling the question is likely to provoke a reaction of rejection among the exploited of the

North, who fear for their jobs or have already lost them because of the economic crisis. However, the fight for the climate will not progress if the exploited of all countries do not fight in a unified way.

Rather than launching the not very realistic figure of 50 per cent of reduction by 2017, this unity could be encouraged by pointing out that the countries of the South are already committed to doing almost the utmost of what is necessary to stabilize the climate, while the countries of the North are making less than half of the effort which is assigned to them. According to the IPCC, indeed, the developing countries should take measures so that their emissions in 2020 are between 15 and 30 per cent below "business as usual" projections. However, we see from the 120 climate plans communicated to the secretariat of the UNFCCC in the framework of the Copenhagen agreement that the commitments of the South are equivalent to an average difference of 25 per cent (almost the maximum, therefore). On the other hand, the climate plans communicated by the developed countries scarcely correspond to a reduction in emissions of 15 per cent compared to 1990, whereas the IPCC proposes for them a range of between 25 and 40 per cent. So we are not in a situation where the South needs to continue not to make any effort, as one might think from the Declaration. On the contrary, we are in a situation where the South is making a more than correct share of the effort and where the North is not doing anything, although it is the North that is responsible historically!

This reality provides a solid justification of the need for a drastic reduction in the emissions of the developed capitalist countries. Moreover, it cuts the grass from under the feet of all the demagogues who want to stir up the victims of the crisis in the North by making scapegoats of the peoples of the South.

Some progressive people who supported in general the approach taken by the Summit expressed reservations concerning an approach to climate justice based on the rights of Mother Earth. On reading the Declaration, however, we have to recognise that this conception of Mother Earth as the source of all life and of its right to exist in a balanced way introduces a completely new and interesting approach to "the right to live in a healthy environment". Without necessarily adhering to the spiritual or mystical conception that the indigenous populations of Latin America have of their relationship with Pachamama, one can only note that, over and above the different cultural references, the very clear points that the declaration develops concerning international policies of commoditisation and the plundering of nature make it possible for completely different cultures to come together around a common objective: to push back the logic of profit and exploitation which is endangering the right of people to live in a stable climatic situation. As regards the environmental crisis, it is undeniable that the cosmological vision of indigenous people, based on the idea that matter and energy circulate unceasingly within nature considered

as a whole, constitutes an invaluable contribution, which must be appreciated at its true value.

But, however valid it is, this dynamic vision of the interrelationships between humanity and the rest of nature cannot replace precise demands such as the pure and simple expropriation of the monopolies, initially in the energy sector. Without this expropriation, indeed, the respect of the rhythms and cycles of the biosphere will remain a chimera, for the simple reason that it will not be possible to implement radical and internationally equitable policies of energy and productive transition. From this point of view, the text is in fact at a crossroads between a radical, revolutionary refusal of the capitalist system, on the one hand, and on the other a positioning which is more ambiguous than it seems at first sight, favourable to a "change that has to be made to the present capitalist system".

The Summit of the Peoples, let us repeat, constitutes a remarkable step forward towards a climatic strategy worthy of the name, i.e. an anti-capitalist strategy. All the exploited and oppressed of the world are indebted to the Bolivian people who took the initiative for this event, through their elected president. They are indebted in particular to indigenous people, who play a leading role by showing that another relation between humanity and nature is possible and necessary. It is within the framework of this eminently positive assessment that we wish to contribute to a constructive debate.

What is China's interest in Latin America?

7 June 2010, by **Virginia de la Siega**

If to that we add that it has the world's third-largest defence budget, and the largest national population (1.3 billion people), it quickly becomes evident that China does not have sufficient oil, natural gas, aluminium,

copper, or iron to satisfy its energy and manufacturing needs, and that it necessitates trade partners to sustain its growth.

China is also a key player on the world

political scene. Besides the strategic role it plays in Asian geopolitics and its status as a nuclear nation, it is a member of the U.N. Security Council, the World Trade Organization, the Group of 77 Developing Nations, the

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Group and the Inter-American Development Bank. China has also observer status in the Organization of American States (OAS) and keeps a peacekeeping mission in Haiti.

Moreover, China has started to show the first elements of an imperialist state in the making. It has strengthened its diplomatic presence and economic influence, often referred to as "soft power," in the developing world, specifically in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. It has tried to earn international goodwill through financing infrastructure and natural resource development projects, assisting in the execution of such projects, and backing PRC state enterprise ventures in many developing countries. If in terms of development grants China is a relatively small source of global aid, when its commercial and concessional loans, technical assistance, and state-sponsored or subsidized investments are included, the PRC becomes a major source of economic assistance. [5]

If the role that China has been playing in Africa has attracted much attention, the one played in Latin America has not nearly as much. And yet, bilateral trade between China and Latin America has been expanding significantly since November 2004, when China's president Hu Jintao promised to invest \$100bn in the region.

According to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, Chinese investments have mounted from \$200 million per year in 1975 to \$70.2 billion per year in 2006 and are predicted to reach \$100 billion per year in 2010. [6] Even though China's trade figures in the region amount to much less than those of the United States US (\$560bn) or the EU (\$250bn), the trend is significant. A sign of the importance the PRC gives to the region is the publication of its first ever policy paper on Latin America on 5th November 2008. The trade and investment relationships have been complemented by other contacts, including high-level delegations of political, cultural, trade and military officials, and China's participation in the Latin American institutions above

mentioned.

China's twofold strategy in Latin America

The PRC has defined two strategies for Latin America. The first is economic: to secure China's access to the primary materials that it needs for its economic growth and to find a market for its manufactured goods. The second strategy is mainly political: to obtain diplomatic recognition from those countries still recognizing Taiwan as the government of China.

Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Venezuela and Cuba play a major role in the first strategy.

Brazil, the first economy of the region, is clearly China's most important partner, both as a market for Chinese goods and as a source of raw materials. Brazil supplies some 45 % of all PRC soybean imports and is also the source for other agricultural products, as well as iron and petroleum. The PRC has launched several major collaborative projects with Brazil in these sectors. Brazil's status as a large middle-income country also makes it important as a market for Chinese goods, including electronics, machinery and labour intensive manufactured goods, such as footwear and toys. Brazil possesses a nuclear industry and uranium resources "important to China as it expands its own nuclear industry to meet its energy needs. The Brazilian aerospace industry has created multiple opportunities for collaboration with China, including technology.

The global recession emphasized and magnified the importance of China to Brazil. While Brazilian exports to the United States fell 37.8 % in the first quarter of 2009, exports to the PRC increased by 62.7 %. Consequently, in the first half of 2009, China became Brazil's number one export destination. China has also emerged as a key financier for Brazil's projects to develop the newly discovered

deepwater oil reserves in the Campos and Santos basins. When in May 2009, China and Brazil signed an agreement for a \$10 billion loan from China Development Bank, the president of Petrobras, Sergio Gabrielli, noted, "There isn't someone in the U.S. government that we can sit down with and have the kinds of discussions we're having with the Chinese". [7] According to this agreement, the loan was given in exchange for a guaranteed supply of oil over the next decade. The two nations are also pursuing a range of important joint ventures, including joint production of jets, the China-Brazil Earth Research Satellite (CBERS) program and other space cooperation programs.

As in the case of Brazil, China's economic policy in relation to Argentina, the other large South American economy, is not restricted to buying natural resources. Argentina has collaborated with China in space projects, such as a satellite laser ranging project in Argentina's San Juan University, and has discussed collaboration in designing a new-generation nuclear reactor.

However, China's main interest is in Argentina's mining and oil sectors. In 2003, the CNPC (China National Petroleum Company) acquired a stake in the Argentine oil and gas firm Pluspetrol, which operates fields in northern Argentina and Peru, and there has already been an investment from the Chinese-Angolan company Sonogol. In May 2010, China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) purchased a 50 percent stake in Argentina's Bidas Holdings for \$3.1 billion. There have also been rumoured talks between the Spanish firm Repsol-YPF and CNOOC regarding Repsol-YPF's Argentine holdings -although none of the possibilities raised has yet materialized.

The USA views with suspicion the PRC financial deals to facilitate commerce with Argentina. In March 2009, China signed a \$10.2 billion debt swap with Argentina, [8] in what the American government considers an expanding challenge to the primacy of the dollar as an international reserve currency. [9] It is to be noted that Brazilian President Lula explicitly

argued for working with China to move away from the dollar during his trip to China in May 2009. [10]

The PRC has also been courting Argentina as a purchaser of its own manufactured goods, but here, the relationship has been much more conflictive owing to Argentina's plan to redevelop some industrial sectors.

For two of the three Latin American members of APEC (Asian Pacific Economic Co-operation), Peru and Chile, China has become a crucial trading partner. According to UN figures, in 2007 nearly 40% of Chile's exports went to the Asia-Pacific region, mostly China. For Peru, the figure was 19%. This has moved countries such as Colombia and Costa Rica to want to join APEC.

The PRC has invested in Peru in the oil and gas sectors. It has purchased fishing fleets and fishmeal processing facilities, and has made investments in the mines in Toromochó, Rio Blanco and Marañón. This is not surprising if we consider that 85.2% of Peru's exports to China are copper, fish flour and iron ore.

The PRC has an interest in Bolivia's gas and iron resources. Bolivia has the second largest natural gas reserves in South America, behind only Venezuela. Bolivia's lack of sea access poses a problem, but the introduction of new refining technologies, such as the liquefaction of gas or its use in producing other fuels, increase the feasibility of exporting Bolivian gas to China. And Evo Morales has opened up a number of possibilities for an expanded Chinese presence in that country: a concession has been signed to the Chinese conglomerate Shandong Llueng, granting them the right to develop all or part of the iron deposits at El Mután—one of the largest in the world, if not the largest; and Chinese oil companies have signed agreements to help YPFB to overcome some of the problems with capital and experience which the nationalization of the country's oil brought about.

The investments in Ecuador have also been huge and have had diplomatic effects. China has invested in oilfields, port operations and pipeline assets. In

2003, China bid on concessions to Ecuador's major oil fields. The oil operations by CNPC have caused serious problems with the indigenous populations in Tarapoa and Succumbios particularly because of the lack of interest of Chinese investments in the preservation of the environment. The decision by the Ecuadorian regime of Rafael Correa not to renew the agreement giving the U.S. access to Manta was the necessary first step to invite the Chinese to develop the airport into a hub for trans-pacific flights, even though the PRC never made any explicit suggestions.

China has also set up investments and joint ventures with state-owned petroleum and mineral extractive companies such as PdVSA (Venezuela), YPFB (Bolivia), Petrobras (Brazil), and Cubaniquel (Cuba).

The case of Panama is slightly different due to its strategic position. Panama's primary-product exports or its potential as an import market are minor. However, as owner of the Panama Canal, it has an enormous strategic value for China. The PRC firm Hutchison-Whampoa, with alleged connections to the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), owns property on either end of the Panama Canal, giving it visibility over military and commercial traffic transiting the canal, and potentially serving as a staging area for future operations to control transit through this strategic checkpoint.

China's political strategy affects mainly Central America and the Caribbean. Here, the PRC has mainly focused on using economic and diplomatic levers to secure diplomatic recognition from those countries still recognizing Taiwan as the government of China. Of the remaining 23 countries that still recognise Taiwan, 11 are found in this region. So far, Costa Rica is the only country that changed alliances in 2007, and has been consequently rewarded: Hu Jintao visited Costa Rica in 2008 to inaugurate a new football stadium donated by the PRC.

Who benefits?

The China-Latin America relationship is not win-win for all partners. As of 2005, the trade surpluses that Latin American countries had with China have been reversed. Nowadays, 93% of China's exports to Central and South America consist in manufactured goods (25% of textiles and garments, and 44% machinery and equipment). This is negatively affecting the efforts of the most advanced Latin American economies to develop their own local industry and is beginning to create problems.

Mexico, Latin America's third APEC member has been particularly affected for two main reasons: its close ties with the US economy and the overlap between Chinese and Mexican exports. Of Mexico's 20 main exporting sectors, 12 are in open competition with China. This not only reduces Mexico's possibility to export to China to only about 3% of its total exports, but it also affects its trade relations with the USA. In 2003, China ousted Mexico from its position as the second largest exporter to the USA. With a \$28bn trade deficit with China, it is no wonder that the Mexican government wants to review the trade agreements. An official of the Mexican government complained that "for every \$30 of Chinese goods that Mexico imports, Mexico only exports \$1 of Mexican goods to China."

Something similar is happening with the textile industry from Central America, which is being smothered by Chinese textile exports.

Another example of tension in the relations with the largest Latin American economies is the case of Argentina. Argentina supplies 23 % of all soy product imports of the PRC. China has suspended an order for more than 2 million tons of soya oil, part of which is in transit, because Argentina decided to tax shoes imported from China as a measure to protect its local producers. Argentina's commercial deficit with China in 2009 reached \$1200 million and for the first two months of 2010 it is already \$600 billion. The Argentinean government is not willing to let it increase. China's response has

nothing to envy to those of other imperialist powers when their “commercial rights” are affected by uppity emerging countries.

Basically, Latin American governments find two problems with Chinese investments: 1) their main purpose is to serve China’s development needs by facilitating the export of the raw materials, often imposing the demand that a significant portion of project to obtain and process those materials and services be sourced in China; 2) they have found that the level of Chinese direct foreign investment in the region is not as high as it seems, and that much of the official figures go into offshore tax havens.

What is clear is that Chinese trade with Latin America has fuelled a boom in the region’s commodity-export sectors in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru and Venezuela, at the same time that Latin American manufacturing sectors have been badly damaged by expanded competition from Chinese goods. The situation is even worse for countries and regions with large manufacturing sectors and limited primary-product export sectors such as Mexico and Central America.

China: The new kid in the American’s backyard

Does China want to replace the USA as the ruling power in the region? Nothing’s farther from the truth. So far, the PRC has clearly shown that its main concern is not to undermine the Chinese-US relation, which it considers of the outmost importance from the strategic and economic point of view. At most, the PRC would be willing to occupy the empty spaces that the USA may leave. The strongest Latin American economies have been trying to profit from the power triangle that China’s policy is bringing about with diverse luck.

China’s concern not to cross the USA also affects its relations with Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and above all Cuba. China has signed

military agreements with Venezuela, but this should not be seen as an outright backing of the Bolivarian regime. Even if China has signed an extensive military cooperation with Venezuela, it is doing so reluctantly, forced by its need for oil. To some extent, China is unwillingly filling a gap created by the deterioration of Venezuela’s political and military relationship with the United States. The fact that the Venezuelan government has frustrated the operations of some Chinese corporations such as CNPC shows that the relations between the two countries are not free of contradictions.

The relation with Cuba is slightly different from that with Venezuela. In spite of China’s pragmatic approach to foreign policy, there is still a slight ideological element at play. The economic relations are closer, and the PRC ranks ahead of Spain and second to Venezuela among Cuba’s trade partners. China also played a key role in upgrading the Cuban Air Defence System, and has frequently exchanged high-ranking Chinese military delegations. Cuba also supplies the PRC with strategic materials and agricultural products. In addition to sugar, Cuba also has both offshore petroleum and the world’s largest proven nickel reserves. In January 2005, China’s oil and gas giant Sinopec Corp. signed an agreement with Cuba’s state-run Cubapetroleo (Cupet) to jointly produce oil on the island. However, the relationship is not without problems. A \$500 million joint venture to produce 68,000 tonnes a year of ferro-nickel in eastern Cuba signed between Cubaniquel and the Chinese firm MinMetals was abruptly cancelled, and the concession was given, instead, to Venezuela.

Conclusion

How the relationship between China and Latin America will develop in the future is a matter of speculation, although certain tendencies are already clear.

- The PRC has no interest in damaging his strategic economic and political relation with the USA. The relation with the governments in Venezuela,

Bolivia, Ecuador and Cuba has been restricted mostly to commercial agreements in which it has proved to be practically the sole beneficiary.

- The relation between the PRC and Latin America is one of unequal partners owing to the potential of the former’s economy and the limits of latter’s. This is a source of constant conflict with those emerging economies “like Mexico and Argentina” that have plans to develop an independent industry and set up barriers to defend their national manufacturers from Chinese exports.

- Another source of conflict with Chinese investments is the fact that Chinese direct investments seek high levels of return regardless of social, labour or environmental conditions. This has already created conflicts with native populations in Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela and Argentina.

Timeline on Chinese investments in Latin America’s energy and commodities sector since 2005

Jan. 2005

- Cuba:

China’s oil and gas giant Sinopec Corp. signs an agreement with Cuba’s state-run Cubapetroleo (Cupet) to jointly produce oil on the Caribbean island.

China’s state-owned Minmetals is investing \$500 million in a joint venture to produce 68,000 tonnes a year of ferro-nickel in eastern Cuba.

Feb. 2005

- Chile:

China’s Minmetals Corporation signs an agreement to invest an initial \$550 million, which could eventually rise to \$2 billion, to set up a joint venture with Chilean state copper company

Codelco.

Sept. 2005

- Bolivia:

China's Shengli International Petroleum Development Co. Ltd. signs a framework pact with state-run Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales Bolivianos to invest \$1.5 billion over 40 years in Bolivia's onshore oil and gas sector.

â€”Ecuador:

Chinese-led consortium Andes Petroleum, which includes China National Petroleum Corp. and Sinopec group, buys Canada-based Encana's oil and pipeline assets in Ecuador for \$1.42 billion.

June 2007

- Peru:

Peru Copper Inc. agrees to be bought by state-owned Aluminum Corp. of China Ltd. in a friendly deal worth C\$840 million (\$792 million) in cash, the Canada-headquartered company says.

May 2009

- Brazil:

China Development Bank announces that it will lend \$10 billion to Petrobras, the state-owned Brazilian oil company, in exchange for a guaranteed supply of oil over the next decade.

July 2009

- Ecuador:

China forges a \$1 billion loan-for-oil deal with South American OPEC member Ecuador.

Sept. 2009

- Venezuela:

Venezuela signs a \$16 billion investment deal with China over three years to raise oil output by several hundred thousand barrels per day in the OPEC member's Orinoco belt.

Oct. 2009

- Brazil:

Chinese steel and iron ore group Baosteel proposes to pay 1 billion pounds (\$1.6 billion) for a 30 percent stake in Anglo American's huge Minas Rio iron ore mine in Brazil.

March 2010

- Argentina:

CNOOC purchases a 50 percent stake in Argentina's Bidas Holdings for \$3.1 billion.

Opposition victory in Dutch public sector union

2 June 2010, by Lot van Baaren, Rob Lubbersen

“Bridge-builders” Tension

The pre-congress debate was dominated by talk of renewal. The incumbent leadership had taken a turn in recent years towards an organisation based on â€”customer service’ and marketing. The union was increasingly being run like a company, with a managing director at the top and a policy that crept ever further in the direction of consumerism. Active members had less and less to say about the union's course. In response a core group of active members organised themselves under the name â€”kloofdichters’ (â€”bridge-builders’, or more accurately â€”gap-closers’) and drafted a programme for a democratic, militant union. To put their ideas into practice they put forward a slate for union leadership.

The tension at the congress was palpable. No one knew for sure what the relationship of forces was. Thematic meetings initially debated and voted on the union's course and the organisation that was needed to follow it. Many of the kloofdichters' proposals were adopted, often over the open opposition of the incumbent leadership. At some points the proposals were made even more radical. For example, one resolution called for the â€”Balkenende standard’ (named after the current Dutch prime minister) for maximum salaries in the public sector - 20 times the minimum wage - to be replaced with a salary ten times the lowest pay scale in the union contract, so as to make income equality more of a concrete demand. And the importance

of rank-and-file activism received additional emphasis. Members' democratic control was strengthened, the power of the director scaled back. In short, the congress consistently took positions that would make Abvakabo FNV a more militant and democratic union.

Outburst of relief

Still, when it came to the leadership election that closed the congress, many delegates were holding their breath. Would the kloofdichters actually manage to get elected to leadership?

The leadership body consists of a total of 15 people, including four paid posts for the day-to-day leadership alongside 11 slots for unpaid active members. For the four paid posts, the

four official candidates were opposed by three candidates close to the kloofdichters. There were 27 candidates for the 11 other slots, including the 11 on the kloofdichter slate.

The result was that incumbent union president Edith Snoey was re-elected by a narrow majority, but two opposition candidates were elected to paid posts. To the 11 unpaid slots, no fewer than seven kloofdichters were elected. This meant that most of the incumbent leadership was tossed out,

with at least nine of the 15 members of the new leadership committed to radical renewal.

A big job

The new leadership now faces the task of preparing the union for the massive attacks on social programmes, wages, working conditions and pensions that clearly lie ahead. They have to defend the public sector from yet more liberalisation. This means increasing

the rate of Abvakabo membership in the public sector, and activating the members so they will fight back in defence of their interests when a fight-back is needed.

The union's ability to organise resistance and move onto the offensive will in any event be greater now that a majority of its leadership consist of activists who put a premium on militancy and don't flinch from confrontation. Who knows, they may even set an example for other Dutch unions!

Gaza Flotilla attack: end impunity for Israel's crimes!

1 June 2010

Thanks to the Labour Party's presence in Netanyahu's extremist government, the whole Zionist political establishment is complicit in this fresh outrage. Labour defence minister Ehud Barak has declared that the government knowingly accepted the consequences of its act. Knowing, that is, that the world's governments would reflexively respond with mere words: some diplomatic communiqués, some tut-tutting at Israeli ambassadors. As usual. But this time it must be different. This time an outpouring of protest must force governments to move from words to deeds.

Already Barrack Obama and Ban Ki-moon have spoken of investigation. What is there of consequence to investigate? The Israeli government does not deny that it launched an illegal attack in international waters; it proclaims it. The Israeli army itself says that more than ten activists were killed. The Israeli military's own spokesperson claims no more than four Israeli injuries as extenuation for the slaughter. Al-Jazeera's correspondent on the lead boat reports that a white flag was raised, and yet the Israelis opened fire as they stormed it, without provocation. All this points to a deliberate resort, as in

2008-09, to "disproportionate force", certainly not a case of "self-defence".

The assault on the Freedom Flotilla was in fact a logical extension of the blockade of Gaza that the flotilla was protesting and challenging. Hardly a government on earth besides Israel's has a word to say in defence of this blockade, a blatant case of an illegal collective punishment of a civilian population. Yet hardly a government on earth lifts a finger to stop it. And the shamelessly cynical Israeli PR operation makes light of the blockade's effects, recommending a posh Gaza restaurant to journalists.

Surely that press statement's author remembers that posh restaurants remained in business in the Warsaw Ghetto as Jews were starving to death in the street outside! Not that there is mass starvation today in Gaza; arbitrary and capricious as the Israeli blockade is, it has so far been calibrated to avoid that degree of devastation. It has led only to widespread malnutrition; only to the traumatization of tens of thousands of children; only to mass unemployment that has left 80 per cent of the Strip's 1.5 million people dependent on relief; only to the helplessness of a

population trying to live among the ruins left by the 2008-09 Israeli aggression, which they are denied any means of repairing; only to the deaths of 28 Palestinians waiting for permission to leave for urgently needed medical treatment.

The protests against the attack on the flotilla, coming on top of the blockade, are more than justified. The picket lines and demonstrations outside Israeli embassies and consulates should continue. But the protests must go further, targeting the governments in each of our countries that have made and are making Israeli outrages possible.

- In the United States, which under the Obama administration has remained Israel's main backer, protests must demand and secure an immediate halt to the \$3 billion in annual aid that funds the Israeli government's crimes.

- In the countries of the European Union, which only months ago decided on closer ties with Israel, protests must demand and secure immediate invocation of the human rights clause in the Israeli-EU free trade

agreement, suspending the commercial privileges that give Israel an economic lifeline.

- In the Arab countries that maintain ties with Israel, the peoples' fury should frighten their governments into halting their complicity - and especially frighten the Egyptian government into ending its indispensable role in the criminal blockade of Gaza.

- In the Israeli state, where protests are also taking place, there should be stepped-up resistance to the far-right government.

- Everywhere where the solidarity movement is not yet strong enough to

compel governments to break in practice with the Israeli state, people should take matters into their own hands with massive boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaigns.

Finally, this new Israeli crime should lead to a new wave of discussion and reflection about the bankruptcy of the "peace process" supposedly aimed at establishing a Palestinian mini-state in the 1967 territories alongside an intact Zionist Israel. Today the Israeli government is being "punished" for its attack on the flotilla with yet another suspension of the anaemic process of indirect talks with the Palestinian Authority - a process that it obviously

views as nothing more than an occasionally useful distraction from its work of establishing facts on the ground. Movements for peace and solidarity should now be spurred to more clarity and resolve about the need for an alternative, heading towards true peace, with full and unconditional Palestinian self-determination, the right of return for the 1948 refugees (who make up four-fifths of the Gaza Strip's population), the dismantling of the Zionist state, and a political solution in which the Palestinian and Israeli Jewish peoples can live together in full equality of rights.

**Bureau of the Fourth International
Paris, 1st June 2010**