



## IV432 - January 2011

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31 January 2011, by **robm**

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## In Tunisia and Egypt the revolutions are underway

31 January 2011, by **Fourth International**

The situation as with any revolution is changing from hour to hour. Any evaluation will undoubtedly be overtaken by events within a few hours or days. But already we can say that the Tunisia and Egyptian people are writing the first pages of the revolutions of the 21st century. They are sending shock waves throughout the Arab world, from Algiers to Ramallah, from Amman to Sana'a in Yemen. These revolutions result, within the particular historical conditions of this society, from the crisis that is shaking the world capitalist system. The "poverty riots" are combined with an immense mobilisation for democracy. The effects of the world economic crisis combined with the oppressive dictatorships, are making these countries the weak links in imperialist domination in the current situation. They are creating the conditions for the opening of processes of social and

democratic revolution.

Demonstrations, strikes, mass meetings, self-defence committees, mobilisations by trade unions and civil associations, mobilisation of all the popular classes, "those below" and "those in the middle" who are swinging over into insurrection, "those above who can no longer rule as before", convergence between parties from the radical opposition against the system, these are all the ingredients of a pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situation that is today ready to explode.

It is today the turn of Egypt to see hundreds of thousands of workers, young people and unemployed stand up against the dictatorship of Mubarak.

In Tunisia, a bloody dictatorship was cut down. It was the focus of the

hatred of a whole society; the popular classes and especially of youth. The Ben Ali regime, its repression, its corruption, a system supported by all the imperialist powers, France, the USA, the European Union, had to be thrown out.

It is this same movement that is sweeping through Egypt today.

There are, of course, historical differences between the two countries. Egypt is the most populous country in the Arab world. It has a decisive geostrategic place in the Middle East. The structures of the State, the institutions, and the role of the Army are different there. But it is the same basic movement that is affecting the two countries.

The Tunisian masses could no longer stand an economic system - "a good pupil of the world economy" according

to Mr. Strauss-Kahn - which starved them. The explosion of the prices of basic foodstuffs, unemployment of almost 30%, and hundreds of thousands of trained and qualified young people without jobs constituted fertile ground for the growth of a social revolt that, combined with a political crisis, led to a revolution.

There were dramatic price rises for all essential products, including rice, wheat and corn, between 2006 and 2008. The price of rice tripled in five years, passing from approximately \$600 per ton in 2003 to more than \$1800 per ton in May 2008.

The recent increase in the price of the grain is illustrated by a jump of 32% recorded during second half of 2010 in the compound index of food prices.

The big rise in prices of sugar, cereals and oilseed products took world food prices to record levels in December, exceeding those of 2008, which had started riots throughout the world.

At the same time, the IMF and the WTO are demanding the lifting of all tariff barriers and an end to all food subsidies.

The recent speculative rise in food prices encouraged a worldwide development of famine on an unprecedented scale, which is hitting a series of countries in Africa and the Arab world.

Egypt has also experienced the effects of this explosion of food prices. The economy does not create enough jobs to provide for the population's needs. The neoliberal policies implemented since 2000 have caused an explosion of inequalities and the impoverishment of millions of families. Nearly 40% of the 80 million Egyptians continue to live on less than two dollars per day. And 90% of the unemployed are young people under 30.

The other remarkable thing is that the Egyptian national trade-union federation - led by members of the government - has partly withdrawn its support for the government in the two weeks since the Tunisian insurrection. They wanted price controls, wage rises and a system of subsidised

distribution of foodstuffs; the people not being able to obtain basic necessities such as tea or oil. That the union leaders should demand this is unprecedented because they have been convinced neo-liberal supporters. That is the impact of the Tunisian events.

In Tunisia, this revolution has deep roots. The current social movement is the result of a cycle of mobilisations and movements which draw their strength from the history of the struggles of the Tunisian people and its organisations, in particular, many associations for human rights and democratic freedoms and trade unions like many sectors of the UGTT (General Union of the Tunisian Workers):

- the fight of certain personalities for freedom of expression and to travel in 1999,
- the high-school students' movement in 2000,
- the mobilisations against the war in Iraq in 2001,
- the second Intifadah in 2002-2003,
- strikes and demonstrations in Gafsa in 2008,
- Ben Guerdane in June 2010,
- Sidi Bouzid, which at the end of 2010 opened up the way for the revolution.

It is a historical movement that started with this combination of social revolt and overthrowing a dictatorship but which today seeks to go further. It is a radical democratic revolution that has anticapitalist social demands.

Ben Ali had to flee, but the essence of his gangster system stayed in place. The force of the mobilisation has constrained the former Ben Ali supporters to leave the government gradually but, as we are writing this statement, the Prime Minister is still the Ben Ali supporter Ghannouchi.

The revolution wants to go further: "RCD out! ", "Ghannouchi out! ", behind these demands, it is the whole of the political system, all the institutions, all the repressive

apparatus that should be eradicated. It is necessary to finish with the whole Ben Ali system, and to establish all democratic rights and freedoms: right of free expression, right to strike, right to demonstrate, pluralism of associations, trade unions and parties; abolish the presidency and install a provisional revolutionary government!

Getting rid of the dictatorship and of all operations that want to protect the power of the ruling classes means today opening a process of free elections for a constituent Assembly. This process must be based on the organisation of committees, councils, coordination and popular councils that have emerged from the process if it is not to be confiscated by a new oligarchic regime.

In this process, the anticapitalists will defend the key demands of a programme breaking with imperialism and capitalist logic: satisfaction of the vital needs of the popular classes - bread, wages, jobs; reorganization of the economy on the basis of fundamental social needs - free and adequate public services, schools, health, women's rights, radical land reform, socialization of the banks and key sectors of the economy, broadening social protection for unemployment, health and retirement, cancellation of the debt, national and popular sovereignty. This is the programme of a democratic government that would be at the service of the workers and the population.

At the same time, whether it is to organize the defence of the districts, to drive out RCD leaders of state administration or big companies, to reorganize the distribution of the food substances, workers and young people are organising their own assemblies and committees. The most combative sectors and most radical must support, stimulate, organize and coordinate all these self-organisation structures. They are something to build on to establish a democratic power of the popular classes.

In Egypt, at the time we are writing this statement, the country is in a state of insurrection. In spite of bloody repression, the waves of mobilisation of the people develop. Hundreds of

thousands of demonstrators are in the streets of Cairo, Alexandria and Suez. The party office of the ruling NDP and symbols of the regime have been attacked. The hatred for the Mubarak system, the total rejection of corruption, and the demand for satisfaction of vital social demands against price rises have provoked and stimulated the mobilisation of all the popular classes. The regime is vacillating. The Army leadership supported by the USA has tried a "self-managed coup" putting Omar Suleiman, head of the secret services and pillar of the current regime, alongside Mubarak as vice-president. The army is strained. There have been scenes of fraternisation between the people and the soldiers but faced with the determination of the Egyptians the Army leadership could also choose confrontation and harsh repression. The demand of the millions in the streets is crystal clear: Mubarak must go, but it is the whole dictatorship, the whole repressive apparatus that must be brought down and a democratic process with all rights and freedoms set in place. The call for a day of mobilisation on 1st February is the next step.

In Egypt too, it is necessary to finish with dictatorship and to found a democratic process with all the rights and fundamental democratic liberties.

The current movement is the most important since the 1977 bread riots, but here again it has deep roots.

For the last 30 years Mubarak has

maintained a dictatorial regime, imprisoning and murdering his opponents, suppressing any independent expression of the social movement and political opposition. The electoral masquerade of November 2010, entirely controlled by the NDP which won more than 80% of the seats, is the latest example. In the last few years there have been important strike movements particularly of the textile workers of El-Mahalla, general strikes and demonstrations and protests by different social categories, big anti-imperialist mobilisations against the military occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan in 2004, marking the disavowal and isolation of a regime that is held up only by support of the USA and the European Union.

Egypt is, with Israel and Saudi Arabia, one of the three pillars of imperialist policy in the region. The USA, Israel and Europe will do everything they can to prevent Egypt escaping from their zone of influence and to oppose a revolutionary development of the protests.

The Tunisian revolution set the Arab world ablaze. It is also for a whole generation their first revolution. Everything can change today with the rising of the Egyptian people. The mobilisation will undoubtedly have repercussions through the region, in particular encouraging the Palestinians despite the shameful statement of Mahmoud Abbas.

We have to build a solidarity wall around the revolutionary processes

which developing in Tunisia and Egypt, supported by active solidarity with the mobilisations throughout the Arab world. We cannot ignore the possibility of harsh blows from the repressive apparatus of Ben Ali, or the threats of his friend Gaddafi. Also, if the regime decides on confrontation, the Army leaders could unleash bloody repression.

Faced with the deepening of the revolutionary process, the western powers and the ruling classes will try to take back control by breaking this immense hope.

The Tunisian and Egyptian people must be able to count on the whole of the international labour movement, on all the global justice movement. In the trade unions, associations, the left parties, we must support the fights of these peoples and the revolt thundering through the Arab world.

**Long live the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions!**

**Solidarity with the fights in the Arab world!**

*Bureau of the Fourth International*

8pm in Paris, 30th of January 2011

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## A European strategy for the left?

28 January 2011, by **Michel Husson**

The global effects of the crisis have been made even worse by what is happening in Europe. For thirty years the contradictions of capitalism have been overcome with the help of an enormous accumulation of phantom rights to surplus value. The crisis has threatened to destroy them. The

bourgeois governments have decided to preserve them claiming that we have to save the banks. They have taken on the banks' debts and asked for virtually nothing in return. Yet it would have been possible to make this rescue conditional on some assurances. They could have banned

speculative financial instruments and closed the tax loopholes. They could even have insisted that they take responsibility for some of the public debt that this rescue increased so dramatically.

We are now in the second phase.

Having shifted the debt from the private sector to the public the working class has to be made to pay. This shock therapy is delivered through austerity plans which are all broadly similar – a cut in socially useful spending and hiking up the most unfair taxes. There is no alternative to this form of social violence other than making the shareholders and creditors pay. That is clear and everyone understands it.

### **The collapse of a ruling class plan**

But the European working class is also being asked to pay for the collapse of the ruling class project for Europe. The ruling class thought that it had found a good system with the single currency, the budgetary stability pact ("Stability and Growth Pact"), and the total deregulation of finance and the movement of capital. By creating a competition between social models and wage earners squeezing wages became the only means of regulating inter-capitalist competition and intensifying the inequalities that benefitted only a very narrow stratum of people in society.

However this model put the cart before the horse and wasn't viable. It presupposed that the European economies were more homogeneous than they actually are. Differences between countries increased due to their place in the global market and their sensitivity to the euro exchange rate. Inflation rates didn't converge and interest rates favoured property bubbles and so on. All the contradictions of a curtailed programme of European integration which the Euro liberals are discovering today existed before the crisis. But these are blowing apart under speculative attacks against the sovereign debts of the most exposed countries.

Underneath the abstract concept of "financial markets" there are mainly European financial institutions which speculate using capital which states lend to them at very low interest rates. This speculation is only possible due to the states' policy of non-intervention and we should understand it as a pressure applied to consenting governments to stabilise budgets on the back of the people of

Europe and to defend the banks' interests.

### **Two immediate tasks**

From the point of view of the working class it's obvious what has to be done: we have to resist the austerity offensive and refuse to pay the debt which is nothing but the debt from the banking crisis. The alternative plan on which this resistance must be based demands another way of sharing society's wealth. This is a coherent demand. It is in fact against the squeezing of wages, in other words the appropriation of an increasing portion of surplus value by capital.

The alternative requires a real fiscal reform which takes back the gifts which for years have been given to businesses and the rich. It also implies the cancellation of the debt. The debt and the interests of the majority of the population are completely incompatible. There can be no progressive outcome to the crisis which does not put the debt in question, either by defaulting on it or restructuring it. In any case some countries will probably default and it's therefore important to anticipate this situation and say how it should be managed.

### **Leaving the euro?**

The offensive, which the peoples of Europe are facing, is undeniably made worse by the European straightjacket. For example the European Central Bank, unlike the Federal Reserve in the United States, cannot monetise public debt by buying treasury bonds. Would leaving the euro allow the straightjacket to be loosened? That is what some on the left like Costas Lapavistas and his colleagues are suggesting for Greece as an immediate step. He proposes that it is done immediately without waiting for the left to unite to change the euro zone, something he thinks is impossible.

This idea is put forward elsewhere in Europe and is met with an immediate objection that even though Britain is not part of the euro zone it has not been protected from the climate of austerity. It is also easy to understand why the far right, such as the Front

National in France wants to leave the euro. By contrast it is hard to see what could be the merits of such a slogan for the radical left. If a liberal government were forced to take such a measure by the pressure of events it is clear that it would be the pretext for an even more severe austerity than the one we have experienced up to now. Moreover it would not allow us to establish a new balance of forces, which is more favourable to the working class. That is the lesson that one can draw for all the past experiences.

For a left government leaving the euro would be a major strategic error. The new currency would be devalued as that is, after all, the desired objective. But that would immediately open up a space, which the financial markets would immediately use to begin a speculative offensive. It would trigger a cycle of devaluation, inflation and austerity. On top of that, the debt, which until that point had been denominated in euros or in dollars would suddenly increase as a result of this devaluation. Every left government which decided to take measures in favour of the working class would certainly be put under enormous pressure by international capitalism. But from a tactical point of view it would be better in this test of strength to use membership in the euro zone as a source of conflict.

It is basically true that the European project based on the single currency is not coherent and is incomplete. It removes a variable of adjustment, the exchange rate, from the set of different prices and salaries inside the euro zone. The countries in the periphery thus have the choice between the German path of freezing wages or suffering a reduction in competitiveness and loss of markets. This situation leads to a sort of impasse and there are no solutions that can be applied straight away: going backwards would throw Europe in a crisis which would hit the most fragile countries hardest.; and beginning a new European project seems out of reach at the moment.

If the euro zone explodes the most fragile economies would be destabilised by speculative attacks. Not even Germany would have

anything to gain because its currency would appreciate in value uncontrollably and the country would undergo what the United States is today trying to impose on several countries with its monetary policy.[ii]

Other solutions exist which need a complete recasting of the European Union: a budget which is financed by a common tax on capital and which finances harmonisation funds and investments which are both socially and ecologically useful and richer countries help poorer ones with their public debt. But again this outcome is not possible in the short term, not through lack of alternative plans but because implementing them requires a radical change in the balance of forces at the European level.

What should we do at a very difficult moment like this? The struggle against the austerity plans and refusing to pay the debt are the launch pad for a counter offensive. We then have to make sure that the resistance is strengthened by arguing for an alternative project and work out a programme which offers both "practical" answers as well as a general explanation of the class content of the crisis.[iii]

The specific task of the radical, internationalist left is to link the social struggles happening in each country with arguing for a different kind of Europe. What are the ruling classes doing? They are facing up to the policies they have to follow because they are defending interests which are still largely nationally based and contradictory. Yet as soon as they have to impose austerity measures on their own working classes they present a solid united front.

There are better things to do than emphasise the very real differences that exist between the countries. What's at stake is having an internationalist point of view on the crisis in Europe. The only way of really opposing the rise of the far right is by suggesting other targets than the usual scapegoats. We can affirm a real international solidarity with the peoples who are suffering most due to the crisis by demanding that the debts are shared equally across Europe. Thus we have to oppose an alternative

project for Europe to that of the European bourgeoisie which is dragging every country backwards socially. How is it possible not to understand that our mobilisations, which are faced with coordination of the ruling class at a European level, need to be based on a coordinated project of our own? While it is true that struggles happen in a national framework they would be strengthened by a perspective like this instead of being weakened or led down nationalist dead ends. The students who demonstrated in London chanting "all in this together, all in this together" are a symbol of this living hope.

### **For a European Strategy**

The task is as difficult as the period which the crisis has opened. However the radical left must not get locked into the impossible choice and start the risky adventure of leaving the euro and a utopian idea of currency harmonisation. We could easily work on some intermediate targets which challenge the European institutions. For example:

Â· The states of the European Union should borrow directly from the European Central Bank (ECB) at very low rates of interest and private sector banks should be obliged to take over a certain proportion of the public debt.

Â· A default mechanism should be put in place, which allows public sector debt to be written off in proportion to tax breaks for the rich and money spent on bank bailouts.

Â· Budgetary stabilisation has to be reformed by a fiscal reform which taxes movements of capital, financial transactions, dividends, large fortunes, high salaries and incomes from capital at a standard rate across Europe.

We have to understand that these objectives are neither further or closer away than an "exit from the euro" which would be beneficial to working people. It would definitely be absurd to wait for a simultaneous and coordinated exit by every European country. The only strategic hypothesis that one can then conceive of must take as its starting point the

experience of a social transformation which starts in one country. The government of the country in question takes measures, for example imposing a tax on capital. If it is thinking clearly it will anticipate the retaliation for which it will be the target and will impose controls on capital. By taking this fiscal reform measure it is openly in conflict with the rules of the European game. It has no interest in unilaterally leaving the euro. This would be an enormous strategic mistake since the new currency would immediately come under attack with the aim of pulling down the economy of the "rebel" country.

We have to give up on the idea that there are "technical" shortcuts, assume that conflict is inevitable and build a favourable balance of forces of which the European dimension is a part. One point of support for that is the ability to damage capitalist interests. The country, which starts, could restructure the debt, nationalise foreign capital etc, or threaten to do it. The "left" governments of Papandreou in Greece or Zapatero in Spain have not even dreamed of doing this.

The main point of support comes from taking the measures cooperatively. This is completely different from classic protectionism, which basically always tries to gain ground by nibbling at parts of the global market. Every progressive measure on the other hand is effective to the extent that it is shared across a number of countries. We should therefore be talking about a strategy, which is based on the following idea: we are willing to tax capital and we will take the necessary steps to protect ourselves. But we are also hoping for these measures, which we propose, to be implemented across Europe.

We can sum up by saying that rather than seeing them in opposition to each other we have to think hard about the link between breaking the neoliberal European project and our project of creating a new Europe.

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[ii] Michael Hudson, "US Quantitative Easing Is Fracturing the Global Economy", <http://gesd.free.fr/hudsonqi.pdf>

[iii] Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc) Portugal: "On the crisis and how to overcome it", May 23rd 2010, <http://gesd.free.fr/bloco510.pdf>

# "I know now that revolution is possible"

28 January 2011, by **Olivier Besancenot**

*How did this trip to Tunisia come about?*

It's something I've never seen before. I'm part of that generation of revolutionaries which has never lived the experience. It's the first time I've been through something like that in real life. I saw it with my own eyes. I love this collective enthusiasm, it's contagious and intoxicating. As I'm speaking to you there are still thousands of citizens on the streets, in clusters, hundreds of people who are describing the events on Facebook and Twitter, trade unionists who are mobilised to demand the resignation of the "new" government. The revolution is continuing here.

*What is your feeling about this popular uprising?*

Revolution is a complex process which moves ahead little by little and creates its own path. The revolution is continuing because it has only one goal: to get rid of this charade of a government. At the moment the Tunisian oligarchy still has the country in its grip; the police are also controlled by them as is every sector of the economy and that suits no one here. The opposition wants to convene a constituent assembly to change the institutions and move along a new road.

*So, revolution isn't a crazy dream? Does that give you any ideas?*

Yes. I'm absolutely filled with hope (laughter). I know now that revolution is possible, it's there, under my eyes. No revolution resembles another. There is no model. When people have tried to copy it has often ended badly. I'm here to learn and to understand. I'm noting things about organisation, the structure of the movement and it's thrilling. We too really need a social-democratic revolution.

*You've met some of the opposition. Do you think they are ready to take power?*

I'm not there to speak in the name of the Tunisian people - it has proved that it does not need anyone for that - but one of the first things they said was "it's our revolution and we don't want anyone to steal it from us". They didn't expect that it would spread across borders.

*And you?*

I'd answer by quoting Ken Loach: "revolutions are always contagious." What happened in Egypt yesterday and has been happening for a few days in Algeria is extremely important.

*Do you hope to go to Egypt in the next few days?*

I'm not a revolutionary tourist (laughter) and am not on a pilgrimage. I came to Tunisia at the request of my comrades whom I've been in touch

with since the start of the movement. We had simply agreed that I would visit at an appropriate time. I'm in touch with people in Egypt of course. We'll see what attitude we should take. However our job in France is to fight against our own government and our own imperialism. It's obviously not the right that's going to do that.

*And the left?*

The Socialist Party won't do anything anymore. Let me remind you that a few days ago Ben Ali was part of the Socialist International and that it was the present government which covered his regime.

*What do people in Tunisia think of France's attitude?*

They are very angry. Sarkozy's excuses are waffle. No one here believes him. I've explained that not everyone in France supported the government and all its actions. I've heard the French media criticise the government's hesitancy but it's much worse than that - it is active, concrete, economic and financial complicity.

*And are they asking anything from France?*

They don't have any intention of living in a dictatorship, that's for sure. They are not expecting anything from the French government. They have been disappointed and will ask for nothing



# The futility of green capitalism

27 January 2011, by **Daniel Tanuro, Richard Fidler**

Tanuro's book includes much additional material elaborating his central thesis that climate degradation cannot be dissociated from the "natural" functioning of capitalism as a system and that a valid "emancipatory project" to confront and overcome the impending crisis must recognize natural constraints and aim for a fundamental redefinition of what we mean by social wealth.

Among the topics of particular interest to readers are extended critiques of popular writers on climate crisis ranging from Jared Diamond to Hans Jonas and Hervé Kempf, as well as his critical assessment of the contributions of Marxist writers such as John Bellamy Foster and Paul Burkett. Tanuro makes a compelling case against many ill-conceived nostrums such as the Sierra Club's campaign for immigration controls, or such cost-efficiency based market mechanisms as carbon trading and ecotaxes.

A major feature of the book is its cogent explanation of how Marxist value theory explains the ecological crisis and points to its solution. He also addresses what he considers a major deficiency in Marx's ecology, an inadequate appreciation of the crucial implications of capitalism's reliance on non-renewable fossil-fuel resources. This aspect is explored in detail in Tanuro's article "Marxism, Energy, and Ecology: The Moment of Truth," published in the December 2010 issue of *Capitalism Nature Socialism*.

We hope that this outstanding book will soon be published in English and other languages.

In the following interview, Daniel Tanuro outlines some of the major themes in the book. My translation from the French, *À propos du capitalisme vert*.

*Richard Fidler*

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## Concerning Green Capitalism

Daniel Tanuro, you are the author of *L'impossible capitalisme vert*, published by Les empêcheurs de penser en rond/La Découverte. You are also the founder of the NGO "Climat et justice sociale." What is "green capitalism"?

D.T.: The expression "green capitalism" may be understood in two different ways. A producer of wind turbines may boast that he is engaged in green capitalism. In this sense "green" in the sense that some money is invested in a "clean" sector of the economy "a form of green capitalism is obviously possible and quite profitable. But the real question is whether capitalism as a whole can turn green, that is, whether the global action of the numerous and competing capitals that constitute Capital can respect ecological cycles, their rhythms, and the speed by which natural resources are reconstituted.

That is the sense in which my book poses the question and it answers in the negative. My main argument is that competition impels each owner of capital to replace workers by more productive machines in order to achieve a superprofit greater than the average profit.

Productivism is thus at the heart of capitalism. As Schumpeter said, "a capitalism without growth is a contradiction in terms." Capitalist accumulation is potentially unlimited, so there is an antagonism between capital and nature, as the latter's resources are finite. It may be objected that the productivity race leads capital to be increasingly resource efficient, as expressed for example by the observed decrease in the quantity of energy necessary for the production of a percentage point of GDP. But this tendency to increased

efficiency obviously cannot be prolonged indefinitely in a linear way, and empirically we find it is more than offset by the growing mass of commodities that are produced. Green capitalism is therefore an oxymoron, like social capitalism.

This observation opens a debate between two opposing strategic conceptions. For some, the spontaneously ecocidal functioning of capitalism can be corrected through political action within the system by resorting to market mechanisms (taxes, fiscal incentives, tradable emission rights, etc.). For others, including me, our policy must be to break with capitalism because if the environment is to be saved it is absolutely indispensable to challenge the fundamental laws of capitalism. This means daring to challenge private property of the means of production, the foundation of the system.

In my opinion, the debate between these two lines is decided in practice by the example of the struggle against climate change. In the developed capitalist countries, we are confronted with the obligation to abandon the use of fossil fuels almost completely in barely two generations. If we exclude nuclear power "and it must be excluded" this means, in Europe for example, dividing by about one half the final consumption of energy, which is possible only by reducing to a substantial degree the processing and transportation of material.

The transition to renewables and reduction in energy consumption are linked and necessitate major investments which are inconceivable if the decisions remain subordinate to the dogma of cost efficiency. The alternative to cost efficiency can only be democratic planning focused on social and ecological needs. And such planning in turn is possible only by breaking the resistance of the oil, coal,

gas, automobile, petrochemicals, naval and aeronautic construction monopolies, for they want to burn fossil fuels for as long as possible.

Climate change is at the center of your book. You interpret this change as a "climate tipping" [basculement climatique]. What do you mean by tipping, and why do you consider it to be otherwise more disturbing than a mere change?

D.T.: The expression "climate changes" (and I do mean changes, in the plural) suggests the repetition of climate variations analogous to those in the past. But between now and the end of the century, in a few decades, the Earth's climate risks changing as much as it has during the 20,000 years that have elapsed since the last Ice Age. There is now no doubt that we are not very far from a "tipping point" beyond which it will no longer be possible to prevent the eventual melting of the icecaps formed 65 million years ago. The word "tipping" is indisputably more adapted to describing this reality than the word "changes"! The speed of the phenomenon is unprecedented and poses a major threat, for many ecosystems will be unable to adapt. This applies not only to the natural ecosystems but also, I fear, to some ecosystems engineered by human beings.

Look at what is happening in Pakistan: designed by the British colonizer to serve their imperialist interests, the water management mechanisms of the Indus using dams and dikes which supply an extensive irrigation system are proving inadequate in the face of exceptional floodwaters. And this risk is increasing because the warmer climate disrupts the monsoon regime and increases the violence of the downpours.

It seems to me illusory to hope that this race will be won by reinforcing the existing infrastructures, as the World Bank and the big capitalist groups specializing in public works propose. Instead of building dikes it would be more reasonable to restore the flexible management of water levels that was practiced prior to colonization. That is what is proposed by the International Rivers Network:

allowing floods to clear the sediment and prevent the silting up of the basin, feeding the Delta, stopping deforestation, accommodating zones liable to flooding, etc.

But that requires a complete overhaul of the mechanisms over more than 3000 km, with major implications for territorial management, agricultural policy, urban policy, energy production, etc. Socially, such an overhaul, to be achieved in two or three decades (that is, very quickly for work of such scope!), means challenging the power of the landed oligarchy and the development programs that the IMF and World Bank impose through the debt. And this debt must be canceled or else the reconstruction will be heavily mortgaged and the country strangled, in danger of entering history as the first example of a regressive spiral in which global warming mutually links all the mechanisms of underdevelopment and multiplies their negative effects.

We see clearly in this how the social and environmental questions are interpenetrated. In fact, the fight against climate tipping requires a policy shift toward another model of development centered on the satisfaction of peoples' needs. Without that, further catastrophes, even more terrible, may well result, and the poor will be the major victims. That is the warning emerging from the tragedy in Pakistan.

You think the countries of the South should "skip" the fossil energy stage in managing their development and go directly to that of renewable energies. What is your answer to those who object that renewable energies are not (technically and quantitatively) able to do this?

D.T.: I tell them they are wrong. The solar energy flow that reaches the surface of the earth is equivalent to 8 to 10 thousand times the planet's energy consumption. The technical potential of renewable energies "is" that is, the share of that theoretical potential that is usable through known technologies, independently of cost "is" represents 6 to 18 times the world's needs, according to estimates. It is certain that this technical

potential could increase very rapidly if the development of renewables were finally to become an absolute priority in energy research policies, which it is still not at present. The transition to renewables certainly poses a host of complex technical problems, but there is no reason to think they are insurmountable.

The major obstacles are political. One: without exception, renewable energies remain more expensive than fossil energies. Two: the transition to renewables is not the same thing as changing fuel at the pump: it is necessary to change the energy system. That requires enormous investments and, at the beginning of the transition, these will necessarily be consumers of fossil energy and therefore additional generators of greenhouse gas; these additional emissions must be offset and that is why, in the short run, the reduction of final consumption of energy is the sine qua non condition for a passage to renewables which, once carried out, will open new horizons.

I repeat: there is no possible satisfactory solution without confronting the dual combined obstacle of capitalist profit and growth. This means, in particular, that the clean technologies controlled by the North must be transferred free of charge to the South, on the sole condition that they are implemented by the public sector and under the control of the local population.

You advocate a social ecology which you call ecosocialism. What is an ecosocialist? And how does he or she differ from a "plain and simple" ecologist or socialist?

D.T.: An ecosocialist differs from an ecologist in that he analyzes the "ecological crisis" not as a crisis of the relationship between humanity in general and nature but as a crisis of the relationship between an historically determined mode of production and its environment, and therefore in the last analysis as a manifestation of the crisis of the mode of production itself. In other words, for an ecosocialist, the ecological crisis is in fact a manifestation of the crisis of capitalism (not to overlook the specific crisis of the so-called



"socialist" societies, which aped capitalist productivism). A result is that, in his fight for the environment, an ecosocialist will always propose demands that make the connection with the social question, with the struggle of the exploited and oppressed for a redistribution of wealth, for employment, etc.

However, an ecosocialist differs from the "pure and simple" socialist, as you say, in that, for him, the only anticapitalism that is valid today is one that takes into account the natural limits and the operational constraints of the ecosystems. This has many implications: a break with productivism and consumerism, of course, within the perspective of a society in which, the basic needs having been satisfied, free time and social relations constitute the real wealth. But also contestation of technologies and of harmful productions, coupled with the requirement of reconversion of the workers. Maximum decentralization of production and distribution in the framework of a democratically planned economy is something else that the ecosocialists stress.

One point that it seems to me important to stress is the need to question the traditional socialist vision that sees any rise in productivity of agricultural labour as a step toward socialism. In my opinion this conception does not allow us to meet the requirements of increased respect for the environment. In fact, an agriculture and a forestry that are ecologically more sustainable necessitate more labour, not less. To re-create hedges, groves, wetlands, to diversify crops and fight for organic produce, for example, implies an increase in the share of social labour invested in tasks of ecological maintenance. This labour may be highly scientific and highly technical – it is not a return to the hoe – but it is not easily mechanizable.

That is why I think that a culture of "taking care" (I borrow this concept from Isabelle Stengers) must permeate economic activities, in particular those that closely affect ecosystems. We are responsible for nature. In a way, this means extending the logic that the left applies in the

area of personal care, education, etc. No socialists would argue that nurses should be replaced by robots; we are all conscious of the fact that we need more nurses who are better paid so that patients are better cared for. Well! The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the environment: if it is to be better cared for, there needs to be more labour, intelligence and human sensibility. Contrary to the "pure and simple socialist", and even though it is difficult, the ecosocialist, because he is conscious of the urgency, tries to introduce all of these questions into the struggles of the exploited and oppressed instead of postponing them until after the revolution.

Many, including myself, are convinced that an effective struggle against climate change necessarily entails a break from productivist capitalism. To this effect, you appeal to "socialized man, the associated producers." Who are they, and what specifically can they do?

D.T.: You are alluding to the quotation from Marx that serves as an epigraph to my book: "Freedom ... can only consist in socialized man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature...." We must realize that in Marx's thinking the rational regulation of exchanges is conditional on the disappearance of capitalism. Indeed, on the one hand the struggle of all against all permanently undermines attempts by producers to associate; on the other hand, a significant fraction of producers – the waged workers – are cut off from their means of production. The latter, including natural resources, are appropriated by the bosses. Deprived of any power of decision, the workers are unable to rationally regulate anything at all concerning production, let alone rationally regulate interchange with the environment!

To constitute social beings, producers must begin to join together in the fight against their exploiters. This struggle in an embryonic way points to the need for collective appropriation of the means of production and collective usufruct of natural resources. These in turn are necessary but not sufficient for a more harmonious relationship

with nature.

That said, we can answer your question about concrete action by examining how different groups of producers understand – or don't – the need to rationally regulate the interchange between humanity and nature. At present, it is striking that the most advanced positions of an ecosocialist type emanate from indigenous peoples and small farmers mobilized against agribusiness. This is not accidental: both groups of producers are not, or not completely, cut off from their means of production. Therefore they are able to offer concrete strategies for rational regulation of their interaction with the environment. Indigenous people see the defence of the climate as an additional argument in favor of preserving their precapitalist lifestyle in symbiosis with the forest.

As for the Via Campesina peasant movement, it has developed a whole program of concrete demands on the theme that "the peasants know how to cool the climate." In contrast, the labour movement is lagging behind. This is of course due to the fact that each individual worker is inclined to wish for the smooth operation of the company that exploits him, in order to maintain his livelihood.

Conclusion: the greater the retreat in worker solidarity in the face of the neoliberal offensive, the harder it will be to develop environmental awareness among workers. It's a big problem, because the working class, by its central role in production, is called on to play a leading role in the fight for the anticapitalist alternative needed to rescue the environment. Indigenous peoples, peasant organizations and youth have an interest in trying to involve more and more unions in climate campaigns – increasing collaboration, rank-and-file contacts, etc. Within the labour movement itself, the task is to promote demands that address the concerns about jobs, income and working conditions while helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

An important issue in this regard is the need for a generalized radical reduction in hours of work without loss of pay, with a drastic reduction in

the pace of work and additional hiring to compensate. Another aspect is the extension of a public sector under the control of workers and users: free, first-rate public transportation, publicly owned energy services, public insulation and building renovation firms, etc. Ecosocialists have a role to play in promoting the emergence of such demands.

With *L'impossible capitalisme vert*, you do not seem to fear being accused of undue alarmism by those who have yet to understand that we have entered the Anthropocene Era, and that it is man that is primarily responsible for runaway warming, especially since the industrial era. Doesn't green capitalism, like "sustainable development" and "greenwashing", reflect a desire to deny this responsibility and to "continue as before"? If we are to abandon productivist capitalism, shouldn't we first alter our behavior as consumers and producers?

D.T.: I am not an alarmist. In my book, I relied almost exclusively on the reports of the IPCC which, in terms of the diagnosis on global warming and its possible impacts, appear to me, whatever is said about them, to be an excellent summary of "good science", subjected to peer review. It is true that the IPCC lags a bit when it comes to recent discoveries, but this does not change much in its findings.

In fact, I dread the discourse of panic and exaggeration. Too often, it tends to obscure the real threats and real responsibilities. Climate tipping easily lends itself to eschatology, and there is no shortage of gurus to claim that "the planet is in danger", that "life is in danger", that "humanity is in danger," that the "photosynthetic ceiling" will fall on our heads, or whatnot. All of this is excessive. The planet fears nothing, and life on Earth is a phenomenon so tough that humanity, even if it wished, could probably not come to an end, even with atomic bombs.

As to our species, climate change, by itself, does not jeopardize it. The danger it poses is more circumscribed: around three billion people risk substantial degradation in their living conditions, and hundreds of millions of

them "the poorest" are threatened in their very existence. Policy makers know this and do nothing "or almost nothing" because it would cost too much, and thus impede the smooth operation of business. That is the naked reality.

Too often, catastrophic discourse serves to obscure the potential barbarism and dilute the issues in a vague overall sense of guilt: "Don't waste time quibbling about the responsibilities," "we are all guilty," "we must all agree to make efforts", etc. Meanwhile, the energy lobbies quietly continue burning coal and oil non-stop.

This leads me to the second part of your question about changing our behavior as producers and consumers. Following on what I said earlier, it is worth noting that employees are incapable of changing their behavior as producers. Who produces, how, why, for whom, in what quantities, with what social and environmental impacts? In everyday life, only the bosses have the power to respond to these questions and, ultimately, they respond according to their profits. Employees can only try to have a say in management in order to challenge it and recognize their ability to do better, according to criteria other than profit. This is the dynamic of workers' control, and ecosocialists should think about how this old demand may be revisited in order to encompass environmental concerns.

In terms of consumption, I think it is necessary to distinguish between individual changes and collective changes. All in all, it is certainly better if someone who travels by plane offsets his CO2 emissions in one way or another, but this offset will mainly allow him to buy a good conscience on the cheap while diverting him from the political struggle for indispensable structural changes. To promote this kind of behavior is to engage in "greenwashing" and it actually means to "continue as before."

Collective changes are a different matter. They help to validate another possible logic, favour the invention of alternative practices, and contribute to the realization that structural changes are necessary, and will come

about through social mobilization. Those changes, such as group purchases of organic produce from farmers, or urban community gardening, are to be encouraged.

Can we fight against climate tipping regardless of the financial and social costs that it represents? Is it urgent to build another model and risk jeopardizing the entire society? Between nature and civilization, what choice is there?

D.T.: To say that another climate policy would jeopardize the entire society in the name of some priority of nature over civilization is to stand reality on its head! What happens in reality is that the present policy jeopardizes civilization while causing enormous and irreversible damage to nature, which is our common heritage. This policy is completely subordinated to the dogma of cost efficiency, and we see what that produces: peanuts. We are heading straight toward the wall.

Of course, a different policy cannot pretend that the cost of various measures is of no importance: between two equivalent strategies to reduce emissions, it is reasonable to choose the one that will be of least cost to the community, all other conditions being equal. But at bottom there must first be a different policy, guided by criteria other than cost, and especially qualitative criteria. In technical terms, an essential criterion is that of energy efficiency at the systemic level.

The great American ecologist Barry Commoner advanced this argument more than twenty years ago. It is thermodynamically absurd, he said, to transport coal over thousands of kilometres to produce electricity which, then conveyed over hundreds of kilometers, will be used to heat household water, something that can easily be done with a solar water heater. In social terms, a major criterion must be the protection of people and their well-being, particularly the protection of the poorest. This criterion today is widely ignored, hence the tragedy in Pakistan, among others.

Finally, do you think your ecosocialist

project is feasible in the near future?

D.T.: The feasibility of this project depends entirely on the balance of forces between capitalism on the one hand, and the exploited and oppressed on the other. This balance of forces currently favours capital, we should not kid ourselves. But there is no third way possible: the attempts to save the

climate through market mechanisms consistently reveal their ecological inefficiency and their social injustice. There is no way other than resistance. It alone can change the balance of forces and impose partial reforms pointing in the right direction. Copenhagen was a first step, a second was the summit in Cochabamba. Let us keep going, let us unite, let us

mobilize and build a global movement to save the climate in social justice. This will be more effective than all the lobbying efforts of those who nourish illusions about a green capitalism.

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## The revolution is on the march!

26 January 2011, by **Ataulfo Riera**

Throughout the week which followed the fall of Ben Ali, demonstrations demanding the dissolution of his party, the RCD, became more and more frequent, going so far as to invade and ransack the party's offices in every city in the country. Under the pressure of the masses this party has de facto liquidated itself, but its principal cadres still hold the key positions in the state apparatus, at the levels of administration, production, police and of course government.

### A weakened provisional government

In Tunis, the demonstrators were joined by thousands of young unemployed who had come in a caravan from the centre of the country, including those from Sidi Bouzid where the revolt started last December, to demand the fall of the provisional government. Thousands of demonstrators occupy the street permanently, including defying the curfew. There is an unmistakable sign of the times: officers of the army and the police now ask them politely, though in vain, to disperse...

On Friday January 21, increasingly put in difficulty by this pressure, Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi had however promised to leave the political scene after the elections...just as Ben Ali had done shortly before his

fall! He also announced that all the antidemocratic laws, such as the antiterrorist law and the press code, would be removed from the statute book. Opposition political parties have been legalized and, faced with the revolt in the prisons, thousands of prisoners were amnestied. But that is not enough: the street demands a radical and immediate change and, as comrade Fathi Chamki [1] underlines, legitimacy is today in the street, not in the institutions.

Thus, the provisional government decided to reopen the schools and the universities on Monday January 24, but the General Union of Primary School Education immediately launched a call for a general strike "until the fall of the government". Reaffirming its "complete commitment to the demands of our people, which mean bringing down the present government, considered as a prolongation of the Ben Ali regime", this trade union demands "the formation of a provisional government which excludes the enemies of our populations".

Indeed, for the majority of the Tunisian people - who evoke it with humour: "We drove out Ali Baba, but the Forty Thieves are still there" - one thing is clear: the politicians from the Ben Ali regime who still hold the key positions must be driven out, and not only from the "government of national union". They must disappear from the scene and the guiltiest among them

must be judged and convicted for their crimes. Moreover, things will undoubtedly not stop there, because the masses want a profound change, not only democratic, but also social, in economic policies, in the control over and distribution of the wealth of the country.

The bourgeoisie is trying desperately to conduct a face-lifting operation, with the support of imperialism, especially French and American. In the West, the capitalist media today deride the despot whose crimes they covered for so long. Ben Ali and his wife are now used as scapegoats, to divert attention from the support that the dictatorship enjoyed from business circles. And to hide the backstairs manoeuvres aimed at cheating the Tunisian people of the fruits of their victory. It is in this way that the "markets" in particular have entered the dance. By revising downward their sacrosanct "rating" of Tunisia, they seek to punish the masses who had the unbearable audacity to revolt not only against one despot but also against his neoliberal policies. As long as the masses stay mobilized, these attempts will remain jeopardized and the situation will continue to be extremely unstable.

### Workers' control

During the demonstrations on January 22 and 23, something unheard of happened: 2000 police officers - some

of whom wore red arm-bands - marched together and joined the demonstrators. Although it was obviously an attempt to excuse and rehabilitate themselves in the eyes of the people, after the fierce repression of the last few weeks, it seems also that a real process of the development of political consciousness is taking place. Thus, these police officers are demanding the creation of a trade union and, as one of them said "We are workers too", while for a second, "the revolution is for everyone. We also demand our rights, in particular pay rises".

Less "spectacular" but without any doubt more fundamental: the employees and civil servants of the state enterprises, the ministries and the central administrations of the state are organizing occupations of their work places to demand a purge and the dismissal of those in leading positions, almost all notorious members of the RCD. In several cases, this demand has even been successfully implemented, as with the National Social Security Office, the Star insurance company and the BNA bank, where the managers were driven out to the jeers of the workers.

Forms of workers' control are also developing, above all concerning the accounting books of companies, in order to lay bare the corruption of the many employers linked to the Ben Ali regime. The employees of the central administration of taxes, while demanding the immediate resignation of the managing director, took control of the files in order to inquire into tax avoidance by the elites.

The role of the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT) -which has 500,000 members in a country whose population is almost 70 per cent urban, and whose militants are very much present in the demonstrations - appears more and more as a central element in the process, thanks to it having been taken in hand by the rank and file and by its left wing. The bureaucratic leaders who were linked to the regime have been pushed aside

and, after having forced the withdrawal of UGTT ministers from the provisional government, the trade-union rank and file pushed the leadership to formally take a position in favour of the resignation of the present government, to call for rolling strikes to support this demand and to constitute a "revolutionary government" with the political forces of the opposition.

## **All power to the revolutionary people: For a workers' government!**

Through the committees of self-defence, of supply and of workers' control in the workplaces, phenomena of dual power are appearing, while the repressive forces of the state apparatus are starting to divide, part of them taking the side of the people. Eventually, these forces could disintegrate, if committees of soldiers and police, closely linked to the popular committees, make their appearance.

The situation in Tunisia corresponds perfectly to the traditional definition given by Lenin of a revolutionary situation: those above can no longer govern as before, while those below no longer want to be governed as before. The popular process, by its dynamics, which are specific to every authentic revolutionary situation, openly poses the question of power and traces the perspective of its permanent growing over into a socialist revolution. Such an outcome is not absolutely guaranteed, but it is possible.

Besides the elementary democratic demands - a purge of the state apparatus, convocation of a constituent assembly, organization of really democratic elections - the maintenance, the extension and centralization/articulation of the positions which the Tunisian workers

are conquering will be a key question in the weeks to come. The ruling class will do its utmost to claw them back.

For the moment - but only for the moment - the Tunisian bourgeoisie, the principal support of the dictatorship, is discredited and finds itself in a precarious situation, while imperialism was caught off balance by the breadth and depth of the popular uprising. The moderate opposition is quite weak, and as for the Islamists, although they are recognized by the masses as a political current which must be legitimately included in the democratic process, they do not have real mass influence.

In this situation, the UGTT is today the only mass workers' organization which has the confidence of the population. It could play, if it gets rid definitively of the bureaucrats who were accomplices of or complaisant with the regime, a decisive role, with the active support of the revolutionary activists, of the Tunisian radical Left and with the support of internationalist solidarity. The putting forward of the demand for a workers' government of the UGTT based on the popular committees, could quickly take on its full importance. The invitation that the leadership of the UGTT has just launched, to constitute with it a "revolutionary government" goes in this direction, but it is addressed to all the political forces of the opposition, including its bourgeois wing. New clarifications will therefore be necessary.

Finally, as the comrades of the Maghreb Commission of the New Anticapitalist Party in France underline: "Faced with the world-wide crisis of capitalism, the workers and the population of Tunisia show us the only possible way out: the most resolute struggle. To organize and fight here for an alternative to the capitalist world order and to imperialism which is at the heart of it, is also a support for all oppressed people, just as their struggles are a support and a real encouragement for us."

# Indonesia: Remembering mass-murder

24 January 2011, by **Alex de Jong**

The predominant form of the killings was an anti-Communist pogrom, targeting not only the leaders of the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) and its allied organizations but also their rank and file. Thousands died in these targeted, systematic killings. The outcome of the killings was the establishment of Suharto's Orde Baru or New Order dictatorship. "1965" became the founding myth of Suharto's regime. The memory of it was simultaneously repressed and instrumentalized, formed and denied: "don't talk about the killings", "the killings were a period of mass hysteria", "society ran amok", "the killings were caused by fighting among the Communists", "don't support communism, remember how they killed those people in 1965" - and, in hushed voices; "don't support communism, remember how we crushed the PKI".

## Before 1965: a society in crisis

Indonesia in the early sixties was a society in turmoil: politically, socially and economically. The Indonesian state was barely fifteen years old, officially created on 17 August 1945 and winning its independence after a four year guerrilla-war against Dutch colonial forces. Politics in the post-war period were a major issue in the lives of many Indonesians. In the first general elections of 1955, the turnout was staggering, almost reaching 100 percent. Indonesia's political landscape was varied and lively, with parties and affiliated groups spread throughout society: from credit cooperations to prayer groups, from peasant unions to chess clubs. The conglomerations of a political center and allied organizations were known as *aliran* or streams. The *aliran* were daily facts of life - they were not campaigning organizations that were

only active in election time but structured the lives of their sympathizers the whole year round. What *aliran* one belonged to was often "the primary identity for an individual" as Indonesia expert Max Lane writes in his *Unfinished Nation. Indonesia before and after Suharto*.

The PKI *aliran* was the biggest. Formed in 1920, the PKI was one of the oldest Communist parties outside the Soviet Union. After being repressed by Dutch colonial authorities following a badly executed revolt in 1927, it was reorganized when the Japanese occupation ended. After only barely escaping complete destruction by the new Indonesian government in 1948 (after the so-called "Madiun affair", a supposed revolt by pro-PKI militia) the PKI made great strides in winning support and influence with a strategy of peaceful, institutional power building. PKI secretary general D. N. Aidit formulated a theory that the Indonesian state had two aspects: one progressive or "pro-people", identified with the nationalist president Sukarno, one reactionary or "anti-people". For Communists, the task was to support and strengthen the progressive aspect of the state. The theory contradicted Lenin's insistence on destroying the bourgeois state and the Marxist theory of the class basis of states - but the phenomenal growth of the PKI seemed to support Aidit's pragmatism.

The party claimed to have increased, between July 1959 and October 1962, from 1.5 million to 2 million members while its allied mass-organizations supposedly grew from 7.8 to over 11 million, before reaching a peak of 20 million a few years later. In the elections for the Constituent Assembly, the party won 16.47 percent of the vote. In 1962 Sukarno, who had concentrated power in his own hands at the expense of the parliament and appointed his own

cabinet - a system he called "guided democracy" - gave PKI leaders Aidit and Lukman posts as cabinet-ministers.

The PKI was not only active on the level of electoral politics. During 1956-7, almost all Dutch-owned companies in Indonesia were occupied by workers. These occupations came at the peak of mass mobilizations, spearheaded by Sukarno and the PKI, against the continuing role of imperialist powers in the Indonesian economy. However, the party watched as control over companies that were officially "nationalized" was turned over to the army: officers were appointed to manage the newly 'nationalized' factories and ruthlessly suppressed any trade-union activity in the factories.

Indonesian society became increasingly polarized along left-right divisions. On the right, the only grouping with the weight and the organization to match the PKI was the army. Opponents of the PKI cultivated ties with army officers who opposed PKI's policies and its suggestions like organizing a people's militia. Meanwhile, the PKI's role was limited exactly by its policy of an alliance with president Sukarno. Bung Karno, as he was called, kept balancing between the right-wing and its supporters in the army and the PKI and its mass movements. Already in the late 1920's Sukarno had begun using the slogan of NASAKOM - Nasionalisme, Agama (Religion) and Komunisme - to signal the combination of Communism and Islam in the cause of Indonesian nationalism. Sukarno's thinking subordinated the Islamic and Communist movements into a supposedly encompassing Nationalist movement.

Despite the continuing talk by Sukarno of "continuing the Indonesian revolution", social-economic change was little. There was a gap between



the fiery anti-imperialist rhetoric of Sukarno, that especially targeted Dutch, English and American “neo-colonialism”, and daily reality that helped feed a general feeling of crisis. Frustrated, the party engaged in a bitter *Kulturkampf* against supposedly ‘reactionary’ or ‘anti-people’ artists and writers – alienating a part of the intelligentsia that supported the anti-PKI forces. The ideology of NASAKOM and the popular figure of Sukarno himself help to shield the party from direct attacks by the right-wing.

But as soon as the party no longer subordinated its actions to policies of national unity, confrontations became inevitable. In 1964 and 1965, unable to ignore the demands of poor peasants, the PKI started to follow a more independent approach in the countryside. In 1960 a fairly progressive law on land-reform, the “Agrarian and Crop-Sharing Law”, which aimed to eliminate big landlords, distribute land to rural laborers and enforce a division of the harvest between tenants and landowners, was adopted. However, the law had been mostly ineffective since its introduction: implementation of the law had been sabotaged by the predominantly conservative state bureaucracy. Attempts by the PKI to enforce the law through mass actions, the so-called *Aksi Sepihak* (“unilateral actions”), led to intense polarization. And they failed as local landlords, often Islamic leaders and associated with right-wing parties and the orthodox Muslim (*santri*) aliran, mobilized supporters, which lead to fighting and occasional casualties. In a strongly *santri* region like east-Java, by early 1965 the PKI was already on the defensive.

The PKI saw in Sukarno the leader of an “anti-imperialist”, “national bourgeoisie” – but in confrontations with the army, the weakness of this ally became visible. Even more, confronted with the deep division over the land-occupations, Sukarno nervously called for “unity” using his slogan of NASAKOM: “avoid the division of the nation, stop the hysteria, stop fighting, write NASAKOM on the banner”. But it had been exactly the deepening of the class-contradictions in the countryside that made continuation of the

NASAKOM policy impossible. The army controlled the major state-owned corporations and obstructed attempts by an increasingly left-wing Sukarno to regulate the economy. Like in the struggle over land-reform, the Indonesian Left found the army blocking the way to progressive change and Sukarno unable to change this.

From the end of 1957 on, Indonesia entered a deep economic crisis – a crisis that can not be blamed entirely on Sukarno’s policies – the price of import export-products for the world-market collapsed – but one he was unable to resolve. Inflation soared: the value of the rupiah fell week by week. With money losing its value, landholders were even more determined to keep hold of their possessions. The supporters of *Revolusi* grew more and more frustrated while for their enemies the danger of revolution grew larger and larger as Sukarno and his supporters kept calling for a “revolution”. Sukarno’s revolutionary rhetoric more and more contrasted with reality. The contradiction and the economic crisis undermined his authority, worrying the PKI that had seen the limits of its power.

## The September 30th Movement

In the early hours of the first of October of 1965, at about 3.15 AM, soldiers boarded trucks and went to the houses of general A.H. Nasution, minister of Defence, Lieutenant General Achmad Yani, commander of the army, and five staff generals of Yani: S. Parman, Mas Tirtodarmo Haryono, R. Suprpto, Soetojo Siswomihardjo and Donald Ishak Panjaitan in the capital of Jakarta. These generals were generally considered to have right-wing sympathies and to be hostile to Sukarno. The soldiers belonged to a group called the “September 30th Movement” which claimed to support Sukarno. The goal of the action was, they would claim later, to prevent the right-wing generals from a coup against Sukarno by “arresting” them. However, Ahmad Yani, M. T. Haryono and D.I. Panjaitan were killed in their

homes, trying to avoid abduction. The most important target of the operation, Nasution, escaped capture: in the confusion his would-be kidnappers shot his five-year old daughter and a guard before returning with Nasution’s adjutant.

The kidnappers made themselves known in radio-broadcasts. The first broadcast on the national radio station was made at about 7.15 A.M. The report was in the form of a news-report, talking in the third person. Maybe this was meant to give a more reassuring character to the broadcast – but it would be one of many sources of confusion. The only name announced in the report was that of Lieutenant Colonel Untung, a battalion commander of the presidential guard who claimed the movement wished to prevent a ‘counterrevolutionary coup’ by a group identified as the ‘Council of generals’ (*Dewan Jenderal*). Although the participants in the September 30th Movement went against their superior officers, they claimed to be acting out of loyalty to their supreme commander, president Sukarno.

After receiving confirmation of the kidnappings, three leaders of the movement, brigadier general M. A. Supardjo, captain Sukirno and Major Bambang Supeno, tried to contact the president in his palace. But Sukarno was not at home. What would they have done if Sukarno had met them? Place him under arrest, as in a coup? Or were their professions of loyalty sincere? In that case, historian John Roosa suggests, they might have confronted him with the fact of the ‘arrest’ of the right-wing officers and asked for his support. Later broadcasts, in which the movement announces the dissolving of Sukarno’s government, would then be an improvised reaction to their failure to win the support of the leader they claimed to defend. No matter what Sukarno’s feelings on the movement were, it would have been extremely difficult for him politically to voice his support for the bloody kidnaps and the murder of at least three of the highest ranking officers in the country. But after the killings, there was no way back for the movement, even when the symbol of the *Revolusi* turned his back on them.

The operation of the September 30th Movement has been described as an 'unilateral retooling' attempt. During the intense power struggle of the early sixties, 'retooling' was the term for replacing leaders and politicians hostile to the PKI and its allies with more friendly ones. After the PKI's decision to shift from a strategy of the overthrow of the government to attempting to win power in the institutions of the state, 'retooling' became an important tactic to extend its influence. The theory that the September 30th Movement was a botched attempt at 'retooling' would explain many of the puzzles thrown up by the events: Why did the movement move ahead with so little military support? Why took it so long for them to officially announce the formation of a new government? Why the professions of loyalty to a president whose cabinet they later declared 'dissolved'?

It also explains why the PKI somewhat supported the movement at first but didn't attempt to mobilize the massive number of its sympathizers for a serious coup attempt. The party voiced sympathy for the movement through an editorial in its newspaper *Harian Rakyat*. Untung and his compatriots received some help from PKI-affiliated transport and communications unions and a small number of unarmed members of the party's youth organisation, *Pemuda Rakyat* - but mass mobilizations in support of a coup never materialized. After the September 30th Movement announced they would 'dissolve' the government and new organs of 'revolutionary power' would be installed, right-wing forces under the command of major-general Suharto, then head of military intelligence and of KOSTRAD, a rapid response reserve force, quickly squashed the movement. Small in number, badly organized and without mass support, the rebel soldiers were no match for Suharto's troops.

After setting events in motion, the movement, its actions and whatever motives it had or claimed, melted away, overshadowed by the army's violence and the motivations it imputed to the movement. Sukarno tried to play down the significance of the movement as nothing more than a

'ripple in the ocean of the Indonesian revolution' - but the military was determined to make the events of early October the most significant historical events since independence.

## The killing fields

No sooner had troops loyal to Suharto restored their control of Jakarta than a massive propaganda campaign was launched. Army-run newspapers came up with the far-fetched acronym Gestapu for Gerakan Tiga Puluh September/ September 30th Movement in order to associate it with the secret police of the Nazis. At the same time, the movement was presented as a cats-paw of the Communists, trying to seize power in a Chinese backed coup. The propaganda campaign was not limited to denunciations of the party's leadership but cast all of its supporters as involved in an nefarious plot. The goal of the PKI, according to the army scenario, was to seize all power and install an atheist, sinful dictatorship. Stories circulated that Communists had drawn up extensive death-lists, prepared pits to dump bodies in and were planning on torturing their victims.

By painting them as threats to two pillars of authority, patriarchy and religion, the army mobilized support. The supposed role of members of Gerwani, the women's organization allied with the PKI, was especially grotesque. Gerwani members were alleged to have danced naked in front of the captured officers before they were castrated and dumped into a pit. Afterward, the Gerwani members were said to have engaged in an orgy with PKI members. This kind of fantasy, a clear example of projection, functioned to mobilize men in the witch-hunt for supposed Communists. Parallel, the atheist character of Communist ideology was emphasized, implying that the Communists were a threat to religion - ignoring that many Communists were practicing believers and the party had even drawn on certain interpretations of Islamic teachings to attract people to its cause.

The army made it clear that the Communist threat had to be eradicated

by violence. On the 8th of October the army newspaper *Angkatan Bersendjata* declared: 'the sword must be met by the sword'. General Nasution himself would play a prominent role in the campaign against the PKI. In an address to anti-PKI students he declared that the PKI had 'committed treason' and had to be 'destroyed'. PKI-supporters had to be 'immediately smashed'. The extermination of the PKI aliran proceeded in a number of escalating phases. The first was administrative measures, banning the PKI and allied organizations, suspending PKI representatives and purging Communists from government departments. The official news agency, Antara - suspected of being 'pro-communist' - was placed under military control and dozens of journalists were arrested. These administrative steps cleared the ground for the massive use of violence.

After Yani's death, command of the army had gone to general Suharto, a position he effectively kept even though Sukarno appointed Major General Pranoto the new Army Chief. For the duration of the crisis, Suharto had been given responsibility for 'restoring security and order' after a five hours-long meeting with Sukarno. Two weeks later, Suharto would take formal control of the army and from there ascend to the position of head of state.

From the beginning, the army covered its tracks, making it difficult for future generations to find out who was responsible for what or what the sequence of events were. Even while army newspapers and officers called for 'crushing' the PKI, instructions inside the army were conveyed only informally. Much of the killing was done by civilians, organized and encouraged by the military. This phase of the mass killing started a week after the coup, when on the 8th of October a crowd, consisting mainly of anti-PKI Islamic groups, set the Jakarta headquarters of the PKI on fire. Army special forces armed and trained anti-communist youth-groups. Working together, the army and youth-groups tracked down PKI members, using membership-lists obtained from destroyed PKI offices.

At the the end of October, Lieutenant-General Sarwo Edhie emphasized in a talk to the Joint Security Staff the importance of 'psywar' - psychological warfare - through pamphlets and 'spreading information'. In his memoirs, he writes that the army 'encouraged anti-communist civilians to help with the job' and describes training right-wing groups before 'sending them out to kill the communists'. The army used civilian groups and indirect orders, aware that Sukarno still supported the PKI and many people were still sympathetic to this alliance. The time between the failed coup-attempt and the first waves of killings was used by the military to take administrative measures to weaken the organizational structure of the Communist aliran, extend the military's influence over the media and spread anti-PKI propaganda. Only after this, the killing started. In Bali for example 'the arrival of army units with death lists' played a 'key role in prompting the killings'.

The highpoint of the killings was reached in December 1965, two months after the failed coup, and would continue on a diminished scale until March 1966. It is still unknown exactly how many died: conservative estimates put the minimum at 500.000; others give a total number of one or even two million.

The systematic, planned character of the mass-killing doesn't mean there were no other, more or less spontaneous, dynamics in play as well. A number of Chinese were victimized because they were seen as foreigners or, like in other South-East Asian countries, were associated with exploitative trade. Zealous Muslims and Christians attacked PKI supporters as 'enemies of God'. But these religious and ethnic conflicts were side-effects of a political purge. The mass-killing was an attack by the army on a political rival - other dynamics blossomed in a context in which supposed PKI-members were already put outside the law. The persistent idea that many people were killed in looting or the settling of private scores is not supported by much evidence: the overwhelming motivation of the killers was indeed to kill 'communists'.

Still, the scale of the killings poses a problem for the theory of a 'political purge'. In other countries in which a military dictatorship took power to crush a powerful left-wing movement, the number of people killed was far smaller. Thousands of people were killed during Pinochet's dictatorship and up to 30.000 by the Argentinean junta - but even taking the large size of Indonesia into account, this is a qualitative difference with 500.000 to one million. To explain the scale of the killings, the purge has to be put into context. The deeper the implantation of the left-wing movements, the fiercer the violence used to crush it. Indonesia would never see the kind of resistance that troubled so many Latin-American junta's and neither has the left been able to recover on a scale similar to Latin-America. Seen in this perspective, Suharto and his companions were just more efficient than the Latin-American dictatorships.

The higher the number of victims, the higher the number of perpetrators must have been. Considering the relatively short time in which the killings took place and the way in which many were killed, with primitive weapons and tools, the number of perpetrators must have been high - Benedict Anderson has estimated it must have been in the tens of thousands. What motivated all these people? It's unlikely they were all directly organized by the army, there must have been a significant element of motivation 'from below' involved.

## The role of foreign powers

The destruction of the largest Communist party outside the 'Communist bloc' was greeted with enthusiasm in Western political circles. Recalling the mass killings, Howard Federspiel, the United States' State Department's intelligence staffer for Indonesia, observed that 'No one cared as long as they were Communists, that they were being butchered.' Indeed, the US and other western governments had encouraged the creation of conditions that would lead to a violent clash. This kind of intervention was not new either. The fact that Sukarno himself almost

crushed the PKI after the Madiun affair was an important reason why the US at first supported him against the Dutch. As Sukarno took an increasingly radical course, they turned against him.

American presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson at first implemented programs of economic, technical and military assistance to encourage a greater role for the army in Indonesia's economic and political life as a counterweight against the PKI. In mid 1964 the US went further, actively trying to provoke a clash between the army and PKI. American officials realized Sukarno would not drop the alliance with the PKI and that his popularity made direct action like a military coup very risky. But something like a failed pro-PKI coup would be the perfect excuse. The Americans weren't the only ones trying to provoke a crisis in Indonesia: even earlier, Britain had adopted policy to if possible provoke 'a prolonged struggle for power leading to civil war or anarchy'.

Despite this, the events of late 1965 took the Western intelligence services by surprise. There is no real proof for the theory that the whole September 30th Movement was a trap, set-up by the CIA and Suharto. But somebody like US Assistant Secretary of State, George Ball, immediately recognized that 'If the Army does move they have [the] strength to wipe up [the] earth with [the] PKI and if they don't they may not have another chance.' At this point, the greatest fear of Western governments was that the army would not move fast enough and if it did move, it would not annihilate the social base of the PKI and leave the possibility of a resurgence of the Left open. The US, Britain and Australia all quickly offered their services to the army in its propaganda-campaign against the PKI.

When it became clear the army had actually embarked on a campaign of massive killings, the American embassy started discussing giving material aid to Suharto and his companions. As gruesome reports poured in, they still feared not enough people would be killed. Outside Indonesia, the official Western response to the massacres was mostly

silence. A limited but politically significant stream of aid, including the provision of small arms and cash to army officers, gave the generals the signal they could count on Western support. US officials turned over lists identifying thousands of PKI leaders and cadres to the Indonesian army, who used them to track down PKI members for arrest and execution. Since the Indonesian Communists had drawn closer and closer to the Chinese in the conflict between Moscow and Beijing, the Soviet Union made it known to the generals that 'if it comes down to a choice between the PKI or no PKI, the USSR would prefer the latter'. For the Western powers, the destruction of the PKI was necessary to secure the integration of the country in the global capitalist economy. And they were successful in it: during Suharto, Indonesia would faithfully follow western approved liberal economic policies.

## Rewriting history

One of many problems in evaluating the mass killing of 1965 and formulating an alternative to the discourse of the New Order is that this discourse is itself contradictory. Of course, the regime could not admit it was a product of massive bloodletting. At the same time, it had an interest in reminding everyone who would consider forming any kind of opposition just what it was capable of. The official version of the events was straightforward: the September 30th Movement was a front of the PKI, planning on seizing all power for itself and installing a dictatorship. By acting swiftly, the military claimed, it had 'saved the nation'. This interpretation of history was repeated time and time again, in schoolbooks, monuments and films shown every year to commemorate the deaths of the generals. Official and semi-official accounts of 1965, such as the 'National History of Indonesia' and the so-called 'white book' on 1965 ignored the killings that followed the violence of the September 30th Movement. The greatest name in official history was Nugroho Notosusanto, who was director of Pusat Sejarah Abri (the Center of Army History) before becoming Minister of Education and

Culture in the eighties. The school-texts based on the 'National History of Indonesia' he edited were so anti-intellectual and so stark in their anti-communism that they fueled a distrust among Indonesian students towards any kind of history. For the regime, apathy and cynicism - instead of enthusiastic endorsement of its view of history - were probably enough anyway.

Official history put the army at the center of a long tradition of struggle against enemies of the Indonesian nation. Dutch colonialism was of course one of those but 'Communism' became another. The Madiun affair was portrayed as a betrayal of the fight against the Dutch and of course the September 30th Movement was another example of 'treason'. The important role of the PKI and other left-wing groups in the Indonesian independence-movement was buried.

This didn't mean that the memory of the mass-killings of 1965 was silenced. Instead, the memory of the killings was relegated to the domain of rumors. The result was that the regime, without admitting responsibility for mass murder, could benefit from the fear left in its wake. Grueling stories of bloodletting circulated in areas where no killings had taken place, adding more confusion.

A national monument, called Lubang Buaya or Crocodile Pit, was build for the generals at the site where their bodies were dumped. It features six individual statues. Yani, the commanding officer, stands in the middle, pointing his finger to the pit as if reminding the audience of what happened. A large Garuda, the mythical bird that serves as the symbol of the Indonesian nation, hovers over the officers, linking the generals to the nation. A bronze frieze tells the official version of the kidnappings, murders and the noble role of the military. Before its intervention, there's chaos, murder - after-wards, order is restored: the country is peaceful, protected by the army, developing, women again virtuous mothers. In a nearby museum, diorama's repeat the official story, including the gruesome torture. Artifacts like Yani's car and one of the

trucks used by the kidnappers emphasize the authentic nature of the site.

For the New Order, 1965 was more than just its birth moment: whenever it had to deal with opposition, it invoked 'the communist threat' for its repression and as argument for the continuity of the New Order. Paradoxically, this meant that this most anti-Communist regime could never declare the final victory over its hated enemy. Indonesia became a country where the specter of Communism would not leave, not even after the global implosion of the Soviet bloc in the early nineties. The threat had to be invoked time and time again. After 1965, the PKI was shattered - its members and supporters lost their political compass with the disappearance of the leadership and Sukarno's fall from power. The sudden implosion of Sukarno's rule discredited the whole of the PKI's approach. An organization build for agitation within the limits set by the Indonesian state, the PKI was completely unprepared for any kind of underground resistance. Although some kind of underground activity continued throughout the New Order, attempts to organize resistance of any kind were rare and weak - the army's operations against Communists after 1965 were not a counterinsurgency but the hunt for survivors of a defeated movement.

Still, it was in the army's interest to exaggerate the capacities of the PKI, always fighting a Communist menace that now really had become a ghost. It was the army that would determine what the Communist enemy looked like. This made it possible for them to accuse the most unlikely candidates to be 'Communists' - something that was akin to a death-threat. The continuing threat to 'national security', epitomized by Communism, played a large role in the army's doctrine of a 'dual function', *dwifungsi*, in both politics and national security. The continuing emphasis on a persisting threat to national security was formalized in 1978 when the army organized the National Defense Institute (Lembaga Pertahanan Nasional-Lemhannas). This 'military education institute' set up a program called the National Vigilance

Refresher Course (Penataran Kewaspadaan Nasional-Tarpadnas) aimed at teaching both officers and civilians about the supposed threats to national security. The 'Refresher course' was partly a reaction on student protests against the Suharto regime. One of the course documents from 1979 stated that a 'New Left' had stepped in the PKI's footsteps of organizing communist activity, now by mobilizing students and intellectuals. According to the National Defense Institute, the PKI had after 1965 formed a 'formless organization' (organisasi tak terbentuk) consisting of cells that tried to infiltrate legitimate organizations.

Suharto's regime embarked on a deep going social and political remodeling of Indonesian society. The political system was turned into a kind of triangle, with Golkar - the state party, originally established in '64 by the military as an umbrella for anti-communist groups - firmly at the top. Underneath were the only two legal other parties into which all existing parties were forced to merge: one 'Islamic', the other 'secular'. Even during the increasingly autocratic rule of Sukarno's 'Guided Democracy', political debate had been relatively free and Indonesian society regularly saw mass political mobilizations. Suharto's regime would be the complete opposite. In his book 25 Years of Accelerated Modernization of Development, the architect of the political set-up of the New Order, general Ali Murtopo, outlined its principles. Describing the Sukarno years, he wrote that 'the mass of people, especially those in the villages, always fell prey to the political and ideological interests' of political parties, which led the people to 'ignore the necessities of daily life, the need for development and improvement of their own lives, materially as well as spiritually'. Instead, the New Order would follow a policy of 'depolitisation', defined as 'freeing the people from political manipulation' so that the people would be 'occupied wholly with development efforts'.

This sums up the distinctive elements of the New Order's ideology: a deeply elitist attitude towards the lower classes and the fetish of

'development'. The people in the villages had been the most numerous supporters of Sukarno and the PKI, for the generals they were backward, lacking in development. Instead of busying themselves with politics, they should work to 'develop' the country. The paternalist elitism that shut out the largest part of the population from active politics was justified by reminding the public of the dangers of intense political polarization and what had happened when 'the people ran amok'.

These ideas didn't fall out of the sky: prejudices from educated city-dwellers, like the generals, against people from the countryside were not new. And neither were the complaints about political chaos: Sukarno himself had defended the curtailment of democracy under 'Guided democracy' with the argument that political disagreements were overwhelming the country. The military's nationalist rhetoric, that squarely placed the enemy outside the nation, was not new either. The PKI had played down the importance of class struggle inside Indonesia because such a policy would have been in contradiction with Sukarno's emphasis in national unity.

Suharto named himself the 'father of development': for those who profited from it, economic progress was often reason enough to accept the military's monopoly on political power and Suharto's grandiose abuses of power and privileges. Even the Islamic groups that had supported Suharto's coup were neutralized and shut out from politics. The dominant discourse for the decades between 1975, when the New Order regime took its final form, and 1998, when it fell, was one of rising general prosperity, which supposedly depended on acceptance of the control of the country by the army and the suppression of dissent and parallel. Over 2000 books are estimated to have been banned during Suharto's role, the majority of these dealing with '1965'. Indonesian nationalism changed from Sukarno's 'anti-imperialist', Third-Worldist variety to one that was focused on national cooperation for development.

## A new narrative?

The fall of Suharto in 1998 and attempts to democratize Indonesia ('Reformasi') strongly contributed to Indonesians ability to formulate an alternative interpretation of '1965'. But any kind of 'rehabilitation' of the Indonesian left in the writing of history will still be a long process. Many of the supporters of the New Order are still in power, years after the fall of the regime itself. And after more than 30 years of continuous repetition, the New Order's version of history has taken a life of its own. Whole generations of elites were incubated by the 'New Order-as-social-order'. Although Suharto was undoubtedly the leader of the New Order regime, he was supported by a coalition of interests. After the fall of Suharto himself and the official restoration of democracy, these people merely reinvented themselves as 'reformers' and 'democrats'. Employing more fashionable rhetoric, former New Order supporters dominate Indonesia's 'democratic' institutions.

The example of president Abdurrahman 'Gus Dur' Wahid's 21 month term as president, 20th October 1999 to July 23th 2001, is instructive. Although he was the chairperson of Nahdlatul Ulama, a Muslim religious organization whose youth-wing Anser played an important role in the killings of '65, Gus Dur himself was a progressive liberal and the first national political figure to apologize for the killings. His attempts to reform the Indonesian state were continuously frustrated by remnants of the New Order. His attempt to formally lift the ban on Communism, created in 1966, was one of his most controversial moves: it was met with hostility and failed. An alliance between the military and political rivals removed him from power.

Unwillingness to confront the past is not only the result of a decades long indoctrination. Many ordinary people were participants in the massacres of 1965. Any re-examination of 65 will create feelings of anxiety and maybe guilt. And of fear: the New Order propaganda used to suggest that surviving Communists or their



children or grandchildren would one day try to take revenge.

The orthodox nationalist school of history is then still dominant in post-Reformasi. The writers of 'national history' refuse to confront the revelations made in the much more free press of post-1998. At the end 1999 the Education Department issued a guide for teachers to cope with the discrepancy between 'official' (resmi) and 'media' accounts of history. The guide was coordinated by a former protégé of Notosusanto. The reason given for it was that 'uncertainty' would end in 'negative consequences for national togetherness'.

If one group has an interest in reformulating history, it would be the victims and the Left that follows in their footsteps. It should be kept in mind that the fall of the New Order regime was the result of the combining of social unrest and a particular acute manifestation of the Asian economic crisis. On its own, the fragmented opposition movement would not have had the strength to put up a real challenge to Suharto. The leading leftwing force in the Reformasi period was the PRD (Partai Rakyat Demokratik or People's Democratic Party) which never had more than a few hundred active members. Still, it was frequently attacked as a new incarnation of the PKI. Even after the fall of Suharto, PRD leaders were arrested and tortured. Going back to the almost legendary figure of the revolutionary socialist leader Tan Malaka, Indonesia however knows a tradition of left-wing historical writings. But the fragile left-wing movement of Indonesia has so far not been able to really challenge to New Order orthodoxy. The space opened up by Reformasi has however allowed dozens of books about 1965 to appear, many of them critical of the New Order viewpoint. The criticism of New Order history and attempts to rehabilitate the Indonesian left is not limited to books but also includes periodicals, exhibitions and documentaries.

In this context, one of the most important figures is novelist

Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Already an important writer before 1965, when he was arrested for belonging to Lekra - the Communist allied Institute for People's Culture - he wrote prodigiously during his 14 years of imprisonment. Much of his work is historical and concerned with showing the role of 'common people' in making history - directly contradicting the New Order's elitism. After his release from imprisonment, Pramoedya founded, together with two other former political prisoners, the publishing house Hasta Mitra. Former political prisoners remained pariahs in Indonesia: their passports declared their status as former prisoners and they were required to regularly report to the police. Still, Pramoedya, Hasyim Rachman and Joesoef Isak, all coming from the left-wing of 'Sukarnoism', defied the ban on publishing works written by former political prisoners, among them Pramoedya's novels. The publications of Hasta Mitra have played an important role in creating an alternative to orthodoxy.

Autobiographies written by surviving PKI members and supporters show that even during the height of the New Order's influence, alternative discourses were kept alive - although just barely. But this kind of memory poses problems of its own. Many of these were written years, even decades, after the events they describe. As such, they might be more relevant in evaluating what people felt in the wake of Reformasi than how they experienced 1965 and its aftermath. And politics is not limited to the macro-level of the state and state-sanctioned history. These texts have been written as challenges to the New Order's discourse but are situated in a context where the demonization of the PKI and anti-Communism are very strong. This has lead their writers to adopt a defensive posture, avoiding for example the involvement of the PKI aliran in repression and intimidation of political opponents before 1965. PKI activities are presented first and foremost as legal and as in support of the legitimate president, Sukarno.

This defensive posture papers over the contradictions in Indonesian that would give '1965' its shape. And the

desire to redeem the PKI also leads to denying the possibility of any Communist involvement in or support for the September 30th Movement. Instead, theories that cast Suharto as the evil mastermind plotting the whole course of events are set up. Like the tales spun by the New Order, this is a political useful myth - but it also mystifies what happened in these tragic days.

In 1999, journalists curated an exhibition called 'Presenting Three Orders of Yogyakarta-Solo photojournalists' of photo's by both journalists and student-activists. The 'three orders' refers to Sukarno's Old Order, Suharto's New Order and the Reformasi era. One of the pictures that drew the most attention was taken shortly before the killings started. It depicts a group of young people at a rally of the PKI in Yogyakarta. The orator is not visible, one sees only the crowd of listeners. They seem to be relaxed and even enjoying themselves. In the center of the photo, a young woman looks at the camera: she's smiling and seems to be full of life. As one writer described the picture; 'there is nothing sinister in this photograph, nothing that would conform to the evil image of communists perpetuated by the New Order regime'.

The reactions to the picture are a snapshot of post-Reformasi attitudes to 1965. Visitors felt sympathy for the people in the picture - the 'evil Communists' had become humans again. But this sympathy partly rested on denying the victims a part of their identity: the idealistic youth depicted is supposed to not 'really have known' what the PKI planned, not to have been 'real Communists'. The taboo on their ideas remains so strong it is impossible to reconcile the idea that they were people, 'just like us', and Communists as well. Recognizing the humanity of the victims of 1965 is undoubtedly an important first step. But remembering the human tragedy teaches us little about what happened. For Indonesian society to come to term with its past, the political convictions of the victims, so central to their lives and their deaths, also need to be recognized.

# The people of Europe should audit the debt

22 January 2011, by **Éric Toussaint**

Now he says : The people of Europe should audit their creditors. It is not logical to repay illegitimate debts . Debt default and the denial of debt repayment have been linked to a national disaster. These “revelation images” are aimed to make people accept the policies that are being applied.

The Committee’s work in Ecuador has recently been mentioned in the Greek Parliament by Sofia Sakorafa. But could the experience of Ecuador be helpful in Greece? Eric Toussaint thinks so: “While the economies of the two countries are different, the structure of Greek public debt has a lot in common with developing countries.

First, Greece is financing a part of debt in the form of bonds by the Government authorities (“securitization of public debt”), a technique used by Ecuador. Second, another large part of the Greek debt is in the form of bank loans, which is also the case for developing countries. Third, as a result of the rescue plan in May 2010, Greece has borrowed from the IMF.

In other words, what is happening in Greece today is not very different from what has happened in many developing countries in recent decades, namely, through the IMF-imposed “Washington consensus”.

Eric Toussaint sees another common element: “Ecuador’s debt was mainly owed to the banks in the U.S. In 200 Ecuador abandoned its national currency and adopted the U.S. Dollar, the currency of its lender. Similarly Greece has the same currency with its lenders, such as France and Germany, the Euro.”

The last observation does not mean that defaulting on the debt will necessarily be accompanied by exit

from the euro: “There is not an automatic exit from the eurozone if Greece is to stop paying. Greece will have to decide if it wants to remain in the eurozone after a dialogue in the Parliament and with the Greek people.”

For Eric Toussaint, wages, pensions and savings can be secured. “If a state refuses to repay the debt, it saves money. In order to repay the debt, the state is using a very high volume of government spending money that could be used in order to pay salaries, to build public hospitals, schools and public agencies, to act to ensure the security of the country. The states that have defaulted up to now have realized that this has improved their ability to meet their obligations to their citizens.”

Also, considering citizens’ deposits, “the public authority must take responsibility and create a large public financial sector. The state can cover the cost of strengthening the banking system, by using the assets of the major banks’ shareholders.”

## **Domino effect**

Although the reasons the debt increased to this level are different in Greece, Mr. Toussaint insists that the debt is not an issue that is only concerning Greece. “Greeks have to understand that they are not the exception to the rule. What has happened in Greece since April 2010 was repeated in Ireland in October 2010, it will happen again in Portugal, Spain and Italy. It would really be a shame for the Greeks to believe that they are an exception and to fatally accept the terms imposed on them.”

## **Argentina - Russia. The default has saved them**

As a witness in defense of his claim for

defaulting on odious debts, Eric Toussaint refers to the Nobel laureate economist J. Stiglitz, who in a 2010 study revealed that the economies of countries such as Russia or Argentina have been in a better financial situation since defaulting and have been able to save money to boost growth.

## **Playing dirty: Foreign banks to take responsibility**

For Mr. Toussaint, Eurobonds are not a solution to our problem. First and foremost, he believes that the conditions for granting loans in Greece should be explored.

The question that we should primarily answer is: “Is it normal for citizens of a country like Greece, to repay a debt that is not legitimate?” If the loans had been made in the interests of citizens with respect for their basic needs and if the banks, mostly French and German, had acted carefully and rationally, then we would say that the debt should be repaid. But the bulk of debt is illegal and the bankers who purchased Greek titles must take their responsibilities. They have entered into loan agreements with unreasonable and illegal terms, and therefore they must accept the cancellation of a significant part of the debt.

Eric Toussaint refers to the “excessive military spending in Greece, much of which is due to Franco-German pressure.”

*This interview with Eric Toussaint was carried out by Nikitas Kouridakis for the Greek daily paper Ethnos tis Kyriakis Third Greek daily paper Ethnos tis Kyriakis is centre- left oriented paper, with the third biggest circulation (100.000 copies) in the country. The original version of the interview was published on 9 January 2011 [here](#).*

# All victory to the Tunisian Revolution; the forefront of the revolution in North Africa and the Middle East

19 January 2011, by **Al Mounadil-a**

Since 1987, Ben Ali together with the rotten and corrupt bourgeoisie; especially the families of his wife and his kinsman, the Trabelsi's and Materi's, have relied on the support of the police and security services to plunder the economy of the country, humiliating and starving them its people. The police alone have 150.000 members, without counting the army and the other forces of repression; meaning one policeman for each 27 Tunisians - more than anywhere else in the Magreb.

Ben Ali's regime was a brilliant pupil of the global financial institutions and particularly of French imperialism which cynically condoned his dictatorship of Ben Ali for the sake of their share in the so-called "Tunisian Miracle"; the Hong Kong of the North of Africa. Now they have been rudely awakened by the true miracle, the explosion of popular anger by the heroes who were the victims of Ben Ali and the policies of the World Bank.

The Tunisian Revolution started from Sidi Bouzid, triggered by the young Mohamed El-Bouazizi who burned himself alive as a protest against unemployment and indignity. This fire turned into a popular flame which increasingly spread across Tunisia and rocked its foundations.

From one demonstration to another, from one barricade to another and from one martyr to another; the uprising flourished and grew, resolutely making its way towards the palaces of the torturer of Carthage, demanding the head of the old dragon.

It has got what it wanted - the old

tyrant fled in panic. This is a great, important victory for the ordinary Tunisian people and all the peoples of the Great Maghreb and the Arab Amazigh region and for all oppressed and exploited people all over the world. It is an Arab, Amazigh and African proof that the will of the people is indomitable, and that the revolution is not just an illusion of out of date radical dreamers. The revolution is the blood and flesh running in the streets of Tunisia. Let all the reactionaries shudder everywhere because this revolution is inevitably infectious.

The Tunisian revolution has made a huge step forward, but its fate has not yet been decided yet. There is still a lot of rubbish to sweep out. The enemies of the revolution have not yet been decisively defeated, and the dragon of the counter-revolution is more than the head of an old tyrant.

The old political system is fully supported by all the reactionary forces of the world. That system is shaking, but it has not yet lost hope to escape from the grip of the street that throttles her. It still has the police force at its command. The revolution will not succeed in achieving the hopes of the Tunisian people if it the old regime has not been totally destroyed and replaced by the temporary government representing the revolutionary people - a government of the workers, poor peasants that oversees the election of a constituent assembly, setting the rules to govern the country at all levels through a new constitution.

Those that support the revolution cannot wait for an interim

government, but must seek to form worker and popular councils in factories, neighbourhoods, schools and also in the barracks. These councils need to exist at the local and the national level, directly elected and subject to immediate recall. They should be a revolutionary power to run the country and a revolutionary shield in the face of the counter-revolution and its propaganda, repression and games. The future of the revolution is based on the formation of these worker and popular councils and on their ability to win the army or at least some of them to their side. The arming of the revolutionary people based on these councils is the guarantee to push the revolution forward and protect it from any foreign interference.

We cannot trust those who remained from Ben Ali's gang! We must beware of liberal political forces which are eager to ride on the people's victory! All the power to the revolutionary people! This is the slogan that should unite all Tunisian revolutionaries.

- For a second, third, fourth, and fifth Tunisia! Against the tyrannical regimes sponsoring division! For a Great Democratic United and Socialist Maghreb! These are the slogans that should unite the revolutionaries in the Great Maghreb.

- All the victory to the Tunisian Revolution; the forefront of the revolution in the North of Africa and the Middle East.

January 15, 2011

[Almounadhil-a](#)

# No to neoliberalism! No to the free market! For a politics that serves the needs of the people!

19 January 2011, by **Chawki Salhi**

Everywhere, young people have expressed their anger against the rocketing price of basic products, their distress at the absence of housing, their despair before the scarcity of jobs, their unhappiness at a life without leisure, in a prison country that Europe prevents them from leaving, in a blocked society in crisis. Youth so poor in a country so rich, they have also expressed their hatred for the new possessing classes, their rejection of corruption and humiliation and their determination against repression.

The tradition of rioting is not new. Baraki and Diar Echems still resound from the battles for rehousing. For several months discontent has boiled. In the brawling to get hold of a packet of milk, or the search for an open bakery, rage was expressed at the billions stolen, the gifts presented to Gulf emirates, Algerian princelings or lords of Europe, all of them exempted from tax.

At the origin of the explosion, the increase in sugar, oil and groceries. The spectacle of the legitimate revolt of the youth of Tunisia has, certainly,

inspired Bab el-Oued and Oran. The distribution of social housing revived the hatred of corruption. We were asked to wait while the fortunate jumped the queue.

The wage increases obtained in the public sector after years of struggles, strikes and repression are derisory for the smaller categories, that is for the majority. And these increases which are not yet applied everywhere are already eaten up by the price rises. The workers in the private sector have rarely received increases.

**All our collective agreements should register a sliding scale of wages: when prices increase wages should go up by the same amount!**

The value of the dinar has fallen by a factor of 20 since 1994, to offer Algerian workers almost free to investors. The new religion of market freedom is proclaimed, but, by order of the IMF, the dinar has been administratively lowered while prices have been freed! **Return to prices imposed by the state for all basic products.**

Oil revenues are spent on giant

projects but our old have been squeezed and our youth have no work. The businessmen of the great powers love the Algeria of big contracts and our youth flee it on improvised boats. The patriotic turn announced is contradicted on the ground by the presents made to the Emirates and the promises made to the Europeans. Our politics need to be reoriented!

**Our investments should be targeted on development for the satisfaction of the needs of the people: housing, jobs, health, transport, training.**

Our youth are reproached for their desperate violence. But does the regime leave any other means of being heard when the association of stonecutters is deprived of approval, when a seminar on violence against women is not allowed, when marches and strikes are subjected to attack and legal prosecution?

**For freedom of expression, organisation, demonstration and strike activity!**

Algiers, January 6, 2011

## "Before COP 16 and its false solutions, for an eco-socialist alternative."

18 January 2011

The Conference of the Parties (COP 16) that is currently being held in

Cancun highlights a new failure, as in Copenhagen last year, of the attempts

of green capitalism and the UN to find a way out of the climate crisis caused

by environmental devastation on the planet (for which big capital and its interests are alone responsible) and puts at risk the lives of millions of human beings. This is because you cannot heal fire with fire, and whereas the blind pursuit of profit at the expense of everything else has created the problem of the evil of climate change, the COP16 and the majority of government delegations in it (with honourable exceptions) seek today, through the so-called REDD mechanism, not only not to find a way out of the climate problem, but to do some profitable business.

Nothing gives the right to the governments and enterprises entrenched in the Moon Palace to dispose of natural resources, mainly forest based, which do not have owners and above all cannot be commodified or have a price put on them, because nature and the market respond to logics which are diametrically different. For it is no secret that the current environmental crisis brings into play the lives of the majority of the human population, especially the most vulnerable, workers, peasants, women, aboriginal peoples and so on. It is striking that

these are the main groups excluded from COP 16, when it should be precisely those most affected who should propose alternatives, not a small group of technocrats who are afraid of the peoples, as shown by the excessive operational security deployed to ensure COP 16 is held in the greatest secrecy.

We in the PRT maintain on the contrary that the search for alternatives and solutions to the climate crisis must be extremely democratic. It is this conviction that brings us today here to this table and above all to join with our forces and ideas with the environmental, rural, social and political movements present at Cancun. To exchange experiences, reflections and proposals from below. We believe that the meetings held in parallel to the official Summit are only a first step towards the construction of a mass movement against climate change. Therefore we support the demands of the summit of the held earlier this year in Cochabamba, Bolivia, especially regarding the need for a global referendum on climate change.

We are convinced that the solution to

the climate problem cannot currently be limited to public policies, programmes like REDD and much less to the activities of "socially responsible" companies. The solution is above all political, economic and ideological. It is necessary to change our paradigms of development and progress, it is urgent that people are given control over their own lives to change this society from the base. For this we say the solution is necessarily anti-capitalist, the alternative is eco-socialist. Therefore, is not enough to ask the governments to stop or change this or that policy or mega-project, another power, another government, other policy and for this purpose another left is urgently needed, committed to the interests of the majorities and not only to elections. We call on the movements and organizations present or absent in these days of reflection and protest to provide continuity and unity against ecological devastation and the climate change process. We must change the system, not the climate. Because another left is possible, necessary and urgent. Another world is possible, an eco-socialist world.

[www.prt.org.mx](http://www.prt.org.mx)

## Not one single more death!

17 January 2011, by **PRT, Mexico**

Femicide certainly already existed before Calderon came to power by fraud in 2006. It is clear that when there is impunity, when the murder of women is unchecked (including exoneration of convicted murders as in the case of Rub  ) the crime is repeated, multiplies and spreads. The most immediate example is the murder of the mother of Rub  , comrade Marisela Escobedo.

But all the same this is already happening beyond Ciudad Ju  rez. When there is impunity femicide extends. In Mexico state the number of women killed is growing. Last week the state government, with the

support of the Ministry of the Interior and "Women's Institutes" in several states opposed declaring a "gender emergency" in that entity on the grounds that it was "politicizing" the situation, noting the responsibility of the Governor Pe  a Nieto, aspiring PRI presidential candidate for the year 2012.

In Colima at the other end of the country human rights and feminist organisations are at the same time denouncing the serious increase in the number of violations and assaults of all types against women. Impunity encourages and conceals femicide.

But we should also add to the above

the explosive combination that has resulted from Felipe Calder  n's coming to power and his criminal policy of militarization of the country in his war on drugs, with violations of all kinds of rights. There is not full agreement on the figures and there is a desire to manipulate them, and there is a dark part concerning, for example, the number of new forced disappearances, hidden under the confusing rubric of "kidnappings" as if all were the work of "organized crime", rather than police and soldiers who sometimes act in complicity with criminals.

Since the end of 2006 when Calderon



declared war, a concept he now hypocritically denies having used, although there is all the evidence of his speeches and even his ridiculous military costume, there have been more than 28,000 homicides. A new and terrifying category has had to be incorporated into the statistics, of 10,000 orphans, the product of Calderón's war.

More difficult to determine, the figure of the disappeared oscillates between one and two thousand and two thousand people who have been kidnapped and of whom there is no news. Rosario Ibarra demanded the presentation, along with the mothers of the "Eureka" Committee, of more than 500 people who disappeared under PRI governments, especially under the government of Luis Echeverría, who had the characteristic of being linked in one way or another to political struggles or the guerrilla units of those years.

With Calderón this has risen to more than a thousand people but probably the victims now are from a wider social ambit and not necessarily political activists, which slows the process by which their families publicly denounce their disappearance. For 2010 alone, the year of increased violence, they are talking about 15, 273 killings. The concept is important because in a supposed war there are conflicts, battles and in Mexico, these clashes are the least common. There are executions, i.e. murder, without any clash of the two parties. Youths have been killed at fifteenth birthday parties, as have whole families passing military roadblocks, and students coming out of school.

They use these figures to say they are "winning" the war. The more people dead, the greater the triumph in the war. They suggest that all the dead are criminals, which is false (and even if they were it would not justify a policy based simply on killing) and when it is shown that they are slandering innocent people as "thugs" or criminals, they incorporate the explanation that this is "collateral damage" or the "necessary sacrifices" within the framework of this war. This is the outcome of this criminal necropolitics of militarization.

We denounce the falsehood and hypocrisy of this war and the rights-violating reality of militarization which is now also killing defenders of human rights, activists against militarization and femicide. Thus the killing last year in Ciudad Juárez of Josefina Reyes, an activist from the first wave of the struggle against femicide. Like many people from Ciudad Juárez who have emigrated to the U.S. or other parts of the country, threatened activists have also had to leave, like comrade Cipriana Jurado, also a fighter from the first wave of struggle against the femicide.

The other particularly serious case is that of Marisela Escobedo, who denounced the judicial exoneration of Sergio Rafael Barraza, the confessed killer of her daughter Rubi, and who was killed when she protested before the Governmental Palace in Chihuahua. Since her murder, assaults and threats against relatives and friends continue, forcing many of them to emigrate to the United States.

In spite of all this street protests and mobilizations continue in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua, thanks to the valour, strength and commitment of activists and defenders of human rights together with the sorrow of the people and families of the victims. All of them deserve our solidarity and support in actions and protests everywhere outside of Chihuahua also, as threats continue such as that which was received in recent days by comrade Jose Hernandez in Ciudad Juárez.

The high degree of violence against women in Mexico has made the country a paradigm for women who have been murdered and whose deaths have not received justice or been accounted for. Chihuahua has become the archetype of the militarization of the country, being one of the hardest hit states during the so called war against drug trafficking, placing Ciudad Juárez at a world level as one of the most violent frontiers. The gravity of the situation has risen with the murders of female defenders of human rights, social strugglers and activists who demand justice for cases of violence against women.

After the murder of Marisela Escobedo that of Susana Chávez is now a paradigmatic case which must not be underestimated. She was an activist and social fighter, a poet, who sought to link art and culture in the fight against femicide in Ciudad Juárez and creator of the slogan: not one more death!

That is why her murder has generated a great response of indignation and social protest. Now the authorities seek to impugn the memory of Susanna and trivialise her murder. That is the meaning of the official version that aims to explain the murder as the product of a binge in the company of "undesirable" people. It is a new edition of the misogynistic, sexist, "explanation" which aims to make women responsible for their death by "provocation", lifestyle or form of dress. The current Attorney General, Mr Chávez Chávez, when he was Procurator of Justice in Chihuahua used to chide the mothers of murdered youngsters for allowing them to wear miniskirts.

Nothing justifies the killing of women and women have the right to live, act, behave, dress as they want to without being condemned to live enclosed in their homes, unable to go out to the streets, especially at certain times or directions, or only in the company of their parents or husbands.

We do not want the world of terror and intolerance of the right and values that it now wants to impose with the impunity of the femicides and the crimes produced by the militarization of the country.

If Susana was murdered for daring to live in freedom this is one example more - against those who close their eyes and do not dare to mention the word femicide, like the officials of Peña Nieto- that she was murdered for being a woman.

But knowing Susana's trajectory, what she wrote and thought, the reasons for which she fought, the murder of Marisela, a few weeks earlier, the continued threats against family and friends, threats against other activists, it is obvious that the murder of Susana is an open aggression against the movement and human rights

defenders in the person of one of their most clear and responsive comrades.

A PRI deputy from Chihuahua, knowing of the protests of the movement, because the authorities have removed again and again the candles placed in memory of Marisela opposite the Palace of Government, has said that it is a "business" of NGOs that appeal for money in the United States to buy hundreds of candles and that if they wanted to place them they should do so in the

Cathedral instead, as it was in the Cathedral where it was necessary to pray for the end of violence.

We reject the moral lessons of the right, the PAN and the PRI. No to resignation, no to acceptance of the current situation as a "natural evil" or "collateral damage". It is not by staying at home to mourn or pray that this will end.

It is by means of struggle, in the street, in mobilization, in organization

and political combat, that Mexico will awake from this nightmare of a government which is illegitimate, but also criminal, herald of death, of the necropolitics of the state, responsible for the current situation of violence facing the country, violating laws and rights, offending against life, access to justice, social welfare and human dignity.

The dream of Susana screaming "Not one more death" is possible only through organised struggle.

# The social and democratic revolution is on the march!

17 January 2011, by **Fathi Chamkhi**

It is a great day for us all, which we share with all those who are fighting against the world capitalist order! Above all, we have re-conquered our dignity and our pride, which for a long time had been ridiculed and dragged through the mud by the dictatorship. Now, we have a new Tunisia to build: free, democratic and social.

But right now the counter- revolution is on the march! Ben Ali has fallen from power but his regime, although destabilized and weakened, is trying to maintain itself in place. The Destourian party/state is still there, and so are its liberal capitalist economic and social policies.

This regime, which is presented as an example of a "star pupil" by the international financial institutions, this regime which bled the Tunisian popular masses for 23 years, for the benefit of an international capital that is greedy for profits, while enriching a minority of families, grouped around the government and organized in gangster clans, must go. That is what we want!

We refuse the attempt that is under way aimed at confiscating our revolution. This operation is being presented under the formula of a "government of national unity", with which this illegitimate regime is trying to hang on to power.

At the same time, the defeated regime has unleashed its over-armed militias, including the personal guard of Ben Ali, which are sowing terror in the big cities of the country, in particular in Tunis and its suburbs. Groups coming from the disinherited and famished masses are also taking advantage of the current chaos to help themselves in the supermarkets: in particular Carrefour and Geant. Bands of looters are positioning themselves along the principal roads of the country, making it dangerous to travel! Basic products are starting to be in short supply or are non-existent: bread, milk, medicine...

The regime, which has demobilized the police force in the cities and the National Guard in the countryside, is letting all this happen, taking advantage of the chaos to impose its own solutions. The introduction of the

curfew and the deployment of the army - which lacks manpower and which has never had to face this kind of situation before - do nothing but worsen the fear, since it is during the night that the armed militias act!

Everywhere, citizens are trying to organize their own defence, often in coordination with the army. Thousands of "popular citizens' defence committees" are being set up to defend the population.

Only the establishment of a provisional government, without any representative of the Destourian regime, which will have the responsibility of preparing free and democratic elections, regulated by a new electoral code, for a constituent assembly, will be able to allow Tunisians take control of their destiny again, and to establish, in their country, an order that is just and beneficial to the mass of the population.

If the people aspire one day to live, destiny can only yield to their will!

Tunis, January 15, 2011

# "Ben Ali assassin, Sarkozy accomplice"

17 January 2011

(The following NPA statement was made before Ben Ali fled.)

January 11, 2011 — When Mohamed Bouazizi committed suicide by setting fire to himself after being harassed by the police his act became the spark which is now setting fire to the whole of the "miraculous Tunisia" of General Ben Ali.

In every town, large and small all over the country, demonstrations showed that the people have had enough. First of all the unemployed and semi-employed moved into action, then they were joined by the workers - unionised workers, but also other groups such as lawyers. The revolt then spread to university students and high school students back from the winter break. This massive wave of struggle has exploded under the slogans of "the right to work", "the right to a fair share of the nation's wealth" and "the fight against corruption and nepotism" (this last is a gangrene which has spread to all levels of society). The demonstrators smashed up the symbols of the party-state. The national leadership of the sole legal trade union confederation, the UGTT, which denounced the movement at the beginning (unlike some of its local and regional bodies) was finally obliged to give its official support.

What is immediately striking about these mobilisations, mostly involving the "Ben Ali Generation" (Ben Ali has been ruling the country with an iron first for 23 years) is their skill in harassing a regime that is expert in stifling the smallest spaces available for free speech.

As they did in Iran, web surfers have been able to set up conduits for information and details of actions by

using proxies which the web police cannot censor. The police forces, even though there are 130,000 of them, have been overwhelmed and have called on the army to back them up in several towns.

The night of January 8-9 was particularly bloody. Dozens of people were shot dead at Gasserine, Tala and Meknassi. But murder, arrests, provocations and intimidation have not demoralised the demonstrators, who clearly named from the beginning the people responsible for their misery: Ben Ali and his family mafia.

## The Ben Ali regime caught in a whirlwind

The world capitalist crisis has hit a country which had opened up practically the whole of its economy through deregulation and privatisation. This has shown clearly the contradictions of the corrupt dealings known as the "Tunisian miracle" which, according to its apostles, was to hoist Tunisia up into the ranks of the "emerging economies". The official growth rate has fallen by half since 2008. The pharaonic projects to transform whole sections of Tunisia's coastline into a series of theme parks have all collapsed under the financial crisis hitting the Gulf states which were to have injected their dollars in this huge real-estate speculation.

While Ben Ali thought he was one of the good pupils of the Western powers, busy doing away with islamism, trade unionism and immigration, the United States government now says it is

"concerned" by the situation. They say they are "following the situation closely" and all of a sudden they believe that democracy in Tunisia is a concern of theirs.

These raised eyebrows won't be enough to satisfy a movement, which is affirming ever more strongly its desire to rid itself of a hated regime. Tunisians must count on the support of other peoples and not on the states which have always been accomplices of the dictatorship.

Many demonstrations have been organised in support of the movement, both in other Arab countries, and in the main countries with large numbers of Tunisian immigrants. In France, there have been rallies in Paris, Toulouse, Nantes, Lyon, Marseille and Lille. These rallies have brought together the Tunisian community, as well as activists from the Arab world and from the French left. They have denounced the dictatorship of Ben Ali and the complicity of Sarkozy. On these demonstrations could be seen many new faces, on the streets in protest for the first time. The Tunisian consuls and Ben Ali's secret agents, who are usually around to harass the opposition, are nowhere to be seen. This is an unmistakeable sign that change is in the air.

The crisis hitting the countries on the northern shores of the Mediterranean is the same one which is destabilising the countries of the southern shores of the same sea. This is one more reason that solidarity is essential. We must not relax the pressure, and our first demand must be the freeing of all the activists in prison.

**Translated by John Mullen for  
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# The Irish crisis: a complete failure for neo-liberalism

5 January 2011, by **Éric Toussaint**

In October 2008, a couple of days before the Belgian government bailed out the big “Belgian” banks Fortis and Dexia with taxpayers’ money, Bruno Colmant, head of the Brussels stock exchange and professor of economics, published an op-ed in *Le Soir*, the French-language daily newspaper of record, stating that Belgium imperatively had to follow the Irish example and further deregulate its financial system. According to Colmant, Belgium needed to change the legal and institutional framework so as to become a platform for international capital, just like Ireland. A few short weeks later the Celtic Tiger was crying mercy.

In Ireland, financial deregulation had triggered a boom in loans to households (household indebtedness had reached 190% of GDP on the eve of the crisis), particularly in real estate, a factor that helped boost the island’s economy (the building industry, financial activities, etc.). The banking sector had experienced exponential growth with the establishment of many foreign companies and the increase in Irish banks’ assets. Real estate and stock market bubbles started forming. The total amount of stockmarket capitalizations, bond issues, and bank assets was fourteen times bigger than the country’s GDP.

What could not possibly happen in such a fairytale world then happened: in September-October 2008 the card castle collapsed and the real estate and financial bubbles burst. Companies closed down or left the country, unemployment rose from 0% in 2008 to 14% in early 2010. The number of families unable to repay their creditors swiftly increased too. The whole Irish banking system teetered on the edge of bankruptcy and a panic-stricken government

blindly guaranteed bank deposits for EU480 billion (that is, about three times an Irish GDP of 168 billion). It nationalized the Allied Irish Bank, the main source of financing for real estate loans, with a transfusion of EU48.5 billion (about 30% of GDP).

Exports slowed down. State revenues declined. The budget deficit rose from 14% of GDP in 2009 to 32% in 2010 (more than half of this due to the massive support given to the banks: 46 billion in equity and 31 billion in purchases of toxic assets).

At the end of 2010 the European bailout plan with IMF participation amounted to EU85 billion in loans (including 22.5 billion from the IMF) and it is already clear that it will not be enough. In exchange, a radical cure was enforced upon the Celtic Tiger in the form of a drastic austerity plan that heavily affects households’ purchasing power, with a resultant decrease in consumption, in public expenditure on welfare, in civil servants’ salaries, in infrastructure investments (to facilitate debt repayment), and in tax revenues. On the social level, the principal measures of the austerity plan are nothing short of disastrous:

- suppression of 24,750 positions in the civil service (8% of the workforce, which would mean 350,000 positions in France);
- newly recruited employees will earn 10% less;
- reduction of social transfers resulting in lower family and unemployment allowances, a significant reduction in the health budget, a freeze on retirement pensions;
- a rise in taxes, to be borne mostly by the majority of the population, already

a victim of the crisis: notably a VAT increase from 21% to 23% in 2014; creation of a real estate tax (affecting half of the households that were formerly tax-exempt);

- a EU1 reduction in the minimum hourly wage (from EU8.65 to 7.65, or 11% less).

The rates for loans to Ireland are very high: 5.7% for the IMF loan and 6.05% for “EU” loans. These loans will be used to repay banks and other financial bodies that buy bonds on the Irish debt, borrowing money from the European Central Bank at a rate of 1% - another windfall for private financiers. According to AFP, IMF managing director Dominique Strauss-Kahn claimed that it would work, though of course “it would be difficult because it is hard for people who will have to make sacrifices for the sake of budget austerity”.

Both in the streets and in parliament, opposition has been very determined. The Dail, or lower house of parliament, voted the 85 billion rescue plan by a mere 81 to 75. Far from relinquishing its neo-liberal orientation, the IMF declared that among Ireland’s priorities it is counting on the adoption of reforms to do away with structural obstacles to business, so as to support competitiveness in the coming years. “Socialist” Dominique Strauss-Kahn said he was convinced that a new government after the elections in early 2011 would not change anything: “I’m confident that even if the opposition parties, Fine Gael and Labour, are criticizing the government and the programme [...], they understand the need to implement the programme.”

In short, the economic and financial liberalization aimed at attracting foreign investments and transnational financial companies has utterly failed.

To add insult to the damage the population must bear as a result of such a policy, the IMF and the Irish government are persevering in the neo-liberal orientation of the past two decades and, under pressure from

international finance, are subjecting the population to a structural adjustment programme similar to those imposed on Third World countries for the past three decades. Yet these decades should show what must not be done, and why it is high

time to enforce a radically different logic that benefits people and not private money.

Translated by Christine Pagnouille in collaboration with Judith Harris.