



IV460 - May 2013

Immense mobilizations against the coup d'état in public radio and television

16 June 2013, by **Andreas Sartzekis**

In the final analysis we come back to the incredible truth: the government has handed over to the Troika, currently on an inspection trip, the 2000 job cuts demanded as immediate proof of governmental effectiveness in implementing the imposed plan of dismissal of tens of thousands of civil servants. Samaras lays off 2670 workers today and promises to recreate a public channel of 600 employees. Those are the figures and we must think that this is if not the only in any case the principal explanation to this foolish takeover by force. Here in any case, is talking about a coup d'état.

Massive reactions to the coup d'état

This coup d'état was not completely impromptu: everyone knew the threats of "reorganization" of ERT, and a constitutional expert had produced a plan that Samaras wants to implement, but in which the author is now refusing to take part as long as ERT remains closed! This is one of many political contradictions which has exploded since Tuesday, opening a crisis within the government, the interior troika as it is called here. Indeed, Samaras, product of the most reactionary and nationalist right,

surrounded by advisors open to the far right, made an arrogant decision, believing that the last surveys giving him two points more than Syriza empowered him to rule without having to worry about tedious democratic procedures any more. The result: the ministers Pasok and Dimar did not sign the decision to close ERT; and today the only group supporting the takeover by force of the right (New Democracy) against ERT, are the nazis of Chryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn)!

However, as soon as the decision was known, an exceptional mobilization started. Since Tuesday, the buildings of ERT in the Athenian suburbs have been surrounded by thousands of people, activists or not, with support from artists and various personalities. The confederation of unions in the private sector (GSEE) and the federation of the public sector unions (Adedy), which had recently refused to support the teachers' strike, were obliged to call on Thursday for a general strike that was quite successful. Protest meetings took place everywhere in the country. The occupation in front of ERT was massive, even if the place is rather out of the way. Most important perhaps, is to see side by side the trade-union, political, associative flags, of various currents which usually do everything not to demonstrate together. This de

facto unity in the fight, linked to a very cordial environment, is for the moment a pledge of determined resistance: KKE (Greek CP) has welcomed to its TV channel the news programmes produced by the ERT journalists, the radio of Kokkino (Syriza) is connected permanently to the takeover mobilizations. It is clear that Samaras had not envisaged such a broad response to its small manoeuvre.

Solidarity with the ERT struggle

International solidarity, which has been very strong, going as far as some not very diplomatic statements by foreign governments, is felt to be an invaluable help. It gives a very practical meaning to the slogan of "Troika out!" last Sunday's demo in Athens concluding the Altersummit. In this context, it illustrates what for three years has been too weak: that international solidarity reinforces the working-class response in Greece. This solidarity must continue and intensify. On Thursday, the police entered the ERT buildings in Salonica to evict the workers occupying their workplace. Although Samaras is obviously destabilized at the moment, it is known that the only answer will

be repression. There has to be the strongest solidarity for the defence of ERT and all jobs! The struggle continues, with a solidarity concert

Friday at the ERT location. There is of course a common feeling that the current struggle in Taksim square in Turkey Greece has a lot in common

with the popular assemblies at ERT!

Athens,
14 June 2013

IV460 - May 2013 PDF

31 May 2013, by robm

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The role of the left in Syriza

27 May 2013, by Sotiris Martalis

I bring you fraternal salutations from the DEA, the Internationalist Workers' Left Organisation, which forms part of Syriza.

I want to begin by clarifying a point: I do not intend in my contribution to provide a "model solution" to the question of the so-called broad parties. I will try, with the little time I have, to describe the difficulties we face and the manner in which we respond to them within Syriza.

So there are six points that I want to highlight:

1. Syriza has a history going back more than a decade. Its foundation, in 2001, was the result of the conjugation of two elements. The first rested on the unity of action between revolutionaries and reformists in the movement against the effects of capitalist globalization. The second concerned the search for electoral alliances by the left reformist party Synaspismos, because of its weakness. This party risked not reaching the threshold of 3% necessary to enter the Greek parliament.

These two elements gave us the possibility of implementing a united front tactic. I use the term "united

front tactic" because in reality, because of the difference in size between the reformists and the radical left, we cannot speak of a United Front in the traditional sense of the term, in the sense of that employed in the 1920s or 1930s.

During the last decade, Syriza has gone through numerous different phases. Unity of action in the movements, support to movements like that which succeeded in 2007 in blocking the efforts to change the Constitution to allow the privatization of the universities or again the youth revolt " which took place in a climate of corruption, diversion of public money and the beginning of a social crisis " in December 2008, with the killing of a young student aged 15: Alexandros Grigoropoulos.

The coalition has also known divisions as during the elections to the European parliament in 2004 or during the national elections in 2010. These divisions took place when the reformist leadership attempted to create an alliance with the social democratic PASOK.

Syriza cannot then constitute a model if we consider this coalition of independent forces (with their

newspapers, their functioning) outside of the context of the social and political movement of resistance. As well as the political place won by the left in Greece. The latter " and I speak of the left, not the centre left " represents around 33 % of votes (Syriza, KKE, " the Communist Party " and Antarsya " the Front of the Anti-capitalist Left). There are moreover around 45 radical anti-capitalist organisations.

2. If we want to explain Syriza's success, we should keep in mind that the working class in Greece has waged many struggles in recent years to defeat the policies of the dominant class: more than 29 general strikes (or one day strikes) " there of them of more than 48 hours " the occupation of administrative buildings, the movement of the Greek indignant who occupied the parks (including Syntagma square in Athens), the "We will not pay!" movement against unjust taxes or price increases of public transports, and taxes to use the motorways and privatized roads and so on.

In spite of a fallback in struggles, in late 2012 and early 2013, we should not forget the significant struggles involving metro workers and

seafarers, peasants in the streets during a general strike on February 20 as well as the decision already taken for a strike in education in early March. We should also mention the movements which brought down two governments: that of PASOK of Georges Papandréou Jr as well as that of the technocrat and financier Lucas Papademos.

Despite this, it is true that the social movement of resistance has not succeeded in reversing the policy of the dominant class. That is why it sought to do this in the situation that presented itself in May and June 2012, through the ballot box. The working people used Syriza to this end as a "tool", and not the KKE which had recorded votes twice as high as Syriza previously.

Three reasons lie behind this:

â€" Syriza was active in the movement (unlike the KKE which applied a profoundly sectarian policy);

â€" Syriza provided a political alternative â€" by its demand for a left government;

â€" and finally it called for left unity, in particular a unity between Syriza, the KKE and Antarsya, beyond divergences and starting from the needs expressed by the popular majority.

We should also not forget that during the inter-election period [from May to June 2012], Syriza firmly resisted all pressure to join a government of "national salvation" with the bourgeois parties.

3. It seems currently that in addition to the struggles, Syriza is the political instrument that working people will use. An elementary error made by the comrades of the KKE and Antarsya resides in the fact that they see the left government as a force which will simply manage capitalism. They use the example of the management and specific defeat for the left of AKEL (Progressive Party of the Working People) in Cyprus in the February, 2013, elections which marked a defeat for Dimitris Christofias (AKEL) faced with the right represented by Nicos Anastasiades.

Unlike AKEL and other centre left parties, Syriza has argued for this transitional objective of a left government â€" in the specific situation of Greece â€" on the basis of a programmatic agreement concerning the cancellation of the Memorandums (the three austerity plans concocted by the Troika and a sector of the Greek dominant classes) and on the overthrow of the policies of the dominant class.

The discussion should, consequently, be on the conditions which should allow us to attain the objective of a left government as result of a wave of struggles while keeping in mind the fact that such a government is not a final objective, but a transitional step which will strengthen the confidence in themselves of the wage earners and their allies and the power of the workers in struggle.

4. It is obvious that the reformist leadership of Synaspismos has an approach which envisages the constitution of a left government as the result above all of purely electoral tactics. That is why it adapts to the so called realist pressure and tries to win votes by approaching the social democratic political sectors, more exactly those originating from a social liberal politics.

With the aim of conducting a clear transparent and loyal opposition to this tactic we founded at the last conference of Syriza the Left Platform (which brings together the "left current" of Synaspismos and the forces of the Rproject), creating a left opposition supported by 27% of votes inside Syriza.

Rproject represents a quarter of the Left Platform. It amounts to a "red" network of activists and organizations which leads struggles not only in the national political field but also inside the local structures of Syriza and the workplaces, as well as in the trade unions where reorganization is taking place under the blows of the economic crisis and the government. Rproject tries to build an assembly of forces sufficient to constitute an obstacle to the adaptations and oscillations of the reformist-oriented leadership of Syriza.

Our basic programme for Syriza is:

â€" unilateral cancellation of the memorandums as well as the cancellation of the loan agreements, the overthrow of all the austerity laws;

â€" the increase of wages and pensions in the limits which take account of the breadth of the crisis; in defence of the public schools and hospitals;

â€" nationalisation of the banks and the renationalization â€" under popular control â€" of the big public enterprises which have already been privatized (like for example a strategic part of the port of Piraeus in the hands of the Chinese enterprise COSCO);

â€" high taxation of capital;

â€" a fight for the retrocession of capital which has fled the country;

â€" control of capital flows.

It amounts in fact to a transitional programme opening the possibility for the working class and its allies to win a decided majority, practically, to advance in the direction of the overthrow of capitalism in a socialist perspective which should emerge with more precision during the struggles and debates which should accompany them at the national and at the least the European scale.

5. The main difference with the comrades of Antarsya (a coalition of groups which obtained 0.33% of the vote in June 2012) is based on the fact that Syriza does not support an exit from the Euro zone or the European Union.

Their main argument is that the Euro constitutes the political instrument of the dominant class. We think that Syriza holds a more correct position: "Not a single sacrifice for the Euro". Leave aside the fact that a minority sector of the dominant class supports the exit from the euro zone hoping that through a devaluation of the currency it can reduce still further the value of labour power.

Also, can anyone give me the example of a currency which is not a political instrument in the hands of the dominant class? I do not even want to

insist on the effects of an exit from the euro in favour of capitalist sectors with significant funds outside Greece and of the various effects on the working class, small peasants and so on.

The left should begin the difficult combat against austerity and not enclose itself in the dilemmas (euro or drachma) of the dominant class. If in addition we should come out of the Euro, it is only by a powerful movement of defence of wages and pensions and this by a politics which involves a process of extending beyond Greece and synchronizing, in

different forms and rhythms, with the other so-called countries of the periphery and by drawing links with the most combative sectors of the German and French working class among others.

6. My final point concerns the fight against the fascists, the neo-Nazis of Golden Dawn. This amounts to a significant front of struggle. The essential point is that the fascists have failed "at least up until now" to win the streets, the public area, apart from specific actions. But that depends on one fact: it is necessary that the mass initiative remains in the

hands of the left, which has succeeded, for now, in responding by unity of action in this area (with the exception, once again, of the KKE which acts in a sectarian and separate manner, although debates have begun within it).

The struggle is common at the international and European scale and where the chain is broken will be created the conditions to reach a more credible European left. If the weak link is Greece, I hope that we will respond aptly there to win the first stage which will require a massive solidarity to be consolidated.

Commodification and rationing

26 May 2013, by **Jean-Claude Chailley**

Is health a national domain?

Theoretically, the Treaty of Lisbon does not concern healthcare :

* It is not among the exclusive competences;

* It appears under very general aspects in the competences shared with states:

- article 4-2-k: "The competences shared between the Union and the Member States shall apply to (...) common safety concerns in matters of public health, for the aspects defined in the present Treaty";

- article 168 of the TFEU specifies broad objectives, but leaves implementation to the states: "The action of the Union, which complements national policies, focuses on the improvement of public health and the prevention of human diseases and infections and on the sources of danger to physical and mental health (...). The Union's action is carried out in compliance with the responsibilities of the Member States with regard to the definition of their health policy, as

well as the organization and provision of health and medical care services. The responsibilities of the Member States include the management of health and medical care, as well as the allocation of the resources assigned to them".

This is why we often hear that health is part of the national domain.

The European Commission said the same thing to the delegation of the European Network against the Privatization and Commercialization of Health and Social Protection, which it received on 14 March, 2013. But there is a strong contradiction: if health is only in the national domain why did the Commission ask us to communicate our precise demands?

Theoretically the EU is "indifferent" to property: the Treaty of Lisbon nowhere asks for privatization or commoditization of health, or indeed of any public service.

And yet 20 years after the Treaty of Maastricht we are witnessing in all sectors and all countries progress towards the privatization and commoditization of all public services. How can we explain this?

The real role of the European Union

In reality the European Union influences policy in health and social protection, more and more directly.

1. The EU has a whole arsenal with which to act: the concept of completion of the internal market in a competitive framework implies that eventually any national difference becomes effaced and privatization becomes general, with the exception of a minimum core. But the resistance in all countries is slowing down the process considerably.

"Competitiveness", to which I will come back, is also destructive.

The budgetary demands "which include health and social protection - contribute powerfully to reducing access to care, rationing it and opening up the "market" to the private sector...

Health policy, like all public services, is framed by the very important European Council meetings, the European Commission (which has the legislative initiative), and by pacts,

treaties, directives, regulations, the Europe 2020 strategy...

This is why the Commission has no basis for passing its responsibility onto national governments, nor for these governments to pass the buck on to "Europe". It is a shared responsibility. For example: two countries (the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom), have refused for their own reasons the European fiscal pact (whose official name is the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance, TSCG), so it is possible.

Let us also note the pressure, if not the blackmail, of financial markets, credit rating agencies, the ECB, the OECD, the World Bank, the IMF... More and more countries are under their tutelage.

2. Some European documents directly related to health:

* According to the Pact for the Euro Plus, "the viability of pensions, health care and social benefits" is to be linked "to the level of indebtedness".

If I may be allowed to offer some advice, it is to learn by heart the Pact for the Euro Plus. It contains all the anti-social policies that are being implemented, including the reform of the Labour Code that is being discussed in France (ANI).

* The fiscal pact (TSCG) demands that states get back quickly to a deficit of 0.5 per cent of GDP, and to a level of debt of 60 per cent, within twenty years. It thus puts on pressure in the short term and in the long term - twenty years is a generation!

Remark: deficits within the definition of the European Union include those of the state, local authorities and "administrations of social protection".

* The search for "competitiveness", which for the EU implies lowering the "cost" of labour and therefore to reduced social security contributions and taxes.

Remarks:

- In France the social contributions which finance social security are part of the salary (the Bismarck system). Since 1992, in the name of the "competitiveness" that is increasingly

being invoked as a pretext, all governments are increasing exemptions for employers' social contributions.

- In countries where social protection is funded by tax (the Beveridge system) tax competition and the decline in budgets leads to the same result: we observe at every meeting of the network that no country, regardless of its principle of funding, is spared.

* "The completion of the internal market" is at the heart of the Treaty of Lisbon:

Section 26 of the TFEU: "The internal market shall comprise an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured (...). The Council, on a proposal from the Commission, defines the guidelines (...) ». It is a shared responsibility.

In 2007 the European Commission defined "Services of general economic interest" (SGEI) in the following way: "The provision and organization of these services are subject to the rules of the internal market and of competition of the EC Treaty, since the corresponding activities are of an economic nature." In a Guide to applying to SGEI the rules of the EU by 2010, the European Commission developed this conception: "Any activity consisting of offering goods and/or services on a given market is an economic activity within the meaning of the competition rules. In this context, the fact that the activity in question is referred to as "social" or that it is exercised by a non-profit making actor (concerning non profit-making actors, see the answer to question 3.1.6) is not in itself sufficient to avoid it being described as an economic activity. Examples of activities considered as economic in past decisions of the Commission and judgments of the Court and Commission are: investment activity carried out by public employment offices; optional insurance schemes operating according to the principle of capitalization, even where they are run by non-profit making organizations; the principle of capitalization covers insurance benefits which depend solely on the level of contributions paid by

beneficiaries and on the financial results of the investments made; emergency transport services and patient transport services. (...); medical services provided in a hospital setting or outside this framework." Health services are becoming increasingly involved.

* After the "six-pack" [1], comes the "two-pack" [2] which has just been adopted provides the European Commission with greatly increased means of pressure on all budgets, including social security. This means regulations that are immediately applicable in national legislation, whether the national parliaments are in agreement or not. The budget debates have already begun for 2014 as part of the European semester.

* Among the institutions which are exerting pressure, the IMF (like the rest of the Troika) is asking France: "to increase competition in the services sector" and "to reduce public expenditure at all levels (state, local authorities and social security administrations), to reduce employers' social contributions, to support wage moderation."

By way of conclusion

* For obvious political reasons rationing of care and commoditization are never explicitly demanded. But a network of constraints leads there. In particular the budget cuts and the completion of the internal market by competition gradually lead to the generalization of privatization and commoditization, with the exception of a basic core, a basket of minimum care (universal service), close to that of the United States.

* It really is a question of rationing: the conception of European employers is of a minimum core funded by tax and the rest by complementary insurance. The mutual societies have evolved considerably since the directive of 1992 and subsequent ones: I recently received an advertisement with the monthly rate ranging from \hat{a} ,-20 to \hat{a} ,-240 per month. We really are in a situation of inequality, contrary to our system of

social security.

* A word about the public-private competition discussed earlier. Firstly, competition distorts public service by giving it the goal of being competitive instead of best serving the general interest; furthermore it is more expensive: for example in all countries where electricity has been privatized, rates have increased by 30 or 40 per cent. Public-private partnerships are a ruin for public finances. We know the disaster from the point of view of the

budget and of quality in the United States

* The health policy of the European Union is synthesized in the White Paper "A strategy for adequate, safe and sustainable pensions" the beginning of which concerns all social protection: "Significant progress in reforming social security (...) has been made in several countries ,most recently in the Czech Republic, Greece, Spain and Italy (...). Nonetheless, more policy action is

needed, and is needed now.

We can see where this has led Greece, which is today calling for international solidarity...

This contribution was made on behalf of the French delegation to the conference of the European Network against the Privatization and Commercialization of Health and Social Protection held in Brussels on March 15, 2013.

Free Alexei Gaskarov and the Prisoners of May 6!

22 May 2013, by **Ilya Budraitskis**

Gaskarov has invested a great deal of time and energy in seeing that his hometown of Zhukovsky, in the Moscow Region, develops in a way that is responsive to the needs of ordinary citizens. To this end, he has continued the work he began during the campaigns to defend the Khimki and Tsagovsky forests by fostering grassroots civic groups and an independent discussion club. In March 2013, Gaskarov was elected to the alternative People's Council of Zhukovsky, thus receiving recognition from other residents of the town for his efforts.

Gaskarov has constantly sought out other forums for articulating his position. He has worked as a journalist and analyst with the Institute for Collective Action, acted as a spokesperson for the anti-fascist movement, joined the self-governing Autonomous Action network, and been involved in coordinating the environmental movement. Since December 2011, he has been actively engaged in the anti-Putin protest moment, appearing regularly in the media and at rallies and public discussions. In October 2012, he was elected to the Coordinating Council of the Russian opposition, where he has consistently pursued a grassroots

social movement agenda.

Center "E," the notorious "anti-extremist" division of the Russian police created under President Medvedev, cannot forgive Gaskarov for his pivotal role in social movements. After Gaskarov was acquitted of all charges in the Khimki case, the police have subjected him to constant pressure, including several attempted provocations. This time round, police have charged Gaskarov with involvement in "rioting" on May 6, 2012, at a permitted opposition march and rally on Bolotnaya Square in Moscow the day before Putin's inauguration. Apparently, the police are hoping this high-profile case will end in a long prison sentence for Gaskarov.

Why have Alexei Gaskarov and dozens of other innocent people been arrested?

On May 6, 2012, special riot police and other police officers used violence against demonstrators in Moscow in a deliberate attempt to provoke them, thus clearly violating the freedom of public assembly. An April 22, 2013, public hearing on this incident established the police's culpability and numerous violations of the law they

committed on May 6 on the basis of over six hundred independent eyewitness testimonies and analysis of a large number of photos and videos.

The Russian authorities, however, continue to refuse to open an investigation into the actions of the police. On the contrary, the Russian Federal Investigative Committee has increasingly been used as a tool to intimidate people involved in the grassroots protest movement. The regime's fabricated case against protesters and bystanders was launched on May 27, 2012, when the first suspect, eighteen-year-old Alexandra Dukhanina, was arrested. Since then, police have arrested another twenty-seven people in the case, seemingly without rhyme or reason. The arrestees include students, businesspeople, scientists, activists, pensioners, and ordinary citizens.

Alexei Gaskarov is the latest person to be arrested in the case. On May 6, 2012, he was at the Bolotnaya Square rally, where he was injured: a policeman threw him to the ground and then kicked him in the face. Gaskarov was forced to seek medical attention (he was given several stitches), after which he filed a

complaint with the prosecutor's office. But as with other instances of police violence on May 6, 2012, the authorities have not followed up on Gaskarov's complaint.

Nearly a year after the so-called investigation of the May 6 "riots" was launched, a pattern has emerged in the way police, prosecutors, and the courts are railroading the arrestees in the Bolotnaya Square case. All the accused are immediately placed in police custody for two months, after which the courts prolong this pretrial detention several times. The presiding judges make these rulings without taking the arguments of defense lawyers into account and ignoring the obviously falsified evidence presented by prosecutors and investigators. Several of the detainees have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that they were not in Moscow on May 6, 2012. Despite this, they were also remanded to police custody.

There is a little doubt that the authorities will use this same set of tactics in Alexei Gaskarov's case unless we take decisive action to show our solidarity with him. At least several dozen other people who were at the rally on May 6, 2012, are likewise threatened with imminent arrest and prosecution. On its web site, the Investigative Committee has announced it will continue to work to "identify any and all persons involved in the riots." But it is in our power to stop this political crackdown.

International Solidarity Action Week, June 17-23, 2013

International solidarity has repeatedly proven to be effective even in the most difficult cases. Thanks to your support the "Khimki hostages" were released in October 2010. This was a genuine victory for the international solidarity campaign. Since that time, a number of other Russian grassroots activists have been persecuted, leading in some cases to countermeasures on the part of organizations and governments. For example, Russian officials guilty of massive corruption and other criminal acts have been banned from entering certain countries. Your support is now especially vital for the dozens of people who have been thrown in jail by the Investigative Committee or

whom it intends to arrest on trumped-up charges. Your vocal and visible involvement is essential, because it shows the Russian police and authorities their crimes will not go unnoticed.

June 18 is Alexei Gaskarov's birthday. An illegitimate, lawless court has ruled that he will spend the day in jail. We must act to secure his release and that of the dozens of other innocent prisoners in this fabricated case. The [advocacy group](#) has declared the week of June 17-23 an international solidarity action week. Join us and together we will oppose lawlessness and political persecution in Russia.

How can you help?

1. Use whatever means you have at your disposal to spread this call for solidarity and information about the case of Gaskarov and the other May 6 prisoners. Demand their immediate release. Raise your voice against political arrests and oppressive police tactics in Russia.

2. Sign the online petition that will be sent to the Investigative Committee and the Prosecutor's Office [here](#).

3. Carry out your own solidarity actions. You can hold pickets and protest demonstrations at the Russian embassies and consulates in your city. You can check the cultural events calendar where you live for events involving Russia and hold protest actions at these events. You can hold rallies, happenings, art actions, and solidarity sit-ins. You can appeal to the authorities in your country and to international authorities, asking them to intervene on behalf of Alexei Gaskarov and the other prisoners of May 6.

Tell us about your solidarity actions and events by sending descriptions, photos, and videos to this address: gaskarov.info@gmail.com.

4. Write letters to the Russian authorities in support of Alexei Gaskarov and the other May 6 prisoners, demanding their immediate release, the dismissal of all charges against them, and a thorough investigation of the actions of the police against peaceful demonstrators

on May 6, 2012, in Moscow.

Send your letters to the following addresses:

Moscow City Prosecutor's Office

ul. Novokuznetskaya, 27
115184 Moscow
Russian Federation

[Online message center](#)

Fax: +7 (495) 951-5040

Central Investigation Department of the Russian Federal Investigative Committee for Moscow

ul. Arbat, 16/2, str. 1
19002 Moscow
Russian Federation

[Online message center](#)

Fax (after 16:00 CET): +7 (495) 691-6315

Russian Federal Investigative Committee

Tekhnichesky pereulok, 2
105005 Moscow
Russian Federation

[Online message center](#)

Fax: +7 (499) 265-9077

Telephone: +7 (495) 986-7710

Russian Federal Prosecutor General's Office

ul. Bolshaya Dmitrovka, 15a
GSP-3 125993 Moscow
Russian Federation

Fax: +7 (495) 692-1725

Russian Federal Human Rights Ombudsman

ul. Myasnitskaya, 47
101000 Moscow
Russian Federation

Facebook Wall

Please send a copy of your letters to our address: gaskarov.info@gmail.com.

5. Send messages of support to Alexei Gaskarov at gaskarov.info@gmail.com. We'll translate them into Russian, pass them on to Alexei, and also publish them on our [web site](#).

6. You can financially support our public campaign on behalf of Alexei

Gaskarov and the other May 6 prisoners and contribute to their legal defense fund. Send your donations to a PayPal account dmitry.cw@gmail.com.

7. If you're an artist, make a graphic work in solidarity with Alexei Gaskarov and send it to gaskarov.info@gmail.com: it will be published on our web site gaskarov.info. The most eye-catching works will be printed on stickers and pasted up all over Moscow (with you

credited as the contributing artist). If you're a journalist or writer, send us articles and blog posts you've written and published about Alexei Gaskarov and the political crackdown in Russia. If you do other work that can help inform people about Alexei Gaskarov, write to us at gaskarov.info@gmail.com.

Thank you for your solidarity! Watch for campaign news and updates (in Russian and several other languages) on our [web site](#).

UKIP results shame the left

21 May 2013, by **Phil Hearse**

UKIP - nationalism, xenophobia and racism

This vote shows who is on the offensive politically, even if the vote is untypical of Britain as a whole. It reveals once again the chosen terrain for all of right-wing reaction in Britain - nationalism, xenophobia and racism - and the mass base it has. And it shows the terrible weakness of Labour's 'alternative' and the absence of a coherent left at the electoral level - mainly as a result of division and futile sectarian factionalism which has sabotaged unity initiatives over the last 20 years.

In June 2009, the day after the county council and European elections I wrote:

"The outcome of the county council and Euro elections means that the British left - the left to the left of New Labour - has to wake up and break out of its dire sectarian, bureaucratic and factional mindsets. Nothing is more shameful than the lack of united left slate, around a minimal set of demands in the interests of the working class, in these elections. The

near-absence of the Left from the electoral field was one important reason - though far from the only one - that such a large number of the protest votes against the main parties went to the hard right UKIP and the fascist BNP. It is shameful that the Left abandons so much of the electoral field to the far right because of nothing more than hardened, bone headed, factional idiocy - topped off by bureaucratic exclusions and a *themas*."

(<http://www.marxsite.com/leftcrisis.html>)

What has changed of course is the relative demise of the BNP. UKIP is a much better instrument for right wing reaction without the stain of fascism and the bourgeoisie won't touch it.

Hundreds of thousands of workers voted in these elections and many of them voted for UKIP. It was a case of the reactionary petty bourgeoisie leading the working class, rather than the working class and the left making inroads into the petty bourgeoisie. Many of the people who voted UKIP were doubtless protest voters, but Labour doesn't inspire workers and middle class people who are suffering at the hands of the cuts and economic downturn. How can a Labour front bench that promises absolutely nothing for when and if it comes to power inspire anybody? The

'left' and no-so-left union leaders who think that Ed Miliband is their man and can maybe be pushed further left are foolish beyond belief. Even with tens of millions suffering from austerity Labour is struggling to get the kind of poll figures that would ensure its return to office.

The failure to construct a left electoral alternative to Labour shames the left, and in particular the leaderships of the SWP and Socialist Party, jointly culpable for the collapse of successive left unity initiatives. Certainly on the kind of unfavourable terrain that existed in yesterday's elections would not guarantee any kind of left electoral breakthrough. But the left should try to be a growing electoral force, to put forward an electoral alternative to austerity, xenophobia and racism. The present practice on much of the left is in fact a form of electoral abstentionism, although at a formal level organisations like the SWP and the SP reject it. Shrugging your shoulders and muttering about the primacy of mass struggle is (at best) a capitulation to syndicalism and spontaneism. The right wing must be fought in elections as well as in the mass struggle, obviously.

Both the subjective forces and the objective circumstances exist for the creation of a force to the left of Labour

capable of creating a credible national electoral challenge. Probably the circumstances are not so favourable as they were 10 or 12 years ago, but we can only start with where we are and the forces we have to hand. The logic of course is to fight for a broad left party which of course prioritises mass struggle, but does not abandon the electoral terrain.

The left has to do everything possible to confront racism and xenophobic

nationalism, so assiduously cultivated by the state and right wing media over the past decade, particularly in relation to "our boys" in Afghanistan and Iraq. Neither should the left act as an echo chamber for the anti-EU xenophobia of the right. UKIP and the Tories attack the most progressive things in the EU, like the European Convention on Human Rights. It is a total diversion to imagine that austerity and the plight of the working class and middle class people

suffering from the effects of austerity can be solved by leaving the European Union, or indeed that the EU is a central factor in imposing austerity in Britain.

The Left in Britain has been marking time - no worse, wasting time. The construction of a broad left party is an urgent necessity to fight the right.

Phil Hears wrote this piece for his site [Crisis and Revolt](#)

The lefts in the crisis

20 May 2013, by **François Sabado**

The comparison is often made between the present crisis and that of 1929. The latter led to fascism and World War II. For the moment, the current crisis is being contained. Some people have used the expression "the crisis of the 1930s in slow motion". But today's crisis has a double singularity, as a "crisis of civilization", especially in its ecological dimension, and as an expression of a "tilting of the world". The centres of gravity of the economy and world politics are shifting. The crisis struck the capitalist societies of the centre and their immediate periphery, while countries such as China and India, and others in Asia, are experiencing a lasting expansion. To a lesser extent, some Latin American countries are experiencing a long phase of growth. This lasting crisis of capitalism - the third of such magnitude after those of 1857 and 1929 - is likely to put an end to the domination of Europe over the world, and to a whole historical period.

These changes are not conjunctural but structural. They affect all the economic, social and ecological equilibriums in the world. And this is in a situation where capitalist globalization has left its mark in every part of the world. So the austerity plans affecting Europe today are not the umpteenth austerity plans that the continent has experienced: under the

present effects of international capitalist competition and of the more and more direct pressure of a unified world market of the labour force, it is the place of the European continent that is being challenged. Capitalist globalization demands that Europe, the weakest link in the system, if it wants to secure its place in global competition, must break what remains of its "model".

The ruling classes and the financial markets are aiming at the reduction of the purchasing power of the working classes by 15 to 20 per cent, if not more in the South of Europe, at the destruction of public services, at blowing the labour code to pieces. Everywhere in Europe, the counter-reforms, in particular those concerning the labour market, are going in the same direction: more flexibility and more precariousness. The brutality of these austerity policies is even greater in that it results from the diverse trajectories of different economic zones of the Union: Germany and its satellite states, France, Italy, Southern Europe, Eastern Europe... These contradictions are even stronger in that there is not, unlike the United States or China, a central state.

In the global concert, Europe combines economic decline and political weakness. The tensions, the

internal contradictions, the risk of implosion exist in several traditional political formations in Europe. This translates into a full-scale attack on rights and democratic freedoms. "Pro-austerity" tendencies reinforce the authoritarian traits of the regimes in place. This "democratic" crisis plays directly into the hands of fascist or far-right populist parties. We can no longer rule out that, under the pressure of the crisis, there will emerge alliances or political reorganizations promoting reconciliations between the Right and the far Right. The policies of the Troika - EU, ECB and IMF - and of the financial markets override the decisions of the institutions of classical parliamentary democracy. With the crisis of the nation-state and parliamentary democracy, the traditional parties are caught up in a turmoil that has undermined their social and political bases. The political earthquake that has just hit Italy is a good demonstration. Berlusconi's Right lost more than seven million votes. The Left lost 4.7 million votes. The organizations linked to ex-Communist Refoundation collapsed. And up popped Beppe Grillo and his 8 million votes - the expression of people being fed up with austerity, with corruption, with the European Union, but also of a leader with problematic political positions with regard to the trade unions and the

rights of immigrants and whose trajectory is difficult to predict.

The historical crisis of the European workers' movement

How, under these conditions, could the 'lefts' not be impacted? During the first months of the crisis, around 2008, it was hoped that the crisis would cause reactions, large-scale social struggles and the strengthening of the workers' movement. Five years later, it is another scenario that has been written. There has been and there is resistance and social struggles. Southern Europe - first of all Greece, with its 8 one-day general strikes, but also Portugal and in an impressive way Spain - with its *indignados*, its strikes and demonstrations - have experienced an upsurge of struggles. Radical forces have obtained good electoral results in Greece with Syriza, an exceptional phenomenon, and to a lesser extent in Spain and France, with Izquierda Unida and the Left Front. But this reality can also express itself in a movement such as the "Five Stars" in Italy. However, in none of the countries of Europe has a significant blow been delivered against the attacks of the governments and the employers, despite exceptional struggles in Southern Europe. Moreover these struggles are not producing a phase of organic growth of the workers' movement: there are no massive waves of people joining parties or trade unions.

No reformist, left reformist, anti-liberal or revolutionary current has experienced substantial growth, apart perhaps in Greece, with a large number of recruits to Syriza which, despite weaknesses in its implantation and organization, had at its last National Conference nearly 35,000 members. But in general the rate of unionization continues to decline, after declining significantly in the 1980s and 1990s. Only IG Metall maintains its position in Germany. As for the parties, they are experiencing a steady erosion of their members,

and in the best of cases tend increasingly to be reduced to big electoral machines. Even the powerful German Social Democracy has dropped from a million members in the 1970s to less than 500,000 members. And almost nothing remains of the great Italian Communist Party!

A party like the PCF, which has contained its crisis following the election results of the Left Front, has seen a significant drop in its membership. The number of members went down from 78,779 to 64,184 between the last two congresses. The number of members who voted for the last congress (February, 2013) was 34,000, whereas 48,000 voted to choose their candidate for the presidential election in June 2011. "34,000 is the lowest figure in recent years," noted Roger Martelli, historian of the PCF and himself a former member of the party. So there is a singular situation, which combines one of the deepest crises of the capitalist system and a very much weakened European workers' movement. This is a notable difference with other crisis situations and in particular the 1930s, when all organizations and currents experienced impressive growth, on both the political and the trade-union level...

"Already no longer and not yet"

This weakening of the workers' movement has deep causes. It is firstly the result of thirty years of neo-liberal capitalist offensive that have unravelled, dismantled and then liquidated a series of social achievements. The crisis comes at a time when the workers' movement has for years been thrown onto the defensive. The changes that have been made to work processes have been shaped by these unfavourable relationships of forces. While the working class has never been as big (between 85 and 90 per cent of the active population), it is segmented, divided, individualized, and in significant proportions engaged in precarious work. This undoubtedly inhibits the development of class consciousness and of trade unions or

working-class political organizations. Finally, even in the countries of Southern Europe which demonstrate great fighting spirit, there is a very considerable lag between social explosions and socialist consciousness. The absence of an alternative puts a brake on any project of revolutionary socialist transformation.

These discrepancies exist in other regions of the world, as for example in the Arab world which is today destabilized by the outbreak of revolutions for democracy and social justice. Dictatorships have been overthrown by the popular classes and by coalitions bringing together democrats, secularists, nationalists, religious people and revolutionaries. The revolutionary processes are continuing, but as shown by the developments of the situation in Tunisia and Egypt, the dominant political forces come from the Islamist movement, even though it is diverse and divided. If, as Gilbert Achcar explains, "We have to go through the experience of Islamism in power", that does not explain the weakness of the progressive and revolutionary currents today. The balance sheets of the Arab nationalism of the 1950 and 60s and of Stalinism on the international level weigh painfully on the formation of socialist consciousness.

To come back to Europe, the propulsive force of its workers' movement strengthened parallel to the expansion of capitalist Europe, even though the workers' movement was controlled by the bureaucracies of Stalinism and social democracy. Europe's decline on the socio-economic level has been accompanied by cultural and political weakening; it reduces the influence of the workers' movement on the continent... Of course, some counter-tendencies offset these declines: social resistance to the attacks by capital, new social movements such as the global justice movement, the *indignados*, and new radical currents among youth. New socio-political experiences which block austerity policies can cause sharp turns in Europe, as evidenced, for example, by Syriza in Greece.

From a geopolitical point of view, the potential of the workers' movement

and of social movements is considerable in the new emerging powers, especially China. The social weight of the Chinese proletariat, its progress in the fight for wage increases, social security, its ability to build trade unions, associations for democratic rights, independent political movements can play a key role in a reorganization of the lefts... In a situation where the traditional workers' movement "is already no longer", as long as new movements - the young indignant ones and Chinese and Indian workers and those of other countries in Asia and Latin America..., "are not yet", what is most promising about the new epoch keeps us waiting... At the same time, capital is scoring points. We must therefore be lucid about the reality of the global relationships of forces, and in order to resist, know how to defend a political project able to respond to sharp turns in the situation.

A social democracy that is "more and more bourgeois and less and less working-class"...

The evolution of social-democracy is a good indicator of the tendencies in the situation. The crisis of the 1930s occurred in a context of a rising dynamic of the workers' movement after the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the crisis itself caused a radicalization of the working classes and their organizations. All the currents of the workers' movement, from the reformists to the revolutionaries, polarized millions of workers. Coupled with the rise of fascism, the crisis pushed the big battalions of social democracy to the left, leading significant sectors of it towards more radical positions.

Today, the movement of social-democracy is in the opposite direction: the more the crisis deepens, the more social democracy adapts to neoliberal capitalism. How can we explain this transformation? Some people thought that, under the effects of the crisis, sectors of the ruling classes, and

following in their traces the parties of the Socialist International in Europe, would move towards Keynesian or neo-Keynesian policies of stimulating demand, of stronger public intervention. On the contrary, the Socialist parties have continued with austerity policies, and sometimes even initiated them, as in Southern Europe and in France today. No ruling class or state has taken up Keynesian policies or those based on social compromises. On the contrary, these sectors are using the crisis to increase the rate of exploitation and of surplus value. Inter-capitalist competition is leading to a forced march to lower the standard of living of millions of people. But beyond the economic trends, there is a political problem: the choice of Keynesianism is the product of relationships of forces imposed by class struggles. It was the Russian Revolution, the impact of the struggles of the 1930s and those of the post-war period and the 1960s that imposed such policies on the bourgeoisie and on states.

Today, the deterioration of the relationship of forces to the detriment of the popular classes in no way forces those at the top to make political concessions or social compromises. On the contrary, they redouble their attacks by imposing austerity and they dictate this policy to their social-democratic "lieutenants". From PASOK in Greece to other Socialist parties in Southern Europe, and involving the whole of the Socialist International, there reign policies of submission to debt, of respect for the "golden rule" of budgetary austerity, of defence of the interests of the employers. This process of adaptation is also due to a growing integration of social democracy into state institutions, and of the upper layers of these parties into the milieux of the financial markets and of captains of industry. The arrival of someone like Strauss-Kahn to head the IMF illustrates this process. Lenin, in his time, defined the Socialist parties as "bourgeois workers" parties. These parties are now "less and less workers' and more and more bourgeois". They remain linked, by their historical origin, to the workers' movement, but their links with their social and political base are more and more weakened.

Each party has its history and the differences are significant between, on the one hand, the ties that unite German social democracy to the workers' movement, and, on the other hand, the more distant links of the French Socialist Party with the workers' movement. But, overall, their relationships with the popular movement are increasingly weak, undermined by their support for austerity policies. Some have experienced a massive loss of members, as in Germany in the 1990s, while others, such as PASOK in Greece, can suffer a collapse or, as in Spain, confront crises that endanger their existence. This qualitative change, if it was taken to its conclusion, would transform these parties into "Democrat parties on the American model". This is the type of transformation that has been experienced, not by a social-democratic party but by the Italian Communist Party, which has become a bourgeois centre-left party. This trajectory can be slowed down because of the necessities of alternation in government, which encourages these parties not to be bourgeois parties like the others. In countries where the history of the workers' movement remains alive and where social democracy is still strong, the latter can only play a key role in political life and in political institutions because it is "social-democratic". This is the reason for the maintenance of historical references, although the Socialist parties of the beginning of the twenty-first century no longer have much to do with those of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Spaces and limits of the radical Left

This shift to the right of social democracy has released a space for the forces to the left of the Socialist parties. In the past months, forces such as the Left Front in France, Izquierda Unida in Spain and Syriza have occupied it. The left reformist forces have even succeeded in winning back a substantial part of the electorate of the anticapitalist or revolutionary Left, especially in France. Indeed, the space occupied by

the "radical Left" results more from the rightward evolution of Socialist parties and the crisis of European political representation than from an advance of the mass movement and the political radicalization of sectors of society, except in Greece with the experience of Syriza. A phenomenon like that of Beppe Grillo has also drawn in not only voters for the radical Left but also voters from the Left and the Right. The spaces occupied by Grillo and Syriza may overlap, but the Five-Star movement is not Syriza, far from it. In the one case, beyond the aspirations of the citizens who have identified with Grillo, which must be taken into account, we are dealing with a movement whose positions are problematic; in the case of Syriza, we have a political movement of the radical Left.

In a situation marked by resistance but also by defeats, parties (such as the Communist parties) which have a better social implantation and positions in the trade unions or in representative institutions are more resistant and represent a more credible alternative than the anticapitalist forces (except in Greece where the KKE, a party that is very Stalinist and divisive, has isolated itself, even though it continues to have militant forces). But the electoral rebound of these parties is not accompanied by a corresponding organizational and political strengthening, which takes us back to the degradation of the global relationships of political forces.

But the crisis also changes the relationships between social-liberalism and the Communist parties. The latter are prey to new contradictions between, on the one hand, interests linked to the alliances forged between Socialist and Communist leaders, and on the other hand, the austerity policies endorsed or implemented by the social-democratic parties, which are of such brutality that they make joint governmental coalitions more difficult. In Spain, these contradictions lead Izquierda Unida to oppose the policies of austerity, but at the same time to participate in a government with the PSOE in Andalusia. In Italy, the nebulous ex-Communist Refoundation has lost its way by remaining subject to the centre-left of

the Democratic Party. In France, the Left Front appears, for popular opinion, to be opposed to Holland, but what contortions it gets into to avoid stating clearly that it is part of the left opposition to this government! How many hesitant and contradictory votes in Parliament on government policies.... And it is no secret to anyone that the PCF will be torn, at the next municipal elections in 2014, between those who will continue alliances with the Socialists and those who want to be part of the Left Front lists. And these contradictions will not disappear, even behind good electoral results.

In France, the Left Party, led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, has been able, thanks to its alliance with the PCF, to give real dynamism to the Left Front. The four million who voted for Mélenchon and the tens of thousands of participants in the meetings during the election campaign have been a point of support for action and debate against the austerity policies. But this time once again, this dynamic has not resulted in a strengthening of the organizations of the Left Front.

In France, Jean-Luc Mélenchon represents, within the spectrum of the European radical Left, the French exception, with his fight for the "Republic". In many aspects, he comes across one of the most virulent against the government's policies, but he combines his references to the class struggle with a "nationalist republicanism" that adds to the confusion of ideas and programmes. On the political and historical level, his reference is not to the Republic of the Communards, who put the social republic in opposition to the bourgeoisie, but that of the republicans who merge, in their defense of the Republic, the words "nation", "republic" and "state". At the strategic level, this conception subordinates the "citizens' revolution" or the "revolution through the ballot box" to respect for the institutions of the state of the ruling classes. However, these references, far from being ideological coquetry, are not without political implications. Thus, during the presidential campaign, he reaffirmed in *Cahiers de la revue de la Défense nationale* "that in the current situation, nuclear deterrence remains

the essential element of our strategy of protection". Moreover, it is surprising that a supporter of ecosocialism defends the French nuclear bomb.

But it is especially faced with a key political question like the French intervention in Mali that the conceptions of Mélenchon on the state and the Republic have consequences. His defence of the Republic leads him to wonder whether or not "French interests" are or are not threatened. Although he rejects "any neo-colonial intervention", he "takes note", in the first place, of the military intervention, then "wishes for the victory of the French forces in Northern Mali". His refusal to define François Hollande's policy as being that of French imperialism prevents him from demanding the stopping of the bombing and the withdrawal of French troops from Mali.

Once again, these differences are not without political implications. The refusal to participate in the Hollande government, some of its votes in Parliament against austerity policies and its support for social struggles create the conditions for joint action with the Left Front. But its ambiguities with regard to the Socialist parliamentary majority, the refusal to affirm itself as a left opposition to the Government, the institutional links which bind it to the PS are a brake on the construction of an alternative. All the more so as the Left Front is at present controlled by the PCF and Mélenchon, despite a few dissenting voices that are unable to modify the relationships of forces within it.

The "Syriza" singularity

Quite another thing is the Greek configuration. We cannot understand Syriza without starting from the Greek crisis, which has resulted in social destruction unprecedented in Europe since the Second World War. Socio-economic demolition goes hand in hand with the political decomposition of the traditional parties, in particular PASOK. At the same time, the austerity plans of the Troika are

massively rejected by the population. Greece has experienced in recent months eight one-day general strikes. On the far right, against a background of racism, the Nazi party "Golden Dawn" is making a breakthrough. In these exceptional circumstances, those of a "global national crisis," Syriza has been propelled into being the first party of the Left: its election results have gone from 4.6 per cent to 26.8ç per cent!

Syriza, originally a coalition, has been transformed into a party. It comes from the history of the Greek Left, the crisis of the Communist movement, its splintering: Synaspismos, the majority current, comes from the Eurocommunist currents of the 1970s and has experienced internal crises and shifts to the left, notably under the pressure of the younger generations. Syriza has also worked with the global justice movement. The KKE, a very Stalinist party, more organized, is outside Syriza. At the last National Conference of Syriza, the left current and the left pole presented a separate list that obtained 25 per cent of the votes. Although the majority of Synaspismos remains on left reformist positions, the instability of the coalition, its sensitivity to the mass movement, its capacity of attraction with regard to the anti-austerity forces, the place of the revolutionary left within it, contribute to giving Syriza a radical role very different from that of the Left Front in France.

Syriza's essential strength and its dynamic come both from its radical opposition to the memorandums of the Troika (EU, IMF, ECB), its rejection of austerity policies, and, over and above formulas, from its real defence of a programme in favour of social rights, public services, the annulment of the illegitimate debt, nationalization of the banks under social control. In this situation of acute confrontation, these demands have a transitional role. Syriza has pursued a policy of unitary proposals towards the KKE and Antarsya, which have rejected them. Lastly, it is practically engaged alongside sectors in struggle. Syriza is the expression of the anti-memorandum movement. It has also popularized the proposal of a government of the lefts on an anti-

austerity programme, whose content is an issue between the left and the right of the party. Because, to date, it clearly a question of a "government of the lefts," a government breaking with austerity and not a "government of national union or salvation", as has been stated here and there by some leading members of Syriza.

Of course, nothing is settled. Social decomposition is increasing day by day. The stakes in Syriza are considerable on the level of the pressure exerted by the EU and the Greek capitalists. The left reformist orientation that is dominant within Syriza, and also the gap between its electoral strength and its organic weaknesses, limits its capacity for action. The temptations of the Syriza right to seek agreement with sectors of the ruling classes for a compromise with the EU are real. Other sectors of the Left, outside Syriza, discuss the possibility of a project of national reconstruction. But, at this stage, the EU remains intractable: no salvation outside "the memorandum"! So, faced with the attacks of the Troika and the Samaras government, there is no other perspective than confrontation, mobilization to overthrow this government, the battle for a "government of the lefts", and creating from the rejection of the austerity conditions the first breaks with the capitalist system.

The revolutionary Left: a difficult mutation

In the context of the overall political decline that the social movement is experiencing, the revolutionary lefts have been hit harder. No doubt there are historical explanations: too marked by the form, the content and the ideas of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they do not manage to take sufficiently into account the demands of the new epoch and the need for a fundamental mutation. No doubt, and the NPA is not the only example in Europe, or even in the world, the revolutionaries and the anticapitalists are not succeeding in moving from the stage of "organization" to that of "small

popular party". No doubt there is also a difficulty for organizations that, for decades, were "against the stream" or "in opposition", to be part of a real global political alternative experiencing the difficulties of political action!

These weaknesses did not allow the NPA to take sufficiently into account the emergence of a force like the Left Front and to adjust a political tactic which combines unitary proposals and political struggle. So it suffered a double temptation: adaptation, in the name of unity, to the dynamic of the Left Front, and sectarian propagandism by way of politics. This double temptation awaits other anticapitalist and revolutionary forces. A detailed balance sheet of the NPA is not the subject of this article, but the redeployment of the anti-capitalist Left implies emerging from this double temptation. This redeployment is possible because, even in reduced proportions, there is always a social and political base for anticapitalism.

This implies clarifying three issues:

(1) The question of unity, unity of action of all social, trade-union and political forces for a convergence of struggles against austerity policies. This is decisive, but it must also be accompanied by a political united front, building a political alternative against austerity and, in particular, by an orientation to build a left opposition to social-liberal governments. In France, this involves proposals to the Left Front for action, struggle and debates.

(2) The question of an anticapitalist action programme is also fundamental. How to combine the immediate demands of the ongoing class struggle, for jobs "the banning of sackings, starting with those made by companies that make profits —, wages, defence of public services and transitional proposals for a break with the neoliberal capitalist logic: auditing and annulment of the debt, expropriation of the banks and constitution of a unified public banking service, nationalization of key sectors of the economy under workers' control; a break with the Fifth Republic and a constituent process for real social and political democracy

based on social self-management. This programme is not a prerequisite for action. In a situation of exceptional crisis, basic demands against austerity may have a transitional dynamic towards breaking the system. Every step forward is support of these demands must be fully supported.

(3) Finally the construction of an anti-capitalist force demands putting forward a political perspective of government based on decisive tasks against austerity and the neoliberal capitalist logic. "Workers' government

", "popular government", "government against austerity"; those are some general formulas."Government of the lefts" in Greece, because the concrete situation calls for a concrete answer. These formulas are opposed to all policies of participation in or support for governments which manage the capitalist economy and institutions. In the present crisis, it is politically important to explain the contours of a political alternative to social liberalism, showing that there is nothing inevitable about it.

The political alliances of the radical

Left are diverse. So are the experiences. The Left Front is not Syriza. The relationship between the dynamics of the mass movement and these alliances, as well as the state of the internal relationships of forces within this or that coalition are important factors in determining a political tactic. The dynamic of social struggles and their combination with political crises will be decisive for the emergence new political generations. It is up to revolutionaries to learn and to become part of these real movements.

Election 2013: A right wing victory

20 May 2013, by Farooq Tariq

Here is brief of the election results and percentage of votes by different political parties:

National

Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN); 35%, Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI); 17.8%, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP); 15.7%, Mutihida Qaumi Movement (MQM); 5.6%, Jamia Ulmai Islam (JUIF); 2.9%, Pakistan Muslim League Q (PMLQ); 3.2% , Pakistan Muslim League F (PMLF); 2.2%, Jamaat Islami (JI) 1.6%;

Sindh

PPP; 38%, MQM; 26%, PMLF; 10%, PMLN; 5%, PTI; 8%, National Peoples Party (NPP); 2%

Punjab

PMLN; 49%, PTI; 19%, PPP; 11%, PMLQ; 5%

Khaiber Pukhtoonkhawa

PTI; 31%, JUIF; 18%, PMLN; 16%, Awami National Party (ANP); 5%, JI; 6%, PPP; 6%, Independents; 11%,

Baluchistan

Pukhtoon Khawa Mili Awami Party (PKMAP); 25% , JUIF; 22% , Independents; 17%, PMLN; 6%, PTI; 2%, PPP; 4%, National Party (NP); 5%, Baluchistan National Party (BNP); 4%.

Almost 62 percent of total votes went

to right wing and religious parties for the first time in history of Pakistan. Although the religious parties were not united in one single platform, despite that pro Taliban JUIF got 10 seats at national level and got 22 percent of votes in Baluchistan and 18 percent in Khaiber Pukhtoon Khawa province, the two provinces bordering Afghanistan. Unlike 2002 general elections, they will not be able to form governments in these provinces; however, they will be considerable force of reaction that will try their best to increase their support by opposing Tehreek Insaaf government in KPK and nationalist cum PMLN government in Baluchistan.

The elections took place despite consistent attacks by the religious fanatics on the election rallies and candidates leaving over 200 dead in different parts of Pakistan, mainly in Khaiber Pukhtoonkhawa, Sindh and Baluchistan. Taliban and other fanatic groups were able to carry out deadly attacks despite all the security measures taken by the police, paramilitary and military forces deployed on the occasion.

The PPP was punished for their absolute obeying the orders from IMF and World Bank to implement all the conditional ties of hiking all the basic

services and for massive load shedding of electricity. The prices had gone up and no comparison for the pay raises of the public sector employees during the PPP government. Private sector workers were the most exploited sector of working class during PPP government. It was government littered with corruption and bad management of all sector of life. The vote of PPP dropped from 2008 general elections 36 percent to little over 15 percent in 2013.

The PPP election campaign was restricted to newspapers and television and no mass activity on the ground. Unlike PTI and PMLN, they did not have one major rally or public meeting during the election campaign. PPP was able to retain Sindh support by securing 38 percent of votes because of spending almost all federal sate resources during five years on Sindh for a very volatile opposition alliance of 10 parties with nationalist, right wing and religious fanatics together, They even could not agree to contest elections on one single election symbol.

The right wing PMLN got the best result because of their Punjab government performance during the last five years. They were able to

construct 27 kilometer long Metro Bus rout in Lahore and advocated such development projects in other cities. Although, the Lahore Metro Bus project was completed at the cost of the other district of Punjab who were left far behind in development projects than Lahore.

The PTI of Imran Khan was able to replace PPP in Punjab and ANP in KPK because of total bankruptcy of the policies and strategies of these parties with a more right wing liberal programme. It could not do it in Punjab with the same success of KPK because another right wing political force PMLN almost similar ideas but an experience of fighting back and with a vibrant political campaign.

The Left

The Awami Workers Party decided to contest from limited seat in Pakistan. It contested 12 National seats, 10 provincial seats from Khaiber Pukhtoonkhawa, 10 from Punjab and 2 from Sindh. It was routed out by the voters in almost all seats apart from one national assembly seat in KPK where chairman AWP Fanoos Gujar was able to fetch over 10,000 votes. I received little over 2 percent of the total votes in my constituency. In Faisalabad, one textile worker contesting election on AWP nomination got over 3 percent of total votes. Although, the election campaign gave us an opportunity to popularize the name of AWP and some new membership, despite that we were unable to break through.

I felt during election campaign where

we organized over 60 corner meetings that we had some sympathetic view of the voters but we were not seen as the top two who were in the race. Also the massive use of money, violation of code of conduct and the experience of contesting and winning elections were the main basis for a total domination of this constituency and many others like this one.

There were a lot of rigging allegations by almost all the parties. The rich spent money like anything in this election and violated election commission of Pakistan code of conduct in almost all the seat particularly the condition of maximum expenditure of Rupees one million (\$10,000) for provincial assembly and 1.5 Million Rupees (\$ 15000) for national assembly elections.

In Toba Tek Singh, where I contested unsuccessfully elections for Punjab Assembly seat, the code of conduct was violated with setting up camps near polling stations, canvassing inside the polling stations, providing free transport to their voters and spending millions of rupees on election campaign. Despite my several applications to the district administrations, no effective action was taken to stop these violations.

Future

Not much will change for working class under PMLN government. It might go worst. PMLN is committed to implement neo liberal agenda with more effective means. PPP government was unable to carry out privatization under a massive

resistance of masses against it. Privatization under Musharaf was very visible at the time and there was no support for this action. PMLN with its mass support and no resistance by any political party will carry out mass privatization of public sector departments on the excuse of reducing state losses on these institutions. It will try to do that in its first 100 days in power. Trade unions will have hard time under PMLN.

The soft strategy of PMLN towards Taliban will pave the way for more right wing forces to popularize themselves among masses. The proposed talks will Taliban by PMLN will have no positive results. Its failure can pave the way for a more aggressive military solution towards religious fundamentalism. This was the strategy adopted by ANP government in KPK during 2008-2013 but failed miserably and was wiped out politically. PMLN will try to do with more sensitively but will not succeed.

The fight against religious fundamentalism can only be carried by making fundamental changes in state structure, separating state from religion, no state subsidy for private religious educational institutions, nationalization of all madrassas and introducing far reaching reforms in educational system including spending at least 10 percent of state budget on education.

Farooq Tariq

General Secretary

Awami Workers Party

A left government to conquer the debt

16 May 2013, by **Françisco Louçã**

2. If the debt is not overcome, Portugal will live through a period of social disintegration, impelled by the transfer of financial rents guaranteed on present and future taxes, accentuating therefore the neoliberal

project of imposition of increasing losses on labour in respect to capital.

3. In respect of the problem of the debt two great changes in Portuguese politics have been organised in the

last year: the Congress of Alternatives, which mobilized platforms of political response against the debt, and two demonstrations on the theme "Que se lixe a Troika" ("Fuck the Troika"), which mobilized popular convergences

against the debt.

4. None of those changes had been possible under parameters of confluence different from those of rejection of the blackmail of the debt. Any other question divides. By political intelligence and unitary will, these platforms against bankruptcy were constructed in an inclusive and mobilizing form. To abandon, devalue or to divide these processes would be disastrous for the left.

5. At the end of the second year of the Troika, resistance against bankruptcy can only be organized in the fight against the debt, with the proposal of a political commitment around a majority that rejects and wants to put an end to the Memorandum. Any devaluation of this unitary effort is an error.

6. In order to form a left majority against the Memorandum, that is to say, a government which rejects austerity and ends the debt in name of the wage-earners, of public services and growth, commitments and alliances are needed. The government of lefts against the Troika will be the form of that alliance. In order to obtain that government, it is necessary to demolish the PSD-CDS coalition, to call elections and to present to the people a viable solution that changes the present political panorama. In order to change that map, it is necessary to concentrate forces where the parties must be understood and be committed: the rejection of the debt.

7. There will be no possible victorious alliance if the platform is centred on exit from the euro. As demonstrated by the strategy of Syriza in Greece, the fight by a left government has a flag: the rejection of the debt. As demonstrated by the experience of Syriza, the right and the centre will use fear of exit from the euro as the main political argument, because that fear can tilt the elections. As the experience of Syriza demonstrated, one can only advance towards a left government with tactical rigor, clarity in the alliance proposals and by concentrating the argument where it is decisive: the debt.

8. There is immense work to be done

to approximate positions and to articulate proposals. The left in the past has done little work of proposal and articulation. It must do it and as quickly and intensely as possible. It can only do so through a rupture with the debt and austerity. That way is viable and can construct an alliance.

9. The exuberant proposal of a Plan A (federalism) and a plan B (exit from the euro if there was not federalism) has vanished from Portuguese political debate. This proposal assumed that the best solution for Portugal and Europe was the constitution of a European state, with a federal form, is to say, that Portugal would have to be a province of that state, evidently led by the German government. This solution is not the best one by some distance: it would be a backward historical backward movement in which only a conflict of high intensity would recover Portugal's independence. The defenders of that idea have abandoned it. Thank goodness.

10. The federalist proposal continues to be a trap because, for example, neither budget growth by 2% nor the management of a single currency necessarily demand the European government of a European state. They demand, certainly, common rules and reinforced cooperation. However, the federalist proposal wants to impose on the left the submission to an authoritarian project of the European bourgeoisie. The left that is against federalism because it is pro-European cannot stop the fight on European scale, without hoping that the forces of federalist centralism recoil, perhaps illuminated by social good sense, against their social interests. It must overcome them.

11. In order to obtain a new correlation of forces on a European scale it is necessary that left governments are chosen, faithful to the workers who choose them. In order to obtain the government of lefts it is necessary to know where to go and where the pressure should be concentrated, because this way requires clarifying alternatives to change parties and policies. All the pressure must be on the demand to the parties to present a plan to cancel the debt, by the route of European

negotiation or, if necessary, by the unilateral imposition of a moratorium and of cancellation of the debt.

12. The government of lefts will not be constituted by the centre nor by a resetting of the political forces of the centre. While the commitment of a party to the Memorandum lasts, the leadership of these parties will be always an impediment for the government of lefts. The good sense of a left policy will be based on this conviction: in order to win it is precisely to want to win and to know how to win, it is necessary to reject the financial rent that it is strangling wages, pensions and the public services. A government of lefts demands that the left has a left policy. The democratic problem of Portugal is the blackmail of financial capital, and is against financial capital that a government of lefts should determine itself.

13. Any proposal to maintain the Memorandum will produce a government worse than the previous one. There is no intelligent austerity. There is no austerity by halves. A new government which accepts the financial blackmail will create more austerity and more destruction, because with every day that passes, the imposition of the Troika will be worse: as is already clear, its solution for the fire of austerity is to blow on live coals to spread the fire. Or, as was said by somebody with authority and experience in the negotiations with the Troika, when we are in a hole they demand that we continue digging.

14. The ingenuous hypothesis of a lightening of the conditions of the financial blackmail after the re-election of Merkel, or of a European Renaissance after September of 2013 [the end of the intervention of the Troika in Portugal -ed.] is a naïveté. Any political conformation of the future German government, including the option by which Merkel has to ally with the Social-Democratic party, the SPD, will maintain the financial savagery. The president of the Eurogroup, the Dutch finance minister, is the living test of how the neoliberal Social Democrats behave like the Prussian cavalry of Merkel. A new government in Portugal cannot count on the facilities of the European

institutions; it must count on the support of its people and its natural allies, the popular lefts of Europe.

15. The government of lefts must present a full commitment: the day on which it comes to power, it will have strengthened electoral legitimacy to declare the Memorandum void and to initiate negotiations to reduce the debt. If the proposal of cancellation of the debt were not accepted by the European authorities, the best answer will be the unilateral imposition of a moratorium on payments of the debt, negotiation with the various creditors for an exchange of the debt securities for others of lower value linked to future growth, and the control of capital. As demonstrated by the failure of the cuts in Greece, if the European authorities are not put subject to the reduction of the debt that they hold, financial capital continues receiving its payments.

16. The government of lefts must have sufficient strength to impose a fiscal revolution, creating the means for a reorganization of the productive system, including reindustrialization for jobs, import substitution, energetic and environmental reconversion of the power and a concentration of investment in that direction. Once again, this economic policy attacks financial capital.

17. Against this background, the government of lefts must be prepared for every conflict, even for pressures that force it to exit from the euro. In "A Dividadura", a book which I published in 2012 with Mariana Mortágua, we wrote with clarity: "In the present context, exit from the euro is the worst of all the solutions and it only can be imposed by the will of the European directory. However, the worst of solutions can only be accepted when there does not exist of any way, when all the alternatives are exhausted, when survival demands it. There is only one condition in which exit from the euro can be made necessary for the Portuguese people, and that condition cannot simply be excluded: if, by means of a misfortune of the European institutions and rules, its independence was placed in doubt and Portugal would have no other solution than to abandon the European Union and, consequently,

the euro, to recover its capacity of decision. And it is necessary that the majority of the population is committed to this position, with the goal of conditioning it to the force of the social movements and the defence of the interests of labour". I maintain this point of view. We must prepare ourselves for everything, including the worst of decisions, if it is the only possible one.

18. I do not believe that there can be an easy exit from the euro. Gentilities to protect Portugal in the event of an exit from euro cannot be expected. There is no hope that the German government authorizes a new loan, this time unconditional and in values equal or superior to those of the first rescue, to favour the policy of a government of lefts that chose exit from the euro. Even if the German government wanted to impose this exit, it is not probable that it would finance it in order not to set a negative example. That hypothesis of an "agreement between gentlemen" seems politically nonviable. In the European leadership chivalry does not exist, but extremely authoritarian social interests do.

19. An exit from the euro under the orders of Merkel or a government of the right would mean a class struggle without quarter against the workers, to transform and to accelerate the process of accumulation of capital to the exclusive profit of a part of the oligarchy. And with no guarantee of cancellation of the debt; on the contrary, in this case, this option could be a form of accentuating the transfer of the profits from labour to capital through an austerity that would accelerate the violent adjustment. The left that is mistaken in this hypothesis will not deserve to survive politically, because it will go over to the side of the austerity and would salvage it. Whoever defends exit from the euro without cancellation of the debt will not be able to solve the democratic problem of Portugal.

20. In the fight against the debt, if the left government were forced to leave the euro it will have to have get the people on its side, mobilizing them to reject the threat of Merkel and financial capital and be willing to stand up for democracy. The

consequences of an exit from the euro are so deep that they would only possibly be justified by a national emergency precipitated by external violence and it only can be maintained by a government which generates an enormous national consensus on this decision. The political question will always be fundamental, given the pressures and difficulties that the process would imply. Only the democratic power of the people assures the force to make the necessary decisions in that context. Whoever ignores that threat and those high intensity risks is not even prepared to govern for a month.

21. The confrontation of a left government with financial capital is being pushed aside by those who consider it a mere slogan for practicing politics. For this fundamental encounter whoever works in the preparation of a new left government must present a firm perspective, considering all the eventualities, the best alternatives for each problem that can be presented during the development of that government, including exit from the euro for the devaluation of the new escudo.

22. This study on how to resist the negative effects in the short and midterm of a possible exit from the euro must necessarily include:

- a) the note that Portugal runs the risk that the new currency, the escudo, is for some months merely formal, allowing the possibility of making internal transactions in a foreign currency, whose circulation will tend to diminish and which will depend on a European central bank with which the country could enter into conflict;
- b) the risk that there are two currencies in circulation in the country for a long period of time and that there is a speculative movement against the escudo;
- c) the perception that depositors will feel threatened and harmed, and could react by withdrawing their deposits in euros from the banks;
- d) the note that the immediate impact of the increase in the price of imports, after the devaluation of the escudo, will be only compensated in the trade balance some time later by the increase in exports, which depends on orders;

e) the note that exports are dangerously sensitive to the political climate, the economic cycle and the rules of financing, which will lead to restrictions;

f) the note that interest rates will tend to rise, with the effect of an internal redistribution unfavourable to debtors, and at the same time inflation will reach levels not known in recent years, which also will have redistributive effects unfavourable to wages and pensions;

g) the new legal definition of the values of internal debts, including mortgage debts, and their effects on the bank balances;

h) the notion that the banks can enter into bankruptcy by the increase of the value in the national currency of their external debts and that, if they were nationalized, that would significantly increase the external national debt.

i) the study of the forms of redistribution throughout society and the benefits that devaluation will grant to the export sector;

j) institutional adjustment, including the operation of the Bank of Portugal and the CGD [Caixa Geral de Depositos, the main Portuguese commercial bank, which is publicly owned], as well as the administration of the financial system.

23. This study would include in addition the national and European political conditions for the decision of

a left government:

a) the verification of the majorities necessary to make the possible decision of exit from the euro, considering the power of the president and the necessity of a parliamentary majority that can thwart a possible presidential veto;

b) the definition of a new model of changes in a context of conflict with the European authorities and its possible hostility to the inclusion of Portugal in the European regime of countries that are outside the euro;

c) verification that the state can legally exert the sovereign power to re-denominate its debts in national currency, whereas companies and the banks do not have that legal power and that, therefore, their balances would be harmed;

d) a new definition of relations with the European Union, in particular to allow protectionist policies of industrialization, job creation and the renationalization of strategic common goods for budgetary management.

24. There are answers, difficult though they be, for all these threats and questions. None of those answers is a slogan. Slogans are useless and do not replace the detailed preparation of answer to the economic and social problems. The slogan is a flag. It is legitimate to make politics with a flag. But a flag does not make a government, does not create a left

government that can respond to the democratic problem of Portugal, that is the debt. A victorious strategy depends on a profound work of preparation of answers, that states the difficulties in order to confront them.

25. Realism is a precondition of intelligence. All the realistic answers demand an economic policy that Portugal does not have, but that it needs to have: control of credit, public intervention in the financial system, a mobilizing taxation of resources, a strategy for jobs. It is not realistic to accept the blackmail of the debt nor is it realistic to oppose unreal solutions to the latter.

26. My conclusion is the following: the only agenda that can create a left majority is the fight against the debt. A left government can only win if it constitutes an alliance and that alliance demands with clarity the cancellation of the debt. This government must be prepared to reject all the pressures of the financial capital and to take all the measures that are necessary in that direction, including exit from the euro if that is the only solution. This preparation demands detailed and careful work, bringing together many of the best left economists. It's a job to be done. And it had better start now.

Le Monde Diplomatique, May 2013

“It is necessary to propose a radical, anti-systemic, anti-capitalist alternative: ecosocialism”

12 May 2013, by Bernard Rioux , Michael Löwy

“Warm congratulations to the Founding Assembly of the Québec Solidaire Ecosocialist Network! You are in the front line of the battles in North America against the biggest polluters of the planet. Your struggle, your thinking and your courage to go against the current are precious for all

those who hope that another world is possible, a world where human beings and nature are no longer reduced to the condition of commodities.”

Interview

Bernard Rioux: Why talk about ecosocialism today?

Michael Löwy: We are facing an ecological crisis that endangers, in the form of climate change, human life on

the planet. At the root of this crisis lies a civilization - modern industrial capitalism - based on productivism, consumerism, commodity fetishism and the unlimited accumulation of profit; its logic of unlimited expansion has shown itself to be fundamentally incompatible with the protection of nature.

Hence the need to propose today an anti-systemic, radical, anticapitalist alternative: ecosocialism. What is at stake is decisive: it is a question of preventing a catastrophe that would be unprecedented in the history of humanity. Ecosocialism is an original attempt to articulate the fundamental ideas of socialism with the advances of ecological criticism. Its objective is a new civilization, an alternative way of life, based on social and ethical values - solidarity, equa-liberty (as Etienne Balibar puts it) - and on the respect of nature.

BR: What has been the follow-up to the 2001 international appeal in 2001 on ecosocialism? What is the present influence of ecosocialism?

Michaël Lowy: The 2001 appeal contributed to relaunching the debate on ecosocialism and to creating an international ecosocialist network. But the influence of ecosocialism today goes far beyond this initiative. We are seeing in Europe and in the Americas (North and South) a multiplicity of declarations in favour of ecosocialism, from different left forces, and the organization of conferences and seminars - in Paris a few months ago, soon in Quito and Caracas - around this alternative. In the United States, journals like *Capitalism, Nature and Socialism, Monthly Review* and *Against the Current* increasingly refer to ecosocialism (or to socialist ecology).

BR: There is the European example - NPA , Left Party, Die Linke - and whether we are talking about parties or entire populations like the indigenous peoples of Latin America, does ecosocialism appear as a perspective that is more and more relevant today?

Michaël Lowy: The fact that in France, the NPA and the Anticapitalist Left, but also the Left Party, and even

the Socialist Youth, identify with ecosocialism is important. But the most promising development is the rise of the socio-ecological struggles of indigenous peoples in Latin America, who are struggling to defend their land, their rivers and their forests against the destructive greed of multinational oil companies and capitalist agribusiness. Some of the leaders of these indigenous movements, such as the Peruvian Hugo Blanco, identify themselves as ecosocialists. For him, this idea corresponds to the way of life of the indigenous communities of the continent for centuries, based on collectivist practices and respect for the "Earth Mother".

BR: Are we not seeing a hardening of the positions of the bourgeoisie and the governments of the major powers? (failure of the Kyoto agreements - abandonment of policies against global warming - relaunching of exploitation of fossil fuels: tar sands, shale oil and gas)?

Michaël Lowy: The spectacular failure of International Climate Conferences-from Copenhagen to Doha, via Rio - and of the Kyoto agreements, as well as relaunching frantic exploitation of fossil fuels, including those that are "dirtier", environmentally destructive and disastrous from the point of view of the climate - such as tar sands - is simply the result of the logic of the system. Businesses, banks, governments and the so-called "international institutions" (WTO, IMF, World Bank) act according to the imperatives of capitalism: "expansion", profitability, maximum profit, competitiveness, a fierce struggle for market share. Their "hardness" is merciless and blind, the hardness of the system itself. The capitalist oligarchies seem to be inspired by the old principle proclaimed by Louis XV: "after me the deluge".

BR: In this context what are the new challenges of the movement for climate justice and the proposals of ecosocialists?

Michaël Lowy: The proposals of ecosocialists start from the fact that a solution to the ecological crisis, and to

global warming in particular, cannot be achieved within the limits imposed by the capitalist world system. But we must start the struggle for ecosocialism here and now, around concrete and immediate objectives, such as those of the movement for climate justice. The challenge for this movement is to contribute to a collective awareness and a massive mobilization on the issue of climate change and social justice, before it's too late. It is essential for it to win the support of youth, women, workers and trade unionists, explaining that another policy would create millions of "green jobs".

BR: In North America, with the search for energy autonomy by the United States and the relaunching of exploitation of oil and gas, are the issues more important than ever? What are the paths of resistance?

Michaël Lowy: The capitalist industrialized countries in North America are among the major contributors to the process of climate change. Canada has the distinction of having one of the most retrograde governments, from the ecological point of view, of the planet. We are witnessing a real blind rush forward in the exploitation of fossil fuels, each time with terrible environmental consequences, as is the case with shale gas, tar sands or deep water oil (the Gulf of Mexico!). Short-term profitability is the one and only criterion, in the two countries of North America, for energy policies. The battle against the XL Pipeline is the most important immediate issue, and it is encouraging to see the success of the mobilization in the United States against this harmful project. It is necessary to build a common resistance between the inhabitants of Canada and United States against this new infamy of the fossil oligarchy.

BR: What are the main tasks facing ecosocialists in the present international context?

Michaël Lowy: We must participate in any movement, any struggle that tries to block the ecocidal dynamics of the system, while trying to bring about a convergence of social and ecological mobilizations. At the same time, within

these mobilizations, as well as in the global justice movement and the movement for climate justice, we propose for discussion our

anticapitalist analyses and our ecosocialist programme, the concrete utopia (Ernst Bloch) of a new civilization. The task is immense and

our opponents are very powerful. But, as Bertolt Brecht said, if you fight you may lose, but if you don't fight you've already lost...

Barbacha boils over

9 May 2013, by **Alain Krivine**

The FLN, RCD and FFS, supposedly in opposition to each other, set up a coalition of eight councillors against the six of the PST. The people immediately mobilized to impose new elections and thus allow Sadeq to return. For four months hundreds of inhabitants, including FFS and RCD activists who disagree with their parties' representatives, have mobilized night and day, occupying and blocking all the municipal departments (the civil registry and so on) and forbidding any meetings of the bogus majority.

Organized in a permanent general assembly, with delegates from the twenty or villages making up the commune meeting in the community hall, the people practicing a form of self management for various municipal activities (waste collection, distribution of fuel to schools, cleaning and so on). Without any sign of exhaustion, they have organized demonstrations in both Barbacha and Béjaïa (capital of the wilaya) situated at around forty kilometres from each

other, which have been covered by numerous articles in the Algerian national press.

Democratic mobilization

Sunday March 24 marked a turning point in the situation. Faced with 2,000 demonstrators blocking the wilaya headquarters in Béjaïa, the Wali called on the riot police who charged the demonstrators with unrestrained violence, wounding several people including a youth whose legs were broken. Twenty-six people were arrested including Sadeq Akrouf who was held for 24 hours before being released to the acclaim of hundreds of people who awaited him, his head bandaged following the blows he had received.

Emotions are running high in Kabylie and throughout the country. The news spread as the government used the police against demonstrations of the unemployed in the south. And the

mobilization has not weakened. On Sunday March 31, hundreds of inhabitants of Barbacha demonstrated again before the court in Béjaïa where six people were to appear to demand the cancellation of legal proceedings. The coming days will see national initiatives in favour of the dissolution of the municipal council and new elections.

"The Wali is the law, for me it is the people" stated our comrade Sadeq Akrouf who has succeeded in leading a council recognized as the best in Algeria in terms of social achievements (settling water supply problems, establishing an emergency service at the municipal clinic, and so on). Four months of uninterrupted mobilizations, and a municipality unable to function with representatives incapable of meeting: a fine demonstration of what can be done by an anti-capitalist party and elected representatives capable of linking social achievements, even in a limited context, and popular mobilization.

New opportunities for left realignment

4 May 2013, by **Alan Thornett**

The left was nowhere in the election - there was nothing to rally the left in the way UKIP rallied the right - which raised again the desperate need for a broad party of the left which can start to do what Syriza has done in Greece:

provide a clear anti-austerity platform to which the working class can relate.

Syriza has demonstrated that a coalition of forces organised democratically within a single party

can win mass support and break the hold of the main establishment parties including social democracy. Similar parties have been built in a number of European countries. Just a few months ago the prospects

for such a party, in England, looked extremely bleak. Socialist Resistance had continued to argue for such a party with all those on the left who would listen because we were strongly convinced of the need. We published a book and held forums and seminars on the issue and discussed with other organisations on the left. It was hard going but the space for such a party had been still there, in fact it had increased.

This grim situation, moreover, was entirely self-inflicted by the left itself. Prime opportunities to build such a party, over the past 15 years had been squandered by sectarianism. This had produced a series of damaging splits which had seriously undermined the credibility of such a project.

The key factor in each case was internal democracy, or the absence or abuse of it. It had revolved around whether these organisations could have a decision making process independent of the principal far left organisation involved, or the principal important individual. Whether they could have their own internal political life and political development.

The Socialist Labour Party, which had been launched by Scargill after Tony Blair took control of the Labour Party in 1994, was eventually torn apart by the personal top down control on which he insisted and his refusal to allow any plurality.

The Socialist Alliance (SA), which was launched in 2000, embraced, at one stage, virtually the whole of the far left, including the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Socialist Party (SP), along with significant forces from the Labour Left, was split when the SP walked out in opposition to one member one vote at its conferences.

Respect was launched in 2004 after George Galloway was expelled from the Labour Party for his opposition to the Iraq war, and the SA dissolved into it. It had a wider appeal, particularly amongst Muslim people radicalised by the war, and was able to get Galloway elected to Parliament (the first left of Labour MP since the 1940s) and significant groups of councillors elected mainly in East London and Birmingham. It was eventually split,

however (between the SWP and almost everyone else), when the SWP refused to relax its grip on the functioning of the organisation.

Respect 'Renewal', which was formed from the split with the SWP, was also eventually destroyed when Galloway imposed his own top-down control and turned it into a support group for himself - even after spectacularly winning the Bradford West Parliamentary by-election in March last year, which had opened up new opportunities for a broad party.

The far-left

The prospects for far-left unity had looked equally bleak only months ago. The far-left had been dominated for many years by the two big organisations (in far left terms), the SWP and the SP, with the smaller groups, including ourselves (in our current and previous forms), largely squeezed out.

The SP had broken the mould and turned outwards when it promoted the early Socialist Alliances in the 1990s. The SWP (the bigger of the two by quite a bit) turned outwards to join the SA in 2000 in quite a sharp break with its past isolationism. This did not last long in either case, however. The SWP increasingly acted in its own self-interest and after it had split Respect it went back to an isolationist position. When it came to the struggle against the cuts in 2010, these historic divisions within the far left became replicated in a destructive way in the broader movement. Instead of a single national focus we ended up three anti-cuts campaigns: the National Shop Steward Network run by the SP, Unite the Resistance run by the SWP, and CoR which was established on an open and broad basis.

In fact the SP split the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) - a trade union co-ordination originally set up by the rail union the RMT - in 2011 by forcing through a resolution (against all others in the NSSN) to turn the NSSN into a new anti-cuts campaign as a rival the Coalition of Resistance (CoR).

CoR was formed after John Rees,

Lindsey German and Chris Banbury led a split from the SWP in 2010 (along with 40 others) and founded Counterfire in England and the ISG in Scotland. They took the initiative in founding CoR and Counterfire became a central component within it.

Dramatic opportunities

Recent developments, however, have dramatically opened up the situation on the left - both at the level of building a broad party to the left of Labour and at the level of far left unity.

The most dramatic was an appeal for a new broad party of the left issued by Ken Loach on the occasion of the launch of his new film *The Spirit of 45* - which is a big defence of socialist and collectivist ideas and in particular public ownership and public services.

The film was launched simultaneously in 50 cinemas (many full to capacity) in mid-March followed by a question and answer session in one cinema which was relayed to many of the others during which Ken Loach made an appeal for a new party of the left. His appeal was then carried by a website which had recently been set up to argue for a new party - called Left Unity, which we as SR had been involved from the outset. Within a few days 6,000 people had signed up to the appeal.

Since then the project has moved at a remarkable pace. There are now over 90 local groups in various stages of formation. An organising committee has been set up at an ad-hoc meeting held in London to administer these developments and support local groups. The first national meeting of reps from branches is taking place on May 11th in order to agree the next steps forward. The initial thoughts for a date for a launch conference for a new party seem to be early next year, February or March.

Not that creating a new broad party will be easy given the propensity of the left in England to squander such opportunities and the legacy which has been left by the previous failures - particularly the actions of the big far-

left organisations. But the urgent need is still there and it is the best chance for a long time.

There seems to be a general consensus that a new organisation should be a broad, pluralist, left of Labour, anti-austerity party and one that is not dominated, undemocratically by a far-left organisation. Also that it should be based on individual membership, and not a federation of organisations.

Electoral strategy has not yet been discussed but it is clear that the approach of TUSC - which is to parachute into constituencies with now record on the ground and to do nothing between elections will be rejected.

Neither the SWP or the SP are involved - other than a few people at local level. Nor does it have a big charismatic leader. Ken Loach will no doubt continue to support, but such 'big leader' roles are anathema to him. There is no George Galloway or Tommy Sheridan (who split the SSP in Scotland) type figures for example. This can be a disadvantage when it comes to elections but it also has a positive side given the havoc which such figures have reeked in the recent past.

It means that the party itself will have to establish its own reputation by its work and its record.

Far left regroupment

The first positive development as far as far left unity is concerned started when the Anti-capitalist Initiative emerged in April last year, initially from a split of young people from Workers Power along with a previous split from Workers Power some people from autonomous backgrounds and others. By the end of the year they were making an appeal for a more open and democratic form of far left organisation. Luke Cooper and Simon Hardy published a book arguing the case for this entitled 'Beyond capitalism? The Future of Radical Politics'.

The book was a clear break from a sectarian past and we engaged with it as strongly as we could holding discussions and joint public meetings with the ACI in London Manchester and elsewhere where our membership coincided. We worked with them in the early stages of Left Unity, before the Ken Loach initiative, and have continue to work with them in Left Unity ever since.

The second was when the crisis in the SWP (or a new stage of it) broke into the open in January this year at the SWP conference, where there was a huge dispute over the sexual harassment allegations were dealt with (or not dealt with), the main lines of which are now well known. Some SWP members had already been expelled for forming a faction.

Soon after the conference a group of around 200 SWP members resigned from the organisation over the leadership's defence of their actions on this issue and the political methods used to do so. They formed themselves into a grouping called the IS Network which had its first national level meeting on April 13th and they invited ourselves as SR and the ACI to attend as observers and to give greetings to it.

However you view the decline of the SWP, which has long been a major force on the left, this has dramatically shaken up the landscape of the far left and has opened up a new space for far-left realignment.

In fact it was clear from the outset that this grouping had a very different approach to others who have left the SWP in recent years - in fact dramatically so. There was a remarkably non-sectarian and outward looking atmosphere in the meeting.

The mood was for a far more open and democratic model for the far left. They were setting up a new organisation/coordination but with the aim of far-left regroupment and the organisations they mentioned in this regard were SR and the ACI. Several speakers said that if they have not achieved regroupment by this time next year they will have failed.

There was also strong support for Ken Loach's initiative, which was seen by most speakers as a separate but

equally important development. There was a women's caucus which discussed and reported back to the meeting and which presented constitutional proposals regarding the protection of women and how to deal with the issue in a very different way to the SWP.

A steering group with 50% women were elected. One of the tasks given to the Steering Group was to organise a 'Marxism-style' political festival within the next year and to approach SR and the ACI to jointly organise it.

The crisis of the SWP is in any case ongoing and they firmly expect more groupings to emerge from the SWP under similar conditions. In fact since then the SWP's biggest student group has resigned also calling for a new kind of far left politics outside of the mould of the SWP tradition.

When I gave greetings to the meeting from SR I strongly welcomed this approach and said that as far as we were concerned we could see no reason why these three organisations, ourselves, the IS Network and the ACI should continue as separate organisations and that we were in favour of bring them together into a single organisation in the short to medium term.

Coincidentally our Socialist Resistance conference was held the following weekend of April 20th and 21st. We placed these new developments - the Ken Loach initiative and the possibilities of far-left regroupment at the centre of the conference which adopted resolutions for our full involvement in both.

Comrades talked about the possibility, if both sides of this go well - a broad party and far left regroupment - of a new regrouped far left organisation working in an organised way inside a new broad party to tackle the issue of working class representation.

Both the ACI and the IS Network attended the conference and gave greetings to it. They were very positive toward a three-way regroupment. Kate Hudson (one of the convenors) also brought greetings from Left Unity and welcomed SR's involvement in it. Regarding far left

unity the mood of the conference was summed up by one comrade who said that if we still exist in a years time we will have failed.

Since the conference things have moved on further with the first meeting to discuss regroupment proposed for May 12th - the day after

the first national meeting of Left Unity.

All this reflects a profound change which is taking place on the far left in England, the extent of which is not yet clear. What is clear, however, is that by this time next year things are likely to look very different on the far-left.

None of this is going to be easy, particularly creating a new broad party after the impact of recent history. SR, however, is fully committed to both projects and we will do all we can to bring them to a successful conclusion.

May 4 2013

A Reflection on US Ecosocialist Conference by an Organizer

4 May 2013, by Andy Wojozen

This struggle and our collaborative process around ongoing specific fights, brought together 240 participants for a discussion endorsed by 29 different organizations, exceeding all expectations. Participants were pouring through registration well through the opening plenary. A majority of folks were New York residents though we had some attendees from Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington, D.C., and even our Canadian neighbors in Toronto. While students were a significant portion of the audience, the conference attracted numerous ecosocialist writers and organizers. In addition to the plenaries, I made time to take a look at the workshops and snap some pictures. Each one had roughly 50-75 people in attendance with consistently lively discussions after the main speakers.

Between sessions, discussions continued around the literature tables of participating organizations. In fact, the organizers had some trouble pulling folks back into the main room for plenaries. The high activity level of participants from different areas suggests that Ecosocialism not only has a theoretical place, but that its activists are eager to branch out and network as part of a larger coordinated struggle. One of the illuminating aspects of the conference was how many activists are knee deep in local ecological work as opposed to

parties just interested in these talks.

These folks are working diligently in campaigns that have been betrayed by the Democratic party and straight up attacked by the GOP. Not surprisingly, the conversation about political action was concentrated on street organizing and involvement with third parties. One can easily imagine that there are many more ready for an amplified Ecosocialist voice in the environmental justice movement. If we can gather 240 organizers and activists for a conference which was organized in six weeks, what can we do in six months? A year? How can this collaborative outlook spread to other forms of struggle? Can it be useful for the anti-capitalist movement in general?

Reflections on Our Collaborative Work

Informally, one of the conference's student organizers made a critical comment that a majority of our presenters were from older generations. This was mostly true with some exceptions, notably the Divestment Campaign and Occupy Sandy workshops. Youth are very much entrenched in ecological work, consistently in the forefront of actions and national campaigns against

mountaintop removal and the Keystone pipeline. These are people who are courageously radical and secure enough in their own political beliefs to risk their livelihoods. Arguably the limited amount of time, resources, and collaborative experience showed when it came to integrating youthful and veteran organizers for discussions of the future. How do we do a better collective job of bringing younger activists to the national table? The Ecosocialist Coalition made some progress in recognizing and dealing with this question, but we will have to work on making remedies more deliberate and efficient.

The Occupy Sandy workshop.

Another criticism of the conference was that the presenters were majority white and male. None of the presenters spoke from a queer perspective or integrated LGBTQ issues into their talks. Organizers made open and honest attempts to balance these issues. Rather than a problem specific to this conference, segregation and over-representation of older white men is an issue that pervades much of the radical Left. A systemic look reveals that the problem is not that women or people of color are not involved in ecology work. Quite the contrary, several conference

participants spoke anecdotally that their experience in local work has been the opposite. The question is how can we organize deep and meaningful collaboration between the section of the movement represented at the conference and the environmental justice movement? If we merely cite the dilemma without taking self-conscious steps to fix it, our shortcomings will persist. An established national coalition, pooling its resources, could ensure access to a much more inclusive group of activists resulting in a more informed analysis and enhanced potential for effective organizing in the future.

On the other hand, I would like to take a moment to thank our seasoned activists and organizers for their experience and insight. Up and coming organizers are inheriting a rich history of ecological work based on Earth Day in 1970 and since. The lessons of this work will help to synthesize an Ecosocialist strategy. For example, Howie Hawkins, a founding member of the Green Party and ongoing Green activist and

organizer, spoke during one of the workshops of re-raising the 1970s demand for socializing the energy sector. It is necessary to understand that this solution cannot simply be a nationalizing of industries, but requires democratic control. Without collective control by the people, a state-owned industry would only centralize Capital's vice grip on resources. This is the type of lesson that experienced organizers can and should be citing in our current effort to bring Ecosocialism to the ecological movement.

Conclusions

The conference, itself, was not perfect or without its logistical and planning hiccups. I do not advise organizing workshops only six weeks in advance if it can be avoided. And I am not suggesting that our coordinating structure is a model. The organizers did what they felt was best based on what was available. But now is the time to productively critique the process - to sum up our strengths and our weaknesses - so that the process

can continue to function as a unity project, bringing together activists based on our common work, and one which I hope can be looked at as a significant step in the right direction.

There is plenty of work to be done. For one, the Northeast does not represent the entire country. The West Coast has its own fair share of ecology work, as well as the Mid-West, Southwest, and Southern regions. In the big picture, organizing this conference, as difficult as it was, will be one of the easier steps. It will take a lot of labor and time to grow Ecosocialism in other places until we can ultimately connect as a national effort. It would appear the time is ripe now that the Obama Administration has shown its true intentions on environmental policy. As the corporate profits continue to rise, multitudes of ordinary people continue to suffer from an ongoing streak of super storms and other violent changes in climate, and a non-stop assault of pollution. Ecosocialists here and abroad insist that there's no stopping us no