



## IV461 - June 2013

### IV461- June 2013 PDF

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## Oppose the Continual Harassment of Rohit Prajapati

28 June 2013, by **International Liaison committee, Radical Socialist**

Comrade Rohit was marked out when he, identified by the police as a Hindu, stayed in the predominantly Muslim inhabited Tandalja area in 2002. He was further identified for his role during the pogroms, and for his subsequent role. Comrade Rohit also had been arrested for participating in the struggles over the Narmada dam.

In the last two decades and more, he and his comrades, in trade unions, in the environmentalist organisations, have been fighting to link environmental issues and the rights of workers, poor peasants, adivasis. This has led to militant battles, court cases, and other forms of struggles. The issues include the struggle against inadequate protection for workers and local communities when hexavalent chromium is used, the struggle to get minimum wages for chemical industry

workers, the struggle to keep Vapi, Ankleswar, Vadodara and Vatva industrial areas and the residential areas of workers and other common people cleaned up.

As a result, the Modi government had installed a surveillance programme, and police personnel were constantly coming to his home and asking questions for a whole year, even though no case had been filed. At the same time, the exposures of environmental pollution and the impact on health of workers and community dwellers in Vapi, Ankleswar, Vadodara and Vatva etc also got industrialists angry. They are aware that because of the struggles by trade unionists and environmental activists, Hema Chemicals has been put under restraint by the Supreme Court of India. In order to try and

forestall such actions against them, the Vapi industrialists have filed two cases against comrade Rohit. Both are over the reports, based on his arguments, that Vapi is the most polluted town in the country. The first is a civil defamation suit for Rs. 25 Crores (approximately 4.2 million US dollars), while the latest is a Criminal Defamation suit under clauses of the Indian Penal Code that can lead to two years imprisonment.

Radical Socialist expresses the view that this is nothing more or less than another tactical move in an ongoing class struggle, which however is of great importance. Gujarat is not only the place that had a massive pogrom. Gujarat is also the development model that the fascists of the RSS-BJP want to highlight as the model for the whole of India. The struggles of comrades

formerly in the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan, and now in Radical Socialist, along with their allies in trade unions, civil rights organisations, and environmentalist organisations, show up constantly that this model has devastating consequences for the working class and all other toilers. The Narmada waters go, not to the dry areas of Gujarat, as rhetorically promised before the dam was built, but to beautify the Ahmedabad waterfront.

The industrial growth of Gujarat is based on repeated attempts to flout Pollution Control Board norms. Not merely by low wages, but also by physically killing the workers through pollution are these industrialists making fast profits and thus is Modi showcasing to the world his model Gujarat.

We call upon all working class, environmentalist, and socialist

organisations, and all organisations concerned in any way with the rights of humans, to support these struggles. In this context, we urge the formation of a broad defence committee, that will look not only at the cases against Comrade Rohit, but also seek to support the work being done by the JKM, the VKU and the PSS about industry, workers rights and pollution. [1]

24/06/2013

## **“The main immediate challenge for the anti-capitalist left is to contribute to the development of the movement”**

**27 June 2013, by João Machado**

**From Europe the protests are hard to understand, since, aside from the higher public transport prices, isn't it the case that there is today an economic and social situation in Brazil in full development? What do you think? Is this a manifestation of the middle-class that does not feel represented?**

The truth is that the idea that there is an economic and social situation in Brazil of full development is false. The federal government tries to pass off that idea, and it is in the interests of the international bourgeoisie (and its mass media) to pass off that idea, but it is not true.

It is true that under the Lula government there was more growth of the economy than under the FHC government. But we look at this in the historical context of Brazil, or if we make the comparison with the whole of the world, Brazil's growth is very mediocre. The growth rate of Brazil in the last ten years is one of the lesser rates in Latin America, it is less than the growth of the other called “emergent” countries and so on.

In addition, in both years of the Dilma government for which there is already

data growth has fallen even more: 2.7% growth of GDP in 2011, and 0.9% in 2012. In 2013, in spite of the previous hopes of the government of a big recovery, the data already indicate that growth will again be mediocre. Of course this is explained, in a good part, by the reflection of the bad situation of the world-wide economy (in the same way that a good part of the better results of the Lula government is explained by the international boom in commodities, impelled above all by China), but the point it is that there is no process of significant economic growth in Brazil.

If we think in somewhat broader terms, more in line with the hypothesis of “development”, the evaluation is still worse. In the last ten years, Brazil has regressed from the point of view of its industry - there is a deindustrialization process - and above all from the point of view of its external economic relations. It has become an exporter of commodities, it has been exporting less industrial products than for 20 years. At that level, its dependency on the outside has increased.

But the problems from the economic point of view go still further. In recent

months there has been a renewed process of inflation - limited, but perceivable (something around 6% in the year is expected). At the same time, there is a deterioration of the trade balance (explained, partly, by the over-evaluation of the real - the Brazilian currency - which is imposed in the name of control of inflation). Weak growth, with inflation and deterioration of the trade balance is a combination of circumstances that restricts much the margin of manoeuvre of the government. And as it is a very conservative government from the economic point of view, what it tries to do is to more forcibly control public spending and to give incentives to capital - with, until now, very little result.

There is an aspect of the question with which I agree more. It is clear that the mobilizations are not only explained, and perhaps not even mainly explained, by the relatively bad present economic situation (although the price of public transport really is high in terms of people's purchasing power). The indignation against the repression of the demonstrations, support for the right to demonstrate, as I have already mentioned, has an

important weight.

And that also has an important weight on what the question suggests, I would not raise it as “the middle-class does not feel represented”, but more as a lost general legitimacy of the political system. A great part of the population feels that the majority parties have policies which are very similar (which has been expressed clearly, for example, by the fairly similar and in general common performance of both the politicians directly responsible for the question of public transport in Sao Paulo, mayor Fernando Haddad, of the PT, and governor Geraldo Alckmin, of the PSDB).

It is true that the federal government has had clear majority support in recent years, and in particular in the elections. But there were surveys published shortly before the beginning of the mobilizations that have pointed to a significant fall in that support. And the sector that supports the government least is exactly the intermediary wage earning sector (a part of the proletariat, of course). The government has greater support among the more precarious wage earners, among the poorest, the sector that some analysts call “the sub-proletariat”. But even a part of that sector has rebelled – starting precisely from the initiatives of breaking into shops and banks, burning cars - and certainly feels exploited and oppressed.

**Which are the social sectors that dominate the economy? Has the economic growth of Brazil benefitted society as a whole?**

The Brazilian economy is dominated by an alliance between financial capital, big industrial capital and agro business (the big rural bourgeoisie), in all cases both national and foreign, with some contradictions among them. For industrial capital, for example, the policy of over-valuation of the real creates problems, because it makes it difficult to compete with imports. But as this capital accepts the neoliberal general framework of the economic policy of the government, it does not have much margin to make pressure for changes in the policy.

The economic growth of Brazil in the last years - which exists, although it is much less significant than is claimed by the propaganda of the government and the praise they have received from the international bourgeoisie - has benefitted mainly financial capital and agro business. But something has been distributed also to the poorest layers of the society, mainly by the big growth in social assistance (most important at this level is the well known “Bolsa Familia” programme) and also by the significant growth of the minimum wage (what also has implications for which those who receive pensions, which are indexed to the minimum wage). That is the big reason for the greater support the federal government has among the poorest layers.

In addition, although the situation of public education is in no way good, the federal government has expanded federal university public education and has a policy of bursaries that has extended the access of more popular sectors to private university education.

Intermediate wage-earners and those that receive higher wages have lost out, especially public employees. That is one of the reasons why those in what can be classified as average layers (this includes a part of the proletariat, including workers) have a much more negative opinion of the government.

Sectors like farmers and indigenous peoples (who are not numerous in Brazil) have also lost out as the government favours agro business, and not peasant agriculture. The federal government has allowed a real genocide of indigenous people - there are many murders of natives carried out by the great rural proprietors, and the federal government tolerates it as the big rural proprietors (agro business) are an important part of the political alliances made to guarantee so-called “governability”.

**What balance sheet do you make of the PT in power?**

I believe that it is possible to summarize the line followed by the PT governments as follows: to give something for “those at the bottom”, on condition of not entering into any

clash with the dominant classes, which implies not making any fundamental change of direction in the neoliberal policy supported by those classes. It is a fundamentally conservative orientation. The economic situation is feasible enough to allow, with the growth of the economy, giving something to those at the bottom without taking anything from those above, and the strength of Lula, the PT and the organizations it leads was able to contain the demands of the workers and oppressed layers of society.

Lula seems to believe, and the PT seems to be convinced by him of this, that is possible to govern (more or less) for all, replacing the class struggle by negotiation (mainly with those at the top) and control (for those at the bottom, when negotiation is not sufficient).

At some time - as seems to be beginning to occur - that line will have to exhaust itself. In the end, the PT governments have not eliminated the violent contradictions of Brazilian society, nor the dependency of imperialism, nor the contradictions of capitalism. And the control on the part of the PT and of their allies, and the organizations directed by them, over the demands of those at the bottom, cannot be eternal.

This line has debilitated the workers and popular movement - which will remain the case for at least a few years, until they can be reorganized. To the PT that seemed until now secondary, because it relied on electoral strength, extended by the broad alliances with the right that it has been making.

There are other aspects of the government line that are very negative. One that should be emphasized is the contempt for environmental questions, reinforced by the alliances with the agro business sectors. Another is the opening of space for the religious fundamentalist right, also reinforced by the importance that it has in its apparatus of alliances.

**When and how were the protests born? What are the demands?**

There are many different and even contradictory demands, that have emerged at different moments. But we can consider that the centre of the movement has been the city of Sao Paulo, and that the demand that lay behind the mobilizations has been for the revocation of the increase in the price of the urban transport, from R\$3.00 to R\$3.20.

The first demonstration was on June 6. There were two more demonstrations, they were growing, but nothing extraordinary, some thousands of people. On June 13 there was a bigger demonstration, of more or less 15,000 people, and this time there was stronger police repression than in previous demonstrations. There were than 250 people arrested, and a few dozen hurt by rubber bullets or batons. Various journalists were arrested or hurt. A photograph of a journalist injured by a rubber bullet in the eye was widely disseminated.

It was from there that the great growth of the mobilization in Sao Paulo and the nationalization of the movement took place. And in the following demonstration in Sao Paulo, on June 17, alongside the demand for the revocation of the increase in the price of urban transport, the axis was the protest against the violence of the police.

Between June 13 and 17 there was a great wave of sympathy for the demonstrations, and a strong social feeling against the violence of the police and for the right to demonstrate. At this time there was a change in the attitude of the big mass media, which passed from an open hostility to the "unrealism" of the demand to a certain sympathy (although considering, still, that the price increase had been small and so on), and from the attribution of responsibility for the acts of violence to the demonstrators themselves to the attribution of the responsibility to the military police through its exaggerated response. The government of the state decided to change line and to suspend (partially) the repression.

The feeling of solidarity with the previous demonstrations, the rejection of the police violence, the more

favourable attitude of the mass media all favoured the explosion of the demonstrations and their nationalization (the press has calculated that there were demonstrations in more than 400 cities), and at the same time to the broadening of the slogans. As I already said, the protest against repression became the focus of the motivations; alongside slogans on transport, the most common being "que coincidência, sin polícia no hay violencia" ["what a coincidence, without the police there is no violence"] (since the demonstration, virtually until its end, was very calm).

At the demonstration of Monday June 17 another important subject was the protest against the exorbitant cost of the soccer World Cup and the Confederations Cup. There were many slogans of the type "I don't want a ball, I want school", which rhymes in Portuguese. In the same way there were slogans about health and education being more important than soccer. They were also many slogans against homophobia, a subject that has caused many protest mobilizations against the religious fundamentalist right in recent months (there is a great mobilization of public opinion against the draft law that allows homosexuality to be treated as a disease, defended by the religious fundamentalist right).

At the same time, slogans against corruption took on a stronger presence. That corresponds to a popular feeling, of course, but it also corresponded to a line of the right wing press. The country's biggest circulation magazine, the right wing "Veja", had a cover on the weekend of June 15-16 saying "the revolt of the young - after the price of travel, now is the time of corruption and criminality". Other press organs did not go as far as to propose that youth fight against criminality (that is to say, for more police), but also emphasized the question of corruption.

That is: at the same time that the demonstrations have become very broad (already in Monday June 17 there were demonstrations in many capitals of the country and other cities, with definitely much more than 100,000 people in Sao Paulo and more than 100,000 in Rio de Janeiro

according to the mass media), and national, they have also begun to show more significant diversity and contradictions.

### **Are there similarities with the mobilizations of the indignant in other countries?**

For sure there are many similarities between the protests in Brazil and the movements of the indignant in other countries. All are movements mainly of youth (although in Brazil there has since June 17 been more of a presence of other age groups), all have used means of convening via Facebook and other media of that type. There is a feeling of indignation in the face of injustice that is a strong component of the motivations of the movement. But, naturally, there are many specificities in Brazil - for example, I do not believe that in any other country the movement of the indignant has faced a government of a party with the history of the PT. It is possible also that in Brazil we count more on a network of "non-traditional" social and popular organizations of several types than in other countries.

### **Which social sectors are at the origin of the mobilizations? What are their forms of struggle and organization?**

At the start of the movement against the increase of the price of public transport in Sao Paulo it was the Movimento Passe Livre (that is to say, for free public transport). It is a movement that has existed since 2005, and has already had many mobilizations, but never with the amplitude of today. It is a movement that is defined as non-partisan and anti-hierarchical, horizontal but not anti-party. In general, it has had always good relations with the parties more to the left, like the PSOL and the PSTU. In fact, the PSOL and the PSTU supported the mobilizations from June 6, collaborating with the MPL, and also some sectors of the PT have been involved. Organizations of youth close to the PSOL (where young PSOL members are active) have had an important participation. From the beginning anarchist sectors have also participated.

The social base of the MPL is mainly

youth of the intermediate layers (as are the members of the MPL themselves). There is no doubt that is a left movement, and in general more to the left than the PT.

After June 13, many other movements and organizations have been incorporated in the mobilizations and have participated in their convocations. In Sao Paulo, there is the MTST (Movimiento de los Trabajadores Sin Techo - Movement of Workers Without a Roof) and Periferia Activa, both movements that organize inhabitants of the peripheries of the city. Also involved have been sectors of the LGBT movement, women, and youth movements. The governmental left (sectors of the PT and the PC do B) have also begun to participate. The participation of anarchists has been extended. On the other hand, far right groups have begun to participate, to try to change the focus of the movement.

In other cities similar sectors have called demonstrations: groups that fight for free public transport or against price increases (the MPL does not exist throughout the country; in various cities there are similar movements), in collaboration with left parties.

In many cities there are Popular Cup Committees, which have for more than two years organized a critical mobilization against not only the exorbitant cost of the soccer World Cup, but also against the violations of rights of populations removed for work related to the Cup, against the exceptional legislation for the Cup (at FIFA's demand) and so on. In many cities, these Committees have had (and continue to have) an important participation in the calls for demonstrations. In fact, the demonstrations that have been most violently repressed by the police have been those near the Confederation Cup games (at FIFA's demand). Nonetheless, over the last week there have been more people protesting outside the Cup games than within them.

As of Monday June 17, on the other hand, the convening of the demonstrations has been increasingly multiple, thorough Facebook or other

means, much beyond the capacities of the above mentioned organizations. Most of the participants in the movement continue to be young people from the intermediate layers (including, obviously, young wage-earners), but it has extended to age groups and social layers - especially the poorer layers of inhabitants of the peripheries of the big cities.

**What relationship does the present movement have with the other social movements: the landless, the homeless and so on? Is there articulation between this social movement and other sectors?**

As I explained in the previous question, there is an important participation of movements of the homeless, of movements of youth, movements of inhabitants of the peripheries, and the Popular Cup Committees. In some cities, the MST has also supported the demonstrations, even though they are demonstrations of the urban population.

On the other hand, there is no relation, or there is no good relation, between the present mobilizations and the organized labour movement. We can say that the participation of the working class as a class is not noticeable, even though the CUT (and also other unions I believe) has begun to support demonstrations formally. I believe that the most important difficulty for this - and this also affects, to a certain extent, the relations between the movement expressed in the demonstrations and the MST - is in the control of the CUT by the federal government and the excessive proximity of the MST with that same government. The tone of the movement is very naturally against of the federal government (in addition to being against the state governments and the municipalities in general).

**From Europe it is seen as perplexing that in the country of soccer people are mobilized as the World Cup approaches, demanding less soccer and more investment in other sectors (education, health and so on). Can you explain this?**

In fact, also for us, Brazilians, that was one of the reasons for the

surprise at the breadth of the demonstrations. But it is not difficult to find the explanation. The Confederations Cup (and the same applies still more to the World Cup) is not done so that the people can participate. The tickets are expensive. In addition, and more important than that, the whole process of organization of the so-called "mega-events" (World Cup, Olympic Games, Confederations Cup) is scandalous, and offends the feeling of justice of the people. The cost is very high, the benefit to the companies is very great, the demands of FIFA - a true state of emergency - are absurd. A part of the population suffers through the removals.

Already for more than two years there has been work by popular organizations, grouped in the Popular Cup Committees, to call attention to the absurdity of the policy of "mega-events". I believe that, instead of acting as a reducer of the mobilizations, the Confederations Cup has strongly impelled them. The feeling of justice, the indignation against injustice of the people has spoken louder than the taste for soccer.

**What has been the response from the government to the demands of the movement? Are there contradictions in the state apparatus?**

The government, or rather, the different governments, of different parties, throughout the country, has yielded on the question of the prices of urban transport. On that initial subject, the movement has gained a clear and rapid victory.

In addition, the president of the republic, Dilma, made a speech on Friday June 21 promising "to hear the voice of the streets", saying that "she will not tolerate disturbances (arruaças)" (and overall will guarantee the security of the games of the Confederations Cup) while proposing "a national pact for public services". That is, she has not defined any change of political direction; she has said that she will do the same thing with more efficiency and more coordination with the governors of states and municipalities. As yet it is

too early to say what impact it will have, but, for the moment, it does not seem that there is any change in the situation. The mobilizations continue, and more are predicted for the coming days.

There were many more similarities than differences in the responses of the different governments from different parties, the PT and their allies, and of the right wing opposition. I do not believe that we can, at the moment, speak of contradictions in the state apparatus.

**What relationship is there between this movement and the left? is it non-political? Do you think that it is being recuperated by the right?**

I have already given some elements that are part of the answer to that question. The movement has a clearly non-partisan tendency (in the sense that there is a strong distrust in relation to the parties), although I would not call it in any way non-political.

The initial tendency of the movement was very clearly to the left: the slogan for free public transport (or the revocation of the price increases) is clearly of the left. Other subjects of the movement, like the criticism of the exorbitant cost of the World Cup, the defence of better health and education, are also of the left, as are the slogans against homophobia, for example.

On the other hand, from the demonstration of Thursday June 13 in Sao Paulo, when it was clear that the movement would experience great growth, the right - including the extreme right - began to intervene in the movement, through the mass media and direct presence in the demonstrations.

On Thursday June 20 in several cities, mainly Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, where there were the biggest demonstrations, the aggressive presence of far right groups, with the collaboration of police provocateurs, gained a partial victory, expelling people who carried flags of parties or movements from the demonstration. In Sao Paulo, that began against the flags of the PT, but later it was

extended to flags of other parties or movements. And it went as far as attacks on people who simply dressed in red clothes.

Those aggressions have reflected the spontaneous feeling of distrust towards the parties, which is for two different reasons: the loss of prestige of the institutional parties (including people that support the government but do not have a positive view of the parties who compose it) and what is seen, with some reason, as the opportunism of the left parties, who, by taking huge banners and placing themselves at the front of demonstrations give the impression that a great part of the people who demonstrate support them. In addition, that feeling very was reinforced by the bourgeois mass media, who seek to reinforce the feeling that "all must be united under the Brazilian flag".

I do not believe, however, that the movement is being recuperated by the right, nor that it can be. What exists is a great dispute about directions and slogans. It is very important to indicate, meanwhile, that until now what has been obtained concretely - the revocations of the increases of the prices of urban transport throughout the country - have been victories of the left.

It is interesting to observe that the announcement of that revocation in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and several other cities, was done on Wednesday June 19 (other cities already had done it before). The demonstration of June 20 in those cities, that had already been called, was maintained "as a commemoration". The feeling of victory broadened the demonstration (the media have spoken of more than 300,000 people in Rio de Janeiro, for example), but, at the same time, left it without any clear unifying slogan.

A key question is that significant sections of the people have had the experience of mobilizing massively, they have gained victories, and they have liked it. That can be exhausted by fatigue later, but I do not believe that it can be recuperated by the right.

**What problems does this movement raise for the PT?**

The situation of the PT is very difficult, at least immediately. There is no doubt that it was the party that has lost the most with the mobilizations. Mainly, a good part of its discourse of recent years has been undermined: it cannot continue saying that there is a process of development in Brazil and that the people are satisfied. And one of its central orientations, the policy of the "mega-events", has failed completely. The Confederations Cup, which it thought would be an opportunity to increase its prestige, has resulted in an immense erosion.

It is the first time in its history that the PT has faced big mass mobilizations that are hostile to it. From the beginning of the Lula government - already with the very conservative pension reform (Previdencia) - the PT was used to dealing with you strikes and mobilizations opposing its governments. Often it has negotiated, counting on the collaboration of most of the union leadership, other times it has resorted to the repression. But even the biggest mobilization against one of its governments - the mobilization around pension reform - cannot be compared with the bulk of the mobilizations that exist today.

That is causing, obviously, a deep discontent in the PT. Before Thursday June 20, the president of the party, Rui Falcão, made a call to activists of the PT to participate in the demonstrations with its flags. The result was a disaster: it was seen by many of the demonstrators as a provocation, it was one of the things that facilitated the far right groups in expelling activists with party and movement flags.

The predominant tendency in the PT now, and mainly of the sectors that support it from a position more to the left, like the MST in recent years, has been to call for unity with all the left (that is, with the left opposition to the governments of the PT), to stand together "against the right". But this is very contradictory with the fact that the governments of the PT do not show any opening, any change of direction. They maintain the same line



that has caused (and continues causing) the demonstrations. It is evident that the opposition from the left to the governments of the PT cannot accept an alliance on those bases.

**And what problems does the movement raise for the radical left? What are the challenges that face these mobilizations at the moment, so that they do not peter out?**

A first question is to reach a good understanding of what has happened. The radical left has been also surprised at the breadth of the mobilizations, and with the complexity of the struggle that then occurs between sectors of left and right in the demonstrations. We are advancing, I believe, in the understanding of the situation.

A second question is the relationship with the PT and the parties that are their satellites, like the PC do B, and the question of what unity of the left to look for. There is a pressure from these sectors in favour of "unity of the left". There is then a debate in the different sectors of the radical left, but I believe that the tendency is very clear, and correct: we can make no alliance with sectors that defend (although it is a supposedly "critical" defence) of the governments of the PT.

The unity of the left that we must look for is with the sectors that are located in opposition to the governments of the PT (and, obviously, in opposition to the governments of the right opposition to the federal government). That includes anarchists, non-party and movementist sectors, like the MPL of Sao Paulo.

In that framework, a trap that should be avoided is the debate on party flags. By all means parties have the right to have and to carry flags - but it is necessary to then find the best way to combine the defence of the legitimacy of the participation of party activists in the mobilizations, without giving the impression (and in many cases it is hardly an impression) of wanting to appear as the leadership of the movement and without dishonestly giving the idea that all the demonstrators support the party.

There are other party symbols that are much more acceptable, like, for example, party t-shirts.

The central dispute is not about the "brand" of the parties, but the political direction of the movement, its demands and slogans. With that we pass to another challenge, that is to find (along with all the sectors that impel the movement) the best demands and slogans to advance now. Here, there are some more or less clear ideas. The question of urban transport - to advance towards free transport or, perhaps, free transport for young people or something in this line, the question of the quality of that transport - continues as an important axis.

This week, two other questions tend to have priority: the protests against the Confederations Cup (and the expense in general of the "mega-events"), and the fight against the draft law that allows treating homosexuality as a disease, defended by the religious fundamentalist right. Already there was a big demonstration in Sao Paulo strictly on that subject (Friday June 21), with more than 10,000 people, and that is a subject that has had great presence on many of the broadest manifestations. The subject is in debate in the House of Representatives, and many deputies already begin to show opposition. A short term victory seems very probable.

Finally, the hardest challenge is the dispute with the right (especially in the big mass media) and with the groups of extreme right. A way to handle that dispute is exactly to call demonstrations with clear demands and slogans, in which the demonstrators will have an inclination naturally to the left, and the right and far right groups will - if they participate - be isolated. The unity of the non-governmental left is another way to face the right. And, in addition, it will be necessary to take care of more of the organizational aspects, like the protection of the demonstrators against provocations.

**How would you define the political situation in Brazil today?**

There are signals that the policy that

the PT in power has followed - to give something for "those at the bottom", on condition of not entering any clash with the dominant classes - is exhausting itself. The PT has been, without doubt, the party that has been most affected by the demonstrations, as well as the other parties either allied to the PT (like the PMDB, of the governor of Rio de Janeiro, Sergio Cabral, very much attacked by the demonstrators) or opposing it (like the PSDB, of the governor of Sao Paulo), which have also been affected.

I do not believe that there is any possibility of a "coup from the right", as some sectors of the PT have raised. The right has no reason to mount a coup: the government of the PT cannot be the government of its dreams, but it serves it well. In this crisis, the parties of the right have behaved in a very similar way to the PT. What interests the right is to take advantage of the crisis to erode the PT (talking a lot - through the mass media - of corruption, trying to make it seem that the problem of corruption is more of a federal than a state level question) and to be better placed for the next elections.

It is not clear where the movement will go, nor to what extent it will represent a change in the correlation of forces. We have indications that the movement has the strength to go forward, can win more victories, but it does not seem probable that it will lead to a more fundamental change by itself. A key question is self-limitation: although the loss of legitimacy of the political system is strong, the movement does not pose the objective of changing the political regime or the government, and we are far from "que se vayan todos".

It seems sure, on the other hand, that some change in the correlation of forces will result from the mobilizations. The PT and their satellites have lost a lot, the right opposition has also lost, although less. The organizations, the social movement close to the PT and their allies, like the CUT, which are already highly bureaucratized, are probably going to lose something. More independent organizations, like the different organizations which have impelled the mobilizations, will

probably be strengthened.

Passing to the non-governmental political parties (which are much weaker than the PT or the right opposition parties), we can evaluate, until now, that a party that is going be strengthened is “Rede Sustentabilidade” [“Sustainability Network”] led by Marina Silva, a party still in the process of obtaining registration. It is a party that, already from its name, tries to create the impression that it is not a party. It has “a clean” image and it is not in any government.

The PSOL, probably, has also already benefitted from the movement, and could benefit more, although it appears to many of the demonstrators as somehow similar to the PT, since it is a left party, and the PT is still seen by the masses as the major representative of the left, and the feeling of distrust of the parties in general is strong. The PSOL is the party that is more in tune with the demands that have given origin to the movement. In addition, their militants (including its parliamentarians) have participated from the beginning in the mobilizations - especially their younger militants. It is sure that the youth organizations close to the PSOL already have more authority, and they are going to go stronger. In any case, many things will be decided in the struggles of the coming days and weeks.

### **Is there a credible alternative to the left of the PT? What are the main challenges confronting an anti-capitalist left?**

At the moment, at the national level, there is no credible alternative to the left of the PT. We are still in the initial phases of the reconstruction of the Brazilian anti-capitalist left, after the blow that it has suffered with the adhesion of the PT to bourgeois institutionalism. The PSOL, the main political alternative to the left of the PT, is still very weak, and has, in addition, many internal contradictions. It can be a credible alternative in some cities, as in the elections of October 2012, but not at the national level.

The main immediate challenge that

the anti-capitalist left has then is to contribute to the development of the movement, in the sense already discussed above. If it can do this, it will also advance in the process of its reconstruction - and build itself as a credible alternative to the left of the PT.

*23 June 2013*

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### **What do you think of the proposals by the Brazilian president to call a referendum and to devote 100% of oil profits to health and education?**

The first proposal was “the calling of a popular plebiscite authorizing the operation of a specific constituent process for political reform”. It was initially presented as a plebiscite to decide on a constituent assembly exclusively to carry out political reform; the following day, the idea of a constituent assembly was rejected, and replaced by the idea of a plebiscite with questions on political reform.

This proposal, obviously, is an attempt to respond to the clear loss of legitimacy of the political system, which is clear from the demonstrations. In the first version, of a constituent assembly, it could be an opportunity for effective change (which would depend, among other questions, on the rules for the election of the constituents). In the second version, it is much worse. The people would respond to some questions, after an electoral campaign where the big mass media would have much influence - as happens in general in bourgeois elections - and the very unsatisfactory present Congress would give the final form to the “political reform”. The probability that there is a significant improvement is small; everything is going to depend on the continuity of the popular mobilization to put pressure on the Congress, in the first place so that the questions posed in the plebiscite are not those that the present Congress would wish to propose.

The second proposal mentioned, of the several proposals given by Dilma on

Monday, was that of devoting 100% of oil royalties of and 50% of the oil resources of the pre-salt layer that would be received by the various levels of government (federal, state and municipal) to education. That proposal was already changed the following day by the Chamber of Deputies, which approved a proposal of 75% of the oil royalties for education and 25% for health. The project will have to be discussed in the Senate.

It is not known what will be the final result, but it is necessary to point out that this proposal, in whatever version, very is limited and has very bad aspects. The most significant oil royalties are expected to come from oil from the pre-salt layer, which has not yet begun to be exploited. These resources will be very limited for the next few years and will add little to the present resources. The proposal by sectors of the left linked to the fight for education is that of 10% of GDP to go to public education (now) - already a viable proposal, although it would require a substantial change in the budget - for example, with the reduction of the cost of the public debt, through an audit of the latter.

On the other hand, the position of the eco-socialist movement is opposed to the exploitation of oil from the pre-salt layer, because of the great environmental problems involved. In addition, in the predicted model of operation most of the oil profits would go to private companies. In conclusion, the slogan “100% of the pre-salt layer oil royalties for education”, very popular among sectors of the left that support the government, is bad in many senses.

Since Monday June 24, the different levels of government, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate are having a bullfight to see who can announce more good things, which can be presented as a response to the “voice of the streets”. What has been announced - or decided, in some cases - is the reduction of the price of public transport (very varied according to the several levels of government responsible, in the different states and cities), including several announcements of “free passes” for students. Another very positive thing



is the expected withdrawal in the next few days of the draft law that allows the treatment of homosexuality as a disease - the so-called "gay cure". We need more time to be able to make a clearer evaluation of what has been won - because the mobilizations continue, on a smaller scale, but more numerous and diversified than the previous week.

### **What has happened in the past few days? Anything new?**

In addition to the continuity of the mobilizations, a very rich process of extension of the political discussion is underway, of meetings of different sectors (youth, inhabitants of the peripheries, movements for public transport, movements for education and so on) by far more people than before, to discuss what to do and what to demand in particular. The unions, not very active until now, have

announced (with even the more right wing federations participating) a general strike and a day of protests for July 11, with a very progressive basis. Most of the social movements, even those nearest to the government, have supported this call by the unions and present their own demands - also very progressive. Ex-president Lula has met with some social sectors close to him and says that it is time "to go for the streets" to face the right and to push the government towards the left. Evidently, that position of Lula has some fairly comedic elements to it, but it is an expressive sign of what is happening in the country.

The threat from the right, which seemed significant at the end of last week, is much more limited. Some mobilizations with clearly rightist orientations that have been tried were clearly a total defeat.

We do not know if all the popular and

union mobilizations announced will really happen, nor their strength. After the last ten years, it is difficult to think that the very bureaucratized CUT will really flex its muscles, not to speak the more rightwing federations. The same can be said of an organization like the highly bureaucratized UNE (National Union of Students), one of the organizations which has met with Lula. The sectors of the socialist left in the different movements, which are being strengthened, for sure, with the present process, are still very much in the minority.

But something we can say with great certainty is that the political participation of the people has taken a qualitative leap; let's hope that its consciousness does the same. Brazil is no longer the same, that's for sure.

*27 June 2013*

## **Feminism and ecosocialism: a necessary alliance**

**27 June 2013, by Tárzia Medeiros**

The naturalization of motherhood as women's function and destiny, as well as the naturalization of their bodies as territory to be conquered and controlled, should be rejected by all socialists who demand an ecosocialist, feminist world, free from the scars of capitalism. We cannot permit that a "biological" explanation of the inequality between men and women be used to keep the latter in an inferior social, political and economic position to that of men.

The effects of the environmental crisis ravaging whole regions of the planet, fall most harshly on the peripheral countries, on the poorest people, and especially on women and children. Desertification, the loss of water resources, environmental disasters caused by climate change (tsunamis, earthquakes, prolonged periods of

drought, floods and landslides) have a huge impact on their everyday lives.

When people are forced to leave the places where they live, most refugees and homeless are again women and children. Climate change is exacerbating poverty and accentuating inequalities, making women often resort to prostitution just to get food. The increase in diseases, with the reappearance of some that were already extinct or controlled (such as cholera and tuberculosis, etc.), also puts a burden on women, because the care of the sick still falls to them. The neo-Malthusian response to the climate crisis points to overpopulation in the world as the central cause of the climate crisis, and seeks therefore to restrict women's right to control their bodies. This is a racist approach, because population

growth is higher in the South. But it also diverts attention from the huge gulf that separates the wasteful consumption of the super-rich from the absolute poverty of the poorest sectors, and the vastly different impacts each have on Nature.

Those of us who have fought for the expansion of women's rights to control their bodies and their fertility, reject and denounce this pseudo-solution, because it puts in question women's right to decide and makes the mistake of ignoring the structural causes of the crisis, where capitalism is the central factor.

In the South, women are also responsible for producing 80% of food, including the gathering and preservation of native fruits and seeds. This central role in ensuring

food sovereignty and the preservation of biodiversity as the heritage of humanity gives women a key role in agriculture and the supply of food. The growing impact of large, capitalist development projects in Brazil, which are supported by the state through the CAP and the BNDES, has led to a loss of territory and autonomy for small producers, most of whom are women, indigenous communities or Afro-Brazilian maroon communities.

The main expression of such projects are agribusiness, the re-routing of the São Francisco River and the irrigated areas that adjoin it, large

dams to supply new hydroelectric plants (Belo Monte, Jirau, etc.), the IIRSA, mining, the intensive use of pesticides and the production of biofuels. Women play a central role in protecting ecosystems and biomass against governments (Federal, State and Municipal) who want to sell them off to multinationals. The actions of the women of Via Campesina, who destroyed the eucalyptus plantations of Aracruz Cellulose, like the role of indigenous and maroon communities in defending their ancestral lands, are examples of the victorious defense of the environment, based on their

particular realities.

It is vital to strengthen the alliance between women in the countryside and women in the city. A feminism that incorporates the ecosocialist struggle will be closer to those struggles that are today at the forefront of the defense of common goods in our country and our continent. Ecosocialist and feminist struggles overlap and stand as the great reference for our work, because they fall, more than ever, within the framework of the struggle against capitalism and form part of our strategic vision.

# Popular revolt is legitimate! Down with repression!

## 24 June 2013

The Partido Socialismo y Libertad [Party of Socialism and Freedom] expresses its total support for the mobilizations that have taken place across Brazil against the increase in the prices of public transport and vehemently rejects the police violence that has tried to repress the legitimate right of organization and expression.

The increased intensity of the protests - which have taken place in the cities of Porto Alegre, Natal, Maceió, Goiania, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo - broke through the blockade of the big mass media and they have become a theme that has mobilized society.

The governors of the bloc that "beats and jails" do not understand that the revolt caused by being stuck for six hours in poor quality transport that consumes a third of one's wage is the reason for the popular support for the demonstrations. The revolt, which began with young people, is the tip of the iceberg of a great collective dissatisfaction. To respond with intransigence, violence and police brutality is to throw oil on the fire. Alckmin (governor of the PSDB in the

state of São Paulo), Haddad (mayor of the PT in the city of São Paulo), Paes (mayor of the PMDB in the city of Rio de Janeiro) and Cabral (governor in the state of Rio de Janeiro) must assume their responsibilities for the repugnant and senseless repression, and their inaction. In addition, it is not helpful for Minister Cardozo, supposedly the Minister of Justice, to foment the truculence of the Federal Police in the repression of the movements.

At the same time, the increased violence promoted by the military police, mainly in the recent protests in the state capital of São Paulo, demonstrates that the totalitarian policy of the local governments and the state cannot live with discord, criticism and opposition, which results in the criminalization of the social movements and demonstrators, an unacceptable fact in a democratic society and which is repudiated by the PSOL. We demand the immediate liberation of all the prisoners. In addition, penalizing activists with payment of absurdly high bails of and denunciation of conspiracy is inadmissible.

In accusing this broad and legitimate movement as a whole of vandalism, rulers without scruples and the Brazilian elite try to manipulate public opinion, but it has not succeeded as shown clearly by the polls which show an enormous popular support for the demonstrations and repudiation of coercion and police violence.

It should be indicated that recently transport prices were exempted from paying PIS and COFINS taxes, which would have been able to prevent the increase. It is absurd that, in spite of these tax breaks, the companies increase the price of transport, with the consent of the mayors and governors. This collusion between the public transport companies and the governors is not unrelated to the fact that the public transport companies subsidize the electoral campaigns of the latter, who now accept the increases as a way of "paying the bill".

In the cities governed by the PSOL - Macapá (AP) and Itaocara (RJ) - there was no increase in bus prices, by political decision of the mayors. Our logic of government is to serve the workers and youth, not to agree with

the company owners who transform the right to public transport into a simple business. We believe it is possible, with a balanced budget and the political will, to advance measures such as free passes for students and even a zero rate. The defense of these proposals, therefore, does not have

anything unreal or absurd about it, but rather guarantees the constitutional right of the citizens to mobility.

The PSOL follows in defense of the right of protest, in defense of the right

to quality public transport and against police violence. Goi nia and Porto Alegre have gained victories with the reduction of the price of transport. It is time to follow forward and to conquer. Only by fighting will we win.

Brasilia, Brazil, June 14, 2013.

# Athens is sending proud greetings to Istanbul!

17 June 2013, by **Kokkino**

## Down with the tripartite parliamentary junta now!

    Unified - overall coordinating struggle center in ERT

    Committees and struggle centers in workplaces and neighborhoods

    A lasting general political strike and an uncompromising political struggle for the fall of the government!

There are some moments in history where within a "fact" there are so many things at stake that a victory or defeat counts decisively. The fight against the shutdown of ERT (the public TV and radio enterprise) after a junta inspired "decree" by the government's spokesperson "Goebbels" Kedikoglou is just such a case: The victory of the movement will be equivalent to overthrowing the government and the initiation of an "unraveling" of the memoranda and austerity policies. On the contrary, if we lose this battle, the government will establish a parliamentary regime of disguised dictatorship, along with political and operational support by the Nazis of Golden Dawn, they will impose terror and the dogma of "law and order".

The venture is so critical that "right here and right now" we must move from complaints and general struggling mood in "countersign": organize a battle plan to overthrow the tripartite memorandum junta. We need to discuss and decide directly! In the context of this necessary discussion, we put forward the following thoughts-suggestions to all comrades and struggle fellows:

### Total battle - Comprehensive Plan - a unified struggle and coordination center

1. The fight is not only about the workers' rights in ERT that are instantaneously "eliminated" nor the right to information and the fight against the total prevalence of the troika news. As in all the battles of the last period (metro, teachers, etc.), now the fight is central and total: trade-unionist (where the militancy of unions and the wider trade union coordination counts), political (the opponent is the tripartite memorandum junta) and ideological (every attack is invested with the ideological trash of social automation: they talk about lazy and lavishly paid public sector, etc.). In order to win this (and every) struggle we should overthrow the government! And conversely, our victory will inevitably mean the overthrowing of the government.

The counter-information is not enough, we also need counter-

propaganda!

The trade union struggle is not enough, we need a comprehensive, political and ideological struggle.

It is not enough if the left unites to stand by the side of the trade union workers' struggle, the left must play a key role in leading and creating a central, aggregate, political and social battle front.

Certainly useful and necessary parliamentary initiatives for the parties of the Left are not enough, we need the Left -united in action and political front- to "declare" civil disobedience and political unyielding lasting struggle.

Union coordination at the press is not enough, we need aggregate trade union and social coordination.

Even the total union coordination is not enough, we need a comprehensive, political and trade union struggle center.

2. If we are aware of the centrality of this battle and the preconditions it requires to be victorious, in that way, then we need a battle plan with similar characteristics:

    ERT should emerge as a comprehensive, trade union and political center of the fight. With ERT as a "base" we need to establish an overall Struggle Coordination Committee, with union leaders not

only from the press, but also from other strata of employees (first and foremost the ones working in public utilities, threatened in their entirety with "decrees" like Kedikoglou's one) with representatives from struggle committees should be created in all workplaces and neighborhoods, but also with representatives of the parties of the Left. Such a Coordination Committee should organize ERT as tradeunionist and political center of the struggle (with committees for each activity, guarding, etc.), but also to prepare-coordinate the overall battle plan. Parties and groups of the Left should put generously their organised forces available to the Coordination Committee for this purpose.

â€¢ The strike on Thursday should not be the "peak" or, even worse, the "epilogue" of a struggle "for our honor", but a first step towards the centralization and generalization of the battle. The slogan should be lasting General Political Strike for the abolition of the Kedikoglou's junta "order", equivalent to the fall of the government. This means that we must prepare today the next step that will follow on Thursday in this direction: transmission of the struggling upheaval in social spaces and neighborhoods, road-blocking and campaigns into neighborhoods, preparation for the establishment of regional struggle centers.

3. Any parliamentary initiatives of the Left must take the form of parliamentary "guerrilla" rather than institutional opposition, which traps people into a passive wait for developments at the parliamentary level. In this direction, the statement of the President of the Parliamentary Group of SYRIZA, Alexis Tsipras, that "the government will be overthrown by the people and not by the parliamentary crutches" is correct, with the obvious precondition that this

is accompanied by an unfolding of an aggregate battle plan as described above. In the context of such parliamentary initiatives and of the declaration of lasting political unyielding, the parliamentary parties of the Left (SYRIZA and KKE) must devise and dare far reaching moves which will accelerate political developments.

**Do not allow the weak to become "powerful"!**

Immediate mobilization on Tuesday by tens of thousands of people at ERT proved that society is "boiling" and that militant resources are not exhausted. During the recent months of the government's success story there were crucial struggles (metro, professors, now ERT) each of which was a real opportunity for an aggregate confrontation with the government.

The government's success story, despite the "global conspiracy" ... to be believed, is hanging by a thread, as evidenced by the government's inability to sell DEPA (public gas company) according to the privatization schedule, the fracas between IMF and Germany bode "savage" developments after the German elections, the predictions for the seventh year of recession with 27% official unemployment, and the massive expansion of poverty and misery.

The government is weak, and draws its strength only from their victories against the movement. The conscriptions of strikers four times during the recent months, the 28 legislative acts and the establishment of a 21st century postmodern junta with parliamentary mantle, is the policy of the weak that can collapse at any time if an important struggle wins. ERT demonstrates how much we miss, what we didn't do, or what is the cost of what we did wrong at the teachers' strike. At the metro workers' strike

etc.

However, if the tripartite junta government wins again this time, then "the weak" can turn into a steamroller ...

To get a comprehensive view of the "ERT battle" stake, we should think that the struggle mood created by the rebellion of the Turkish people should not be wasted as well. The insurrectionary mood already gone from North Africa to Europe (Turkey, Sweden, Bulgaria and Romania), it surrounded Greece and it is giving us back the power of international solidarity for our struggle.

The pictures of a coalition of the Left forces (PAME, SYRIZA, ANTARSYA) in the courtyard of the ERT headquarters prove that unity in action and the political Left Front is not unattainable, but it is built in action. In such a battle plan, this section may prove to be the political force that will function as the political multiplier for our victory. On the other hand, the role of all political forces becomes absolutely clear. PASOK and DHMAR, the political representatives of the alleged political "center", prove to be the political remnants of the tripartite, "tail" of the Right and handmaidens of the parliamentary junta. In this deep division between the defenders of memoranda and austerity measures and those who seek to overthrow them by abolishing memoranda and austerity policies, the dipolism Left - Right is being clarified, demonstrating a political expression of class polarization and controversy. And we know who are our friends and who are our enemies.

â€¢ **Now is the time to overthrow the tripartite parliamentary junta.**

â€¢ Struggle until the victory!

â€¢ "If not us, who, if not now, when?"

*Kokkino, component of Siryza*

## Gezi Park Evacuated, Istanbul and Turkey



# Explode

17 June 2013, by **Sungur Savran**

One focus of resistance crushed meant a thousand flourished. Immediately, in a series of neighbourhoods of Istanbul and in many cities around the country, people came out in their thousands and sometimes in their tens of thousands spontaneously and started to chant the common slogans of the already fifteen-day old rebellion. The most relevant to the occasion was, of course, the widely chanted "Everywhere's Taksim, everywhere resistance!" Other significant ones were "Shoulder to shoulder against fascism!" (Turkish left-wing tradition calls all kinds of repressive regimes "fascist") and "Government resign!" Moving from working-class neighbourhoods, tens of thousands occupied circular roads in opposite edges of Istanbul on the Asian and European sides. A group close to one thousand marchers crossed the main bridge over the Bosphorus that connects Asia and Europe. Istanbul has now become an arc of struggle and resistance that extends over 80 kilometres in a city of an estimated population that is 14 million-strong. In the centre of the city, even very posh quarters were the scene of cacerolazos (pots and pans concerts) and marches.

## Hotly Contested Spaces

The strategy of the police was simply to protect Taksim and the environs. They made this a question of honour and saved face by not admitting the protesters near this square, which has been hotly contested over the last fortnight. That is why they poured tonnes of pepper gas on those crowds that, like the one we were part of, were several kilometres near the square and were forcing the police barricade, while they were not able to even touch those huge groups that cut the circulation of traffic on major arteries and throughways and

marched until sunrise. But even near Taksim there were at times huge crowds. For instance, the one we were part of reached up to the tens of thousands at a certain point. But the choking effect of incessantly thrown tear gas and the bite from the chemically enhanced water played their part and over the hours many people left.

There was, though, at a certain moment an event of utmost significance. Gezi Park has been at the centre of the attention of the whole world throughout these two weeks, with its enjoyment of an atmosphere of freedom and shared life. Rightly so, since this experience implied that tens of thousands of youth were introduced for the first time to the beauties of sharing a common life. But in the process, the world, and many in Turkey as well, ignored that the ignoble line of the Turkish police in handling mass demonstrations was being continued elsewhere. An outstanding example was the Gazi neighbourhood of Istanbul, a working-class district with an Alevi majority (the Alevis are a religious minority that number in the tens of millions, though the exact figure is a mystery). The irony was even embedded in the names of the two places, Gezi and Gazi. The almost ticklish event occurred at the moment when last night our thinning crowd received the support of a crowd of people arriving from Gazi, chanting "Hold tight Taksim, Gazi is coming!" Gazi finally met Gezi in the same vortex of violence!

Elsewhere in Turkey the masses poured out onto the streets as soon as they found out about what had happened at Gezi Park. In Ankara, the capital city, Izmir, the third biggest city on the Aegean coast facing Greece, Adana and Bursa, respectively the centres of the textile and metal industries, and Antalya, the major summer resort centre on the

Mediterranean, all saw huge crowds gather on their major squares. Nonetheless, the attitude of law enforcement was very diverse, ranging from total abstention from violence in Izmir and Antalya for example to extreme use of force in Adana.

## Soul-Searching in Ruling Circles

There is no doubt that people in high places are meeting frantically in offices in Ankara. The government, the heads of the intelligence and law enforcement bodies and top brass are in all probability weighing the merits of martial law or a state of emergency. Parallel to these official consultations, there is little doubt that the fissures in the ruling class are finding their way into the apex of power. An anti-Erdogan coalition has emerged in the alliance between Abdullah Gul, the president of the republic with roots in the AKP, Bulent Arinc, the deputy prime minister, another heavyweight of the same party, and Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the leader of the self-appointed social democracy of Turkey, which is also the major Kemalist, i.e. secular-nationalist party. This party, a darling of many sectors of the left, is trying to let the steam out of the movement although it claims hypocritically to be siding with it.

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan has probably made the biggest mistake of his life. His hubris again pushed him toward making a rash decision. The leadership of the organizations that were handpicked by the government as representatives of the revolt were ready to liquidate the movement. But they had to proceed cautiously lest the rank and file rebelled against their capitulation openly. They only needed one day to size down the whole Taksim Commune and at most a week to dissolve it. But Erdogan had scheduled a rally in Istanbul for

Sunday the 16 June, where he wanted to put on a show as a victor. That is probably the major factor behind the timing of the police raid on Gezi Park.

The attitude of sections of the left regarding the continuation or the dissolution of the Gezi Park Commune is instructive. Only a week ago the hand-picked representatives of the movement had put forth a list of demands, many of them incredibly minimal formulations of otherwise legitimate grievances. One example should suffice. Faced with the brutality of the methods of the police forces, including the use of troops without uniforms wielding nailed wooden bats, pretty much in the same vein as the Shabiha of Bashar Assad (in Syria) or the Baltadjis of Hosni Mubarak (In Egypt), the representatives only demanded the removal of some provincial governors, as if it were not the home minister that was responsible for these brutal and shameful policies.

Yet despite the shortcomings of those original seven demands, these proved to be extremely precious when compared with what the representatives agreed to in the end. Erdogan simply proposed a referendum on the future of Gezi Park and an internal investigation of excesses by the police. Given the track record of the Turkish police and armed forces in investigating their own crimes (fully one and a half years

after the Uludere/Roboski massacre, where 34 Kurdish peasants were bombarded to death by the Turkish air force, not one single person has been prosecuted), the promise of an internal investigation is a joke! And yet the representatives accepted it and decided to unpack. This was truly incredible, given the fact that not one of their original demands had been granted and the additional fact that the movement had not lost any of its vibrancy.

## Taksim Commune

However, in forum after forum held at Gezi Park, the independent youth that formed the backbone of the Taksim Commune characterized the concessions of the government as ludicrous and refused to budge. This led the leadership to opt for a devious method of liquidating the movement. Caught as they were between the devil and the deep blue sea, the leadership manoeuvred and declared they were holding fast, whereas they were simply trying to lay the commune on its deathbed. Even this much of rhetoric proved too rebellious for Erdogan's taste. War ensued.

The revolt is unprecedented by the breadth of its influence, the depth of the rage out of which it was born, and the self-confidence and courage of the ordinary masses of people, many with scant political experience in the past.

If last night's affluence and combativity continue, not only Erdogan's but also the whole regime's future would be put in jeopardy.

A factor of immense importance is the fact that DISK, the most progressive industrial workers' confederation, and KESK, the most leftward leaning among the public employee confederations, have jointly declared a general strike and appealed to their rank and file to go out on the street and protest. This is a novelty and of critical importance, but we will have to wait and see to what extent this promise will be kept once we get to Monday, which is when any kind of strike would be meaningful.

All in all, the Turkish revolt is entering a new stage in which the struggle may, under certain conditions, bear much more distinctively the stamp of class struggle. It may erupt into a revolution any moment. It may, however, also dwindle into a simple protest movement and gradually die out some time in the coming period.

Even if that is the case, subsequent repercussions on Turkish politics, on the working-class movement and on the left promise to be considerable.

*16 June 2013*

**This article is from *The Project*, E-bulletin of Socialist Project, Canada.**

# Interview with Francisco Louçã, economist and leading member of Portugal's Left Bloc

**15 June 2013, by Mark Bergfield**

Louçã was part of the student movement against the Salazar dictatorship in the 1970s. He was arrested for a protest against the colonial war in December 1972. He is one of the Left Bloc's founding members, stood in the Portuguese Presidential Elections in 2006, and served as the Bloco's chief coordinator

between 2005 and 2012. He continues to play an active role inside the Bloco and the social movements internationally.

**Q: Last year Germany's Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble labeled Portugal "the good pupil of the Eurozone." Now Portugal faces**

**a difficult economic outlook. Unemployment, for example, has hit 18 percent. The PSD-CDS coalition government is demanding more time to implement its austerity measures. What are the underlying reasons for Portugal's downward trend?**



The recession was caused by austerity and the transfer of resources for the payments. As a consequence unemployment has reached unprecedented levels. Declining wages and pensions have created a downward spiral in the economy. This is anything but acting like a good pupil. It certainly is the price you pay for accepting Merkel and Schäuble's rule.

**Q: The economic crisis has created fractures in the regime. At the beginning of April, Portugal's Constitutional Court out ruled down four of nine contested austerity measures. A senior member of Portugal's cabinet, Miguel Relvas resigned. What's happening at the top of Portuguese society?**

There is a crisis in the coalition government. The two right-wing parties in power have difficulties imposing the Troika's solutions — increase unemployment, cut public services, raise taxes, reduce social security and welfare. The Constitutional Court's decision to challenge these policies proves that it is more than a political crisis: this is the beginning of a regime crisis. In Greece and Italy, such a regime crisis is obvious. Eventually the same will happen to Spain. It is the direct consequence of the democratic deficit, the austerity measures, and their bankrupt policies.

**Q: Across Europe we have witnessed three strands of resistance to the Troika: mass strikes by workers, youth revolts like the indignad@s, and electoral revolts such as SYRIZA in Greece, Front de Gauche in France, or the CUP in Catalonia. In Portugal we have witnessed the former two but haven't seen an upsurge in support for the Bloco or the Communist Party for that matter. Why hasn't the Portuguese left been able to take advantage of a favorable situation?**

The opinion polls indicate growing support for the left anti-Troika parties. Today they represent more than 20 percent. In order to elect a left government — one which is anti-memorandum and calls for the end of

the Troika's rule — much more would be required. A left government would have to restructure and partially cancel the debt to regain the capacity for investment and employment. The million-strong demonstration on March 2 showed the readiness of a large section of the Portuguese people to fight for their wages and pensions as part of their democratic responsibility.

**Q: At the Bloco's congress in November 2012 delegates voted overwhelmingly to adopt the slogan for a "government of the left." You outlined some of the premises for a left government in your opening speech. However, a left government would only be possible with the participation of the Socialist Party who isn't explicitly against all austerity measures. What does the slogan mean and what can it achieve?**

It is not a slogan. It is a proposal to all those men and women fighting for a viable left-wing alternative. In that sense, it is not a compromise with the Socialist Party. As long as they support or accept the memorandum and the IMF's blackmail, this party is absolutely unable to provide a solution. To accept the Troika simply means to pursue the policy of unemployment. A left government is defined by its popular mandate to break with the Troika — just as SYRIZA has proposed in Greece. We do not abdicate responsibility or hesitate in the fight for a strong short-term solution. We advocate a rupture with the impositions of finance capital, Merkel and her associates. This policy represents the popular demand for a left government against the Troika.

**Q: With the current balance of forces do you believe that a left government in Greece or Portugal could beat the Troika?**

It is the only way. Of course, such a government would come under threat. It must be ready to look for allies in Europe and elsewhere since the EU and ECB are devoted to austerity and serve the interests of the finance capital. Its victory depends on popular support, its coherence and capacity for initiative.

**Q: The total of Portuguese state debt amounts to â,~209 billion, equivalent to 126.3% of the Gross Domestic Product. During the alter-globalization movement activists demanded the cancellation of Third World Debt. Today there are similar discussions about "debt renegotiation," "debt cancellations," and "debt jubilees" amongst the left in Europe. How should the European left respond?**

Exactly in the same way. An economy with a deficit of 3 percent cannot pay an interest rate of 4 percent. If debt creates debt, cancellation is the only possible solution.

**Q: We have witnessed a number of strikes by TAP workers, in the public sector, and a number of general strikes called by the CGTP trade union confederation. On the other hand, we have seen outbursts of popular anger in the streets on the "Que Se Lixe a Troika" demonstrations. How do these two strands of resistance relate to one another? Are there common initiatives?**

The strike movement is weak. The popular movement by young people and the social movement has mobilized for very large demonstrations on two occasions: September 15 and March 2. Both times more than a million people marched in a country with a population of ten million. This is a huge success! It demonstrates to what extent an open and united political platform can transform the situation.

**Q: In 1974 a coup by left-wing military officers of the MFA overthrew the Salazar dictatorship and ignited the revolutionary upheaval of the Portuguese workers. What role does the memory of the Revolution of Carnations play in the current round of mobilizations against austerity?**

The Revolution of Carnations was the last revolution in 20th century Europe. It ignited the movements to replace the dictatorships in Greece and Spain. It is deeply engrained in the memory of older generations. Young people

today chant "GrÃ¢ndola, Vila Morena," the wonderful and meaningful song used as the radio signal for the military operation in April 1974. One generation later people have re-

appropriated the symbols of the revolution. But new modes of politics require different visual representations. We need to provide

solutions through the proposal for a left government rather than rest on what happened some decades ago.

*From Monthly Review*

# GDP, the bourgeoisie and inequality all growing

14 June 2013, by **Jean Nanga**

This is a very different situation from that of the 1980s and 1990s, during which sub-Saharan Africa "outside South Africa" was presented as a burden, to such a point that the ideologues of Capital spoke of it as external to the world economy, with the task of the international economic bureaucracy being to integrate it therein. It then displayed an external public indebtedness, both bilateral and multilateral, which was considered as critical.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the level of general indebtedness of the sub region stretches from more than 100% to an average of 40% of GDP, but with great disparities: from a an external public debt of 4.7 % for Equatorial Guinea to 150% for Zimbabwe, via 58% for the Comoros and 71% for Cape Verde. Thus, it is still in sub-Saharan Africa that we find the greatest number of "heavily indebted poor countries". Countries that have benefited from or are awaiting a supposed relief on their external debt are among those showing the best growth rates, from 4% to 7%, like Congo-Brazzaville and the Ivory Coast.

Overall, the sub region is supposed to do better in 2013-2014, according to the projections of the UN, IMF and consorts [2]. And the future will be radiant by 2050, according to the initiates in the cult of growth [3]. Some analysts evoke Africa as a future locomotive of the world capitalist economy after having spent some centuries mainly as a supplier of labour power and raw materials.

Predictions which enthuse Afro centrists and Afro-optimists, forgetting that these analysts are the same as thus who did not foresee the crisis and whose supposed solutions to it have proved unviable.

## Economic ideology and metamorphosis of domination

This enthusiasm for sub regional economic growth over the last ten years as well as the optimism for the future which accompanies tells us much about the ideology of those who reproduce it. For these "performances" prove the persistent domination of central capitalism over these economies rather than any kind of "auto dynamic and self centred development" of the type advocated up to the 1980s, for example in the Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa 1980-2000 [4].

The specific African road to growth advocated by neoliberalism does not take account of the persistence of the specialization inherited from colonial exploitation. The said growth is still essentially impelled by oil and mining operations, by transnationals originating from the dominant or imperialist traditional capitalist economies which export production towards their processing industries. It is as usual those who are the main beneficiaries of the so-called African

growth.

The main change in relation to this tradition is the very prominent participation in recent years of the new capitalist economic powers of the so called "emergent countries" like China, Brazil or India, in collaboration and in competition with the traditional powers from Europe and the US. This breakthrough, while consolidating the grip of capitalism on the continent, brings about changes in the imperialist game [5].

Numerous African states are no longer today in the same relation to certain neoliberal dogmas as in the 1980s and 1990s, or indeed the early years of the present century. The background to this is the influence of the economic performance of China "impossible without the existence of an entrepreneur state framing private capital" which has concretely breached the dogma of economic disengagement of the state as the condition sine qua non of economic progress [6].

The economies dependent on extraction have seen their incomes fall, following the diktat of the international financial institutions as recognised by the UN Economic Commission for Africa: "From an economic viewpoint, the reforms of the 1980s and 90s have opened up many African countries to private mining investment. Yet this shift has not always been beneficial, as governments are forced to make major concessions to attract mining capital into their economies due to strong

global competition for such capital” (<http://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/publications/aficanreviewreport-on-miningsummary.pdf> )]].

Thus for some years there have been (contrary to the letter of the Washington Consensus) reforms in the other direction: the mining and oil codes have been reviewed with a view to bringing more into the national public treasuries, through either higher taxation or state participation in the extractive enterprises (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Zambia, Zimbabwe) which can pose problems.

On the one hand in relation to the transnationals who do not favour any initiative liable to reduce their profits or anybody else biting into their lion’s share. As reaffirmed by some mining companies at their 2013 international “Mining Indaba” conference in South Africa. These companies appear concerned by the Chinese policy of construction of public infrastructures in the partner countries, in the context of contracts for exploitation of national resources. A practice which attracts African governments, given that the traditional transnationals are not thus inclined, with the risk for the latter that in the short term Chinese capital will be as present in the mining sector as in the oil sector. Sub-Saharan Africa is thus carved up between the traditional hegemony of western European and US capital and the expansion of the capital of the emergent capitalist powers, Chinese in particular, which are together the main actors in African growth. Without forgetting the exploited and super-exploited work force whose cost has been reduced by the labour code reforms of the 1980s and 1990s as well as monetary devaluations, to attract investors. But their fate does not concern the so called reforming government.

On the other hand, there is a problem for some governments, like that of the Ivory Coast. There have been disagreements between the energy minister, Adama Toungara, and the finance minister Charles Koffi Diby on one side and the head of state, Alassane Ouattara, on the other. According to “Africa Mining Intelligence”: “The new arrangement

specifies that after having recovered the investment linked to operations, each company should pay a share of 50% to the Ivorian state for any production of a value between \$1- 100 million. This share will develop gradually (...) It was also specified that the state holding in each mining company be raised to a level of 25 %, against 10% today. Result: Ouattara has entrusted the drawing up of a new arrangement to the services of Philippe Serey Eiffel, the omnipresent coordinator of the body of advisers to the presidency. Whatever happens, operating licenses will in future be attributed by presidential decree”. [7].

Two nuances in the conception of the role of the state in the Ivorian neoliberal economy: a greater financial autonomy within dependency against a conservatism concerning the domination of transnationals. As the latter are openly hostile to these new revisions, Outtara, a former deputy director general of the IMF, will justify his orientation by the desire not to deter investors, who will find more attractive legislative arrangements elsewhere in the sub-region. In spite of the mobilisation of certain sectors of civil society for the harmonisation of oil and mining codes, the majority of states do not yet respect the undertakings made in the context of the Mineral Resources Development Policy of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Despite the effectiveness of such a harmonisation: “It is imperative that the mining companies can find the same standards throughout the community area. If they try to respect the standards concerning human rights and the environment, the states will have less fear of losing an investor” [8]. Meanwhile despite the “vibrant affirmations on the unity of the continent” in Fanon’s words, it is the spirit of competition, of who can best please the transnationals “traditional or BRIC” which reigns between the states of the sub-region.

The cult of growth thus seems incompatible with a sensible sub-regional solidarity, fifty years after the creation of the Organisation of African Unity. As shown by the tensions around the exploitation of natural resources located in problematic frontier zones such as the recent

threat of war between Malawi and Tanzania for the oil discovered in Lake Nyasa.

## **“Sub-imperialism” and the new comprador bourgeoisie**

Another change is the participation demanded by African capitalism in the neoliberal exploitation of the sub-region. South Africa, the economic leader of sub-Saharan Africa, a traditional investor handicapped for decades by apartheid [9], a holder not only of capital but also undeniable expertise in the exploitation, export and processing of raw materials, occupies first place in this new race for the natural resources of the sub region, including arable lands. This leads to the accusation of sub-imperialism. Following in its footsteps there is Angola, one of the world champions of growth in the last ten years, which, profiting from the significance of oil and diamond income and the dynamics of its national fuel company, Sonangol, has involved itself in direct foreign investment.

Angolan capital, already considered as neo-colonial in Cabinda, an enclave agitated by secessionism, is for example involved in mining production and bauxite exploitation in Guinea-Bissau. There have been accusations of vassalisation with a 10% share only for Guinea Bissauans in a joint-venture for bauxite exploitation, accompanied by the project of construction of a port infrastructure (at Buba). There was also the presence of a military mission “including the training of the local police” in the context of the CPLP (Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries) and the African Union Peace and Security Council (then chaired by Angola) for the restoration of stability in a country affected by repeated coups. The supposed Angolan influence, with the support of Portugal, was seen by some members of ECOWAS, like Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Senegal as interference by a southern African state in the affairs of the West African community despite the shared Portuguese heritage of

Angola and Guinea-Bissau.

It seems that leadership of Lusophone Africa “only five states” is not enough for Angola. Some observers see it competing with South Africa for the political leadership of southern Africa [10]. Another current characteristic of Angolan capital, public and private is its overseas expansion: Sonangol controls Portugal's main private bank and is present in Portuguese hydrocarbons (Galp Energia) and in ZON Multimedia. Sonangol has also invested elsewhere, in the Angolan oil sector for example. It is to be feared that the strong growth of these economies, involving cross border expansion of capital rather than local investment in the social field, produces more sub imperialist ambitions in the sub-region.

Africa's local dominant classes are still in general content with their status as comprador bourgeoisies in the hierarchical structure of the world capitalist economy. This is what the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), adopted by the African Union in 2001, had clearly expressed by its dependence on foreign capital, thus turning its back on the spirit of the Lagos Plan of Action.

However, this is no longer the comprador bourgeoisie of the first years or indeed the first two decades of “independence”. There is no longer anywhere in Africa any sector “from mining to oil to air, via food or banking” where you will not find African capitalists whose primitive accumulation is nearly always linked to income from situations in the state apparatus, to the corrupt management of the latter and to other illicit acts “including involvement in south American narco trafficking cartels, from Mozambique to Mali, via Ghana” benefiting from impunity. Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) in post apartheid South Africa has also considerably increased the circle of African capitalists, who constitute the biggest share of the 4.84 % of the African “rich” drawn up by the African Development Bank (ADB). Thus, although it is not their activities which have mainly boosted African growth, we can no longer say that the African

bourgeoisie is “not oriented towards production” (Fanon) or that it does not include financiers. Certainly, the presence of these African capitalists is still inversely proportional in such sectors in relation to others: it is for example very weak in the mining and oil sectors “where the status of significant shareholder is more usual. It is also rarely in a hegemonic or leadership position in relation to capital originating from the centres of capitalism and invested in the same sector.

## **“Accumulate, accumulate!”**

This African capitalism is also constituted by murderous violence. Economic growth increases the conflictual relationship between the different political fractions in competition for the neoliberal management of neo-colonial states, a traditional source of primitive accumulation of capital or its reproduction. Ethnic, regional, confessional and other identities are instrumentalised for popular mobilisation, going as far as armed violence “for those who have the financial capacity for it as well as the support of external capitalist and political networks” so as to access control of redistribution of the fruits of growth and other illicit or legalized privileges.

The long Ivorian conflict between the governing faction of Laurent Gbagbo and that of Alassane Dramane Ouattara and Henri Konan Bédié (believing themselves unjustly excluded from control of the fruits of growth) is a good illustration of this [11]. The solution of the “international community” was military action by the UN and the French army to dislodge Laurent Gbagbo and replace him with the former IMF deputy director general. Since then human rights violations have continued, with criminal warlords presented as democrats; war booty has been transformed into capital and profitable situations acquired, with big markets granted to friendly foreign investors. In short the reproduction of neo-colonial capital is

going well and the Ivorian people should be happy to be saved from a supposed worst fate.

In Mozambique, an oil and carboniferous El Dorado with an average growth rate of 7% over the last ten years, Afonso Dhlakama, leader of the former anti-Communist rebel army, RENAMO, which has become the second biggest political party in the country, has called for the remobilisation of his old troops [12]. This new threat [13] of resumption of civil war is in fact a reaction to the ongoing consolidation of the oligarchic monopoly of the leaders of the ruling party since independence, FRELIMO. The main civilian and military leaders of this party, formerly classed in the socialist camp, have proved themselves corrupt “with the dynastic instincts of the bourgeoisie” and cynical, indifferent to the poverty in which the great majority of their people live.

For 20 years the Rwandan regime has been constantly accused by UN commissions of being the main support for the recurrent armed rebellions in the north east of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Rwandan capitalists are pillagers and exporters of Congolese natural resources (coltan, cassiterite and so on), for the industries of Europe and Asia [14], thus contributing to the growth of their country. As if the memory of the millions of victims of the genocide and massacres of 1994, for the defence of the privileges of the oligarchy then in power could be used to legitimate an operation of primitive accumulation and reproduction of capital by predatory means, at the price of millions of lives, rapes, and other acts of violence in the DRC. Victims not taken into account by “Doing Business” and other classifiers of Rwanda's economic performance.

From the transformation of Africa into “a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins” [15] during the first centuries of capital to the mining and oil pillage of the current era there has always been the self interested complicity of some indigenous Africans. The latter are much more numerous than before and are fairly visible in this neoliberal phase: the new comprador bourgeoisie is the



main local beneficiary of the fruits of a socially and ecologically damaging growth. These political or administrative leaders are adept at pillaging public goods, mining and oil profits (the oil kleptocracies of the Gulf of Guinea, for example), corrupted by foreign investors adept in over-billing and work projects which are sometimes uncompleted but often well paid, in tax fraud and other illegal privileges. All this immorality with serious social consequences is forgotten by the apologists for African growth and the dynamism of the African private sector.

## A middle class boom?

With the development of African capitalism growth has supposedly led to an “emergence” of the “middle classes”. A World Bank study evokes their tripling from 1980 to 2010, while the regional population has only doubled in the same period [16]. After the “slimming down” of the civil service, the liquidation of state enterprises and so on in the 1980s and 1990s, which seriously affected the middle classes also, there is now a kind of dynamic return. In a context of development of the culture of ostentation, of the consumerist spectacle, of proliferation of gadgets supposed to symbolise social success, they have much higher visibility in a good number of African societies. Without forgetting the clientelist networks of the political and administrative leaders as well as the agents of the international institutions, including those of certain international NGOs. There is a higher visibility of young people “MBA graduates and the like” whose professional attitudes and modes of life represent local versions of the yuppies produced by Reaganism.

However the real situation is out of synch with the statistics. The criteria of classification are not rigorous, indeed they are fantastical. Such as the hundreds of dollars which would distinguish belonging to the category of the poor “less than \$2 a day or rather \$1.25 per day” from that of the middle classes “starting from \$2 a day” [17]. In fact a significant so

called floating part of the middle classes lives in poverty. The 20.88 % of the “floating class” should be divided between the 60.85 % of poor (“1st poverty line” and “2nd poverty line”) and the 13.44 % of the real middle classes (“lower middle” and “upper middle”). Also it is not certain that this new wave of middle classes or petty bourgeoisie will in the medium term escape the stagnation of job creation for the “middle classes”, and the progressive decline which characterizes them in a good number of developed capitalist societies for around twenty years. One positive thing in this campaign of propaganda around the middle classes is the acknowledgement of the existence of social classes, of rich and poor. It is also a way of acknowledging that African growth is not for the latter.

## Growth, poverty and unemployment

While the economic performance of sub-Saharan Africa might reduce the slowing of the world capitalist economy, it has not brought about an effective reduction of poverty. The last report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for 2013 affirms that one person in four living in extreme poverty in the world is a sub-Saharan African. The “millennium development objectives” for the elimination of “extreme poverty” and hunger have not been met in Africa or the rest of the world. Nearly all African countries are characterized by the coexistence of high rates of growth of GDP with a high rate of poverty. The ADB has noted the growth of the poor in sub-Saharan Africa [18].

If in Angola, one of the world champions of growth during the first decade of the 21st century, the oligarchy can acquire majority shares and some big banks and other enterprises in Portugal, it remains in a catastrophic situation as regards the indices of human development: around 60 % of the population is classed as poor and just over a quarter of the active population is unemployed. This cannot be explained solely by the long war between the MPLA government and UNITA (1975-2002).

The indicators, except for the lower rate of growth of GDP, are almost the same in Nigeria, the biggest oil producer in the sub-region, which certain analysts, like the US National Intelligence Council, present as the next emergent power. Here “as in Uganda, Zambia, or Ethiopia (10% GDP growth)” poverty affects around 80 % of young people. A poverty which is sharpest in the rural areas, feeding the rural exodus, today being increased by the grabbing of land. Emergent powers like China and Brazil illustrate this: China is among the grabber countries while Brazilian capital has already, in the context of the agro-business project ProSavana (shared with Japanese capital) grabbed 10 million hectares in Mozambique, or more than half the local potential, expelling the small peasants.

Land grabbing is a phenomenon which produces a super exploited agricultural proletariat as well as being a factor in the proliferation of shanty towns where proletariat and lumpen proletariat coexist. For sub-Saharan Africa remains a sub-region where so-called vulnerable jobs proliferate, above all for women [19]. This poverty is explained not only by the place of the informal sector, but also by the permanent violation of employee rights, when they are not already reduced to virtually zero by neoliberal legislation “the so called reforms of the 1980s and 1990s.

The future promises a growth of this type of employment, with respect to the free trade zones that many governments declare in a programme of cooperation with foreign investors. The monetary devaluations of the 1980s and 1990s and the existence of significant reserve armies in nearly all African companies favour low cost of labour power made up mainly of youth, many of them graduates, something generally not taken into account by employers. In a so called “success story” like Mauritius, one young person in five is unemployed, while in Swaziland 52% of young people are out of work.

The said growth is almost everywhere accompanied by the aggravation of inequality and social injustice. South Africa and Angola are among the

worst cases in the world, but other countries like Zambia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Kenya, Mozambique, Ghana, Uganda, the Ivory Coast and Senegal are pacesetters in the growth of inequality.

More Africans appear in the magazine "Forbes" and those who are not rich enough to appear there still form part of the 4.84 % holding nearly 20 % of incomes in 2009 (Africa then had 8 billionaires, as against 20 in 2012). This concerns only declared incomes: "Forbes" does not take account of the longstanding kleptocrats of the Gulf of Guinea and other extraction-based economies of the sub-region.

On the other hand, at the bottom of the social ladder, there is the growth of begging for those who are not sure of having the equivalent of \$1.5 a day; massive dropout rates of young girls whose families are incapable of paying their school fees; children who die from non fatal diseases in rural dispensaries deprived of nearly everything, or of recurrent epidemics, for example of cholera, due to the insalubrious nature of towns managed by kleptocrats; masses of young unemployed in the shanty towns where the neo-colonial political factions arrive to recruit the victims of the rural exodus as militias for civil wars motivated by accumulation, but clothed in ethnic, regional or religious identity. There are workers on poverty wages, sometimes trying informal petty trade at the same time in the hope of making ends meet.

## Popular resistance and political impasse

Faced with this situation of economic growth accompanied by the development of social injustice, the exploited African people have collectively expressed their rage in recent years in several countries, at the call of trade unions or by "spontaneist" self-organisation.

Protests against the cost of living have taken place in countries such as Niger, Madagascar, Gabon, Kenya and South Africa. There were long popular

mobilisations (involving unemployed youths and miners, or judges and fishers "against the pollution caused by mining") from February to June 2011 in Burkina Faso, as well as the recent tragic mobilisations of miners and the rural proletariat in South Africa or the union struggles in the Mauritian sugar industry, the general strike organized by the Nigerian Labour Congress against higher fuel prices, the public sector strikes in a Botswana thought to be prosperous and peaceful. There have been mobilisations against land grabbing in Senegal with demonstrations against the violence suffered by people and women in particular in the eastern DRC subjected to the pillage of raw materials, and the struggles of certain indigenous and other peoples guilty of living near or on profitable deposits. Sometimes small victories have been won, despite the habitual deployment of the repressive machine by the regimes.

These mobilisations for social and environmental justice, while showing a certain capacity for reaction and popular self-organisation, reveal the flagrant absence of an alternative political dynamic.

The social democratic left organisations who have come to power in recent years such as the Rassemblement du peuple in Guinea and Nigeria's Party for Democracy and Socialism are no different from those which had preceded them "the Parti socialiste in Senegal and other African members of the Socialist International" as state managers. Their social policies stem from World Bank humanism, and a neo-colonial form of social liberalism. It is difficult to distinguish them from the parties of the African Liberal Network, like the Parti démocratique sénégalais of Abdoulaye Wade or the Rassemblement des Républicains of Alassane Ouattara.

The most representative case of this social liberalism is the policy followed by the ANC which governs South Africa in tripartite alliance with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the powerful Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). A popular organization,

among the most dynamic, above all during the second half of the 20th century and benefiting from a great international solidarity, its government post-apartheid not only remains prisoner of the conditions of its access to power, but appears seduced by neoliberalism. It came to power on the basis of a compromise with the realist fraction of white capital which had understood the economic and social impasse the constitutional apartheid regime had reached.

Since 1994 the ANC has dropped the minimum programme represented by the historic "Freedom Charter" of 1955, replaced by the Reconstruction and Development Programme, including the BEE [20]. The BEE was the political project of constitution of a powerful black capitalism, and the exponential growth of inequality inside the black population. Black identity being politically exploited by the black bourgeoisie for the conservation of power and the pursuit of the accumulation of capital and its reproduction, mainly by the black petty bourgeois elements in the leadership of the anti-apartheid movement. Such as the union leaders Mosimo "Tokyo" Sexwale or Cyril Ramaphosa, who became true capitalists.

By an irony of history, Cyril Ramaphosa, a former COSATU leader who had participated in the negotiations leading to the compromise between the ANC and the ruling white bourgeoisie, is one of the main director-shareholders of the mining company Lonmin which the police had protected by firing on striking miners at Marikana, leading to thirty deaths [21].

Ramaphosa also recently became vice-president of the ANC and candidate (with the support of Nelson Mandela) to succeed Jacob Zuma. Such classic criminality cannot be atoned for by the gesture of another beneficiary of the BEE, Patrice Motsepe, a generous billionaire donor to the ANC who has put half his fortune into a philanthropic foundation. Nelson Mandela expected from the BEE the constitution of a black "patriotic bourgeoisie", but workers and other victims of rainbow capitalism have



encountered a plutocracy/oligarchy employing African cultural nationalism, with Jacob Zuma defending “African values” in general and Zulu ones in particular [22]. Meanwhile it reproduces the conditions of xenophobia with respect to African economic immigrants from other countries who have come to work as quasi-slaves in the mines of apartheid capitalism. So it goes, with bourgeois pan-Africanism.

This rightward drift of the ANC is reflected in COSATU, despite the combativeness of certain branches and by the SACP, whose reference to communism now seems no more than formal, despite its long and rich history (“Stalinist” certainly, but anti-apartheid) and the existence, fairly unusual in sub-Saharan Africa, of a highly organised proletariat.

This accompaniment of neoliberalism is the same for other African organisations of the left not identifying with social democracy, even considering themselves to its left, but who by electoralism serve as forces of support to the main neo-colonial factions fighting for alternation in power – drawing with them the trade union bureaucracies [23]. With some evocations of the specific situation of the poor in general, the struggle against corruption, and electoralist demagoguery that the classic neo-colonial parties heading up the electoralist fronts constituted have no trouble in integrating. The main point of disagreement concerns the inequitable sharing of profits, markets and other privileges that could be strengthened by a nepotistic succession. In Senegal in 2012, one comprador bourgeois faction replaced another one, thus consolidating locally the ideology of capitalism as the inescapable horizon of our epoch, which “good governance” would render equitable.

## **An alternative project to the capitalist order**

Sub Saharan Africa has since “democratization” been faced with a

flagrant deficit in terms of an alternative project to the capitalist order. The latter has succeeded in reducing the social and political perspectives to a democracy escaping any serious critique (apart from the culturalist nationalist farce of “democracy African style”). If elsewhere an anti-neoliberalism has developed, resembling in practice a neo-Keynesianism, this is hardly audible in sub-Saharan Africa. The current growth gives a kind of credibility to neoliberalism, supposedly offering opportunities as shown by the visibility of the new middle classes and new capitalists. The negative social effects which affect the majority of people are rather seen as malfunctions that “good governance” can settle, with the existence of a dynamic “civil society” whose components are supposed, in defiance of logic and history, to have the same interests.

The organisations of the anti-capitalist left, which still exist in some African countries, but which are generally characterised by a great numerical weakness, appearing almost absent on the terrain of the class struggle in theory. There have been many desertions and very little inter-generational transmission. There is also the influence of pragmatism, empiricism, expressed in terms of a priority accorded to concrete actions with the masses, who are supposedly not interested in theory.

Thus, the anti-capitalist organisations and activists of sub-Saharan Africa have the task of recreating a dynamic whose radicalism can only be attached to the dialectic of theory and practice. This refoundation would avoid a conception of the struggle which is limited, in the name of some backwardness of Africa in the area of development, to the improvement of the purchasing power of the masses or an alternative which would only evoke the classic appropriation of the means of production. Which comes down to putting off until much later the consideration of the ecological question, the appropriation of the critical balance sheet of the economy identified with the cult of growth, of technical progress and consumerism whose harmful consequences are no longer considered. That would be a

kind of stageism concerning ecology.

For example, it is not only about asking for transparency on the money paid by the mining and oil companies (who should not be alone in being subjected to this transparency), reforming codes so as to increase the tax on profits and state holdings, or to insert some clause of internalisation of pollution. It is about reflecting, like Ecuador, on the policy of national and pan-African management of these resources according to the climatic requirements drawn up by the IPCC, of non extraction of 75 % to 80 % of reserves, so as to avoid a planetary warming above 2° C. The eastern coast of Africa “also rich in oil and gas” is already affected by a rise in waters caused by global warming. The worst is before us, if nothing is done to avert it.

Thus one of the challenges for the African anti-capitalist left, necessarily ecologist, is to reflect on how to erect the bases of an economy or a development which allows the full satisfaction of different needs “alimentary, cultural...” of each human being. But also to reduce to the extent that it is humanly possible, the harmful impact of the satisfaction of these needs on the environment. In other words to take a different direction from that of the developed capitalist economies, as adopted also by the emergent capitalist powers (Brazil, China, India, South Africa), of the pseudo-solutions of green capitalism, proposing in fact the relocation of the harmful effects, the postponement of the catastrophe to future generations.

As a trades unionist from a South Africa which is in the vanguard of ecocidal growth and consumerism on the continent puts it: “Dealing with the problem of greenhouse gas emissions is not only a technical or technological problem. It requires a radical transformation of the economy and of society so as to modify the current modes of production and consumption” [24].

In other words it is about engaging with greater lucidity and enthusiasm, as Ernst Bloch would say, in the construction of another dynamic which would establish in sub-Saharan

# Women Farmers Share Their Visions

**13 June 2013, by Communication team of La Via Campesina**

**“Since the 1990s, we women farmers have been resisting the major offensive of liberalism”.**

In our continent, the decades of the 60s, 70s, and 80s were marked by dictatorships that perpetrated violence and repression that greatly impacted women. It is precisely those women who were impacted who became the primary organizers of the struggle for democratic processes. Since the 1990s, women farmers have been resisting the major offensive of liberalism, that has been promoted in particular by the policies of North American imperialism. Only when fighting towards an end to the repression of one gender over another will we be able to achieve a more just and egalitarian society. It is necessary to defeat capitalism and transnationals in order to end the conquest of women farmers and afro-descendants. (Lidia Ruiz, Paraguay. (Via Campesina South America).

“In Palestine, women are strong and clever and fight for their survival”. Palestine is a hysterical and very religious country and it is packed with historic sites. We have a good climate and we produce olives, wheat, fruits and vegetables of all kinds. The Palestinian people love their land and freedom. Yet, the country is currently victim of an occupation; the Israeli Occupation. Every day, we experience armed confrontations that decimate our lands, orchards, and trees, with

bombs and rockets. This is a very serious situation, but call for the recognition of our right to national sovereignty as a people. In Palestine, a woman is strong and clever, since often she has a brother, father or son who has been imprisoned, and she has to take care of the children, cultivate the land and fight for her survival. I affirm that to solve the problems of the world, women have to work together. Waheba Shamali, Palestine.

“The only things governments do is to apply antiquated policies under a purely masculine point of view”. We are few men and women farmers in Norway. The majority of the population goes to cities to work and the government imports products from impoverished countries. What we wish to do, is to produce food in Norway and achieve food sovereignty – also for the other European countries. Violence is not only physical and sexual; a very common form of violence is psychological and social, – in our homes and in the public sphere. Women are marginalized from decision-making bodies and the governments only create implement policies with a purely masculine point of view. Ilona Drivdal, Norway (European Coordination Via Campesina).

**“We must teach men to treat women as human beings”.**

In India, violence against women begins the day a female child is born; in rural areas a boy is considered active whereas girls are passive; a

girl is considered a burden, especially due to the obligations involved with the need to produce a dowry in order to guarantee an arranged marriage and with traditional wedding expenses. As a result, we have high rates of abortions of female fetuses; abortions decided based on the gender of the baby. In rural areas, girls begin to work when they are six years old and they work until they are 66 years old. Domestic violence is very common, so common that a woman with a high tolerance for violence is even respected by other women. This all brings along health problems among women in India. Not only do we need to teach women in the countryside, we especially need to teach men to treat women as human beings. Nandini Singadowda, India

**“In Mozambique, women are a bargaining chip.”**

In Mozambique they teach us to protect the men, and despite the fact that we produce the food for our families, we do not have any decision-making power. There is no balance, no equality or parity; only men occupy bodies of power. We get married young so that our parents can have more money since they are paid once we get married; we are a bargaining chip; that is why we always get married. It is imperative to raise awareness among women about the importance of literacy, to train and teach women in order for them to have the courage to report what happens to them. Ana Paula, Mozambique (União Nacional de Camponeses UNAC).

# Women of the world's largest peasant movement call the shots

## 13 June 2013

This week at the IV International Women's Assembly of the Via Campesina in Jakarta, Indonesia, Zubaidah was far from alone in her efforts. In a fiery speech, she encouraged women from 76 countries representing at least 150 Via Campesina member organizations to join forces and never give up when leading the struggle for their historical rights to land and its resources. She knows from experience: in her village of 1,700, more than 1,300 residents are active in campaigns for agrarian reform and 70% of those activists are women and members of the Indonesian Peasant Union (SPI).

Success stories like Zubaidah's are possible in part because of Via Campesina's recognition of and efforts to address a fundamental dichotomy in the agrarian community: even though women produce roughly 70% of the world's food, the voice of agriculture is predominately patriarchal. Via Campesina became aware that this was an issue within its own organization as well leading up to its international organizing conference in Bangalore in 2000, when the International Coordinating Committee realized that its dedication to equality existed more on paper than it did in practice. The Committee opened that gathering with a women's assembly and has done so at each international conference since, including the present one in Jakarta. A central tenet of Via Campesina's mission is its commitment to female participation.

"The women's assemblies are grounds not just for training, but also for legitimacy," offered Nettie Wiebe, a Canadian peasant, founding member

of Via Campesina, and the first female to sit on its International Coordinating Committee. "We have a history of being marginalized and excluded in public spaces. So it is crucial for us to hear each other and speak one another into confidence." Today, thanks in part to the women's assemblies, there is total gender parity among Via Campesina's leadership: each member region elects one female and one male delegate to represent it at the international level.

Therein lies what differentiates Via Campesina from other agrarian movements. It serves as a model for social movements by linking agrarian reform with women's advocacy to attain a fair place in society.

This strategy has worked as evidenced by the fact that some of the Via Campesina's most profound achievements have been won at the hands of women. Ever since the movement coined the term food sovereignty asserting people's rights to define their own food and agricultural policies women have played a key role in making it a reality in their communities.

One example is the Korean Women's Peasant Association (KWPA), a Via Campesina member that is more than 30,000 members strong, which accepted the Food Sovereignty Prize in New York City in October 2012.

Highly industrialized South Korea employs less than six percent of its population in agriculture, and increasingly relies on patented seeds, low wages, and forced labor. Since much of its farmland has been taken over by the high-tech sector, the South Korean government grabs

cheap land elsewhere often in African countries like Madagascar. Like their African sisters, the women of KWPA strategically oppose these actions through the Via Campesina.

Locally, they have created a practice of food sovereignty within the framework of women's rights and local governments are starting to copy it. KWPA's sister farmers' program provides hands-on training, linking the women to both local cooperatives and consumers. Together with national allies (including the Korean Peasant League, another Via Campesina member), KWPA formed the National Campaign Task Force to defend food sovereignty. "We are creating a new world where women farmers are respected from planting, to harvest, to the marketplace," explained Kang Da Bog, a rice farmer and current president of KWPA. "The very meaning of food sovereignty implies our right to determine our identities," she added.

A key articulation of both food sovereignty and agrarian reform is an end to violence against women. At the last Via Campesina international gathering in Maputo in 2008, the movement launched the Global Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women. That campaign had been three years in the works with the Dominican Republic-based National Confederation of Women Farmers (CONAMUCA). Training and education within local movements is at the heart of the campaign, for men as well as women.

"One of the biggest problem facing women of the world is violence," said Juana Ferrer Paredes, Global Campaign to Stop Violence Against

Women's campaign architect and current coordinator. "Via Campesina strives for the rights of workers in the countryside. We cannot advance in our process of struggle without having one point of that fight be putting a stop to violence against women," she added. In the last five years, the campaign has grown from its Caribbean origins

to international actions on five continents. Juana has high hopes that in the coming years, it will take place in each country in which Via Campesina works.

While Via Campesina raises its colorful banners again in Jakarta, the women among its leadership are

highly organized to advance the agenda. They have proved that they are ready to do whatever it takes—even if it means laying down in front of a truck.

*June 9*

[Via Campesina](#)

## To continue the debate on broad parties

**10 June 2013, by Laurent Carasso**

The purpose of this document is to relaunch the debate after the day of discussion at the last IC on the Brazilian, Danish, Italian and Portuguese reports

The first debate is clearly identified with the Irish comrades and those of SA, who systematically reject any policy of building broad parties, thinking that we should just stay on the line of building organizations on the programme of the Fourth International.

The second debate, which we have had since the 1990s (at the 1995, 2003 and 2010 Congresses) is between the comrades who participated in debates on the orientation of building broad parties.

The central question is "what do we want to build? ". The debate concerns the definition and boundaries to give to "broad parties"

This debate continued at the last congress of the FI around the resolution on role and tasks:

Is our orientation is to build broad parties bringing together all the currents located to the left of liberal social-democracy, including both "classist" classic reformist social-democrats from the Stalinist parties, "anti-liberal" currents and revolutionary movements?

This definition of broad parties is in general that of parties or groups such as Die Linke, Synaspismos/Syriza,

Å-DP, Respect, and Rifondazione or the PT (in the years following its creation).

The orientation adopted at the last World Congress (2010) was that of the building of broad anti-capitalist parties, that is to say, parties placing themselves from the outset in the perspective of the overthrow of the capitalist system, with an acknowledged revolutionary horizon, even if they do not develop a completed revolutionary strategy and if within them they could bring together from political currents of different history and traditions. Such parties may also attract current and activists from radical social movements.

Parties like the PSOL, the NPA, the Bloco, the Danish RGA placed themselves from their creation in such a perspective. This is also the project implemented by Sinistra Critica and Izquierda Anticapitalista.

Everyone understands that there is no impermeable boundary between the two projects, and previous congresses of the FI (1995, 2003) included both perspectives. The starting point of these projects is in all cases the fall of the Berlin Wall and the adoption by the SD parties of an openly neoliberal economic policy in the 1980s and 1990s. This new context disorganised the cohesion of the Stalinist parties and encouraged centrifugal dynamics (on the right and left) in currents emerging from these parties, opening new spaces to the left of social

democracy, and making the divisions between earlier revolutionary currents, which were often determined by the attitude to the USSR, clearly no longer pertinent. The 1980s also showed the limits of building of self-identified revolutionary organizations, created and maintained precisely most often in opposition to Stalinism or classical social democracy.

During the recent discussions, the British comrades explained their disagreement with the prospect of "broad anti-capitalist parties" by the irrelevance of such projects in many countries, starting with England.

### New experiences

In the 1990s new experiences for revolutionaries emerged in several continents:

- 1 / Building broad parties as a milieu bringing together currents to the left of social democracy including reformists and anti-capitalist activists, with as the sole basis rejection of social-liberal management of capitalism by social democracy. We can think that Die Linke, during the 2000s represented this type of party, with the explicit coexistence of socialist anti-capitalist currents, rooted in social movements, trade unions and the global justice movement and currents based on "strong reformism" seeking to establish management alliances with social democracy on a non-neoliberal



basis.

The experience of Rifondazione and the Brazilian PT stood roughly in the same area but with different dynamics, our Italian and Brazilian comrades having the hope in the 1990s that the process of building these would give them a socialist strategy, of revolutionary rupture with the capitalist system. In both cases, the question of the relationship to institutions and the state led either to the crisis of the parties or its full integration in the management of the capitalist system. This clearly shows that even without a complete revolutionary strategy, the question of the relationship to the state and the need to place its daily political activity in a perspective of overthrow and not management of the system is essential to stabilize new parties.

This why the orientation developed in our recent World Congresses and explicitly stated at the last congress, taking stock of the Brazilian and Italian experiences in particular, was not only the building of broad parties, but anticapitalist parties seeking to consolidate all currents rejecting the political logic of management of the capitalist system and acting explicitly for a socialist break, a revolutionary rupture based on the activity of social movements.

Four intertwined questions arise concerning the broad parties:

**A / How to build political tools:** a party-instrument at the time of the crisis of Stalinism and of social democracy, different from small propagandist groups, parties capable of organizing the class struggle and integrating the change of period of the 1990s: parties that are actors and not critical currents of SD and Stalinism, useful parties for the exploited. Parties that organize. This immediately raises the question of the type of activity, organization and implementation of these parties, their social base, not just the electoral base but the question of what social strata that party is able to organize.

**B / The question of programme of these parties:** an anticapitalist programme aimed at changing society, the overthrow the system. But

the question of the programme is obviously directly related to its reality, not just a reference to congress texts: what relationship between this programme and slogans, the campaigns of the party, the political education of its members/ activists, the reality of its political orientation, all the more so that when we talk about broad parties, incorporating new generations of activists coming to politics from social mobilizations on a given issue. Scottish and English examples have also recently shown how the weak integration in reality of the issues of feminism can have lamentable consequences. But other issues can quickly take on an explosive character, such as anti-imperialism, Islamophobia, racism, ecology, especially since they also provoke of tensions that must be collectively controlled in a democratic debate on the orientations of these parties.

**C / The question of the relationship to institutions.** First of course the fact that these regroupments take place in contradistinction to social democracy already implies a distinct identity. Does this distinct identity translate as practical independence, independence and lack of collaboration with the Social Democrats in the management of bourgeois political institutions?

This question is obviously related to the programme, but more concretely in the relationship with the state and the party's understanding of its role in society and how political action can translate.

The traditional parties of the labour movement (social democrats, or former Stalinists) are essentially reformist political parties, but also parliamentary parties, for whom the function, the essence of a political party is its parliamentary presence, Institutional activity being the centre of gravity of the party. But this definition is precisely in today's society that of a political party, because by nature, the democratic parliamentary system considers the role of political parties is to represent voters in the management structures of the system, not to organize the exploited and the oppressed to overthrow it! This question of

relationship to institutions has determined numerous debates in parties like Rifondazione or the PT, with at particular moments a crossing of the Rubicon leading explicitly to institutional management at the highest level of the state or explicit support to social liberal governments.

But these debates were also present in recent years in broad parties taking a more prominent place in institutions, such as Portugal or Denmark, or recently in France in the NPA.

**D / Relationship to social movements and new forms of radicalization.** The last years of the crisis of capitalism have put into question the usefulness of political parties for the oppressed. Alternating management of the system and attacks against workers by conservative parties and the Social Democrats has considerably increased the discredit of the institutions and the functioning of bourgeois democracy and a deep scepticism about the emancipatory political projects proposed by political parties. This discredit also has rebounded on the parties of the radical left.

The experience of the Indignant in recent years in several countries, after much debate in the global justice movement has also highlighted this contradiction: New layers, new generations rise up, rebel against the system, but assimilate to the system all party political forms, so they appear actually built into the system they claim to fight. At the same time, these new political spaces are sources of rapid anti-capitalist politicization or radicalization.

But at the same time, the capitalist crisis, on the basis of the rejection and disgust generated by the system within the youth and the working class, also opens the way to ultra-reactionary, fascist currents.

## A bundle of contradictions

Broad parties are thus faced with this bundle of contradictions:

- Being parties at odds with social-

democratic policy and developing an anticapitalist programme;

- Organizing layers of worker and young people radicalizing faced, with the crisis;

- Having political activity useful to the oppressed by participating in the organization of social struggles while refusing any institutional collaboration with social liberal managers.

- Having an internal political, democratic and educational life to make real parties, not just electoral political fronts, while consolidating all these parties faced with the pressures of "realism and political seriousness" which grow as much as these parties take an important place in their national political life.

These discussions have brought out several things:

First, of course, is it credible want to build such broad parties in a stabilized fashion?

The question of the reality of this perspective and its forms obviously depend on national circumstances: the situation of the radical left and our own capacity to take initiatives. Not only is there no model, but there may even be situations where the only lasting achievement is fronts of political organization or electoral fronts.

This was the case, for example, in England with Respect. But even in this case, at one point, the issue was clearly raised in Respect of overcoming this framework to move towards a new party, going beyond the political components of the starting point. This would not necessarily have been reflected in an evolution towards revolutionary positions, but would have qualitatively changed the situation. At the time, the SWP has explicitly rejected this development and this was the first step in a crisis of Respect and of the SWP.

But above all, the most important question in recent years has been that of the usefulness of anti-capitalist parties or broad parties faced with the crisis.

There was in Europe, in particular, a dynamic wave in the 1990s and 2000s, driven by the global justice movement and benefiting the radical left.

The strength of the capitalist crisis since 2008 has focused more sharply the demand for anti-capitalist responses but has not brought greater visibility and effectiveness for the European anti-capitalist left, quite the contrary. After the crises of the 2000s (Rifondazione, Respect and SSP) came those of Die Linke and the NPA.

In each case, there are specific causes, but the result is that the parties that appeared to be the driving force of the European radical left came into crisis.

These last years have put at the centre of popular concerns the question of the fight against the structural adjustment plans related to the sovereign debts, in Europe in particular. On the one hand the crisis clarifies workings of a savage capitalist system, on the other it makes even stronger the demand for immediate solutions to the social damage provoked by neoliberal policies.

The key place taken by Syriza at the time of the recent ups and downs of the Greek crisis and by the Front de Gauche in France this last year are explained by this situation.

In the absence of social mobilizations able to confront the root of the capitalist evils and to provoke a social confrontation with the system, the victims of the crisis seek immediate answers to their sufferings produced by the crisis and austerity policies.

We must learn the lessons from this context and have as a priority concern the building of political tools able to fight and propose concrete answers to the social attacks conducted by governments and the capitalists within the framework of the current crisis. The building of anti-austerity fronts or coalitions bringing together the political and social forces opposed to these plans, within the framework of a policy of the united front, must be our essential concern. Proposing united action to the political forces situating themselves in this terrain must be the

lever of our action. That means that we must put to the fore of our emergency programmes against austerity containing the essential demands faced with this crisis and able to be used the basis of such fronts.

## Maintain the problemati

At the same time, the experiences of the last ten years make it necessary to maintain the problematic of the last Congress of building broad anti-capitalist parties.

1/ The continuation of the economic, ecological and capitalist crises and their likely worsening in the coming years always more indispensable the determined political action of revolutionaries and anti-capitalists to fight in a frontal and global way this system, the exploitation and oppressions that it generates and maintains.

2 / We maintain the perspective of building political parties going beyond the framework of our sections to organize the social struggles of the exploited and oppressed, seeking to bring together militant currents acting socially and politically on the terrain of anti-capitalism and seeking to give coherence and political effectiveness to their action.

3 / The possibilities and forms largely depend on national circumstances and the reality of our sections. In all cases, the profile that we need is that of openness to other anti-capitalist organizations, but also and especially to the new generations of activists appearing in the social movements.

The experiences of recent years strengthen the need to stabilize such parties by basing them on the forces of the social movements and not on parliamentary positions. This goes alongside the concern of sharing within these parties our analysis of the state and bourgeois institutions

4/ We must also maintain our concern for the international relationships and action of anti-capitalist organizations. Although recent years have marked



blocks and setbacks in this area, the preoccupation must be maintained especially given that the international

developments of the crisis make such action increasingly necessary. While the last World Congress showed the capabilities of our International to

bring organisations together, the efforts to have regional meetings and joint actions are clearly standing still.

## **“To rebel is something to be proud of”**

**9 June 2013, by Özlem Onaran**

**Erdogan has been promoting a fully neoliberal agenda with privatisations, “development”, etc. Has this reached a ceiling? Is this the reason why people are protesting?**

Yes, absolutely. The obvious injustice and police brutality in Gezi Park was the last drop in a long process of accumulation of discontent against an authoritarian government, their social policies pushing for a conservative Islamic life style threatening in particular women and youth, criminalization and imprisoning of oppositional groups ranging from seculars to Kurds, socialists, and trade unionists, and neoliberal policies which increasingly commercialized public services, created areas of rent for large corporations, and eroded the living standards and security of a significant part of the working people. 27 May and the mobilisations that has followed will mark a historic moment for the collective memory of the movements in Turkey. This has been the insurrection of a new generation, who has been brought up by the conservative neoliberal authoritarian AKP regime for a decade.

**The establishment has been presenting Turkey as model not only for the Muslim world but also as an economic model for Europe during the crisis. Is Turkey really a model?**

Can authoritarianism be a model? Not a stable one, as the recent events have shown. Can neoliberal speculation and finance-led growth be a model of development, social cohesion and regional convergence? No, as the recent history of Turkey, which is

marked by regular boom and bust cycles, and crises in 1994, 2001, 2009, shows. In the recent global crisis, Turkey had one of the severest recessions in 2009 –deeper than other major emerging economies. Indeed Turkey’s growth model dependent on cheap labour and speculative financial capital inflows and a high trade deficit, would have experienced a crisis sooner or later even without the global recession. The recovery since 2009 is as fragile as before. The share of industry in Turkey’s production is decreasing and becoming increasingly more dependent on the imports of intermediate and capital goods. No wonder, this is a jobless growth process with high youth unemployment rates reaching 22%. This is neither socially nor economically stable. AKP has recently took pride in having paid the last instalment of its debt to the IMF. However, in the last decade Turkey has borrowed increasingly more in the international financial markets, and in particular the foreign debt of the private sector has reached unforeseen levels. This is a fragile model. When the private debtors go bankrupt, those private losses are often socialized. The periphery of Europe is just one recent example of this to add to a series of former crises in Latin America and East Asia. The next bust and crisis in Turkey is not a question of “if” but “when”, and the international financial investors will make that decision.

**We have come to conclude that the tone of the protest is not being set by the poor or the working classes but by the demand for democracy and social freedom. Is it possible to combine these two?**

They have been already combined. The Confederation of Public Workers’ Unions has rescheduled its strike about a change in the labour law to 4-5 June in order to support the mobilization. What brought discontent to the tipping point of rebellion is also the increasing insecurity and impoverisation of the working people in Turkey. AKP has initiated a redistribution towards the poorest of the society via both crony in kind transfers of food and fuel as well as some institutional pro-poor changes, e.g. in the health services. However, the source of this redistribution was income scrapped from the organized blue collar and white-collar/professional working people, and not taxes on the rich. This redistribution helps to increase the profits of the large capitalists without hurting the poorest further. This also explains part of the mass electoral support for the party. In the last decade insecurity has increased for all segments of the working people bare the poorest. During a decade of AKP rule the amount of workers working for outsourced companies has more than tripled reaching to above 1.5 million. Almost a thousand workers died in workplace accidents. Dr. Ahmet Tellioglu, a workplace doctor at a major factory in Istanbul, who has been sacked recently because of his objection to serious health hazards in the practices of the factory, says that “anyone who is just above the poorest or earning just above the minimum wage, thus any working person, who has something to loose, feels increasingly more insecure in Turkey today”.

**According to the protesters the Turkish government is building**

**shopping centers and malls all over the country and that's what she is attempting to do in Gezi Park. They also say that these shopping centers will mark the end of the small shops and itinerant trade. Are we moving towards the creation of a new proletariat?**

Yes, the losers of these policies are multi-dimensional. Gentrification and commercialization is generating a potential for new urban alliances across different segments of the society ranging from the dislocated Roma people and the Kurdish street vendors to organized workers and small shop owners. Some of the latter may have voted for AKP but the neoliberal policies as well as the sheer arrogance of their brutality and ignorance about any popular discontent may mark the beginning of the erosion of the diverse mass support for them.

**The past two years, we have seen uprisings everywhere, from Wall Street to Tunisia with most recent ones in Sweden and the current**

**uprising in Turkey. Do these movements/uprisings have anything in common apart from police brutality?**

They have a lot in common. They are all a rebellion against the lack of democracy, voice, and representation as well as rising inequality, joblessness, insecurity, commercialization of the supply of basic needs and the multiple dimensions of the crisis -the energy crisis, climate change, ecological crisis and food crisis. Young men and women, who are mostly not coming from former organized leftist backgrounds, have been in the forefront of all these mobilizations. Not surprisingly, this is happening at a time of record high youth unemployment and increasing precariousness. This is a new generation, who feels insecure about the future, working, if at all, with fixed/short-term contracts, or part time without a choice, at times in the informal sector, most often for low pay, and usually in jobs not matching their education levels and aspirations. These mobilizations have given a massive expression to the discontent

of a silent majority across the world and turned hopelessness into first anger and then hope. Their experiences has been followed and received by solidarity across the world. They have created domino effects, first regionally, but I believe now it is fair to say, also internationally. Turkey has a long tradition of rebellion, but I feel the recent images of rebellion from Greece or Spain or Egypt has been more alive in the memory of the first time demonstrators in Istanbul, Ankara or Izmir than the history of Turkey which has been persistently erased or discredited or demonized in the collective memory of the young Turkish people by the military coup and generations of ruling elite to follow. To occupy and demonstrate is now almost the new fashionable and "hip" thing in a positive sense. To overcome fear and to rebel is something to be proud of. It is a uniting feeling as hearing the song from the concert of your favourite band playing at a remote corner of the world. No matter what next, all these mobilizations have transformed our social genes forever.

## **"We are in solidarity with Amina the Femen"**

**5 June 2013, by Ahlem Belhadji**

**Do you approve of actions of the Femen type to approve women's rights?**

Posed like that, I would say no. We don't adopt the same methods of struggle, but we understand perfectly the choice that they made. We express solidarity with Amina against all the forms of violence that she suffers.

**You say that you don't adopt the same methods of struggle. Why is that Tunisians can't or don't want to adopt the same methods of struggle? Why don't they have the possibility of demonstrating like Ukrainian or French women?**

Not all feminists around the world

adopt Femen, it isn't just a question of Tunisian women. It is a question of faith in methods of struggle. Each group, each social movement, each individual, chooses the method of struggle which works for them. But we, in Tunisia, have not debated inside the ATFD, we understand that methods of struggle like this are employed, but we do not insert ourselves within them.

**Do you think this type of action is too radical in the Tunisian context?**

This can have different types of reaction. This can led people to reflect correctly, but can also radicalise certain extremist current or even

moderate currents who become extremist on the matter.

**Some of your activists denounce the increasingly common aggression notably from the security forces against so called "modern" women, that is those who are independent or who dress in western styles.**

Effectively, there is a model of society which is being imposed on Tunisian women which is completely unacceptable. The Ennahda party has always said they want to change society from below so as afterwards to make changes at the legal level. Until now, none of the laws acquired for

women's rights has been touched. But at the same time in practice in everyday life, there are acquired liberties which are threatened and violence is a major instrument, precisely to dominate women and lead them to leave the political and public field.

**In your view, Ennahda has not yet changed its conservative vision of what should be the role of women in society?**

Today there is a battle on the model of society that we want. And Ennahda has a model of society that feminists do not necessarily share. Ennahda knows very well that the real rampart against Islamism in Tunisia is women's rights and the question of women. That is why the response in relation to this is variable according to the relationship of forces. One minute [the idea of male-female - ed.] complementarity is introduced, then they go back on it, but other articles have been introduced in the Constitution which can threaten women's rights. There are many threats, but there is a lot of mobilisation to meet these threats and the question remains open.

**Precisely, to advance the cause of**

**women, you want principles to be registered in the Constitution. And when we read the last draft of the Constitution, it stipulates that male and female citizens have the same rights. That gives the impression that you have succeeded in advancing your positions. Is that really the case?**

Effectively, in relation to the proposal of complementarity, we can consider it as an advance. That is under the pressure from the street. But the draft Constitution is really ambiguous and contradictory: they give with the right hand and take back with the left. When you have an article, article 136, which stipulates that Islam is the state religion, and not the religion of Tunisians, we know very well that this leaves the door wide open to all kinds of attack.

In the same text, there are setbacks like on the question of the family: it says that the state should preserve family cohesion. We know very well that when the rights of the family are advanced before the rights of the individual, women's rights are always hurt. Women's rights in the fight against violence have been refused in the name of family cohesion. We know it. Women who are victims of violence

have been told by the police: "your family and its cohesion must come before everything". And if this is constitutionalised it will really hit women's rights. Today, they cannot take measures to modify the law but they introduce big open windows for subsequent regressions. And this is what makes us afraid, today we fight so that this Constitution does not open breaches, that it conforms to our expectations in the area of non-discrimination and equality.

**The Tunisian feminist movement has existed for a century. Does this depth and historic anchoring give you enough strength to oppose the changes proposed by Ennahda?**

Tunisian women and men have been marked by this progressive, modernist current. It has marked the recent history of Tunisia. The last century has been truly a century where Tunisians have produced many progressive readings of the Koran and of Islam. We cannot now reverse all that. There is a progressive history of Tunisia, of truly modernist readings of our cultural heritage which, I hope, will allow Tunisia to pass through the current difficult times.

*From the [RFI site](#).*

# Riots and police violence in Turkey

**5 June 2013, by Masis Kürkçügil**

It all started when a group of citizens decided on a peaceful occupation, maybe for only some days, to express their opposition to the redevelopment, including uprooting the trees, of Gezi Park in Taksim Square in the centre of Istanbul. Gezi Park, according to explicit statements by the Prime Minister Erdogan, would be the object of a development project including rebuilding, as a luxury shopping centre, an Ottoman artillery barracks that had been demolished following a Restorationist rising against the Young Turks Revolution of 1908 and definitively cleared in 1940. This plan

has also been criticized by many specialists including town planners, architects and ecologists.

On Friday May 31st, the very same day that an Istanbul administrative court decided to suspend the rebuilding of the barracks, the police attacked the peaceful occupiers of Gezi and evacuated them. The police aggression provoked a massive reaction by the inhabitants in solidarity with the occupiers, and after violent confrontations the police finally moved back from the park on June 1st and 2nd and lost control of Taksim. The street fighting continued

day and night in several districts of the centre of Istanbul.

The authoritarian turn of the Party of Justice and Development (AKP) - in power for ten years - that excluded all those who are not in its camp, as well as the reactions, especially by broad segments of youth, to its neoliberal policies, provided several subjects of conflict as elements of a spontaneous explosion that was set off by the spark of the police intervention in entering the park to brutally evacuate people with their children and set fire to their tents,

The AKP, which has a comfortable electoral base of fifty percent, has suffered a first defeat, and from a popular mobilization. This party, which is seen as having brought about important changes for half the population, had just sat down at the negotiating table with the Kurds to find a peaceful solution to the national question. Its policies were up to now contested only by militant but not very influential sections of the left, but suddenly a heterogeneous and not easily definable set of people conquered the centre of the city after courageously facing the police.

The majority of the demonstrators are, alongside the left groups, people of 20-30 years old participating for the first time in a political struggle although there is a sizeable participation in the demonstrations of secular Kemalist currents opposed to the AKP government. It should also be underlined that young women occupied the front ranks in the confrontations with the police. The proximity of poor districts to the centre made it easy for young people from these districts to participate. People from all over the city went to the centre. At dawn a massive crowd crossed the bridge over the Bosphorus on foot and joined the other demonstrators. Although it remained limited, certain members of the far right MHP party took part in the demonstrations, but the party leadership immediately ordered them to leave.

There is a mixture of young headscarf-wearing girls, "anticapitalist

Muslims", fans of football clubs, LGBT groups, Kurdish, Kemalists and especially of those who said, standing up against Tayyip Erdoğan, "we are here too, we exist". The important slogans were "Tayyip resign", "shoulder to shoulder against Fascism", "It is only a beginning, the fight continues", however there was no clear demand from the mass. Even if the Taksim Initiative has formulated the demand for the resignation of the minister of the interior, this demand is not yet very widespread in the masses.

What is more important than discussions about the possible appearance of an opposition which could extend from "We are" with "We will be", is the fact that, for the first time, hundreds of thousands of people are independently going to public places without being directed by a known centre (left, trade union or State) in order to oppose to the policies of a government which is taking a more and more authoritarian turn. Even if social demands have not yet emerged, it is quite obvious that the implementation of neo-liberal policies is provoking the indignation of the masses.

## **The revenge of May 1st or wars of memory**

On May 1st this year the government had, on the pretext of work in progress, closed to demonstrations the symbolically important Taksim

Square, paralysed maritime and road transport and deployed police officers everywhere in order to prevent May Day demonstrations. Following the adoption by the government of the Putin method in order to choke off the social opposition the city was paralysed.

There is a war of memory between the left and the government over Taksim Square which is known as May Day Square. Faced with the left which wants to perpetuate both the memory of 42 people who fell here on May 1st 1977, as well as working class ideals, the government would like, by rebuilding the artillery barracks, to both "revive history" and, by transforming it into a shopping centre, create its own historical legitimacy.

By humiliating the demonstrators whom it stigmatizes as "marauders" and agitators, Erdoğan revealed how "consistent" he was when he opposed to Israeli repression in Gaza or when he criticized Assad in Syria. Municipal and parliamentary elections will take place during the next two years, as well as the presidential election. According to many analysts, it is almost certain that Erdoğan will be elected president. Erdoğan would like a constitutional amendment that would enable him to constitute a Putin-style presidential regime. However these recent events have been an unexpected defeat for him.

What we need now is new mass movements.

*3rd June 2013*

# **Confronting an Elected Dictator: Popular Mobilization in Turkey**

**5 June 2013, by Yunus Sözen**

To better understand what is happening, let's start with a discussion of the relationship between elections and democracy. Athenian democrats devised their democratic

system without elections because they believed that elections are the oligarchic method of selecting the leaders, and mechanisms that prevent the formation of a political class (like the

lottery and rotation systems) are the only democratic ways to select the rulers. Because, Athenian democrats believed that elections not only have an intrinsic class bias, but elections



also provide the rulers autonomy from the ruled; that is, they make it possible for rulers to be able to do whatever they please. Indeed, the only reason why modern liberal representative government centered around elections is not simply an oligarchic system is because it is also a system that provides tools for the ruled, including methods of participation other than elections, freedoms for the opposition, and checks on the rulers. Although these tools are still severely inadequate, they do make it more challenging for the rulers to do whatever they wish and they do force rulers to respond to citizens to an extent. However, if elections start to become the only institution of a modern representative government, then elections merely become a tool for authoritarian rule by bolstering the executive branch with popular approval.

The historic demonstrations centered around the resistance in Istanbul's Gezi park is exactly about the grievances caused by the dictatorship of an executive branch that is reinforced by the electoral approval. Specifically, Gezi park resistance is one those instances where both the class character of the state and the oligarchic nature of electoral authorization became blatantly obvious. Firstly, it signifies the class character of the state in a way that will not escape even the most crude Marxist analysis. Gezi is a public park at the political and social epicenter of the city, Taksim, and the government decided to replace the park with a shopping mall. When activists started to resist by not evacuating the park, the government sent in its police to fight for the conversion of a public park into a mall. To put it even more bluntly, the state blindly used its instruments of violence to serve the interests of capital, and to covert a collective good into private property. However, Gezi also demonstrates the oligarchic character of a political regime based solely on electoral authorization. Because, in the 2011 elections, nobody voted for the government to convert the public park in Taksim into a mall or any of the other governments incursions into the social sphere, yet short of specific mandates, and clear instructions on how to rule, the government had the

legal right to rule as it pleases. However, despite their electoral mandate, this type of unilateral action may not have happened in a better functioning representative system which provides the ruled with other instruments of participation and opposition than elections. Because, even though its democratic content is limited, in a liberal representative government citizens would have some access to policy making, there would be a level of transparency and free public debate, and there would be legal scrutiny over the issue. In Turkey on the other hand, no such limits are in place given the AKP's unprecedented accumulation of power since 2007.

The AKP has now not only eliminated the well-known historical challenge from the army, but it has also taken control of the high courts, and then slowly but surely, using its popularity, eradicated all oppositional freedoms. Concretely speaking, Erdogan's policy could not be confronted by the non-existing oppositional media, and it could not be challenged by the judiciary that is now under the control of the executive, i.e. the ruling party. Therefore, when Erdogan wanted to turn a public space, where citizens can engage in free and equal interactions, into a right-wing conservative space, where customers focus on the acquisition of goods, there were no other way to stop him except by the force of numbers.

However, the hundreds of thousands of people out protesting are not resisting the police and subjecting themselves to the massive use of tear gas and brute force just because of the injustice at Gezi park, or just because of the fact that Erdogan is an authoritarian leader. These protests happened because in addition to Erdogan's on-going attacks on oppositional groups (seculars, Alewites, Kurds, socialists and others), including purging them from positions of power, and criminalizing and imprisoning them en mass for various reasons, he deepened to an unprecedented extent his neoliberal and extremely conservative exclusionary social policies. To name a few of the most recent ones, last year, without much debate, the whole education system was reconfigured to

better serve not only the needs of capital but also in Erdogan's words, 'to raise a more religious generation'. Last month, in a country where per capita alcohol consumption is by far the lowest among OECD countries, strict alcohol consumption restrictions passed, which were defended by Erdogan as follows: 'why is it defensible for you to accept a law passed by two drunkards [according to many signifying Ataturk and Inonu], but the law that is the imperative of religion becomes something that you need to deny...if you want to drink, buy your drink and go drink it in your own home'. Last week, the AKP enlarged its assault on women rights by making the morning after pill a prescription drug, and a couple of days ago Erdogan later approved of an announcement made in Ankara metro warning against kissing in public. Many of these regulations would be very difficult to implement if previously existing checks were still place. For example, the constitutional court might strike a few of the legal changes, or the council of the state would limit or remove some of the others. Considering the lack of avenues for voice and the lack of obstacles against Erdogan's power, these and many other similar policies, combined with his symbolically exclusionary and suffocating speeches, have apparently made a great many non-supporters feel not only completely powerless and frustrated, but also very angry.

This anger has now become embodied in massive demonstrations, where hundreds of thousands of people are taking back the autonomy that the government enjoys. In short, if the reason for the rebellion is the sense of powerlessness, lack of control over their own lives, the immediate result is perhaps the sense of power large sectors of the population are enjoying for the first time. For now, they have taken control of their city and of their lives. As a result, we are now part of a truly democratic moment. This is an experience that goes way beyond the 'democratic rights' enjoyed within liberal representative democracies, which at its best is a democracy tamed for the requirements of capitalism and the modern state. Therefore, in a counter-intuitive way, we probably owe this democratic explosion to the

lack of democratic checks on the power of the electorally authorized executive. For Erdogan, on the other hand, before our very eyes we are witnessing the transformation of his image from a leader who is powerful, popular, and if a little impulsive, still reflective of the values of the 'Turkish nation', into a tyrant who is so greedy and drunk with power that although

he has the votes, he cannot manage the country effectively anymore. He is indeed trapped in a dictatorial dilemma: if he caves into the current demands, he will lose the perception that he is all that powerful; if he does not cave in at all, he will have to rely on coercive power to the degree that he will turn into a cruel tyrant. So far he has taken the second route, still belittling and criminalizing the

demonstrators, hoping that the next elections in less than a year will result in a way to dissipate the democratic euphoria. However, although this is one of those instances where the statement that 'politics is open-ended' is indeed the reality, it appears that sustained mobilization is the only course of action that will help satisfy both democratic and socialist goals.

## Spring comes to Turkey

5 June 2013, by Tom Gagné

AFTER A day filled with police violence against unarmed, peaceful occupiers and protesters, one of my old friends from high school, living near Taksim Square in Istanbul reported: "It's midnight, and my street is alive. All the neighbors are leaning out their windows, stepping out on their balconies, whistling, banging pots and pans, shouting, 'Tayyip istifa! Tayyip istifa!' (Resign Tayyip, resign!)"

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the prime minister of Turkey and head of the conservative, Islamist-influenced Justice and Development Party (AKP), is in the hot seat—faced with an uprising that people from many different political viewpoints are comparing to the Arab Spring that swept across the Middle East in 2011.

Erdoğan has been at the forefront of a neoliberal reinvention of Turkey. This has included the nearly complete privatization of nationalized industries, the rise of Turkey as a regional power with its sights set on domination of natural resources in the Mediterranean—and the utter destruction of ancient Byzantine and Ottoman neighborhoods in Istanbul, Turkey's largest city, in the name of urban renewal and gentrification, with the goal of turning Istanbul into a major financial center.

This last element is what sparked the mass protests that erupted last week and continue to spread into this one.

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SINCE FEBRUARY 2012, Gezi Park—a small green oasis in the middle of Istanbul's busiest district, Taksim Square—has been slated for demolition as part of the latest urban renewal project of the AKP, which has faced little to no political opposition over the past several years. The government's plan is to build a replica of the Taksim Military Barracks, demolished in 1940—and turn the structure into a shopping mall.

With construction about to go forward, on Monday, May 27, a series of semi-spontaneous protests resulted in the occupation of Gezi Park by a small group of activists determined to stop the uprooting of trees and green space. That night, bulldozers began demolishing the walls of the park—but the process was slowed by the occupiers.

The protests built over the following days. By Thursday morning, the demonstrators had halted the construction temporarily after a prominent Kurdish politician, Şeyda Şener, stood in front of a bulldozer. Unable to produce the necessary legal documents granting it authorization to demolish, the construction company went to the Istanbul police.

By Thursday night, up to 1,000 demonstrators were occupying the park. Their protests coincided with a

large march in honor of the anniversary of the deadly Israeli military assault on the Mavi Marmara, the Turkish vessel that was the flagship of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in 2010.

Each night during the week, according to Sungar Savran, editor of the newspaper İscı Mucadelesi (Workers' Struggle), in a report that appeared at the Canadian Socialist Project's Bulletin website, the police waited until the pre-dawn hours to launch their vicious attacks on protesters. As Savran reported:

*Istanbul has become a battlefield covered by tear gas...This would have been no news at all: Turkish police are famous for their brutality in dealing with demonstrations unwelcome to the government. Only a month ago, on May Day, they dispersed a gathering of thousands of workers and unionists using tear gas unsparingly...The difference lies in the determination and audacity of the protesters. .*

By Friday, Gezi Park was sealed off by police as the street confrontations continued. But the shocking images of police brutality had by now spread around the world, sparking outrage—and the biggest mobilizations in Turkey itself were still to come.

Judging from the photos and videos taken over the past few days, it wouldn't be unfair to say that the



streets of Istanbul resemble those of Cairo during the initial stages of the Egyptian Revolution. Tear gas canisters litter the ground. There are bloodied faces and broken limbs. The authorities are using tanks and water cannons in an attempt to disperse demonstrators. Protesters are burning cars, erecting barricades in response, while the banners and graffiti of the protesters pronounce the word "revolution."

Yusuf Cemal, an independent trade union activist, reported: "They [the cops] even used real bullets—we didn't know if there was anyone dead or not. We were fighting them from 7 p.m. until 6 a.m."

Onur Devrim Ağaçbaşı, a socialist activist and member of the Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party, described the situation:

*There were socialists, anarchists, climate activists and all sorts of concerned citizens. Police attacked barbarically again; using their gas bombs to shoot people in their heads. That attack changed everything.*

The main initiative "Taksim Solidarity" called for a massive protest on Friday. More than 10,000 people came to Taksim that evening and did not retreat, despite hundreds of tear gas bombs. Then the struggle spread to other cities, on a massive scale. Today, June 1, more than 100,000 took back the park and Taksim Square. Police used plastic bullets and water cannons. More than 900 people were detained, and at least a dozen were seriously injured. There have been no fatalities for now.

The movement spread literally all over Turkey, tens of thousands marched in big cities such as Ankara and Izmir. The participants were not the "usual suspects" thousands of young people joined a political march for the first time. They were labeled as "apolitical" by older generations, but now we are taking part in politics.

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WHAT STARTED as a comparatively small protest to protect a park and its history from destruction has turned into a watershed moment. It has galvanized all of the unacknowledged grievances, political problems and latent anger in a country that has been shifting more and more toward a one-party state promoting conservative religious values and a swifter-than-ever conversion to neoliberalism.

As British socialist and author Richard Seymour wrote for the Guardian newspaper, "[T]his is more than an environmental protest. It has become a lightning conductor for all the grievances accumulated against the government."

The protests in Istanbul—and, now, across the rest of Turkey—have given confidence to the trade union movement. This is a movement with a rich history of struggle, but also of repression. It has remained largely passive over the past decade of neoliberal reforms under the AKP.

One of the four main unions in Turkey, the Confederation of Public Workers' Unions, has called for a sector-wide strike on June 5. The possibility of a general strike is not unthinkable if Erdoğan and the AKP remain firm in their drive to demolish Gezi Park.

The courageous demonstrations in Turkey are inspiring support around the world. Last weekend, Occupy activists in New York City marched to the Turkish consulate from Zuccotti Park in solidarity with those fighting in Turkey. There was a lively demonstration in Boston, and more to come this week in cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco and Chicago.

The plan to destroy Gezi Park is part of a wider agenda for Istanbul and all of Turkey. It began in earnest in 2008, when the city was declared a "capital

of culture" for 2010. For Erdoğan and the AKP, this was a green light for further development and urban "renewal" plans, concentrated in their hands.

The forced gentrification program in Istanbul began with the destruction of a 550-year-old neighborhood called Sulukule. The entire neighborhood, populated mostly by an impoverished Roma community, was displaced. Next on the list was the largely Kurdish neighborhood of Tarlabası—a historic area full of migrant workers. The project destroyed Ottoman-era buildings and a cultural heritage of the marginalized Jewish, Greek, Armenian and now Kurdish peoples who used to live there.

There are 50 other proposed gentrification projects in Istanbul, but the proposed destruction of historic Gezi Park is the last stand for many activists. It's clear that huge numbers of Turks are tired of everything about the AKP's neoliberal projects—and they want to express their outrage.

Taksim Square, where Gezi Park is located, has been a profound symbol for the Turkish left since May Day in 1977, when dozens of trade union militants and radicals were massacred by still unknown assailants. In the years following the brutal military dictatorship of the early 1980s, protesters tried to take Taksim on May Day as a symbolic gesture to fallen comrades.

In 2010, the police opened the square up for May Day demonstrations under tight security—this past May Day, it was shut down again, and trade union activists and other leftists were met with state violence.

The future of a different Turkey lies in Taksim Square—with a new generation is taking up this fight.

June 3, 2013

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# United against the Troika

5 June 2013, by **Esther Vivas**

Who is the Troika? A year ago few knew the answer to this question. We knew it by reference, to its stay in Greece, and it wasn't good. The Troika was synonymous with austerity, adjustment and cuts, hardship, hunger and unemployment.

But it was not until the arrival in Spain of the much denied rescue, in June 2012, that the "men in black" and "Troika" became a household name. Today, a year later, people, sick and tired, are coming out into the streets to say loud and clear: "Troika, go home".

History repeats itself. And just as in many countries of the South in the 1990s and 2000s saw mass demonstrations against the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, whom the people accused of reducing them to misery,

now people, here, speak out against the Troika.: the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission and the European Central Bank. The bank is different. But the logic is more of the same.

Centre-periphery relations at a global level are now repeated in the European Union. And the countries of the periphery of the Continent, we have become the new colonies, markets or sources of financial capital. Where once, in the South, structural adjustment plans were applied, in order, it was said, to make debt more sustainable, as if the misery and poverty to which they could be subjected was sustainable. Now they speak to us of "aid" and "bailouts" ... and they reduce us all to misery.

Debt remains the yoke imposed on the poor. A mechanism of control and

subjugation of peoples. An infallible instrument to transfer resources, or to be more precise, of plunder, from South to North, either global or at a European scale. And an argument for reducing the rights of the majority and generate more profits to capital, cutting and privatizing public services covertly. The debt imposed on us, which, incidentally, is not ours, is the perfect excuse to implement what is a long plan. Thus, the scam is called the crisis, the theft is the debt.

We have quickly learned the meaning of the Troika, but also that of other concepts such as anger, rebellion and disobedience. And today we rise in more than 100 cities across Europe as the "peoples united against Troika". Because we can.

[\[http://esthervivas.com/english/united-against-the-troika/\]](http://esthervivas.com/english/united-against-the-troika/)

## Austerity policies are incompatible with health

5 June 2013, by **Carmen San José Pérez**

### A change of health model

The booklet prepared by the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs to "explain" the measures contained in the Royal Decree mentioned above is riddled with omissions and mystifications concerning the changes and the real restrictions that will result from its application.

First, this booklet justifies the reform by the huge debt of the health system.

Secondly it invokes the current economic crisis. In part, this debt, which we can assume comes to a, ~15 billion euros, has been contracted in a completely uneven way by each of the Autonomous Communities. Some jurisdictions have accumulated it in a thoroughly fraudulent way, engaging in processes of outsourcing and privatization, together with private entities and for the construction of hospitals. These processes have been implemented with the help of formulas such as concessions to banks and builders, formulas which, as demonstrated by all such experiments,

have proven to be much more expensive (between four and seven times, as regards the hospitals in Madrid) than using their own administration for both management and construction.

In any event, it should be noted that public health expenditure in Spain amounts to some 6.5 per cent of GDP, while in the 17 countries of the euro zone, it represents an average of 7.3 per cent, which means that the annual expenditure per capita per year is less than the average of OECD countries. In addition, the rate of growth of these

costs has been very modest over the past ten years (2.9 per cent, against 4.3 per cent on average in the OECD). If we add to that the health indicators of the population, we see that the results obtained are better with a lesser quantity, in terms of health, equity, coverage and access, of quality and safety of care, of user satisfaction and of the legitimacy of the system according to the opinion of the population, with the exception of waiting lists (according to the latest report of the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies).

The budgetary constraints faced by the National Health Service are also at the origin of the debt, as part of a larger-scale strategy implemented over the last decade in order to destroy public services and win the battle of convincing public opinion about the policy of privatization. This has led to a huge financial deficit that has resulted in the allocation of exceptional credit at the end of each year.

The present crisis affecting the country is the second reason given by the government to justify the change in the health system. As can be verified, it is not possible to attribute the responsibility for this crisis to an excessive level of public spending; Spain is one of the EU countries with the lowest levels of social spending. The same goes for the tired old refrain "we have lived beyond our means," that the government is trying to instill in the population in order to make it accept the restrictions. The crisis has liberated the big financial groups and speculators - big capital in its logic of the rate of profit - and deepened and extended the austerity policies implemented by the governments which have submitted to the strategies imposed by the IMF, the ECB and the European Commission (the Troika). However, the way out of this crisis does not lie in the reduction of public spending, nor in lower wages and pensions which reduce social rights to previous levels that were unimaginable not so long ago.

Moreover, the government is taking advantage of the crisis to implement a policy that benefits only the interests of the big banks and of big business (that is, one per cent of the

population). This policy is a real fraud. To pretend that this reform is being carried out in order to ensure the economic viability of the National Health System (SNS) is a deception, not only because it is applied with the reductions whose implementation has begun, but also because it was never intended to offer this guarantee.

It is clear that savings could be achieved through a budget that amounted to €90 billion euros a year, gaining in efficiency and improving coordination in order to avoid duplication and overspending on pharmacy technology. It follows that the only alternative that has been implemented consists of reductions in staff and human resources, with hospital closures, reduction of the number of beds available, closing down of hospital departments, outpatient and emergency services. The transfer of hospital services, medical imaging centers and laboratories to the private sector so that it can manage the provision of health care, making profits out of public funds, is the most dramatic illustration.

The assertion by the ministry that the goal of all this policy is to "always preserve the right of citizens to protect their health and to guarantee that in Spain, health coverage is universal, public, free and quality" is new and quite simply wrong. It should first of all be noted that the right to health is attacked when it is not provided in conditions of equal and free access, which is exactly what this reform removes. This results in the exclusion of citizens who have not paid social security contributions, which means that it is no longer a universal service, person, and that it has become simply an insurance company, improperly called Social Security, which only protects its contributors.

Health care can no longer be a public service when, for a good part of the population, this care is delivered by private institutions. Moreover, these health benefits are not really free, because the reform has introduced payment for certain services and medications, which prohibits access to part of the population. This provision is confirmed by the announcement of

limiting health provision to basic services, the list of which remains to be defined and from which are therefore excluded a certain number of services.

## The social situation

The social situation is dramatic for a large part of the population, and recent data merely confirm this. And furthermore, with the figures that we have at our disposal, we can only glimpse certain aspects. According to Eurostat, Spain is among the last of the 27 EU countries, followed only by Latvia and Lithuania, in the ranking for the Gini coefficient; which determines the degree of inequality in the distribution of household incomes. The rate of poverty and social exclusion comes to 25.5 per cent of the population in Spain, while the average is 21.7 per cent in the EU and 21.6 per cent in the euro zone. The latest figures from the Survey of the Active Population (SAP) in July 2012 show an unemployment rate of 24.63 per cent of the workforce, but which rises to 52.1 per cent for young people under 25 and 35.76 per cent for migrant workers. In 1,737,600 households, everyone is unemployed.

According to figures provided by the national bank, Banco de España, average household income was €10,571 in 2010, as against €11,120 in 2009. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE), the average gross annual salary was €22,790 euros in 2010, but the salary most often found was €16,500. And the average amount of contributory and non-contributory pensions was respectively €805 and €366 per month.

These characteristics are those of a country with great social inequalities, with a quarter of its population below the poverty line, including almost a quarter of its workers and unemployed and half of its young people, while the majority of the population is classified as being in the category of *mileuristas*, a neologism which refers to workers whose monthly income is around €1,000. To these are added the pensioners who receive only

subsistence pensions. If we add on the new cuts that have been announced, the country, after having counted on receiving a loan of €100 billion to save the banks, is currently negotiating a new loan to save the country. We should expect the continuation of adjustment policies.

We are faced with the biggest offensive of the past decade against people's conditions of existence, a situation of real social emergency. After the collapse of the financial system in 2008, the extension of the crisis to the real economy of the countries at the centre of this turmoil and the collapse of neoliberal recipes, capitalism is again taking the path of accumulation by dispossession, by pillaging the rights, hard-won in struggle, of the working classes, by appropriating public and natural resources, which makes the situation incompatible with a decent life.

## **The consequences for health**

The new model radically modifies the orientation of the health system. The prevention of disease and the protection of health are totally abandoned, as is planning based on health needs. The goal now is to "satisfy the demand" of users, thereby converting health care into a commodity, an object of consumption, a kind of assistance that uses and abuses high technology and expenditure on pharmaceutical products, since these are the elements of the system which generate the biggest profits for the big monopolies of the health sector.

The system puts an end to universal coverage, to equality in access to care, and reduces the role of various agencies to emergencies only, which is not only a factor in the deterioration of the health of these people but causes public health problems which may extend to the entire population. Ultimately, this model of health system, which reduces some services, charges for others and expels the most vulnerable citizens, will eventually cause tragedies and deaths that could be completely avoided. For all these reasons, the model of health system

which emerges from Royal Decree 16/2012 is an inhuman model; it is xenophobic because it does not guarantee the right to health of the entire population and increases the rate of deaths from disease in defined layers of the population.

## **Strategies and alternatives**

We have been plunged into a global crisis of unprecedented magnitude. Despite the many comparisons and studies of past crises, it does not seem that the present crisis has many similarities. This is why the strategies that we need to implement to ensure that the crisis does not result, as has been the case up to now, in citizens taking the brunt of it, need to adapt to this new situation. In turn, they will have to be thought about, debated and ultimately applied in new ways. The advent of the Arab Spring has been able to provide us with some lessons about this, as has the Occupy movement around the world. In our case, the 15-M movement has, from May 15, 2011, paved the way for the exploration of other kinds of actions.

The recent history of the majority trade unions, fervent advocates of negotiations and agreements, shows their lack of internal democracy and their loss of legitimacy as a result of their bureaucratic methods. It is therefore necessary to push forward the self-organization of workers by helping them to become more conscious and, through democratic participation, to make decisions. At the same time we have to assist in the organization of a citizenry that is outraged by the deterioration of living conditions it is enduring. Faced with negotiations and with the agreements to which the majority unions have accustomed us, faced with the collusion between the majority and the institutional Left, we must drive forward massive and permanent mobilizations and thus create convergence between all the sectors in struggle. Unity of action is necessary in order not to remain on the level of symbolic mobilizations without any real effect, which only demobilize, and to have clear objectives that are democratically

discussed and agreed. We must also be aware that this fight cannot be won by mobilizing only the most conscious sectors. It requires the support of the majority of citizens in order to obtain a better relationship of forces than exists at present, by trying to unite our forces in order to succeed as often as possible in involving larger organizations, as well as the most sectarian ones on some occasions. And we must also remember always that the struggles must go beyond the framework of the borders of the EU.

The strategy of defence of some public health services must be part of a global discourse that broadly articulates the objectives with the demands to which people are most attached. It is therefore necessary to understand that the offensive against public services and the determination to dismantle them are part of the austerity policies: attacks against wages, working hours, pensions, freedoms and democracy itself, driven by the Troika and implemented by EU governments. This preoccupation puts the ideological battle in the foreground, because these policies are incompatible with the health of the people.

In order to triumph, these policies consciously include, of course, the need to overcome the working class and its organizations. The reforms of the labour code, the attacks against the unions, against the right to collective bargaining, against the right to strike, against the right to demonstrate, etc., are the daily illustrations of this.

In the field of health, it is up to us to make proposals in order to succeed in taking control of public services, taking into account certain basic questions:

? the inadequate impact of health care systems on health, because in times of crisis like the one we are going through today, this control becomes more important;

? how health is largely conditioned by social determinants, by the class and gender position of people;

? the considerable medicalization of everyday life, due to the influence of

the bio-technology and pharmaceutical industries.

We also believe that these services should be decentralized, controlled by citizens in all phases of the projects: implementation, organization,

planning, management and care policy. With organization and planning criteria to combat inequalities in access to care, as well as universality and fairness as guiding lines. The demand for public funding will lead us to implement a progressive tax reform, accompanied by the abolition

of indirect taxes for the financing of health. And this demand will lead us to demand the non-payment of the debt and the nationalization of the entire privatized sector. ?

*Madrid, October 16, 2012*

## Selection in the private hospitals

**3 June 2013, by Patryk Kosela**

The GUMed scientists carried out their analyses in the area of Pomerania (Gdansk). The report, entitled "Analysis of the exercise of chosen health care", was sent to the regional president of the national health fund and to the Prime Minister, Donald Tusk. The conclusions of this report shook public opinion. Under the pressure of two organizations - the Employers of the Republic of Poland and the National Association of Private Hospitals - the Minister for Health, Bartosz Arlukowicz, ensured that this document quickly disappeared from the website of the University.

The editorial board of "Kurier Zwiaskowy" obtained this report thanks to the kindness of a sociology lecturer the University of Warsaw, who has for years been concerned by the problems of the selection of patients according to the estimate of care costs. What emerges from the analysis by GUMed makes the blood run cold. And that confirms what we knew for a long time: the private medical care companies are not worried about patients but profits.

### Emergencies don't pay

The private companies are not candidates for the contracts of the hospital emergency units (SOR). These units take patients who should be hospitalized immediately, or are even in danger of death. Their lack of interest in emergencies is prosaic:

"the management of an emergency service generates losses".

As we can read in the report, "(...) whole sectors of care, which (...) produce losses, remain out of the field of interest of these companies. These sectors are, inter alia, the internal medicine, pneumology, neurology, general surgery, pediatry or stationary psychiatric care".

### Eclipse of the cataracts

The non-public care units decide to look after cataracts (ophthalmology) only when they are the simplest cases, without complications. The report indicates that one of these units carried out 933 operations, of which only 10 related to cataracts with complications, whereas two other companies cared for only one cataract with complications. The average percentage of cataracts without complications treated among patients of the non-public hospitals is 83%, whereas in the public hospitals it is 29.6%.

The conclusion of the report is as follows: "This situation leads the patients affected by cataracts with complications to wait longer for access to care financed by public means".

### Loss making fractures

The long hospitalization of patients with pelvic fractures means that "the real profit margin of the hospital is low and in the event of complications, not so rare among such patients, it can be loss making". As we can guess, the private health centres do not treat these cases, therefore the patient owes must go to the public health centres.

The private hospitals are on the other hand avid for the most profitable operations, like therapeutic arthroscopy under local anaesthesia carried out in one day. That confirms their concentration on the choice of the most profitable processes.

### Heartbreak

The news concerning cardiology and the cardiac surgery is no better. Acute coronary syndromes are treated by private hospitals deprived in cases where care involves three days hospitalization at the maximum. After four days the cases must be dealt with by the public sector.

"There is a pre-selection of patients at the stage of the admission in a private care centre: a more serious clinical state of the patient disqualifies them with regard to treatment in such a centre. These data also show that patients with complications are quickly transferred towards the public



hospitals. Undoubtedly the two mechanisms coexist”, write the authors of the report. They also indicate the very small number of patients suffering from cardiac insufficiency. In one of the private health centres of health there was one patient in this disease group. By comparison, in one of the public hospitals there were 199 such cases.

The absence of patients suffering from cardiac insufficiency can mean the elimination of such cases at the preliminary stage of clinical examinations, because they are a group of expensive patients who moreover block beds due to a longer hospitalization. The researchers stress that such patients could be qualified as relating to internal medicine. But the problem is that the private medical care centres do not take contracts for this sector of care, and we know why.

On the other hand they are fond of coronarography procedures. For one of the providers of private medical care these represented “up to 60% of care mentioned, with the result that the average is much higher at the private ones than at the public ones”.

An incredible phenomenon was observed with regard to the cardiac surgery. We can speak here about discrimination because of age. In the case of aorto-coronary bridging the average age of the patients differed by almost six years according to the hospitals. The private ones chose patients aged less than 69. “That

could confirm the thesis that the patients were selected for admission from the viewpoint of the reduction of the number of potential complications and the shortening of the hospitalizations”, say the authors of the GUMed report.

The final conclusions of the report do not leave any illusion. The private hospitals offer a reduced range of care and often they use more half of their contract with the NFZ for only one procedure. Moreover they choose procedures which guarantee a higher profit margin. They also avoid patients whose hospitalization would be longer. In certain situations (for example in cardiac surgery) a selection of patients according to age could occur. According to Janusz Morys, the vice-chancellor of GUMed, private companies should by definition offer commercial care services. But when it appears that it is not possible to finance a hospital in this way, they feed off public resources. However, according to the professor, they do not offer a complete service of care and are not interested by patients with serious complications or cases, which are more expensive and where unfortunately over-costs are not covered by the contracts signed with the national health fund.

Whereas the law on health care activity, modified by the current government, forces local councillors straightforwardly to transform hospitals into commercial companies, the report by of the researchers of Gdansk raises the question: what will

become of patients without interest for profit and the calculation of margins when all the Polish hospitals are privatized? Will they have to choose between paying and dying?

## Rage of the private sector

The document from Pomerania strongly shook the lobby for the privatization of public health. The Employers of the Republic of Poland and the National Association of Private Hospitals asked the minister of science and higher education to undertake disciplinary proceedings against vice-chancellor Morys.

Why? The answer is simple. The mechanisms described in the report constitute a problem of national scope. They state that by tolerating the fact that the private companies seize what is most advantageous within the sector of health and social protection, the constitutional right of equal access to medical care is not being respected in Poland. The system of health and social protection as a universal public property cannot be at the service of the multiplication of the dividends of the shareholders of the private companies acting in this field. Thanks to the report from GUMed it will be perhaps a little easier to fight for universal access for all to healthcare and for its exemption from payment.

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# Privatization of health and resistance in Catalonia

**1 June 2013, by Sergi Raventos**

To understand the situation that we have at the end of 2012, we have to remember where we are coming from. Health policy, conducted over the years in Catalonia by Convergence and Union (CiU), with the complicity

of the Socialist Party, was clearly a mixed public-private model of health services. This "social convergence" put in place the foundations of various kinds of relationship of public health with private centres, mutual health

societies and other enterprises, not very transparent and already having problems with the law. All kinds of affairs and ruses have been uncovered by some sectors of the media and are waiting to be examined by the

commission of inquiry set up by Parliament, which, unfortunately, has been suspended following on the Catalan elections of November 25, 2012, but which, if nothing prevents it, should resume its work.

Without denying the clearly negative aspects of this mixed system and the inequalities in the territorial distribution of the budget, which does not correspond to health inequalities, there is general agreement [25] that universal free access to most of the services, as well as programmes for the most vulnerable groups, with special needs, helped not to aggravate inequalities related to health and even to reduce them, over the years of their operation.

The population as a whole (including those who have a complementary insurance) has always recognized, in different surveys, that the public system is best in all aspects of clinical care and that it is surpassed by the private health care system only as regards aspects such as comfort and the waiting time for non-urgent care.

## **Dismantling of the system of public health**

Over recent years, the CiU has quite obviously advanced towards the privatization of health care, and without denying the role of Marina Geli, the socialist former councillor of the tripartite government of the lefts (we should remember her insistence on the implementation of the policy of the patients paying a share, when she was in government), there is a before and an after in the dismantling of the system of public health policies after the elections of November 2010 in Catalonia.

As we know, the health councillor, Boi Ruiz, was president of the Unió Catalana de Hospitales (Catalan Hospital Union, UCH), which includes private subcontractors and other private health care establishments which manage public services. During his tenure he openly favoured the private model at the expense of the erosion of the public system. His

performances are already well known in the Catalan population and his prestige has collapsed lately.

Without wishing to make a comprehensive examination, let us quote some of his performances: the opening of the operating rooms of public hospitals in the evening for the benefit of private mutual societies has become a practice in some hospitals. One of the hospitals where this is done, well known because a few months ago the Spanish monarch underwent surgery there, is the Hospital Clinic of Barcelona, in which Barna Clinic, the very expensive private group, operates in the evening. Another similar case is that of the hospital in Terrassa. And also the Hospital of Sant Pau, which is currently in the news because of the struggle of its workers, because today it has been closed for more than a week already. In this hospital, since April 2011, 84 beds remain closed, with all that this entails in terms of saturation of the emergency services, premature discharges of patients, lengthening of waiting lists. In addition, there have been significant cuts to the budget of the hospital pharmacy, of prostheses and catheters, cuts in radiotherapy, radiology, nuclear medicine and hemodynamics, and the closure of operating theatres in the afternoons, which represents a reduction of about 713 surgical operations per year. But according to the workers themselves, the straw that broke the camel's back, and that led to the hospital's closure, was the announcement by the Catalan government of the reduction of the health budget for 2013. This reduction will amount to 200 million euros, which represents a reduction of health activity of the order of between 15 and 20 per cent. This brutal cut will represent a reduction of services, decreased wages and possible redundancies in health enterprises that have agreements with the government.

Another recent affair "a clear support for the private sector and for the search for profits" was the concession for ten years to the private group Eulen of the management of the Centre for Primary Health Care of the population of L'Escala and of seven medical consultations in the area.

Eulen won the concession at a price of €2.4 million per year, an offer that was cheaper by only... €10,000. This was the reason for giving the concession to a group mainly specialized in security and cleanliness, which has no experience of health management, unlike the entity which was previously in charge: the Fundació Salut Empordà of the Hospital of Figueres, a not-for-profit foundation that was appreciated by the population. The Mayor of L'Escala considered this outcome as "bad news not only for L'Escala, but for health in Catalonia as a whole" and said he would be appealing.

These cases, as well as many others which cannot be dealt with for lack of space, correspond to an understanding of health by the regional minister as "a private sphere which depends on you, and not the state, because it depends on the genetic code, on your family history and on your habits", according to statements made on 25 October 2011 by Boi Ruiz. Certain statements which have been contested by Amnesty International run counter to the 2008 report of the Commission on Social Determinants of the World Health Organization itself, which considers that the toxic accumulation of unjust and avoidable social factors - such as economic inequality, precariousness of employment, pollution of the environment, food insecurity, lack of adequate housing or lack of participation and democracy - damage health and create injustice. The Commission considers that these determinants and others, such as pensions, the level of education, inequalities between men and women (in particular the work of reproduction and violence against women) and social and political participation are "the causes of the causes" of health and of its inequalities.

## **Struggles of opposition and of resistance**

The struggle of the workers of the Hospital de Sant Pau followed on from the other battles that have taken place in the Catalan health sector over the

last few months against budget cuts and dismantling of services. There have been struggles of the hospital staff, as in the Hospital Vall d'Hebron, the Bellvitge University Hospital and the Hospital Dos de Maig, all in Barcelona, but also the struggles of users and patients in the Primary Care Centres (CAP), such as that of the residents of the neighbouring working-class district of Bellvitge, who occupied their CAP for weeks to defend public health care and to avoid its closure.

Another action is underway, to try to stop the looting of the public health system for the benefit of the patrons and friends of Councillor Ruiz Boi. On November 19, 2012 the PARS, the League of the Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Acordem ATTAC, ATTAC Catalunya, IAC - CATAC-CTS-IAC and Dempus per la Salut P blica filed a complaint against Boi Ruiz and his government team before the Supreme Court of Justice of Catalonia. The

plaintiffs consider that the articles of the Penal Code that refer to the prevention of the exercise of civil rights (art. 542), non-assistance to persons in danger (art. 196), trafficking in influence (article 428) and in negotiations and activities prohibited to civil servants (art. 441) have been violated. They consider that the right to health, one of the basic pillars of the Welfare State, has not been respected.

Recently, the review *Caf  amb llet* once again discovered in the town of Matar  a case where significant medical expenses of the Generalitat (the Catalan government), also negotiated with the private sector, were granted to companies in an unlawful manner. And this is not the first case. One of the best known has been exposed by the CUP [26] of Reus, which unveiled all the affairs of the president of the Institut Catal  de la Salut, Josep Prat, who is considered to be the key figure in the privatization

process in Catalonia. It is difficult to understand how Prat can be part of the Spanish subsidiary of the multinational United Surgical Partners, of the big Onnova group which dominates Reus, and at the same time be the principal manager of the Catalan health service. This case is now before the courts.

These struggles, and others for the defence of Catalan public health, are a good example of resistance, but that is still not sufficient to stop the offensive by the employers and the neoliberal Right that governs Catalonia, whose aim is to appropriate public health.

So we have to build the convergence of the struggles of all sectors of health and of citizens in general, all those who are affected by the budget cuts of 2013 and the process of privatization of a public health system that, until quite recently, was one of the best in the world.

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