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31 July 2013, by **robm**

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The impact of the June mobilizations

31 July 2013, by **João Machado**

There were three main reasons for taking to the streets: a) against the price increases on public transport (and for a reduction in ticket prices, as well as an improvement in quality); b) against the high level of spending on the Confederations Cup and 2014 World Cup, and their elitist character, while the rights of affected communities are disrespected (with the eviction of local residents to make way for infrastructure projects; c) against the repression unleashed on the demonstrators themselves. Other themes were also present, like the struggle against the corruption of “politicians” (and against the political system itself), and the struggle against the influence of religious conservatism and racism.

On the issue of public transport, the movement scored a rapid and impressive victory. All those (municipal and state governments) who had recently raised ticket prices were forced to reverse the increase. In many places, ticket prices were

actually reduced. In others, free passes were introduced for students or young people, along with plans to improve the transport system.

On the question of repression, we can also say the movement won an impressive victory. After 13th June, the legitimacy of the protests was widely accepted and the repression diminished considerably, although not in all cases. In Rio de Janeiro, the level of repression remained higher, which was probably one reason why the protests continued with greater strength in this state, and why the political cost – revealed in a series of opinion polls – was greater for the governor, Sergio Cabral, of the PMDB (but also supported by the PT). Indeed the protests have continued in Rio (albeit with fewer taking part), as has the “Out with Cabral” movement, demanding the resignation or impeachment of the governor.

There were victories on other issues, like the struggle against the influence

of religious conservatism – the central issue here was the withdrawal of a project to authorize psychologists to carry out “gay cures” (treatment of homosexuals).

Government at all levels, from the federal to the municipal, was put on the defensive and saw its authority eroded. For example, opinion polls put support for central government at around 60% before the protests (it had already fallen slightly before that); after the protests it fell to about half that figure.

On the other hand, the more traditional organizations of the Brazilian social movement, the vast majority of which support the government, were also put somewhat on the defensive. This happened with the CUT and with the unions in general, with the UNE and even with the MST. These organizations, after being largely absent in June, called a “day of stoppages” on 11th July, but the results were rather feeble.

The view spread by sectors of the PT and the leaders of these organizations – that the protests, in large measure showed the strength of the right and the influence of the media – does not stand up. There were moments when

sections of the right were indeed very active and the big media did try to influence the movement. However, when we look at the overall outcome, we can see that the slogans of the right carried little weight, and it is

very clear that a new period has opened up in Brazil, one which is more favourable (or less unfavourable) for the socialist left.

29 July 2013

What next after the failure of the Ennahda government?

31 July 2013, by **Ahlem Belhadji**

What is the balance sheet of 18 months of Islamist government?

The failure of the Islamists is no longer a matter of much controversy. I think that the majority of Tunisians are agreed that government has failed in relation to the task it was responsible for. It had been put in place to manage a transitional period of one year. Finally 18 months have gone by and the essential tasks for which it was there, those of the Constitution, have not been fulfilled.

Everything the government has undertaken, at the economic or political level, poses enormous problems. We are very far from the objectives of the revolution. At the economic level, one of its first tasks should have been to adopt the broad outlines of a development model favouring more the poor regions, the poorer layers and jobs for the unemployed. But it has gone even further in the direction of neoliberalism than the Ben Ali dictatorship:

- The partnership with the European Union signed on November 19, 2012 is unfavourable to Tunisia. It seeks to install total free trade, notably for the agricultural and services sectors and that would be a disaster for them.
- The new agreement with the IMF in June 2013 envisages still further market liberalisation.
- The government has involved Tunisia in a policy of ever more pronounced

indebtedness.

Given the inflation rate, the high cost of living, the increase in unemployment, the policy of indebtedness, the absence of new measures in favour of social justice, it is a total failure at the economic and social level.

At the political level, we have known some very difficult times under the Ennahda government with a lot of violence, going as far as political assassination. Recently Sahbi Atig, one of the main Ennahda leaders, threatened Tunisians who would dare to challenge the legitimacy of the regime as has happened in Egypt. He sought to scare people by using extremely threatening words like “trample them underfoot” or “make their blood flow”. These words were pronounced not by anybody, but by the president of the Ennahda parliamentary group.

Another point concerns all the institutional reforms and state structures, like the independence of the judiciary or the reform of the police. Increasingly judicial decisions are dictated by the executive, and this troubles me hugely. We have experienced some very violent episodes with the police and people talk about a parallel police. We have to ask how far this will go.

Moreover, the state of civil liberties is worrying. We have seen several political trials recently. Some youth were arrested over a rap song. A

Femen activist was arrested when she had done absolutely nothing wrong. There have been many arrests and trials. We have seen trades unionists arrested and the right to strike and exercise trade union activity are threatened.

What the current revolutionary process is fighting for is freedom of organisation, expression, freedom to demonstrate. And today, many things are thrown into question in this area. For example they are trying to muzzle the press to the maximum.

As regards women's rights, for the moment no laws have been threatened. But the debate around the draft Constitution has shown the type of social project the Islamists support. Instead of the idea of equality between men and women, they have introduced that of “complementarity”, which constitutes a wide open door to every kind of regression.

A great battle was needed so that the notion of equality was reintroduced in the draft Constitution. But subsequently another article was introduced explaining that Islam was the state religion, which then allowed any kind of interpretation of this notion of equality. Ridha Belhadji, the spokesperson for the Salafist party Ettahrir, has for example said that there was no problem with equality since sharia guaranteed equality! Meanwhile, his party promotes polygamy!

The same problem is posed

concerning international conventions defining what we understand by equality. Ennahda is leading a great campaign against the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Its minister of religious affairs has initiated this campaign, saying it would allow homosexual marriage and forbid marriage before the age of 18. Some Tunisian Islamists advocate that girls should be able to marry at 13.

There are regressions in social behaviour, and enormous pressure is exerted on women, notably through the re-emergence of violence against them. There is a whole discourse legitimating and banalising this violence in the absence of new measures for the protection of women.

There is also a moral pressure on women and on their behaviour. Many women self-censor now and question how they dress before going out. We have seen groups who attach women and not much has been done about it. It is in social behaviour that we see the most regression, for example concerning the difficulties in access to abortion and contraception, without their being any modification of the legislation in this area.

What other dangers does the draft Constitution contain?

Several basic points are problematic.

The first is the link with religion: will Tunisian legislation be based on "positive laws" or on sharia? The Islamists have undertaken to establish a civil state based on positive laws. Both then they began to introduce sharia as the source of laws in the draft Constitution. After a battle on this point, they stopped talking about sharia, but in the preamble they used extremely vague formulations like "based on or inspired by the sharia" or "drawing on the principles of Islam".

Finally a national consensus was arrived at, which for me personally poses a problem. It concerns article 1 of the Constitution of 1959: "Tunisia is a free, independent and sovereign state: its religion is Islam, its language Arabic and its regime republican". This formula leaves the possibility of several interpretations on whether

Islam was the religion of the country or the state religion. Of course, Tunisians are mostly Muslims but for me, the state should not have any religion. If that was the case, that would mean that those who govern do so in the name of the sacred and then there is no means of discussion.

It is a consensus because it leaves the question open. But the Islamists, after having accepted it, added an article blocking this opening and allowing article 1 to be interpreted as the affirmation that Islam is the state religion. It is something serious, because it leaves the way open to questioning all laws considered as contrary to Islam, or rather a certain interpretation of Islam.

The second point concerns civil liberties, because many clauses limit basic freedoms like the freedom of expression or of creation and publication.

The third point concerns the question of the independence of the judiciary. The current draft Constitution does not favour it: the public prosecutor, who alone can initiate investigations, is dependent on the executive. We reject this totally. The Constitution should wholly guarantee the independence of the judiciary.

A fourth point, added at the last minute to the last draft, concerns the "transitional period". It prevents the text of the future Constitution being changed for three years once it has been adopted. That will mean a three year extension of the transitional period.

More generally the question of Tunisia's adhesion to universal values of human rights has been a significant point of discord throughout the process of drawing up the constitution. A vision relating everything to Arab Muslim identity is opposed to a universalist vision of rights. Despite an improvement of the different drafts, problems subsist and that reflects significant divergences at the level of the model of society to put in place.

How far has the preparation for the next elections advanced? Are the dates fixed?

The elections should take place at the end of 2013. But for me, it is impossible to prepare them for this date in good conditions. The ruling Troika has done everything to make sure that they are not organised in time.

There is an independent high commission for the elections, with people who have had experience from the elections of 2011. Money has been spent to train them. It is a national body with regional structures. But the regime, in particular Ennahdha, did not want such an independent body. That is why it has been attacked, and then some months were needed to put new bodies in place with all that involves in terms of cost and loss of time. And above all in terms of danger to its independence.

I think that the elections will not be feasible before 2014. It is necessary that they stop telling us stories, even if recently there has been talk of a series of meetings organised by Ennahdha so that the elections take place in 2013. Personally this date does not seem to me possible if the elections are to be free, transparent and democratic.

What about the security situation?

As Ennahda has not dissolved its militias and there has been no real restructuring of the Ministry of the Interior, the security question remains completely posed for me. The investigation on the killing of Chokri Belaïd has not advanced. To demand the truth, the Popular Front has called a big national demonstration on August 6, to mark six months since the killing.

This stalling proves that it was a state killing: there is no will to make the truth known. And historically, we know that state crimes are the most difficult to elucidate. Following the killing the dissolution of the LPR was demanded. We had believed for a time that Ennahda was retreating a little, but finally nothing has been done. They want to keep troops to use during the elections as well as against the coming popular mobilisations.

There is an increasing tendency to criminalise the social movements and use the cops and the legal system.

What kind of legitimacy does the regime have today?

I think it no longer has any legitimacy. Legitimacy can't result simply from having won the elections in October 2011. The Assembly was elected to realise objectives and for a very determined period. The objectives have not been realised, and the period is over. Also there is a climate of insecurity and the economic situation gets worse every day. What legitimacy is there? A revolutionary process is underway, and the only real legitimacy is revolutionary legitimacy.

What is the impact of the situation in Egypt?

Tunisians have closely followed what happened in Egypt. It has constituted an opportunity to re-motivate Tunisians and above all the activists. We are indeed in a dip in the revolutionary process with everything that has happened like attacks, repression, and limitation of liberties. Egypt has revived hope among people who despaired a little.

We have seen emerge in Tunisia a movement, Tamarod, (Rebellion) in the Egyptian style and another, "Khmagtouna" ("You asphyxiate us, you oppress us") calling notably for the dissolution of the constituent national assembly.

We have also seen the main opposition political forces call for the dissolution of the assembly, like Nidaa Tunes [1] and the Popular Front. That has also had an impact on Ennahda, because very rapidly we have seen repressive measures and a threatening discourse. For Ennahda, it is obviously a big loss: the overthrow of their brothers in Egypt worries them and their whole movement in the region greatly. A meeting of the Muslim Brotherhood has taken place in Turkey with Ghanouchi, the president of Ennahda, present. They have considered what happened in Egypt as a coup d'état, and that it was necessary to help Ennahda keep power in Tunisia, or there would be a fatal blow for the Brotherhood in the region.

What is happening now in Egypt, with the role of the army and the repression against the Islamists,

worries me, and I think that is true for many people. Repression does not resolve any problem. The Islamists were overthrown in Egypt through a significant popular mobilization. But then the army has profited from this and sown terror inside the Islamist movement. I don't agree with this, it can only reinforce the role of victim which has very much benefited the Islamists in recent years. And this to a point where 50 people have been killed in one day and Morsi and other Brothers have been imprisoned. I am completely against all these acts which have no legitimacy.

Could the Tunisian army play the same role as in Egypt?

The Tunisian army has a different history. It would be hard for it to intervene in the same way. It could nonetheless play a role, but everything depends on the way in which things evolve and if significant mobilisations take place.

What have been the concrete results of the attempts to seek consensus: the UGTT dialogue, the conference against violence?

Their objective is to bring together all forces to find a consensus so as to bring the transitional period to an end. All these initiatives are advancing very slowly.

What happened in Egypt will undoubtedly accelerate things a little at the level of the Constitution. Overall, there is no advance concerning violence: Ennahda and the CPR have moreover withdrawn from the process at the last minute of the conference against violence and have not fulfilled their initial undertakings. Personally I think that a consensus with Ennahda is very difficult.

What are the common points and differences between the UGTT Initiative and the government of national salvation proposed by the Popular Front?

It is about two different approaches.

- The UGTT does not take an approach of challenging the government, it only proposes tasks for the existing government.

- The Popular Front, however, proposes an alternative government. It considers that the current government has failed and proposes instead a government of national salvation. This should not be limited only to the democratic questions but should place economic and social questions at the first level.

- The UGTT has also begun to discuss the setting up of a national pact with the government and the employers' organisation, but that is a separate debate.

How does the Front respond to those who think that its meetings with the UPT for the setting up of a national congress of salvation could lead to an electoral coalition?

The official decision of the Front adopted during its national council of June 1-2 is not to set up an electoral coalition, but to work punctually around well defined tasks. However, some Front activists are concerned about the setting up of a permanent framework of coordination between the Front and the UPT.

How are the mobilisations going?

For some months, the popular social mobilisations have been somewhat in decline in the towns and neighbourhoods. That is explained by the repression and criminalisation of the spontaneous social movements, to defend the right to work, water, the roads and so on.

That doesn't mean that these movements have disappeared. It is simply a small temporary dip, because the malaise remains very deep. The will for mobilisation remains high faced with the high cost of living the everyday difficulties, the breadth of unemployment, the absence of political and economic response to all these social and popular demands. We also see the re-emergence of the more traditional forms of struggle like the strikes organised by the UGTT.

What initiatives have been taken for protection from the Islamist militias?

Increasingly, and notably since the attacks against meetings, forms of

self-protection have been put in place. But this movement remains embryonic.

The EU has never been a European solidarity organisation. The European peoples must create their own unity

30 July 2013, by **Éric Toussaint**

Are there other points of division?

Not only do we have opposition between, on the one hand, countries like Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the East European countries, and on the other hand, the strongest EU countries, but also inside each of these countries, where income disparities have increased following reforms of the labour markets.

The policies that have been applied by the EU member states have contributed to these inequalities. A prime example is Germany, where counter-reforms, that aim to create a greater variety of employment models, have been put into place. There are currently 7 million full time employees earning less than 400 euros a month!

Tax policy is known to be at the heart of the European problem and of the indebtedness of member states. How can the fact that most European countries are maintaining internal competition be explained?

Europe has refused fiscal harmonisation. The result is that there is enormous disparity between systems of taxation. In Cyprus, corporation tax is 10%. That should change with the present crisis. In Ireland corporation tax is 12.5% and in Belgium, 33.99%. These differences allow companies to declare their revenues where the tax bite is the least. Current European fiscal policy protects tax evasion. Tax havens exist within the European Union - notably the City of London - and the Eurozone, with the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg.

It is quite possible to implement measures of fiscal justice at a national level. The common belief that "being in the Eurozone it is impossible to apply major fiscal measures" is false. We are told there are no alternatives. Those who invoke these arguments are protecting the fraudsters. We can see that solutions previously considered impossible are being imagined in the "case" of Cyprus: bank deposits of over 100,000 euros are to be taxed; controls of capital movements are being put into place. I am against the plan imposed on Cyprus by the Troika because the goals are to impose global antisocial policies; but certain measures show the clear possibility of controlling capital flows and of greatly increasing tax-rates above a given level of wealth.

In spite of EU regulations, it is perfectly possible for countries to refuse the policies of the commission and impose renegotiations at the European level. Europe must be reconstructed democratically. In the meantime the left-wing governments must break ranks. If François Hollande really represented the will of the French people that elected him he would have insisted on renegotiating the European Fiscal Compact with Angela Merkel and if she refused he could have refused to vote it in. This would have prevented its adoption.

The euro crisis is clearly the result of an absence of sound political governance (lack of coherent economic, financial, fiscal and social policies). The lack of real European support for Greece in the face of its debt problems

shows the fragility of a union that is not based on solidarity. Does this euro crisis toll the bell for European solidarity? Is the dream of European federalism dead and buried?

The EU as it exists has never hinged on solidarity, unless it be in favour of the big European companies. The European governments have continually applied measures that favour them and the European banks. When it comes to helping the weaker people and the weaker economies, there is no solidarity. One could say that there is one kind of solidarity: a class solidarity, a solidarity between capitalists.

Federalism is possible but it must be constituted by the peoples. Guy Verhofstadt and Daniel Cohn-Bendit advocate a federalism imposed from above. We need a federalism that arises from the will of the people.

Federation is possible and necessary, but that implies that the solution to the European crisis should come from the base. That does not mean a withdrawal behind national frontiers, but solidarity between European peoples and a European constitution decided by the people themselves.

What must be done to make the European institutions more democratic?

The existing non democratic institutions must be taken apart and replaced by new ones, created by a peoples' constituent assembly! The legislative power (the European Parliament) is extremely weak, too much in the thrall of the Executive.

Awaiting this miracle remedy, do you have a concrete idea of how to reconcile Europe's citizens with Europe?

Within national frontiers, initiatives must be taken by the social movements and corresponding left-wing organisations towards defining common objectives. At the European level, through the Alter Summit movement, we are trying to create a maximum of convergence between citizens' movements, social movements and European trade unions [2]. It is not easy, up to now it has been too slow, but a coalition of European social movements must nevertheless be created. Relaunching the "Indignada/os" movement must be encouraged if it is possible, supporting Blockupy in Frankfurt against the ECB. [3] Also, feminist movements and actions against austerity programmes in Europe must be given all possible support

[4]. Along with this, other European initiatives must be reinforced, such as the European and Mediterranean

citizens' audits networks (ICAN) [5], the European network against the privatisation of health services [6] and the efforts to create a European anti-fascist movement [7], the "European peoples against the Troika", which organised actions in dozens of towns and cities across Europe on 1st June 2013 [8].

Europe has a purpose because...

Solidarity between the peoples is necessary and undoubtedly possible.

Europe has a purpose on condition that...

The process comes from the people. A constituent assembly of the European peoples must found a completely new Europe!

It is time to abandon the dominant ideology that has reigned for so long. There are several possible ways to resolve the crisis. The austerity measures currently applied can only make it worse. We are facing 10 to 15

years of crisis and very limited growth. Unless, that is, the social movements manage to put structural reforms into place, such as the socialisation of the banks; the consolidation of public services; the reconstruction of a Europe based on a peoples' constituent assembly; a Europe in solidarity with the rest of the World. Illegitimate public debt must also be abolished by developing initiatives of citizens' audits as is the case in Belgium today [9].

This solution presupposes that the social movements and the radical left are capable of proposing real alternatives, with a coherent programme that goes beyond neo-Keynesianism. I would be disappointed if this capitalist crisis were to achieve no more than slightly better discipline. Regulated green capitalism is not a solution to the fundamental problem of climate change. We must abolish the capitalist system.

Translated by Vickie Briault and Mike Krolkowski [10]

Nine + one remarks on Syriza after its founding congress

29 July 2013, by Stathis Kouvelakis

1. The congress of Syriza took place in a context of growing political instability following the closure of the public radio and television broadcaster (ERT) by the government of Antonis Samaras and the departure from the government of one of its three components (the party of the Democratic Left - DIMAR). The new bipartisan government of New Democracy and PASOK can now only count on a very narrow parliamentary majority (153 votes out of 300), as shown by the vote in Parliament on July 17 on the new package of budget cuts directed at the public sector. Furthermore, the scale of the public reaction to the closure of ERT has sounded the end of the relative apathy that had prevailed on the social front

since the vote on the previous Memorandum last November. The ruling bloc has incontestably emerged weakened from this confrontation. The fall of the government under popular pressure appears to be a more realistic goal than it was a few months ago. But what is sorely lacking is a strategy and tactics that would address the question head on.

The position of Syriza is in this respect at an incantatory level, marked by the gap between a rhetoric that is conflictual, but vague, and the line concretely followed at key moments of social confrontation over the recent period (strikes in the underground, the docks and secondary education aborted or broken, because of the

measures of requisition taken by the government). In each case, the leadership of Syriza has shown great caution, avoiding any objective of a powerful rise of protest. This culminated in the withdrawal of support to the teachers' strike, which was, however, approved by a majority of more than 90 per cent in exceptionally massive general assemblies.

2. By announcing the party congress in May, the leadership had only one goal in mind: to make the constitution of Syriza as a unified party the occasion to "take things in hand", aiming to both marginalize the internal opposition and stabilize a party political form that would mark a

break with decisive aspects of the political and organizational culture of the radical Left. In other words, the goal was to move quickly to a "party form" specially designed to anchor in organizational realities the line of "readjustment" that the leadership has been pursuing relentlessly since autumn 2012 - a line whose expression is the increasing blurring of the positions of Syriza (and their perception by the social sectors that have confidence in them) on key issues (cancellation of the Memoranda, debt, exit from the euro, refusal of privatizations). [11]

To do this, the party leadership imposed a forced march to the congress (with a delay of less than one month between the publication of the preparatory texts and the vote in local branches) and an agenda centred entirely on internal issues, far from strategic and programmatic preoccupations and from the imperative need to develop a programme corresponding to the demands of such a volatile conjuncture.

This introverted "agenda" was structured around three key points:

• the question of what are called the "components" with an ultimatum of two or at the maximum three months for their dissolution in the framework of the process of "unification" of Syriza [12].

• a right of tendency gutted of its substance, with the suppression of the so-called "separate lists", a roundabout way of designating the proportional representation of minorities in leading bodies.

• the method of electing the president of the party, i.e. by congress and not by the leading bodies (the central committee).

3. This internal agenda makes sense only if it is located in the wider perception of Syriza by representatives of the majority bloc and of the internal evolution that the party has undergone over the last year.

For the media and the political forces that are part of the system, the "components" and "tendencies" of Syriza, its famous "cacophony" are

code words for the radicalism of Syriza, which these "tendencies" embody, faced with a leadership (embodied by Tsipras) which represents the "realism" and the line of re-centring. The leadership, especially Tsipras, is under constant pressure from the system to "clean up" the party and to assert his authority ("Tsipras, cut off some heads" is a one of the favourite injunctions of authorized media commentators...) by getting rid of dissenting voices. Those who are particularly targeted are those who criticize the leadership from the left and are presented as obstacles to the "image" of Syriza as a "responsible party of government."

Even within Syriza, the spectacular electoral success of spring 2012 has produced a contradictory dynamic. On the one hand, there has been a significant wave of recruits (the number of members has approximately doubled in a few months and has now reached 35,000), as well as success in some areas, particularly in the workers' movement, a traditional weak point of Syriza - relative success, however, since its presence in the unions remains significantly less than that of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), which won only less than 5 per cent of the vote - about one sixth of the vote for Syriza.

But this wave also has another aspect, much more ambiguous. In a society traumatized by the economic depression and formed by decades of "partyocracy" (the "system" forged by New Democracy and PASOK, which have alternated in power since the fall of the colonels in 1974), joining a party that appears to be at the gates of power can also mean the reconstruction of a clientelist relationship, coupled with a relationship of obedience to the charismatic leader. If this phenomenon is still far from representing a majority, it nonetheless alters in what is now a significant fashion the composition of the party and essentially encourages the proliferation of "passive members", who appear only on the day of the vote for the congress and whose link to the organization is based primarily on the personal relationships they have with

one or more local cadres.

4. This phenomenon, partly spontaneous and perfectly predictable for anyone who is familiar with Greek realities, was nevertheless clearly encouraged in the name of necessary "enlargement" by the party leadership from the autumn of 2012. The choices made at that time - the absence of any real activist intervention and of a party-building strategy, the choice of congresses and national conferences organized in haste, with a bloated number of delegates, similar to that of national or federal leading bodies, the building of strong networks of a personal kind around some leading cadres (usually also parliamentarians) - inevitably lead to a "catch-all" party, as political scientists say, following Kirchheimer. In other words, an electoral party, with its internal life atrophied, mainly welded around its leader and a discourse from above, mainly addressed - through the media - to a "national audience", but always modulated in order to please the various "publics" (more "radical" and "lyrical" when speaking to the activists, more "sober" and "pragmatic" when it comes to meeting Schäuble and the IMF).

5. The most problematic aspects of the founding congress of this "new Syriza", a now unified party, arising from these profound tendencies, leading to its transformation into a "party of government" ready to run the country, are the following: a disproportionate number of voters compared to the participants in internal discussions, an unmanageable body of 3,500 delegates, no structured discussion during the first two days (the time when delegates could speak), no report on the activity of the outgoing leading bodies, an opening speech by Tsipras adapted to the demands of an electoral meeting, not an address to a deliberative body of the party.

To this was added the particularly aggressive climate towards the internal opposition (grouped in the Left Platform [13]), which culminated, on the evening of the last session of Congress, during the votes concerning the representation on the three points relating to the internal functioning on which the discussion was focused

(dissolution of the components, representation of tendencies and method of election of the president of the party). There took place shocking scenes for a conference of the radical Left (representatives of the Left Platform booed, rude gestures and insults, Tsipras applauded every time he went up to the podium, before he had even begun to speak), which led to the departure from the hall of the delegates of the Left Platform and of a significant number of delegates from the majority.

6. What is the balance sheet of this conference? From the point of view of programmatic content and strategic development, very thin or nonexistent. The documents adopted merely repeat, often word for word, the formulations adopted (again rather perfunctorily) at the national conference last November. These compromise texts, replete with convoluted and ambiguous formulations, have in any case never really been distributed or publicly supported by the majority faction of the leadership, which is always eager to provide "interpretations" in accordance with the line of "re-centring" and "realism." Thus, last December, a few days after the national conference which confirmed the position of Syriza on the immediate cancellation of the memoranda by parliamentary vote in the event of electoral victory, those responsible for economic issues, and key figures in the leadership after Tsipras, made a whole series of statements to the media to clarify that Syriza "would not act unilaterally," avoiding systematically to use the terms "cancellation" or "abrogation", replaced by references to "negotiation" with "our European partners." Tsipras himself has increasingly made "conciliatory" statements of this type, especially during his trips abroad, above all in Germany, where he met Schäuble, and in the United States, where he met with representatives of the State Department and the IMF.

7. The Left platform tried to give a political content to a virtually non-existent programmatic debate and tabled four amendments which touched on the most sensitive strategic points: the debt (questioning

the legitimacy of the debt itself, denouncing existing conventions and having recourse if necessary to cessation of payments in order to obtain its cancellation); the possibility of leaving the euro zone (a viable option that should be seriously prepared for, if, or rather when, a Syriza government finds itself, like Cyprus, facing the blackmail of the EU and the ECB); the nationalization of the banking sector as a whole, a clear commitment to cancel all ongoing privatization and nationalization under popular control of strategic sectors of the economy (telecommunications, energy, road and airport infrastructure); a strategy of alliances that reaffirms the line of a left anti-austerity government, with no opening to the "centre" or the forces of the sovereignist Right. All of these amendments were rejected, but received between one third and 40 per cent of the vote, the amendments on the debt and the euro receiving the broadest support. In this sense, we can say that on the question of the political line, the leadership was able to impose its point of view.

8. However, given the objectives that it had set, this conference represents a serious setback. The agenda in three points mentioned above and focused on the "restoration of order" within the party had a rough passage at this founding moment of the "new Syriza".

On the question of the dissolution of the components, and the ultimatum which was addressed to them, the leadership had to resort to a compromise (the wording adopted speaks of "dissolution in a reasonable time and after consultation") following on the extremely firm attitude of Manolis Glezos. Emblematic figure of the Resistance, enjoying immense prestige and stature, as befits the national hero that he is, Glezos did not merely defend the right of the components to preserve their autonomy. He attacked Tsipras in a direct and personal way and strongly rejected the model of a "presidentialist" party, thus undermining the moral and symbolic authority of the leadership and of its leader.

On the issue of minority representation, the leadership threw

its weight into the balance, carrying out what can be called a coup de force led by Tsipras in person: after proposing a system that granted by a "technical" subterfuge an automatic advantage to the majority list, the majority bloc imposed on the (minority) tendencies who wished to present themselves as such an obligation to constitute separate lists, figuring on different voting ballot papers.

The possibility that has existed up to now to choose, on a single ballot paper, a list and then to vote, within certain limits, for candidates appearing on the various lists, has been removed. As for the majority list, it is not presented as a tendency list, or an agreement between tendencies (although it is), but as the "unified list", simply an addition of individual candidates representing the "diversity of the party" as such. It was clearly intended that the minorities should appear as a "foreign body", merely tolerated, and that the majority list would be accorded a symbolic status of sole expression of the party's legitimacy.

The operation nevertheless turned against its instigators. Instead of weakening, the Left Platform has been significantly strengthened (see below), and, aided by the presence of small "independent" lists, it brought the majority list down to 67.5 per cent, seven points lower than at the national conference last November.

Finally, on the question of the election of the president by congress, the leadership was successful, but at the cost of the adoption in the party constitution of a "flexible" provision allowing each congress to freely decide how to elect the president. Unsurprisingly, this congress subsequently decided in favour of the direct election of the president. But in the vote by secret ballot, Tsipras had what can be considered a counter-performance, totaling 72 per cent of the vote (74 per cent of valid ballot papers, virtually all the blank or spoiled ballot papers expressing various forms of rejection of the procedure and/or Tsipras personally).

9. We can however consider that the main setback for the leadership was

the strengthening the Left Platform, which crossed the symbolic threshold of 30 per cent, an increase of nearly 5 percentage points compared to the national conference last November (30.16 per cent, as compared to 25.6 per cent), and this in a highly confrontational environment, entirely conceived with the aim of obtaining its marginalization. There is no doubt that the climate of intimidation faced strong resistance from some of the delegates, beyond the ranks of those who had from the start supported the positions of the platform.

The result caused a shock in the leadership, which avoided any official comment (its representatives became invisible after the announcement of the first results). The press and media reported the obvious embarrassment in the ranks of the majority, although in general, they try to go easy on Tsipras. The questioning is becoming more pressing as to the line that will be followed in the coming period, the search for compromise or further internal confrontation, this time at the risk of causing a prolonged internal crisis.

For its part, the Left Platform for the first time released a separate communiqué stating that its efforts to obtain "the radicalization and the anchoring on the left of Syriza and the unity of the whole of the radical Left were being pursued in better conditions." This is a sign that its success is seen as an encouragement to deploy its intervention in an even more visible way within the party and even beyond.

9 +1. In conclusion, we can say that the founding congress has probably created more problems than it solved, or attempted to solve. Now established as a unified party, with statutes, programmatic documents and an elected leadership, Syriza nonetheless appears as a party deeply divided over key strategic points, which are at the centre of a national and European debate. It is obvious that the confrontation between supporters of a "realistic" approach, anxious to gain power in a "cold" fashion, not to break with the European framework and to avoid confrontation with strategic sectors of the dominant forces, and those who advocate open confrontation and a

break with the present framework of the EU, goes to the heart of the questions that are posed to the radical Left in Europe today.

The essential contribution of Syriza and of the dynamic that it was able to create last spring, is to have been capable of posing in concrete terms, within the radical Left, the question of an alternative state power. It remains to be seen whether such an undertaking will be at the expense of radicality or whether it will join the long list of experiences of left governments which quickly became bogged down in the running of the system. The congress of Syriza was no doubt useful in that it has at least made it possible to formulate the terms of the problem in a way that is clearer and more easily understood by the social and political forces engaged in an emancipatory project.

July 18, 2013

Source: the French journal *Contretemps* [9+1 remarques sur Syriza après son congrès fondateur](#). Translated by *International Viewpoint*.

Beyond the Double Standard: Towards a Real Liberation Politics

28 July 2013, by **Cinzia Arruzza**

These two posters were part of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention campaign organized by the Human Resources Administration of the New York City Department of Social Services. This advertising campaign is a perfect example of the way inequalities around class, race and gender can be entrenched and covered up with a liberal discourse. The message conveyed by the campaign is first of all that you need to have money in order to have the right to have a child: if you are poor and nonetheless have a child, you are responsible for his or her future unhappiness, poverty and social failure. Secondly, there is no

mention either of social services or of abortion rights in the posters: the whole problem of teen pregnancy is reduced to a matter of individual choice, where girls are to be considered responsible for their sexual behavior. Hence, here is the kind advice provided by the authorities: finish high school, get a job, and get married before even thinking of having a child. Finally, the prominent use of children of colour in the campaign suggests the message of the campaign is fundamentally racist.

This campaign is evidence of what we might call a "double standard policy"

concerning gender and sexual issues. The substantial rights granted to women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered and queer (LGBTQ) people vary enormously according to their class position, their ethnicity, and even their location within an urban space heavily divided along class and race lines. In the state of New York same-sex marriages were introduced in July 2011. In June 2013 the governor, Andrew Cuomo, announced a Women's Equality Act that is meant to achieve pay equity, stop sexual harassment, prevent pregnancy discrimination in all workplaces, strengthen human

trafficking laws and protections for domestic violence victims, end family status discrimination and protect a woman's freedom of choice. How do we explain this pro-equity legislation alongside the shaming racist poster campaign in the subway system?

This double standard situation results from granting women and LGBTQ people formal rights without real resources for equality. The adoption of anti-harassment policies, quotas, anti-discrimination policies, legal gay marriages, and so on has opened the possibility for at least a partial emancipation of women and LGBTQ people. However, these policies have not been accompanied by changes in workplace relations, proper child care programs or other decisive interventions aimed at granting substantial social rights.

In the last decades, a predominantly middle class gay mainstream subculture emerged. This subculture has contributed to the consolidation of a gay identity focused around consumption and commodification, with commercial gay scenes continuing to grow. The recognition of gay rights has gone along with a consumerist visibility requiring in most cases at least a middle class income. Moreover, the high degree of gender-conformity of these middle class gay communities has facilitated their incorporation into the neoliberal social and sexual order. Meanwhile millions of low-income LGBTQ people in advanced capitalist countries are excluded both from the access to these patterns of consumption and from the safety and symbolic recognition attached to them.

The current economic crisis is making this double standard even worse. The dismantling of the welfare state and cuts to social spending put a heavy burden on women's shoulders again, as they are the ones who still perform most care work. While upper-middle class women can still buy their freedom and their right to a professional career by paying someone else for the care work required by their family, working-class women find themselves in a double-bind situation. On the one hand, they are forced to work, as the epoch of the "family wage" where a single income

(traditionally male) can support a whole household is over. On the other hand, they still have to take care of the children, of the elderly and of the ill, because of the absence or weakness of social services, and of the persistence of differentiated gender roles. Even the recent attack on reproductive rights in a series of countries, from the US to Italy, has differential outcomes along class lines, as working-class women have no possibility to travel abroad and pay the costs of private abortion clinics. We are, therefore, in a situation in which both having children and having an abortion are becoming a privilege, rather than a right.

Capitalism and Gender Oppression

This double standard raises important questions about the idea that has become prominent in the last few years that women's emancipation is one of the positive consequences of capitalist globalization. Indeed, the so-called "feminization" of the labor market, that is the massive employment of women in the work force in the Global South, was welcomed as the occasion for a transformation of gender roles and family relationships. Yet, in those very same countries, the current trend is now to "de-feminize" the labour market. As soon as capitalism develops and capital-intensive productive sectors grow, women are again expelled from the work force. Indeed, women's employment is still characterized by the fact that most women are employed in labour intensive sectors, where wages are lower, working conditions are worse, and the turn-over is high. Women still play the role of an "industrial reserve army:" they are cyclically employed and then expelled again from the labour market.

In addition to this, the sharp separation under capitalism between the public and private spheres, and between market and family, has historically hidden and devalued women's domestic work, and therefore women themselves. This fits perfectly well with capitalism's need to have a hierarchically-organized and

differentiated labour force: gender oppression and racism are translated into a sexual and racial division of labor, where women and racialized people are at the bottom of the hierarchy and subject to the worst working conditions.

Moreover, it is clear that in moments of crisis the cuts on social spending and the dismantling of the welfare state count on the work of women as surrogates of social services, performing the largest part of the necessary care work for the reproduction of the working class. The hierarchical family and gender relations play an ideological and political role, making deepening inequalities seem natural and contributing to the reproduction of capitalist relations and of the society as a whole.

While women have gained unprecedented formal rights under capitalism, this was due mostly to women's and workers' struggles rather than the automatic unfolding of capital's law of motion. This is why women's rights, such as reproductive rights, are never really granted in a definitive way. And it is why in the absence of struggle formal equality rights are often entirely decoupled from substantial transformations of women's material conditions of life.

Identity Politics and Neoliberalism

It has been surprising in the era of neoliberalism to see a pro-capitalist, and even right-wing, appropriation of women and gay liberation language and slogans. In recent years, some scholars have started adopting the two categories of femonationalism and homonationalism to describe processes where feminist or queer liberation language is used to support imperialist or domestic policies.

Femonationalism is in evidence when pseudo-feminist language is used to support islamophobic policies or imperialist wars. The war in Afghanistan, for example, was celebrated by its supporters as a civilizing and liberating mission in favor of the rights of Afghan women.

The so-called "veil law," passed in France in 2004, forbidding the Islamic veil and any other evident signs of religious affiliation in public schools, appealed both to secularism and women's rights in order to hide its discriminatory and islamophobic purpose.

Homonationalism involves the growing use of gay liberation slogans and concepts in order to justify anti-immigrant and islamophobic policies. In 2010 Judith Butler refused the Berlin Civil Courage Prize, in protest against the increasing commodification of Pride and its complicity with racism. She explained: "Some of the organizers explicitly made racist statements or did not dissociate themselves from them... We all have noticed that gay, bisexual, lesbian, trans and queer people can be instrumentalized by those who want to wage wars, i.e. cultural wars against migrants by means of forced islamophobia and military wars against Iraq and Afghanistan. In these times and by these means, we are recruited for nationalism and militarism. Currently, many European governments claim that our gay, lesbian, queer rights must be protected and we are made to believe that the new hatred of immigrants is necessary to protect us. Therefore we must say no to such a deal."

One of the most apparent cases of co-optation of LGBTQ people by right-wing and nationalist discourse is the pinkwashing of Israel. There gay rights are used to defend the occupation of Palestinian land on the basis that Israel is a civilized land of freedom, in contrast with the backwardness of homophobic Arab countries.

From Identity Politics to Socialist Politics

In the last fifteen years, more intellectuals and activists have started criticizing the separation of class and gender politics, which elides the consideration of capitalism from the analysis altogether. Theoretical trends

such as intersectionality, social reproduction theory, and queer Marxism insist on taking account of the class dimension in gender and sexuality. Perspectives on gender and sexuality that do not consider this dimension easily fall prey to neoliberal and even conservative co-optation. The current economic crisis, with its harsh effects on women's conditions of life, is accelerating this process. A lot of work remains to be done, however, in order to provide a non-reductionist and non-determinist account of the way gender and sexual oppression are linked to the dynamics of capitalist accumulation.

On a political level, the divorce that took place in the past between gender and class politics was not only the outcome of the more general crisis of the New Left movements, but also of the sexism of socialist and anti-capitalist organizations. Indeed, the relationship between movements based on class and those based on gender and sexuality has been a complicated one. However, it is not true that workers' movements have always been blind to gender and sexual issues and to the needs of women and LGBTQ people in their organizations. As a matter of fact, workers' movements have historically opened a political and public space where gender and sexual oppression could be finally addressed, often endorsing positions which were much more advanced than those of liberal feminism. It remains nonetheless true that socialist and anti-capitalist organizations have not always been faithful to their promise of emancipation and often tended to reproduce oppressive dynamics or to underestimate the importance of women's and LGBTQ struggles.

The separation between class and gender politics, however, is not a viable or promising alternative. The co-optation of gender and sexual liberation by neoliberal and even conservative forces should remind us that the politics of gender and sexuality risks losing its emancipatory potential when it is separated from anti-capitalism. Moreover, the divorce of gender and sexuality from class has contributed to the more general fragmentation of struggles, which has

contributed to almost three decades of social and political defeats in many countries. Finally, this divorce can contribute to the invisibility of the conditions of life, needs, and lived experience of working-class and poor women and LGBTQ people of color, for whom the separation of gender and sexuality from their class position does not make any sense.

What we need is a strong socialist, feminist and LGBTQ politics. This, however, would require some decisive steps.

First of all, it means recognizing the contribution of different strands of critique of gender and sexual oppression, including those that do not share a Marxist or socialist framework of analysis. We need to strongly reject the view of some socialist organizations that feminism is substantially in antagonism with Marxism and with socialist politics. In the same way as there is not only one "Marxism" or one "socialism", there is not only one "feminism," but rather a living and diverse field of analysis and political intervention, from which we have many things to learn.

Second, we need to deepen our analysis of the way capitalist social relations constantly produce and reproduce gender and sexual oppression. To challenge this requires truly democratic forms of organization in which people who experience different forms of oppression can organize autonomously if they so choose. We need to acknowledge that power dynamics creating sexual, gender, and race hierarchies can and do exist within left-wing organizations and must be addressed.

Finally, it requires also the political acknowledgment of the centrality of gender and sexual oppression and analysis to our critique of capitalism and to our political and social struggles. The question should not be whether class is "prior" to gender, but rather whether we can really think of the working class, of its lived experience and the way it fights, as separate from thinking about gender and sexuality.

<http://www.newsocialist.org/>

“Do not let the army fool you” - independent union leader speaks out

28 July 2013, by Fatma Ramadan

Al-Sisi's “Permission” is a Deadly Poison

My comrades, the workers of Egypt are struggling for their rights and for a better Egypt. Egypt's workers dream of freedom and social justice, they dream of work at a time when thieves who are called businessmen close down factories to pocket billions. Egypt's workers dream of fair wages under the rule of a governments that are only interested in promoting investment at the expense of workers and their rights, and even their lives. Egypt's workers dream of a better life for their children. They dream of medicine when they are sick, but they do not find it. They dream of four walls in which they can take shelter.

Since before the 25th of January and you have been demanding your rights, and your strikes and demonstrations for the same unanswered demands continued after Mubarak's overthrow. Both the Muslim Brotherhood and the military have negotiated left, right and centre, not once having in mind your demands and rights. All they have in mind is how to put out the sparks you have lit with your struggle in times of darkness, even these sparks all burned in isolation from each other.

Did not the military forcibly end your strikes in Suez, Cairo, Fayyoun, and all over Egypt ? Did not the military arrest many of you and subject you to military trials just for practising your right to organize, strike, and protest peacefully? Have they not adamantly worked to criminalize this right through legislation banning all Egyptians from organizing peaceful protests, strikes, and sit-ins?

Then came Mursi and the Muslim

Brotherhood, who followed in Mubarak's footsteps with dismissals, arrests, and smashing strikes by force. It was Mursi who sent police dogs against workers at Titan Cement in Alexandria, acting through the Minister of the Interior and his men. The same police and army officers who are right now being carried shoulder-high are killers, the killers of honest, young Egyptians. They are the authorities' weapon against us all - and always will remain so unless these institutions are cleansed.

The leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood are planning crimes against Egyptian people on a daily basis, which have caused the killing of innocent people, while the army and the police are facing these with brutal violence and murder. But let each of us remember, when do the army and police intervene? They intervene long after clashes have begun and are almost coming to an end, after blood has been spilled. Ask yourselves, why don't they prevent these crimes committed by the Muslim Brotherhood against the Egyptian people before they start? Ask yourselves, in whose interest is this continuation of fighting and blood-letting? It is in the interest of both the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood and the military together. Just as the poor are cannon-fodder for wars between states, Egypt's poor, workers and peasants, are fuel for internal war and conflict. Has not the doorman's innocent son been killed in Mokattam, and in Giza as well?

Today, we have been asked to go out and authorize Al-Sisi's killing spree, and we find all three trade union federations in agreement: the government' Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF), the Egyptian Democratic Labour Congress (EDLC), and the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU) (of

which I am a member of the Executive Committee). I debated with members of the EFITU executive committee in order to convince them not to issue a statement calling on its members and the Egyptian people to go down on Friday, confirming that the army, the police, and the people are one hand as stated in the statement. I was in the minority, winning four other votes versus nine votes, and thus all three trade union federations called for workers to join the protests on the pretext of fighting terrorism.

We are thus faced with jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. The Muslim Brotherhood committed crimes and it must be held accountable and prosecuted for them, just like police and army officers and men of the Mubarak regime must be held accountable and prosecuted for their crimes. Do not be fooled into replacing a religious dictatorship with a military dictatorship.

Workers of Egypt, be aware, for your demands are crystal clear. You want work for you and your children, you want fair pay, laws that protect your rights against the laws that the businessmen of Mubarak have designed to protect their interests against your rights. You want a state which has a real plan for development, opening new factories in order to absorb a growing labour force. You want freedom, freedom of all kinds, freedom to organize, freedom to strike. You want a country where you can live as free citizens without torture or murder. You have to specify what stands between you and these demands. Do not be fooled and let them take you to battles not your own. Do not listen to those who ask of you today and tomorrow to stop pressing for these demands and rights on the pretext of fighting terrorism.

The Red Green Alliance and the government

26 July 2013

The examples are plentiful:

- * the government made the reform of the early retirement system proposed by the right wing side of parliament a reality;

- * the government refused to restore the unemployment benefit – at a great loss for the unemployed;

- * the government sent a huge bill to the weakest groups in our society when they adopted their reform of early retirement benefits and the reduced-hour jobs.

Moreover, the government has refined the former government's zero growth in the public sector and thus has completely refused to fetch funds from the capitalist and the wealthiest citizens in our society. Thus making it impossible to strengthen our welfare system and create jobs. It has become evident that there is a deep-rooted ideological clash of interests between the government and the Red/Green Alliance and other progressive forces concerning the economic policy.

Only if a substantial pressure from outside parliament can be created through protests and mobilizations will it be possible to force through larger or more essential concessions or even induce the government to confront the bourgeois retrenchment and inequality policy. It stands to reason that large parts of the working class, including S-SF voters have been disappointed, but the disappointment has only to a very limited extent been visible in organized protests and movements. On the other hand, the two parties have reduced their voters support drastically, but that hasn't as yet made S and SF change course.

The government's cooperation with the right wing side of parliament over

a bourgeois policy has not appeased the right wings. On the contrary they have sharpened their liberal and anti-social upper-class policies. The government's great betrayal is thus that it has prepared for its own electoral defeat and paved the way for an even worse political line than the one we witnessed until 2011. No matter which course the government takes we will continue fighting to defend the working class and people on benefit and to have the bill sent to the rich. In the succeeding period of time it is first of all a matter of creating the necessary pressure from voters, movements and grassroots on the government. The Red/Green Alliance does not want to turn over the government, but it's becoming increasingly difficult to save it from committing suicide. To us the actual results are of crucial importance which means we will not give up and we will not leave any attempts undone. In parliament we will use our seats to check the bourgeois initiatives of the government and challenge it to adopt progressive reforms rather than retrogressive reforms.

We call on the government to cancel the many settlements with the bourgeois side of parliament and use the opportunity at its hand which a majority with the Red/Green Alliance is.

We will continue to vote for any improvements of ordinary people's conditions and vote against any impoverishment.

We call on the government to carry through (though far too late) with a radical break that replaces the VKO (S-SF-R) policy with a solidaric and sustainable policy. We do this, knowing that it will always mean a break with the first 1 1/2 years of governmental procedure.

A state budget is at one and the same time an accumulation of the postponing years' policy and a budget for the following year. If the necessary "break" has been carried out that year it will be visible in the budget. And the other way round, a budget without any substantial improvements reflects that the government still follows the old course. That's why the Red/Green Alliance only votes for a budget which signifies a break of that kind.

So under no circumstances will we vote for a budget that:

- * will lead to impoverishment

- * does not lead to profound changes for the better

- * summarizes a year's retrenchment policy adopted in cooperation with the right wing side of parliament.

It means that any major settlement with the right wing that leads to impoverishment will lead to enhanced demands from the Red/Green Alliance so that the budget marks a break with the government's policy so far. If these conditions are met, the Red/Green Alliance can vote for the budget. The final evaluation of whether or not the Red/Green Alliance votes for the budget will furthermore depend on our political and strategic assessment of the current situation.

For instance, the following aspects should be part of that analysis:

- * Will our vote for the budget contribute to popular movements' possibility to create mobilizations and commitment?

- * Will our vote for the budget increase the Danish populations' support to and trust in a progressive socialist policy?

No matter what, a vote for the budget

is not the same as support for, acceptance of or consent to the anti-social settlements that the government has made with the right wings during the preceding year. The Red/Green Alliance will whether or not it votes for the budget, continue to fight for a withdrawal of anti-social impoverishments by the right wing and the government. Taking these guidelines as our starting point the

Red/Green Alliance will at an early stage present our view of what the 2014 budget should contain and we will encourage grassroots and movements to formulate their demands for the budget.

The Red/Green Alliance does not expect the other parties to join our budget as a whole. We do not demand

that all parts of the Red/Green Alliance's budget become part of a possible settlement. But our entire party - the national executive, members of parliament and the local sections - will make it very clear to the public and the government parties that as a minimum the abovementioned conditions must be met, if the Red/Green Alliance is to vote for the budget.

A glimpse of the discussions within the Red-Green Alliance

26 July 2013, by **Michael Voss**

After the vote of the 2013 budget by Enhedslisten/RGA parliamentarians inside the party an discussion start. You write that this decision was an important mistake. The RGA national conference in April adopted an resolution on the RGA and the government. Could you explain the differences in the RGA discussion and on what this resolution permitted to avoid these type of mistakes in the future?

The negotiations of the 2013 budget between the government and the RGA started in the autumn of 2012. At that time the majority of the working class quite clearly wanted important changes to the rules of unemployment benefit. Just before losing the last elections the openly right government made an agreement with the centre-liberal party about serious cutbacks in unemployment benefit. After the elections of 2011 the centre-liberal party made a governmental coalition with the two traditional reformist workers parties, and they made their governmental partners accept to carry through these cutbacks. They were implemented from January 2013.

During the autumn of 2012 the disastrous effects for tens of thousands of unemployed workers became clear for those involved and for the public as such. Protests

evolved from workers, trade unions and from the rank and file of the reformist workers parties, the Social Democratic Party and the Socialist People's Party, even from parts of the centre-liberal party.

For the RGA it was a central issue in public campaigning, in mobilising and in the negotiations about the national budget.

In the end, the RGA accepted a budget with a very limited compensatory measures to relieve the situation for some of the unemployed workers hit by the cutbacks. In some way this undermined the attempts to further build a movement on this issue. That is one reason why the RGA should have refused to vote for the budget.

Secondly the overall impact of the budget had so few and so limited positive elements that it could not at all offset the negative effects of a number of neoliberal measures that the government had decided in 2012 with the support of the right parties. This overall situation was predicted in a resolution by the 2010 National Convention of the RGA stipulating among other things that the RGA could only vote for a budget with significant improvements, and that we could not vote for a budget that primarily summarized neoliberal measures adopted during the

preceding year.

In the opinion of the Danish section a broad layer of the working class would have understood and accepted if the RGA had refused to vote for the 2013 budget, even if the result would be the downfall of the government, especially because the budget did not solve the unemployment benefit problem.

After the vote on the 2013 budget the government made a number of new neoliberal agreements with parties of the right, cutting down on social welfare measures and redistributing in favor of the rich and the ruling class. It was seen by everybody in Denmark as an important rightwing shift by the governmental parties.

This development gave reasons to second thoughts among a lot of RGA-members who had favored the 2013-budget vote, even in the leadership. More and more often you could hear MP's and members of the National Leadership say that it is now extremely unlikely that the RGA can vote for the 2014 budget.

In this situation fifty members of the RGA made a proposal for the 2013 National Convention with the aim of repeating and clarifying the 2010 conditions for voting for a budget. The most important change was that it was made completely clear that the RGA

can only vote for a budget which implies a break with the political course of the policies of government in its' first two years.

In the pre-convention debate a proposal for changes in the original resolution "of the 50" was made that would give the National Leadership (NL) and the MP group the freedom to accept a budget as they liked. Only a few delegates voted for that.

A group of leading members together with other members made another proposal for change. These people had all been supporting the vote for the 2013-budget. Their proposal was not very clear in its consequences. Would these additional paragraphs make it possible for the NL to accept a budget if they judge that such a vote would strengthen working class mobilization even if the budget would not meet the original conditions. Or was it an additional condition for a budget vote, making it even more difficult to vote for the budget?

A couple of the leading members behind the proposal stated both in writing and at the convention that it was an extra condition. At the convention the resolution of the "the 50", including the change of the leading group was carried by a solid majority.

This was in my opinion a positive outcome. But the differences still exist, and no NC decision will remove some real differences. No sooner had the NC ended before a debate erupted on what "a break" with the governmental course implies concretely, only illustrating that no NC resolution can work as an Answer Book on how to vote on all possible versions of a national budget.

This resolution criticised the the governemental policy, but said at the same time *Enhedslisten* does not want to overthrow the government, but it gets harder and harder to save it from committing suicide. The S-SF-R government has not parliamentarian majority. If RGA dont vote the budget, the right wing could decide (for their own reasons) to also vote against. It will overthrow the government. So what then does not want to

overthrow the government ?

This has been very much debated in the RGA and even inside the SAP. In my opinion nothing is gained for the working class or for the left wing by actively setting the target of overthrowing the government by parliamentary means or by accomplishing this target. This is also the official position of the RGA, and it is supported by the Danish section. This is not based on a principle, but it is based on the evaluation of the class struggle and of the political parliamentary situation.

At the moment a huge disappointment and dissatisfaction with the government exists among a big section of those who voted for the parties of the government. They have almost continuously lost support in opinion polls since the elections. This has created the historically almost bizarre situation of no more than one percent difference in the support of the Social Democratic Party and the RGA (ca. 14 and ca. 13 percent) while the Socialist Peoples' Party is down to 3-4 percent.

But it is not a result of big mobilizations, and the right parties have gained as much voters from the governmental parties as has the RGA. In this situation, actively overthrowing the government would not lead to a more left wing government but to return to government of the right parties. At the same time the RGA would risk cutting the links to the rank and file of the reformist parties and to those who still would vote for them. They are critical to their own parties but they do not want to overthrow the government.

On the other hand the RGA should not and will not support neoliberal policies in order to save the government. By tying themselves to the right parties and to the neoliberal agenda the government itself is endangering its own future. They put their lives in the hands of the right parties who will cut their throat at the right moment, and the governmental parties act in a way that make it less and less likely that they can win the next election.

In that sense the government is in the process of a long drawn suicide. The

RGA cannot and will not prevent that suicide by guaranteeing a vote for their policies or their budget.

Some formulations in the adopted resolution underline - as the RGA did it in the resolution adopted in 2010 - conditions must be realise to permit the RGA to vote the financial law.

What is the signification of the new formulations and are they more clear that 2010 resolution, which was not sufficient to avoid the mistakes of last year ?

The words of the 2013 resolution are not qualitatively different from the 2010 resolution. For the members behind the proposal - among whom were a number of SAP members - one aim was to counter the argument that the 2010-resolution was passed in a different period for a situation that could not have been predicted and for that reason was not relevant anymore.

Secondly the 2013 resolution makes it unequivocally clear that a budget must break with the policies of this government, while the 2010 resolution - passed before the elections and the change of government in 2011 - called for a break with the policies of the right government of 2001-2011.

The resolution is one way to define RGA policies - but a resolution can never guarantee that the NL and the MPs group will not make a wrong decision. Unless you want to decide once and for all that you always support a budget of a "left" government - or if you want to decide once and for alt that you can never vote for national budget in a capitalist society.

As we have explained in former articles, the SAP agrees with the vast majority of the RGA that voting for a national budget is not by itself wrong. It is a part of united front approach to make demands for the national budget, to try to mobilize working class pressure on the government for social, environmental, pro-working class measures in the national budget.

This will not be possible if an RGA vote for the budget is not an option. On the other is not possible if the RGA are not clear on the conditions for

voting for a budget. That is why members of the SAP have been in the forefront of defining these conditions both in 2010 and 2013.

But the political discussions and the political struggle inside the RGA will of course continue among the membership, inside the MP-group and in the NL. According to RGA statutes the MP-group need a majority vote in the NL to vote for the budget.

The resolution said that "Large sections of the working class, including S-SF voters are good reasons been disappointed, but the disappointment is only limited translate into organized protests and movements". But also : "The final assessment of whether the Alliance should vote for a budget, will be influenced by current political and strategic evaluation, in which the following aspects must be included:

Will participation in a budget contribute to popular movements to create mobilization and engagement?

Will participation in the budget increase public support for and

confidence in a progressive socialist policies?"

Could you explain the discussion on this questions and said in why RGA comrades imagine that the vote of the budget could "contribute to popular movements to create mobilization and engagement" and "increase public support for and confidence in a progressive socialist policies" ?

This is some of the paragraphs that were added to the original resolution of "the 50" on a proposal by a group of leading members of the RGA. As I explained there was some confusion to the actual implications of these paragraphs.

The line of thought is that the working class needs partial victories to build its self confidence and not to lose faith in political action or even in just voting left. If a number of improvements and pro-working class measures are included in the national budget it could have this effect. Especially if the inclusion of these measures are seen as the result of

some mobilizations or at least popular pressure on the governments.

This is not wrong - in my opinion. But in the case of the 2013 budget it seems clear to me that the RGA majority grossly overestimated the positive effects in this sense by the very few and small improvements in the budget. This was made even worse because they did not account for the disappointing effect because the unemployment benefit was not changed for real.

In addition to that, the majority underestimates the importance of showing a real political alternative to the two neoliberal strands of the respectively the right and the present government. By voting for a budget that only make minor changes to the overall neoliberal course the risk is very big that the RGA is seen as just a part - although critical part - of the governmental bloc.

This constitutes a real tactical dilemma. In the situation of the 2013 budget the RGA majority did not handle that dilemma very well - as is has happened in other situations.

Report on the international situation

24 July 2013, by **François Sabado**

Fourth International
Report on the international situation

François Sabado

The last few days have been marked by the tremendous uprisings of the Turkish and Brazilian youth. We must also add the movement in Bosnia, started around the defence of the right of babies to have an identity. These social and political mobilizations are part of a movement of social and political resistance against austerity, inequality, attacks on democratic freedoms. Whether it is the defence of a park, the reaction to the rising cost of transport or the defence of democratic rights, these movements also have their specificity.

They are movements that are springing up, in any case for Turkey and Brazil, in emerging countries that previously were not affected by the crisis. This gives these movements a whiff of May 68, with a strong mobilization of youth relayed by the mobilization of sectors of the labour movement.

In Brazil the austerity measures indicate perhaps the premises of the exhaustion of the "Brazilian model". But the mainspring of these movements is precisely the contradiction between some growth - although it has slowed in Brazil - and glaring inequalities. In Brazil, it is the tension between the amounts spent on the next "Mundial" and budget cuts

that affect health, education and housing.

In Turkey it is the opposition between socio-economic growth and the oppressive regime that the Erdogan government wants to impose. It is too early to draw any lessons from these events, but new political generations are moving into action and that is of capital importance for the situation in these countries.

We will highlight five questions: the economic conjuncture; new tensions in Europe; the elements of political crisis in Europe; the latest information on social movements; and the latest information on the possibilities of political regroupment.

1. The economic conjuncture

a) The recession or quasi-recession in Europe is confirmed: -0.2 per cent on average, 0.1 per cent in Germany, 0.2 per cent in France.

b) This is the sixth consecutive quarter of contraction in economic activity in Europe, the longest recessionary period in the history of Economic and Monetary Union in Europe. Industrial overcapacity, particularly in sectors such as automobiles, is reaching alarming proportions, leading to new plans for the liquidation of factories and jobs.

c) The easing of tensions on the financial markets does not mean that the European economies are immune to new banking crises. Some large international banks have even reconstructed the mechanics that led to "toxic" financial products; the Cyprus crisis shows that rebounds of these banking and financial crises are always possible.

d) As a result the double pressure of tendencies to overproduction in key industrial sectors and in the financial markets is leading the ruling classes and governments to make the austerity policies harsher: mass unemployment, blocking or reducing wages, further reducing social budgets, attacks against social security and the labour code (see the agreement in Italy between the employers' organization Confindustria and the CGIL, against collective bargaining agreements), postponing the retirement age and longer duration of pension contributions. Gradually plans for the liquidation of pension systems are being put in place. In the last few years and the last few months the outlines of a reconfiguration of social relations in Europe are taking shape: The "social model" really is being liquidated. This austerity is endless.

2. New tensions in Europe

The effects of the economic crisis combined with the type of European construction have changed intra-European relations over the past five years. The different zones of Europe, Germany and its satellites in the North, Southern Europe (Greece, Spain, Portugal) - and occupying an intermediate position, France and Italy - have crystallized even further. As for Eastern Europe and the Balkans, some of these countries which are part of the EU - Poland, the Baltic States, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia - are part of a "second circle" of satellites of Germany (in the sense of submission/integration and not, like Sweden and Denmark, only integration); but probably not Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia, whose economies are also in the orbit of France and Italy and therefore closer to the "South" or to a "second circle" of the South. Beyond public pronouncements on the need for unity and cooperation, for a European economic government, a new balance of power has been established, dominated by the German bourgeoisie. The strong capacity for productivity, technological innovation, research, development, the density of a network of internationally successful small and medium-sized companies have consolidated the place of Germany in this competition.

But it is especially the neoliberal restructuring of its labour market and of its productive organization that has given it a certain advantage. The Hartz-Schröder reforms have impoverished 20 to 25 per cent of the active population and the movements of relocation eastward, with a policy of social dumping, have amplified the differences between Germany and the other countries. This is what led Oskar Lafontaine, former chairman of the SPD (German Social Democracy) and founder of Die Linke (left party in Germany), a supporter of capitalist Europe, to declare on April 30, 2013 that "the Germans have not yet realized that driven by the economic crisis, the Southern Europeans - including France - are likely to be forced eventually to revolt against German hegemony", and to advocate an "exit from the euro."

These policies of "austerity without

end" are not only defended by German capitalism - supported by the Christian Democracy of Angela Merkel and the SPD - they basically meet the demands of profitability of capital dominated by the financialisation of the global economy. The different European capitalisms, the different European ruling classes, the different European governments which are in the service of the globalized system, can only respond to the internal logic of this system: to achieve the maximum rate of profit. And François Hollande, "the boss of the Republic," fits completely into this logic: to deviate from it would involve a confrontation with capital that is totally foreign to the genes of social liberalism.

The problem is the social and political risks of such a historical regression and of internal cracks in the European Union, but the ruling classes continue in the same way as long as they are accumulating profits and earnings and they dominate the relationship of social forces. Until when?

These changes in the internal relations in Europe lead us to clarify our orientation towards capitalist Europe, combining anti-austerity emergency plans on the national level and a social and democratic European perspective, breaking with the European Union, initiating the construction of new relations in Europe, at the service of the workers and the peoples. But as soon as a government engaged in the serious implementation of such a programme, it would clash with the ruling classes, it would be faced with the demands of financial markets and the dictates of the European Union. There is an interconnection, but the rhythms are uneven, the crises and the changes in the relationships of forces are non-simultaneous, the histories and trajectories of each country are specific. In this case, every people and every government that begins to break with the logic of capitalist Europe must "protect its experience," every revolutionary process must protect its achievements.

It is with this method that we must treat the question of exit from the euro, which is being raised by a part of the radical Left. As the crisis deepens, and as social regression is

identified with the EU and the euro, we understand the growing popular feeling to reject the euro and Europe. However this is to pose the problem upside down, especially if the exit from the euro takes place in an economy that remains capitalist, and is therefore tantamount to a massive devaluation which would be another form of austerity against the peoples. It is no accident that the National Front in France (and other reactionary formations in Europe) have come out against the euro.

Far from choosing to fall back on the national framework, anti-capitalist forces must stay the course: a Europe at the service of the people and workers. But we must not close our eyes to the fact that there is an insurmountable contradiction between the type of construction of the EU and the euro, and the implementation of an anti-austerity programme. That is why we have never shared the conceptions of "reform" or "reorientation" of the EU. When the Troika launches an ultimatum to the Greek people, "either you accept the memorandum (austerity policies) and you stay in the euro, or you reject the memorandum and you get out of the euro," it is necessary to get out of this trap, and we fully understand the slogan launched by SYRIZA in Greece "no sacrifices for the euro!" And so, prepare for conflict, for confrontation.

It is not for an anti-austerity government to opt to leave the euro, which is its responsibility, what is necessary is to go right to the end in refusing austerity and thus prepare the population to break with the logic of capitalism. It is for the European Union to decide to expel any country - which in legal terms is not so easy - that does not apply its plans. And if the EU goes as far as that, it is the responsibility of a workers' government to face up to the crisis, to draw all the consequences of the break (and of course, to be prepared).

3. The elements of political crisis

a) The present moment is a combination of all the crises, economic, social, and political.

Neoliberal capitalism in crisis tends to undermine democracy and to develop authoritarian measures at the institutional level. The closure of the Greek public television is a good example of the attacks against democracy: people even talked of a "coup." Already the subordination of the governments of Southern Europe to the regime of the Troika (EU, IMF, ECB), and to the power of the financial markets and the big banks has marked the change. The ruling classes are showing that they are willing to question democratic rights and freedoms in order to impose their "austerity diktats."

b) The crisis is also aggravating the crisis of political representation. The social, political and electoral bases of the traditional parties are being destabilized and eroded. Italy is obliged to establish a grand coalition bringing together Bersani, Letta and Berlusconi in order to address the great instability caused by the 8 million votes won by Beppe Grillo and the millions of votes lost by the Right, the centre-right and the centre-left. The inconsistency of the movement of Beppe Grillo after only a few months in parliament clearly shows the depth of the crisis. In Germany, the polls are also for the moment predicting election results that will lead to a grand coalition between the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats.

c) In this situation of crisis, the ruling parties are regularly rejected, but in a movement that reinforces the Right and the parties of the extreme Right. Thus, we had demonstrations in France of hundreds of thousands of people against same-sex marriage. This issue has awakened an old Catholic France, reactionary, anti-Dreyfusard, which has existed for decades in the country, but has reappeared on this theme, encouraged by a general climate where the Left is demobilized and demoralized by the policies of the Socialists. It should also be noted that in the wake of the mass mobilization of a radical Right, which also partially escapes from control by the parties of the traditional Right, we are seeing the activism of extreme right-wing groups which attack leftists and antifascist activists.

d) In France, the political and moral

crisis is enormous. The policies of the Socialist Party are overwhelmingly rejected. We thought that the fate of the Greek PASOK - a total collapse - was a Greek singularity and social democracy could weaken but not collapse to that point. When we analyze the recent by-elections in France, we cannot rule out this type of collapse for the PS. The PS lost thousands of voters in these elections. It even failed to get into the second round of the elections. If current trends continue, the situation may be catastrophic for the PS in the upcoming municipal and European elections in 2014. But what is more worrying in terms of the political and electoral relationships of forces is that this collapse of the PS benefits the Right, but especially the National Front, which has now become the centre of gravity of French political life. Even though there is not, at this stage, a significant fraction of the ruling classes behind the FN - they are with globalized capitalism - we cannot rule out a political recomposition on the right, with a traditional Right that is broken: sectors that make deals with the National Front and others that turn towards a broad reconstruction of the Left with the centre. The relative autonomy of the factors of the political crisis may at some point lead the country into a critical situation.

4. New movements in emerging and limits of social mobilizations in the countries in crisis

We have to distinguish between the new mobilizations that have arisen in so-called emerging countries and the countries in crisis. We must follow precisely the dynamic forms and content of the mobilizations in Turkey and Brazil. These mobilizations start from attacks on the social and democratic levels which give these movements a whiff of May 68. The emerging countries are in their own way affected by the crisis, but in a

unique way and with a material position (relative to the state of these societies) that is more favourable than in the countries of crisis. In Europe, we should note the days of action and demonstrations in Spain and Portugal. On June 27, Portugal is preparing for another one-day general strike. Note also the rebound of social and democratic mobilizations in Greece after the closure of ERT (public television). Despite a difficult situation for social mobilization in Greece, after 29 days of nationwide strikes, the popular movement is still capable of resisting another attack. In terms of democratic resistance partial victories can be won, but on the socio-economic level, the struggles are not able to block the layoffs, the freezing or reduction of wages, the loss of thousands of jobs in the public sector, the cuts in social spending [14]. In short, austerity is continuing and getting worse. The days of coordinated mobilization on a European scale have marked the situation on their level, but they do not constitute references for workers and young people in each country. New attacks are being developed, including a new reform of the Socialist government, which is continuing and accentuating the policies of the Right, and also a draft European directive, which imposes competition in the service sector, including health, social security, pensions, social protection ... We must follow and intervene as actively as possible in these social movements, pending a partial upturn in the economic conjuncture.

5. News of the

Revolutionary democratic: Israel's new workers' union

24 July 2013

It is workers' day - and yet a working day in Israel. What does May Day mean in Israel and what

radical and revolutionary Left

The relationships of political forces are unfavorable to the revolutionary Left.

Syriza remains the reference for a good part of the radical Left in Europe. Its convention in July will be a test for measuring its ability to relaunch an anti-austerity programme and to withstand the enormous pressures of the ruling classes and the European Union.

In Spain, the United Left, dominated by the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), maintains an audience that the polls confer on it, by combining actions against austerity and institutional realism, such as in Andalusia, where it confirms its participation in government with the PSOE. In the Spanish state, in Catalonia as also in the Basque Country and Galicia, it is the radical nationalism of the CUP, Sortu and ANOVA which is central to building a political alternative on the left of the Left. The comrades of Izquierda anticapitalista have recently taken part in meetings to build an "anti-capitalist alternative from below." These meetings have involved activists of the radical sectors of the United Left, trade unionists, activists in various associations and militants of the revolutionary Left. These meetings, in cities across the country, are opening up new areas of debate among activists. They are confronted, to turn these meetings into a sustainable framework for anti-

capitalist alternative, with the policy of the United Left, which remains dominated by institutional issues.

In France, the recent elections have not benefited the Left Front. It is the National Front that is gaining from the collapse of the PS. The Left Front called a demonstration of tens of thousands of people against the austerity policies, which the NPA supported, but the mobilization on the side of the radical Left is not at present strong enough to change the balance of forces. We will have to wait until the next municipal and European elections to see if, faced with the rise of the FN, the radical Left can also make its mark on the situation.

Finally, it should be noted that there are some interesting initiatives concerning regroupment of revolutionaries in Britain, involving activists of Socialist Resistance, the Anticapitalist Initiative and forces coming from the crisis of the SWP. These activists are also involved in initiatives around the appeal of Ken Loach for a new anticapitalist party.

In Germany, a meeting of anticapitalist regroupment was held on the initiative of a series of currents, including the members of the Fourth International in the country, with Olivier Besancenot and Charles André Udry.

We should also note the initiatives in Belgium, more precisely in Wallonia, to discuss the possibility of bringing together anti-austerity trade unionists to assess the possibilities for a new party based on these groups of trade-union activists.

is the situation of workers in the country?

May Day in Israel has some unique traits: It does not necessarily carry very positive connotations for workers

here. The 1st of May is partly associated with a political agenda. The main reason is historical: For its first 30 years, the State of Israel was ruled by the Labour Party. Labour took the support of workers for granted. May Day represented the monopolisation of power by the party.

When Labour lost power for the first time in 1977, the country took an about-turn. Ever since, the political mainstream agenda follows a vision of idealised capitalism, looking up to America. A massive campaign of privatisations changed the country, and traditional pride in the social democratic foundations of society vanished. Workers' Day gained another negative connotation.

Israel traditionally only had one trade union, the Histadrut, very close to the state and the Labour Party. Membership was basically forced on the workers, as receiving social services was dependent on being a union-member. When social services were drastically downscaled with privatisation, membership declined. Today only 25 percent of workers in Israel are organized, compared to 75 percent in the mid-1990s.

Koach LaOvdim breaks with the tradition of a state-union, the Histadrut. How did Koach LaOvdim develop and what characterises the union?

Histadrut was not the only trade union in Israel, technically speaking. A second union was founded as early as 75 years ago, associated with the right-wing Likud party. That was perhaps the only union in the world with a nationalist agenda, developed in response to the Histadrut. Really it was not very effective as it disagreed with strikes and thus prevented true pressure from workers.

Koach LaOvdim was founded only six years ago. It is the first and only organization that truly competes with the Histadrut, as it offers workers a real alternative. It was founded by social leaders, some from academia, some from the field. Some of them had

made their own experiences working in more precarious jobs where – typical for Israel – they had no chance whatsoever of organizing for their rights and fair pay. They wanted to create a meaningful alternative to the complacent Histadrut.

What is alternative about Koach LaOvdim? Most importantly, it is the first union in Israel that is democratic. It stresses that workers must have their say in all major decisions concerning their working conditions, including decisions to strike, over collective agreements and so forth. In the Histadrut, even basic workers' participation was not given. We did not invent the democratic model, of course, but orient ourselves towards the models of northern Europe, where participatory unions are the norm.

The democratic set-up seems very basic, but for Israel it's a novelty. What is amazing is that Histadrut had to acknowledge the difference. They, too, start seeing things differently.

The new government has just presented its proposal for a reformed social budget. How will workers be affected?

Unfortunately, the new budget is not at all social. They use social as a slogan, and they do verbally acknowledge the social protests [of summer 2011], but in fact they do not intend to change anything to the more social. Quite the opposite: It was recently reported that the prime minister is attempting to issue legislation reducing the possibility for strikes and limiting the labour courts. He is thus seeking to restrict union work.

There is a huge gap between the new government's slogans and the reality of policy. The left has to be alerted to this: Parties, unions should be prepared to defend their rights.

Israel's workers come from very different, very polarised social groups. How does Koach LaOvdim cope with such vast differences?

It is always amazing to see that mutual goals help in making people work side by side. We recently worked with kindergarten teachers, for example, who in Israel really come from very different social groupings: Jewish religious, Arab, new immigrants, Bedouin. When it came to organizing them for better working conditions, people came together, joined forces, and backgrounds did not play such a big role anymore. Overcoming difference usually starts in the field: You work with the groups involved and then bring people together.

Koach LaOvdim does, I have to say, give special consideration to such issues and actively works on them. We are always careful to respect each group's respective needs. And we do pay attention to make sure that all groups are represented in the leadership. That is action in very practical terms: Translating all relevant documents into Arabic, for example.

What is Koach LaOvdim's relation to the Histadrut today?

Officially, Histadrut has never acknowledged our existence: In interviews, officials never mention our name. Unofficially, of course they feel our presence, as competition. In several cases they did their best to pull workers away from our actions, even cooperating with management. We for our part try our best to prevent confusion: Workers' organisation should be clear and not mixed up between Koach LaOvdim and Histadrut.

A success: Histadrut has become a bit more democratic following our model. Union veterans, for example, now know they can demand a little more say in the process before accepting agreements for wages, for example. More engagement does not happen on a daily basis, but the atmosphere in a wider sense has changed.

Thank you very much for this interview, Yaniv Bar Ilan.

They want us poor, silenced and straight

24 July 2013, by **Esther Vivas**

Last week the Government proposed to the Spanish regional governments that they veto, within the public health system, assisted reproductive treatment (artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization) to lesbians and single women. A measure that threatens equal access to public services and discriminates against those who do not conform to the strict hetero 'standard'. If you are female, poor, lesbian, or you are single, you are forbidden to get pregnant. For the PP, without men there must be no children. In this way, the Right imposes its family archetype: a straight couple.

We are facing a government that is shocked that two women can be mothers, that two men can be fathers, that a lone woman may have daughters and sons, but it does not feel the slightest shame in pursuing policies that lead to hunger, unemployment and evictions. It is the double standard of those who do not have any principles. Who are only obedient to the doctrine of capitalism and patriarchy.

Yesterday in a feminist protest outside the Ministry of Health in Madrid, called precisely to condemn this measure, the response was repression. This is a government that pursues and criminalises those who refuse to be silent. The 'politics of the truncheon

is the other side of coin of their 'politics of cuts'.

Here's another example. The Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality plans to leave out of official statistics the abuse of women who, despite being attacked, do not visit the hospital or whose hospital stay is less than 24 hours. Which means the majority of cases will remain hidden. Could it be that the figures are getting out of control?

In the first quarter of 2013, 1,100 women per month signalled injuries when reporting attacks by men, according to the Observatory for Gender Violence of the General Council of the Judiciary. This, however, represents a minority of cases. In 2012, according to the same organisation, in only 11% of the 128,000 complaints for abuse did women notify that they had been injured. For some, it seems, it is better to hide or disguise the reality, rather than fight it.

And to all of this must be added the offensive by Minister Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón to change the already limited abortion law, turning the clock back to the era of 'the caves'. A change that, in the words of the minister, will take place in the next three months. The future law, everything seems to indicate, will be more restrictive than that of 1985,

only allowing pregnancy to be terminated in certain, very limited circumstances.

Among the cases that are being earmarked for removal from the current law, is the malformation of the fetus. According Gallardón, the reform aims to 'increase the protection of the quintessential right of a women: that of motherhood.' And I wonder: Motherhood in whose hands? Women or the State?

In short, this is an attempt by the PP to take control over, and legislate about our body. These measures ultimately add up to a political solution to the crisis that sees women returning to the home. When cutting public services such as health, welfare, social services, there will be a whole area of care work, invisible, undervalued, but essential, that will end up being done, again, by women. It is us who, above all, will bear the burden of the cuts to the welfare state.

We face a right-wing government that is sexist and homophobic. The response to this can only be at once left-wing (not talk, but action on the streets) and feminist, in defence of sexual freedoms.

Translation by Revolting Europe

<http://esthervivas.com/english/>

David and Goliath : The story of farm workers and farm bosses in the Breede River Valley

22 July 2013, by **Mercia Andrews**

In a corner under a tree stood a few farm workers' representatives, leaders from the Mawubuye Land Rights Movement, union officials from the Commercial Stevedoring Agricultural & Allied Workers Union (CSAAWU) and NGO representatives from the Coalition for Farm Worker's Solidarity. Most farm workers present had walked to the meeting; others had hiked lifts, and one or two arrived on the back of bakkies belonging to their bosses.

Each group was engrossed in conversation, preparing for the meeting. The divisions between the two groups were stark. The farmers, their lawyers and consultants were all white South Africans. The union representatives, farmworkers and the coalition representatives were all, barring one, black South Africans. It was a scene that told the story of the rural Western Cape. It told the story of how little South Africa had changed. It told the story of who owns land and who works on the farms to produce the wealth of the agricultural sector.

The farm worker uprising of the past five months held many lessons for CSAAWU, Mawubuye and those who are in solidarity with struggles of the farm workers and rural poor. The key lesson has been the ongoing refusal of the farmers to negotiate with the unions or the farm workers' committees. Throughout these five months, we heard the farmers' organisations, such as Agri-SA, say that they had no mandate to speak to the unions or negotiate on behalf of their members. Farmers refused to speak to workers' committees except to threaten workers. The farm workers' strike is a clear indication of how farmers have used the lack of bargaining councils in their favour, and how this lack undermines marginalised workers. Our recent experience with farmers from the Langeberg valley is testimony to this.

The meeting between farmers, farm workers and their representatives on the 6 March was the first of its kind. It was a direct outflow of the

farmworkers' strike and the protests that started in De Doorns in November 2012. CSAAWU, a small, independent farmworkers' union operating in the Breede River Valley, the Overberg and Kannaland, had, during the strike, invited farmers to negotiate on the farmworkers' demands for a living wage and decent living and working conditions. On most farms where the union was present, the farmers refused to negotiate.

Despite a proposal put forward by Agri-SA that there should be 'farm-to-farm' negotiations, when Mawubuye activists went to deliver letters requesting meetings with the farmers, they had to be escorted to the farms by the police because it was often difficult to enter farms and speak to workers. Unions are consistently barred from entering farms on the grounds that they are private property; workers are consistently victimised and targeted when they join unions.

This was the background to the gathering on 6 March. From the outset, the meeting was tense and polarised. After the CCMA's introduction, the union outlined the challenges facing the organisation and the right to unionise farm workers. The union referred to the strike as an indication that conditions of abuse and exploitation in rural areas cannot continue and stated that the proposals for farm-to-farm negotiations had failed. These experiences were the reasons for the request that farmers consider agreeing to a framework that could facilitate collective bargaining around problems farmworkers experienced.

Farmers insisted that they only wanted to discuss labour relations, and had no interest in 'politics' and 'emotive issues'. They refused to address the intimidation of workers or the denial of trade union access to farms, and were adamant that they had no interest in collective bargaining. Their main argument was that CSAAWU did not have enough representation on the farms in the

region to bargain on behalf of workers. Many of the consultants and lawyers present indicated that CSAAWU had no mandate to change the present system for negotiating wages; one of the lawyers even said: 'The right to bargain is not automatic; all parties have to agree'. There was complete denial of the unequal power between farmers and workers, and of the abusive working conditions. One farmer from Robertson said, 'I met with the workers on my farm and explained that I could not afford to pay the R150,00 per day. I offered them R85,00 per day. They accepted this. Everyone on the farm is happy and satisfied.'

This meeting with farmers, their consultants and lawyers is indicative of the inequality in the agricultural sector. Farm and seasonal workers will remain marginalised and unable to access their rights and a living wage unless power relations on the farms are challenged and structurally changed.

Already farm workers are being denied the victory and the gains made in the recent farmworkers' strike: the Department of Labour as well as Business Day (8 March) report that over 10% of farmers (employing nearly 75,000 workers) have applied for an exemption from the new minimum wage of R105,00 per day. Farmers are also increasing rent and electricity for workers living on the farms and threatening evictions and retrenchments.

The new minimum wage of R105, 00 per day, the right to organise, the right to join a union, the freedom of association, and to a guaranteed minimum wage, were hard won rights in this country that must be defended by strong workers' organisations on the farms and in rural towns.

18 April 2013

Mercia Andrews is a land rights activist and a member of the Democratic Left Front. She was very active in the recent farmworkers' uprising.

COSATU's history: coming full circle

22 July 2013, by **Amandla!**

Amandla!: What do you make of what is happening in COSATU [15]

DH: I think what we are seeing is a direct result of the decisive victory of the Zuma-SACP faction at the December ANC Congress in Mangaung [16] The SACP essentially triumphed at Mangaung, and now has more people in the ANC's NEC, government and Cabinet than ever before. They are on the offensive to take out any significant opposing voices in the Alliance. Julius Malema, the ANCYL NEC, and the Limpopo NEC are already history. Now they are coming for the biggest thorn in their sides, which has always been Vavi and the independent trade union or worker views that he reflects.

A: Do you think there is any truth in the allegations against Vavi ?

DH: There are currently three commissions investigating Vavi on various allegations, including that he might be anti-ANC. I can't imagine on what grounds they can even consider such a charge within COSATU, which is meant to be organizationally independent of the ANC. My own feeling is that this is a carefully planned and orchestrated attack by the SACP and its allies in COSATU to try and finish him off once and for all, or at the very least tame him. They are proceeding on the basis that if they throw enough mud at him in the public arena, some will stick. It is an old tactic and one that the SACP are masters of. Whether they succeed or not will depend on the balance of forces within COSATU's leadership structures, and whether the forces within COSATU who support Vavi are prepared to fight back. It is not out of the question that this schism ends up as some kind of split in COSATU, since the SACP is determined, one way or another, to get control over organised workers. The SACP believes only it should speak for workers and it has always behaved as a kind of policeman

in the workers' movement, ferreting out and getting rid of independent worker voices.

A: So the way the battle lines are being drawn has a history in COSATU ?

Yes, this struggle has been going on in the liberation movement for a long time - certainly from before COSATU was born. One of the main issues in the unity talks that led to the formation of COSATU was the division between so-called 'workerists' and 'populists'. The workerists generally congregated around the principle of worker independence and control, and embraced a variety of political tendencies including revolutionary Marxists, syndicalists and even anarchists. The populists generally congregated around the principle of loyalty to the ANC-SACP alliance, and included African nationalists and of course Stalinist communists. Both saw organised workers as a key constituency. Many of the workerists imagined a mass Labour Party might emerge from the trade union movement, while the populists imagined a mass SACP. In those days, the Party was virtually non-existent on the ground, but because it was banned and in exile, it still carried a lot of moral authority. The populists have been in the driver's seat and have set the pace at least since democracy was achieved. Now the SACP is the second biggest party in government and wields great power. Its key role of late seems to be to attack any independent action or voice of workers as happened at Marikana. [17] The SACP has no interest in changing the status quo. There have been countless struggles over the years within COSATU affiliates where the SACP has used its weight, influence and organisation to try to crush independent worker politics, resulting in the expulsion of many activists.

A: How is it then that COSATU is

still independent?

DH: Despite its best efforts, the SACP has still not managed to get its way in COSATU. It now has control of the leadership of several key affiliates like the NUM, but these unions themselves are in trouble because the gap between the rank and file and the leadership is so vast. The Party is an organization for whom COSATU principles like 'worker control' are a complete anathema. What need is there for worker control when the Party, the self-proclaimed vanguard of the working class, is there to represent workers? Everything the Party says about itself contradicts reality: it is neither revolutionary, nor communist, nor pro-worker. When did you last hear of the Party leading ANY struggle of workers? COSATU is still nominally independent to the extent that its structures are able to make their own decisions in spite of the Party line. In some unions, that is still the case as well and is therefore carried over into some COSATU structures. If the Party had had its way already, COSATU would be a completely sweetheart federation, doing what it was told. But the fact that Vavi is still there shows that this is not yet the case.

A: Any thoughts on the future of COSATU?

COSATU is in a very difficult situation. It is in an alliance with the ANC and SACP, who are basically running a crony capitalist state that is deeply anti-worker and pro-big business. Marikana smashed whatever illusions were left among many militant unionists. But how to go forward? Some, like the mine workers, have organised themselves into worker committees or into new trade unions. These have even given birth to a new communist organisation, the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP); it is the first time the non-Stalinist left has stepped up to the plate in the

organisational battle for socialism. Others, like the Numsa [18] leadership, are continuing the fight within COSATU and Alliance structures. The general prognosis for COSATU is not good: it will never

again be able to mobilise workers as it did in the 1980's, with the dead weight of Stalinism so dominant in its structures. Vavi's best defense would be to appeal directly to COSATU members and workers in general -

over the heads of the Stalinists - to mobilise and organise themselves against the bosses and their ANC/SACP government.

Republished from [Amandla](#).

Elections stolen: people power the answer

20 July 2013, by **Lachlan Marshall**

May, 2013

Malaysia's ruling party managed to narrowly hold power in elections in May, but only as a result of a rigged electoral system and widespread fraud. Over 50,000 protesters expressed their anger at the result on the Wednesday following the elections in Kuala Lumpur, undeterred by police declaring the demonstration illegal. The elections were the closest in Malaysia's history, where the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN—"National Front") has been in power continuously since independence from Britain in 1957.

The BN received 47 per cent of the popular vote against the opposition's 51 per cent, yet due to gerrymandering that benefits BN strongholds in rural ethnic Malay areas, BN won 133 seats out of the 222 seat-parliament, against the opposition's 89.

The Malaysian Socialist Party (PSM) contested four seats as part of an electoral alliance with the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR—"People's Pact") coalition. Federal MP Dr Jeyakumar Devaraj retained his Sungai Siput seat. However, other opposition parties broke the agreement and ran against the PSM in the three other state seats, splitting the vote and delivering two of the seats to the government in the first-past-the-post race.

Besides the formal inequalities in the electoral system and the huge bias in government-controlled media; intimidation, violence, vote buying, "phantom voters," faulty indelible ink

that permitted double voting and other cases of fraud were rampant.

The opposition is pursuing a legal challenge in 30 seats where it lost narrowly, but such cases rarely bear fruit against the ruling party.

Tellingly, the opposition trounced BN in urban areas. Behind this lies resentment among urban Malaysians at policies of racial discrimination and cronyism.

The strength of the opposition's polling in the cities can be attributed in part to the mass BERSIH mobilisations for free and fair elections, and revulsion at the police brutality that accompanied them.

The BERSIH protests over the past two years are a sign of the growing disgust at the venality of Malaysia's elite. The mobilisations raised the hopes of millions and contributed to the record voter turnout of 85 per cent. It indicates intense politicisation and Malaysians' confidence that real transformation is possible, with voters flocking to the opposition's rally cry of "ubah" (change).

Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim rose to notoriety as a critic of corruption in former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad's government. Sacked in 1998, Anwar was prosecuted on phoney charges of sodomy and jailed for six years.

He now vows to abolish all vestiges of racial discrimination and introduce assistance to the poor along with free education. But experience of opposition rule in state governments

shows that while they might be less corrupt, they adhere to the same neo-liberal economic consensus as other governments.

Race, class and corruption

BN leader Najib Razak described the opposition gains as a "Chinese tsunami" in an attempt to play on racial divisions. But the vote against the BN was seen across ethnic groups in urban areas—"even though ethnic Chinese Malaysians are heavily concentrated here.

Racial tensions have loomed large in Malaysian politics for decades. A consequence of centuries of British domination was that independent Malaysia inherited a society that was racially segregated. Chinese Malaysians were resented in particular because of their over-representation in business.

Following bloody race riots in May 1969 a suite of affirmative action measures were adopted under the New Economic Policy (NEP), which discriminated against the ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities in access to higher education, government employment and business. Aspects of official racism have been watered down, but discrimination continues.

While the NEP was introduced to address the relative disadvantage of the ethnic Malay majority, its effect over the years has been to cement a Malay elite with preferential access to

business deals and government positions, generating rampant nepotism.

Prime minister Najib Razak's party, United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which heads the BN coalition, remains committed to preserving privileges for ethnic Malays, and its members are primary beneficiaries of government largesse.

New York academic Meredith Weiss told the Financial Times, "Intra-ethnic inequality is startlingly high. There has been a lot of disproportionate access [to economic privileges] by the few. The underlining trend seems to be that interests are defined now by socioeconomic class rather than ethnicity."

Many of the government's opponents reject the efforts at racial division.

"We are not Chinese, we are Malaysian," said one placard at the protest against the election result, in response to Najib's anti-Chinese comments.

It is the movement on the streets that now holds the key to taking forward the struggle for democratic rights in Malaysia.

From Solidarity.net.au.

Theaterpolitik of the Troika takes over

18 July 2013, by **João Camargo**

The week before last that there was an important and massive teachers' strike which stopped national examination and in which the government was forced to stop measures and retreat before the unions' struggle. Last week there was an important general strike, the fourth this government has withstood and the second called by both union confederations. It was a very successful strike, the strongest since the liberal-conservative coalition took office. There were important notes about this strike: the mood was pro-strike, even between those who did not stop. Even the employers' association said that there were plenty of reasons for a general strike.

On Monday Vitor Gaspar, Finance Minister and a high-ranking official in the European Central Bank (supposedly on leave), tendered his resignation. In the letter he wrote, he talked about the insurmountable pressure about his two previous requests for resignation, after the two massive protests of September and March against the troika and the government. He also spoke of the recurrent mistakes in prediction of macroeconomic outcomes, and specially about the lack of political strength he had to further implement the reforms and cuts comprised in the troika memorandum. He said his departure would strengthen the government and thank the friendship he had shared with the prime-

minister, Passos Coelho. His predictions were once again wrong.

The prime-minister very quickly tried to shake off the spectrum of doom that held over the government, nominating Gaspar's second in command, secretary of State for the Treasury, Maria LuÃs Albuquerque. Trouble is, Albuquerque had been for the last months under huge controversy over toxic financial swap operations she had executed while running the financial direction of a state company - REFER. For the last months she had been given the file as the governmental responsible to investigate massive losses in state company which had used such toxic financial operations, including the ones she had herself executed. She was accused by all the opposition of lying in Parliament in this process. The public losses amount to the billions of euros, as the state has bought these bad assets and cut billionaire deals with the banks.

The next day Albuquerque was set to take office in the President of the Republic's office. The President is Cavaco Silva, former finance minister and former prime-minister for the PSD party (the main party in the coalition), responsible for a very important part of decisions when joining the EU and receiving huge amounts for economic transition to european policies. He is the longest politician holding office in Portugal, being in power for nearly

thirty years.

Then the atomic bomb was dropped: Paulo Portas, head of the minority coalition party in government (CDS-PP, Christian democrats), tendered his resignation letter to the prime-minister, claiming his irrevogable decision to leave the government, and saying that "staying in government would be an act of dissimulation". Portas, also a long standing politician who was minister of defense for DurÃo Barroso, is the leader of conservative party, who had 10% in the last elections. He held the position of minister of foreign affairs, and was supposed to present in two weeks a script for a 4,7 billion euro plan to cut in social spending of the Portuguese state, a reform that was due last February, but was postponed dozens of times due to massive social struggles developing in the last months in Portugal. In his resignation letter he attributed his decision to the choice of Maria LuÃs Albuquerque to lead the finance ministry, as he defended there should be a shift from Vitor Gaspar's "austerity at all cost" policies. 40 minutes later, the President of the Republic ratified the new finance minister, Maria LuÃs Albuquerque.

Theaterpolitik

On the afternoon of the 2nd of July, the Portuguese coalition government

finally died. It has been a social and political corpse for quite a while, but the resignation of Gaspar (the troika minister) and Portas (head of the coalition partner), following the resignation of Miguel Relvas (2nd to the Prime-Minister and political strategist of the PSD) in April were quite clearly the end of it. Or was it?

Quickly the stock market fell and public interest rose, while from Europe all the messages pointed to need of continuing reforms in Portugal, as Barroso said that there were already signs of political recovery in Portugal (where?) and that the government should remain in power. Unemployment in Portugal is at the moment officially at 17,6%, but in reality it is closer to 25%, with one million and a half unemployed. The current budget deficit is at 10,6 percent of GDP, having ended 2012 with 7,1%. Public debt is forecast to end 2013 with the massive record of 138% of GDP. 2012 ended with a recession of -3,2%. On the first trimester of 2013 the recession aggravated to -3,9% of GDP. Austerity is destroying Portugal's people and its economy, as is happening in other countries under this new social regime.

At 8 p.m. Passos Coelho addressed the country in a public statement on television. Coelho announced that he would not resign and that he wished to have clarification of the terms of Portas' resignation and that he would therefore not accept the minister's request. In the streets there were protests celebrating the demise of the government. The president of the republic supported a solution of maintenance of the coalition or another formula which could maintain "stability", rejecting popular and widespread support for the resignation of the prime minister and a call for the ballots. Former presidents of the republic, former leaders of both the CDS and the PSD parties and all the opposition, unions and social movements publicly called for the fall of the coalition government.

Portas had not informed his party's leadership about his resignation, and the party's congress was going to be the following weekend. Portas

convened with his party's political commission after Coelho's speech and he lost his support in a vote for leaving the coalition. He was able nonetheless to be mandated to convene with the prime-minister and try to patch up the coalition.

The next day the stock market crashed with the biggest drop since 1998 (7%) and the public debt interest for 10-year loans rose from 3 to 8%. Alarms went ringing through the banking sector and the bourgeoisie. Against the common claim from the streets and every media, the bourgeoisie had a clear message: no elections, no resignation. Then the new fear campaign came: the idea of the imminent 2nd bailout, which had in fact precipitated the resignations. Coelho went to Berlin on government business and returned the same day with assurances from chancellor Merkel of total confidence in continuance of the policies. That same day there was the first of three meetings between Passos Coelho and Portas. The president of the republic demanded that both leaders of the parties stayed in government.

Durão Barroso said from his office in Brussels: "The markets taught a lesson to the Portuguese". They are the only ones who can choose when a government falls or when you can have an election. Realpolitik is a thing of the past. In the Age of the Troika you get Theaterpolitik, where the population's relationship to the actors is only as a spectator.

The portuguese witnessed with awe the disgraceful show developing before their eyes: the minister of finance who resigned because he could not further implement his blind destructive policies, the appointment of a minister accused of lying in parliament to continue implementing these policies, the resignation of the leader of the coalition partner in shock with this nomination, the refusal of the prime-minister in accepting a resignation and finally his victory, forcing the minister who had irrevocably resigned (quoting his own words) one day earlier to come back. Passos Coelho seemed to be gaining leverage. Or was he?

Small protests blossomed over the

week, all calling for government resignation.

Flip the tables

This Saturday, after the meetings during the week about a possible deal to patch up the dying coalition, the directions of CDS and PSD met at a hotel in Lisbon. There were protests in Lisbon called by CGTP the biggest union, with some thousands protesting near the president of the republic's palace, but the 43°C in the streets meant that the protest was cut short. In Porto and Funchal (Madeira) hundreds took to the streets calling for resignation and elections.

At 7.30pm the prime-minister addressed the country in a press conference in the hotel. With Paulo Portas standing on his side, in silence, Pedro Passos Coelho presented the new deal for the coalition government: Paulo Portas, who had tendered his resignation 5 days earlier would become vice-prime-minister responsible for the coordination of economic policies, connection with the troika and the reform of the State; the recently appointed minister of finance would keep her post and also be raised to minister of State; António Pires de Lima, a businessman in the direction of CDS would be made minister of economy. The deal will now be taken to the president of the republic for ratification. The junior partner in the coalition seems to have come out on top from a political episode which, although still far from over, will long endure in memory as an infamous succession of disgraceful party politics, especially when the rules of democracy no longer apply and shame has long left the minds and action of the parties and politicians who implement the regime of austerity supported by decaying bourgeoisies. CDS-PP's congress was postponed indefinitely and it seems this party is now solely under the control of troika instructions, as it was forced back into a dying government, even after such eloquent theatrical moves by its leader, who though now apparently reinforced in power, is acknowledged as someone who will do anything for power. In truth, the political spine of this conservative party was tested and failed utterly: the political commission

who claimed to be betrayed by its leader when he took the decision of leaving the coalition by himself eventually ratified that he would be reinforced in power. But at that moment that was no longer CDS-PP's decision to make - troika and the president of the republic had taken over, denouncing this small party for what it is: only a leverage for the implementation of a new regime, even though that might (and most probably will) destroy it.

When leaving the hotel, the cars were surrounded by a small group of protesters and chased, having had to run against traffic with police cover. This week further events will certainly take place, as the surreal world of the substitution of democracy for direct troika rule is about to take place and the chip is about to fall for a population that has seen the last few days' episode as a clear sign of the decrepitude of the ruling parties.

A sum-up of the situation shows how far from the population the government and its policies are at the moment: after the two biggest protests in the last decades in Portugal (15th of September and 2nd of March) against the troika, austerity and the government, the coalition tried to shield itself from the shockwaves of mass protests, postponing new austerity measures but, when confronted with the need of forcing them (in the next weeks the troika will arrive in Portugal for the 8th evaluation of the program), the internal contradictions of the coalition parties brought them to a collapse. At the moment, the dead government has been patched-up as a Frankenstein. The political crisis is far from over, and the governments' legitimacy is not in doubt: it has no legitimacy. Only the bourgeoisie and the troika (especially the latest can decide the fall of a government) decide. Democracy's incompatibility with austerity is now an incontestable fact and the following

months will likely see a rapid deterioration of the political and social situation.

The plot thickens

On the night of the 10th of July, the president of the republic, Cavaco Silva, addressed the country. Everyone had been expecting a very simple ratification of the governmental reconfiguration formulated by the CDS-PSD coalition. Brussels and Berlin had both ratified it. But Cavaco, who has lingered in an criostasis of inaction which has lasted for the last years, had different thoughts for the night.

After explaining why, on his opinion, it was dreadful to hold general elections due to budgets, the need to continue implementing further austerity measures, the troika evaluations, market reactions, a second bailout and so on and so forth (the day before the confederation of tourism went as far as saying that there shouldn't be any elections because that would drive away the tourists in the Summer). Cavaco went on to shock the government it has stood firmly by, by not supporting the agreement reached by Portas and Passos Coelho after last week's meltdown.

He further proposed a national salvation agreement signed by the three parties which support the troika memorandum - PSD, CDS and opposition PS. This agreement comprised three main points:

1. The parties would have to establish a calendar for future elections before the end of the term, with the proposal of July 2014, date for the supposed end of the troika program;
2. The deal includes all three troika parties to guarantee the support necessary to complete the program and guarantee the payment of the

debt to international creditors;

3. The deal should hold for the medium term, and the government out of the next elections should count on these three parties to assure an absolute majority, public debt repayments, tight control over public accounts, etc., that is, maintaining austerity beyond the troika.

Although his intervention was quite shocking to many (many newspapers claim that he has vetoed the government and further increased the political crisis), the president has maintained quite clearly the focus: a troika government must be in power, whichever parties of the troika may need to combine to guarantee this. He has further hinted that, if these agreement he proposes does not go forward, he may hold the reigns of power himself, triggering the possibility of a presidential government initiative.

In the meantime, the Socialist Party has already come public, stating that it will not support any government that doesn't come out of elections. The open exclusion of the parties which are in Parliament but outside the troika arch - Left Bloc and Communist Party - has demonstrated the utter contempt this 74-year-old economist has for democracy. Because democracy in Portugal is now defined only inside the austerity sphere, inside the troika sphere, inside the debtocracy sphere. He has publicly shamed PSD and CDS and its leaders, tried to pin down the Socialist Party into austerity at whatever cost and for the long run, and openly admitted that only markets matters, while the whole country is in tatters. As is predictable, Portugal's political crisis is far from over, and the twists may yet find us once again unprepared for the burlesque and the grotesque of the troika Theaterpolitik.

12 July 2013

The Egyptian revolution must continue

without the tutelage of the army

10 July 2013, by **Izquierda Anticapitalista**

Neither Morsi nor the army represents the aspirations for freedom and social justice

The enormous mobilizations in Egypt that preceded the fall of Morsi have shown the increasing social rejection of their reactionary and increasingly authoritarian neoliberal project. The Muslim Brotherhood were not originally involved in the Egyptian revolution, but after the fall of Mubarak they became the main political force in the country as the only organization opposed to Mubarak with a strong implantation and social basis. Their work in government has made it clear that their political project is far from the popular aspirations that brought down the dictator in 2011.

From the protests against Mubarak in January 2011, the Army “the most significant economic and political institution in the country” has had as its sole intention assuring an “ordered transition”, as well as channelling popular aspirations in directions which do not threaten the structures of power. For that reason, it established an initial entente with the Muslim Brotherhood with the aim

of directing the revolutionary process towards moderation without structural economic changes. Now, following the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood’s inability to guarantee the stability of the country, the Army has broken its alliance with Morsi.

The popular mobilization against the latter shows the firm determination of the Egyptian people to deepen the aspirations to freedom and social justice that led to the fall of Mubarak in February 2011. But the outcome of this intense mobilization, with the taking of control by the Army by means of a coup d’état, also shows the enormous weaknesses of the revolutionary process. In particular, it emphasizes the absence of a political pole favourable to social justice and the deepening of the revolution. It is the absence of a political alternative linked to the popular mobilization which has allowed the Army and its allies to take the initiative in trying to channel post-Morsi scenario towards their interests.

A period of great uncertainty for the revolutionary process has therefore opened. The determination and capacity for struggle of the Egyptian

people have been well demonstrated, but also the strength of the forces of order and the Army, now riding on the popular aspirations. The Egyptian people will have to continue fighting to avoid their desire for change being reined in from above and to prevent any authoritarian reversion by the army and its allies, as well as to avoid the country slipping into a witch-hunt against the Muslim Brotherhood or any other organizations that are against the government, and a civil confrontation that adds to the chaos and can, in addition, be utilized by the army and reaction to impose an authoritarian reversion.

Izquierda Anticapitalista considers that for all this the social mobilization and popular self-organization of the Egyptian people are necessary as well as the construction of a democratic pole, of those on the left and those favourable to social justice, to advance so that the revolution is not snatched from them by those who want everything to change so that things remain the same.

The original is here [La revolución egipcia debe continuar sin tutelaje del ejército](#).

“Beware of the army”: and if we stopped treating Egyptians as stupid?

10 July 2013, by **Julien Salingue**

Coup d’état vs. revolution?

If the overthrow of the Egyptian President was formally organised (and

announced) by the army, and not by the autonomous structures emerging from the movement of revolt which has shaken Egypt for 30 months, it would never have happened without the historic demonstrations of June 30 and the days which followed. It is

because Egyptians mobilised in their millions that Mohammad Morsi was forced to depart, not because the Egyptian army suddenly decided to overthrow him. This focus on the institutional aspect of the events led many observers to neglect the motor

role of popular mobilisation in the fall of Morsi.

The intense media coverage of the coup contrasts with the media's neglect of the mobilisations which have shaken Egypt uninterruptedly since the fall of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. The figures speak for themselves: during the first five months of 2013, there were 5,544 demonstrations in Egypt, the great majority concerning social and economic questions. The success of the "Tamarrod" ("Rebellion") campaign also centred on these questions (and not on the denunciation of some "Islamisation of Egyptian society"), reflecting this dynamic of opposition to the policies of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The latter have proved incapable of responding to the demands of the Egyptian people, which led the latter to revolt massively against Mubarak's dictatorship in 2011. Elected democratically in June 2012, Mohammad Morsi, who presented himself as the candidate of the revolution, failed to satisfy those demands, especially in the economic and social areas, where there was on the contrary a degradation of the living conditions of the population. If it cannot be denied that the remnants of the old regime did everything to stop the Brotherhood from governing, it should be noted that the latter very rapidly lost their popular legitimacy because of their own political and economic choices.

The lead weight lifted in January 2011 has not returned. The overthrow of Mubarak convinced millions of Egyptian that they were not condemned to suffer the policies of their leaders and that they could, on the contrary, hold them accountable and if necessary mobilize to overthrow them. That is what led to the events of recent days, to the great surprise of many observers who, blinded by a "religious" reading of the policies of the Brotherhood and the hostility towards them, underestimated the breadth and nature of the deep wave which has again overthrown a power considered as illegitimate by a large majority of Egyptians. And it should be no surprise that an elected president can be perceived as illegitimate

including by his own voters, when he betrays the mandate entrusted to him.

The army intervention

The military intervention should obviously be clearly considered, and the authoritarian temptation among elements of the military leadership, who became hostile to the Mubarak dictatorship only when the latter was doomed by the size of the 2011 uprising, should not be underestimated. But this intervention, presented a little hastily by some commentators as a "revenge" of the military against the Muslim Brotherhood, should be understood above all as the breaking of a tacit (although conflictual) understanding between two forces, the army and the Brotherhood, who were set on bringing order to a country affected by a continuous revolutionary upheaval since the fall of Mubarak.

Indeed, President Morsi and his government have been incapable of stifling the protests of recent months, deepening a situation of political and above all economic instability which is hardly reassuring to an army which controls more than a third of Egypt's wealth. The army believed that the Brotherhood had shown their inability to stabilise the country, and it should then itself restore calm and put a stop to a revolutionary process which could lose it a significant part of its political and economic influence.

Such is indeed the weakness of over-enthusiastic readings which see in the intervention of the army a new stage of the revolution, whereas the objective of the military leadership is precisely to put an end to it. The paradox is not small: the events of recent days have been both the expression of the existence of a popular and revolutionary dynamic and of a relationship of political forces which is very unfavourable for revolutionaries. The latter have not up until now succeeded in equipping structures which are sufficiently united, strong and legitimate to play the role that the military plays today, thus leaving the initiative to a social force which is essentially concerned

with a return to normal and not the satisfaction of the demands of the revolution.

A new period of instability thus opens, already marked by the will of the army to dissuade anyone from opposing its "roadmap" with arbitrary decisions like the closure of the al-Jazeera offices or the arrest of the Muslim Brotherhood leadership. The military have for the moment exploited a situation of political paralysis, marked by the errors of the Brotherhood and the structural weaknesses of the opposition. But the revolution has not been defeated or confiscated. Many have seen the scenes of popular jubilation which accompanied the declarations of the military takeover and the deployment of tanks in the streets of Cairo as the Egyptians burying their revolution. A double error of analysis underlies these attitudes.

The revolution continues?

The first of these errors is the underestimation of the central role of the Egyptian people in the fall of Morsi, linked to the massive rejection of the policy of the Muslim Brotherhood, whose defeat was considered by millions of Egyptians as their victory. What the people celebrated in the streets was the defeat of a President who had satisfied none of the demands of the revolution, contrary to what he had promised, and not a seizure of power by the military. The latter have always been conscience of this, inasmuch as they immediately announced that they intended to play no lasting political role and took care during their press conference announcing Morsi's overthrow to surround themselves with representatives from the country's political parties and religious institutions.

The second error is linked to the first, and results from an infantilising vision of the Egyptian people, leading various commentators to state that Egyptians were in the process of learning democracy whereas they were precisely showing that they had better understood its essence than

most of the Western lesson-givers. What could be more authentically democratic than the peaceful challenging by petition and demonstrations by the people who elected him of a President who has betrayed his mandate and follows policies opposed to the demands of the revolution which indirectly brought him to power?

Currently an obvious confusion reigns, and one can understand that the scenes of fraternization between demonstrators and the army, indeed the police, cause surprise and worry.

But Egyptians are not imbeciles! All those who today stress the role of the army during the dictatorship and the exactions it committed before and after the fall of Mubarak are right to do so. But is it useful to recall that Egyptians, who were the first victims of them, are aware of all this, and probably know a good deal more about it than the self-proclaimed specialists? Visibly, yes.

It is obviously not about underestimating the contradictory aspects of the army intervention and showing a naive optimism after the fall of the President. But remember that

one year ago, after Morsi's victory, some already said that the revolution was dead and that Egyptians had seen their victory "stolen" by the Muslim Brotherhood. They have just shown the whole world that this was not the case, and that they remain vigilant, not lowering their guard before the counter-revolutionary elements. For 30 months, the Egyptian people have in reality shown that they do not intend to let anybody, civilian or military, confiscate their revolution. And nothing indicates that this popular dynamic is broken - in fact the indications are quite to the contrary.

Army ousts Morsi from power in face of popular protests

9 July 2013, by **Gilbert Achcar**

JN: Welcome to The Real News Network. I'm Jaisal Noor in Baltimore. In Egypt, President Mohamed Morsi has been taken out of power by the Egyptian military. The move comes 48 hours after the deadline the army had set for President Morsi either stepping aside or coming to a new power-sharing agreement with the millions of protesters who have taken to the streets since June 30.

Now joining us to talk more about the latest is Gilbert Achcar. He grew up in Lebanon, is currently a professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. His books include *The Clash of Barbarisms: The Making of the New World Disorder*, which is published in 13 languages; *Perilous Power, the Middle East and U.S. Foreign Policy*, co-authored with Noam Chomsky; the critically acclaimed *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives*; and most recently, *The People Want a Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising*. Thank you so much for joining us.

GA: Thank you. Nice to talk to you.

JN: So can you give us your reaction to this breaking news that President Morsi, the democratically elected leader of Egypt, has been stripped of his power by the Egyptian army?

GA: Yeah. I mean, this is in some way a repetition of the same scenario of February 2011. And in both cases what you have is actually a coup, a military coup, on the background of a huge mass movement mobilization, except that the player or those who are in power are different, and the composition of the crowd, the mass mobilization, is different.

In January 2011, in January-February 2011, you had, you know, industry [incompr.] this huge protest movement, this big uprising, in which you had all shades of opposition to the regime of Mubarak. And that included liberals, left-wing movement, but also the Muslim Brotherhood. They were a major component of the mobilization at that time. And you had, you know, in this big mass mobilization the same kind of expectation towards the army, the idea that the army is with the people, can represent the interests of

the people. And, I mean, it so happens that on 8 February 2011, just three days before the downfall of Mubarak, The Real News Network had recorded an interview with me in which I was warning against these kinds of illusions about the army, about the military.

And what we have now is just, you know, after a game of musical chairs, if you want. You have the Muslim Brotherhood in power and the partisans of the old regime, of the Mubarak regime, in the streets with the liberal, with the left, with the popular opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood. So in a sense it's a repetition of the scenario with, okay, a key difference of the nature of the political force which is in power.

Now, of course, in both cases you had a huge mobilization. And this uprising is absolutely fascinating. It is something that actually went beyond the expectations of people, even people like me who rejected, you know, all these gloomy comments that you had ever since you had some elections bringing the likes of the Muslim Brotherhood to power. You

had all kinds of comments on, you know, the spring turning into autumn or winter or—you know, and many—so in these events, a reason, if not a pretext, to just dismiss the whole uprising in the region. And there were others like me who were insisting on the fact that we are only at the beginning of a long-term revolutionary process and that actually—I was actually—I stated that I was quite happy to see the Muslim Brotherhood come to government because that was the best possible way to expose them and to, you know, put an end to their ability to mystify the people with very demagogic slogans like Islam is the solution.

JN: And can you talk about the varying interests that took part in this uprising in Egypt and what political interests they serve?

GA: Yeah. Well, as I just mentioned, I mean, you have a very heterogenous crowd, politically speaking. I've seen some—you know, on television some interviews with people in the street. And there are many of the people in coffee shops or things like that expressing their preference for Mubarak over Morsi. So you have, of course, a lot of partisans of the old regime, a lot of people who represent, how to say, a rather conservative mass who got [incompr.] the Muslim Brotherhood because of their absolute clumsiness in power. I mean, they behaved miserably, in the most stupid possible way, and so they managed to antagonize everybody else.

And so you have people who support the old regime, but at the same time you have—in this mobilization you have huge crowds of people who, you know, are motivated by class, if you want, feelings that the deterioration of their living conditions, a government which has only continued the economic and social policies of the previous regime, did not change anything in that regard, and so you have also the liberal opposition, which is against the Muslim Brotherhood for political reasons but not against their social-economic policies, because the liberals share basically the same views. Then you have the left. So it's a very heterogenous crowd. They—as in the same way that in 2011 you had heterogenous forces, forces of a very

different nature coming together with the only point in common being their opposition to Mubarak at that time, you have the same now with the opposition to Morsi.

But this of course won't solve the problem, and any illusion that the army and whoever the army brings to power or who—because now the army is kingmaker again for the second time—the illusion that this would lead to an improvement in the social and economic conditions and then the conditions of living of the laborers in Egypt is just, I mean, completely baseless. All illusions of this kind are just illusions, pure illusions.

And here you have, you know, a contradiction between those who are supporting this takeover by the army because they want the restoration of law and order, they believe that the Muslim Brotherhood were not efficient in doing that, and they are longing for a return of the country to normality, which means basically stopping the strike movement, stopping all these social movement that have been with us for the last two years in a very intensive way. So you have these kind of people. And you have—on the other hand, you have those people who are revolting against Morsi because he is continuing the social policies of Mubarak.

So you are in full contradiction. And the problem is that there is little awareness of that except for fringe groups, but there's little awareness of that. And that's the tragedy here is the absence of a left-wing core with a real popular credibility, able to—with a clear strategic view of what is happening. This is badly missing.

JN: Now, you mentioned how this is—the revolutionary process which began on January 25 is evolving. So you're saying you don't see any leaders emerging from the revolutionary movement that may be able to challenge for the leadership in this next election the army has promised?

GA: Well, I mean, you had the emergence of a figure who could play the role of bringing together the aspirations of, let's say, the social-progressive aspirations of the people.

And that was the Nasserite candidate—a reference to Nasser, who ruled Egypt until 1970. And so it's a kind of left-wing nationalism that this candidate represents. And he came third. That was the big surprise in the presidential election. In the first round of the presidential election, he came third. And he represents the only real popular figure in the broad spectrum of the Egyptian left.

But the problem is that he has completely shared the discourse, now the prevailing discourse about the army, about how the army are our friends, are with the people, and all that. And he is in alliance—he entered into an alliance with the liberal and with someone who is a remnant of the old regime, Amr Moussa. And he has made recently declarations saying that it was wrong in the previous periods before Morsi come to power, it was wrong for the popular movement to say, down with the military regime, when you had the supreme committee of the Armed Forces, the SCAF, ruling the country in a very terrible way. So all these statements are not reassuring at all, but, I mean, this is the only person who emerged as attracting the popular aspiration for a change on the left and not a change on the right or the—I mean, whether in the Islamic direction or the military, old-regime direction as you have.

So now the question is: if—and this is an if, of course—but if this program that the army put forward that includes holding early presidential elections, the question is: what will happen these elections, and how will this candidate precisely—because he's the only one who is able to do something on the left—what kind of discourse, what kind of program, how would he approach these elections? We'll have to see if—again, if these elections are held, and of course it's too early now to see, because the Muslim Brotherhood for the time being rejected and denounced the coup for what it is, a coup. Well, it is indeed a coup. Even though it's not a coup against a democratically elected government, period, it's a coup against a democratically elected government, but a government which managed to bring against itself the broad majority of the Egyptian people. I mean, this mobilization against

Morsi reached, you know, unprecedented scales. It was completely unprecedented.

JN: What is the role of the United States in all of this? I mean, they were perfectly happy supporting Mubarak for decades with the military in power. But what role have they played in this situation, and what role might the U.S. play moving forward?

GA: The opposition movement in Egypt, that opposition to Morsi, had the strong conviction that Washington was backing Morsi. And indeed there were many signs showing Washington support to Morsi, indeed, warnings against a military coup, warnings against the intervention by the military, insistence on the necessity to follow the constitutional way and not any disruption of the constitutional way, although the Constitution, the present Constitution, is very much disputed in its legitimacy. I mean, now this huge movement does not recognize this constitution as legitimate but as something imposed by the Muslim Brotherhood. The U.S. ambassador in Cairo at the beginning of the mobilizations against Morsi made us a statement saying that they are detrimental to the economy of the country. I mean, that appeared as a blatant statement of support to Morsi. So there are many indications for that.

And the reality is Washington is in real disarray. And, you know, all these guys, and there are so many of them, especially on the internet, everywhere, with all these conspiracy theories who believe that Washington is Almighty and, you know, kind of puppet master of everything that's happening in the Arab world are just completely off of the mark. I mean, Washington, the United States in general, the U.S. influence in the region is at a very, very low point. It's a result of the defeat in Iraq, because Iraq has been a major defeat for the United States, for the U.S. imperial project. And you had this combination of this huge defeat, disaster, actually, for the U.S. imperial policies in Iraq, with the

uprising toppling key friends of Washington like Mubarak.

So, I mean, Washington tried to bet on the Muslim Brotherhood. And for the last period, actually, since the beginning of the uprising, or soon after the beginning of the uprising in the Arab world, Washington has chosen the Muslim Brotherhood as the horse on which to bet. And, of course, they renewed their old alliance because they have been working closely, in close collaboration with the Muslim Brotherhood in the '50s, in the '60s, in the '70s, up actually—up to 1990, '91. They had a close collaboration with the Muslim Brotherhood. And so they renewed that, believing that, well, okay, in the present conditions of the Arab world, with all this mass mobilization, which is the major new—the major outcome, the major, if you want, development of everything that has been happening since December 2010, January 2011, they believe that, well, now they need allies with a real popular base, with a real popular organization. And, of course, the only ones who correspond to this definition and are willing to collaborate and cooperate with Washington are the Muslim Brotherhood. And they did so and they are doing so.

But now the situation has reached a point where, you know, Washington can see that the Muslim Brotherhood failed. It's obvious that they failed. So even from the point of view of Washington, betting on them is no longer possible. They failed in reestablishing law and order, if you want, in Egypt. They failed in controlling the situation. And of course the major ally of Washington in Egypt is the army. I mean, the army has very close ties with Washington. It is founded by Washington to a certain extent. I mean, but the bulk of U.S. funding to Egypt, which is second only to U.S. funding to Israel, goes to the army. And this generation of military officers have all been trained by the United States. They have been into military maneuvers and all that. So the army is very closely linked to Washington. And, of course, I mean, you can't expect Washington to take a position against the army. They wouldn't have to get into some conciliatory, I guess, stand. But the

key point is that they are not running the show. And anyone believing that they are running the show is just, as I said, you know, off the mark.

JN: Now, can you share some more of your thoughts about what may come next for Egypt? Mohamed ElBaradei is an opposition figure who was among the leaders that met with the army today. It appears that leaders of labor unions did not meet with the army. Can you talk about the possible implications of that? And finally, do you feel that because of this crisis that's emerged with the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood in power, do feel that if there was another election, the Muslim Brotherhood would not win?

GA: Yeah. Well, I start with that last point. No, I can't see how the Muslim Brotherhood could win an election now. I mean, the next election will be a presidential one, according to the statement by the military, the commander-in-chief, his speech. Now, if Morsi—I mean, if you look at what happened in the previous election, Morsi was elected in the second round thanks to votes which were not pro-Morsi but anti-Shafik, the other candidate, which is the former—an ex-military man and regarded as a representative of the continuity of the Mubarak regime. So even then, Morsi in the first round that only 25 percent. And I very much doubt that the Muslim Brotherhood would get now, again, even that 25 percent of the vote. So, no, I don't think this is really possible, not to mention the fact that, I mean, I can hardly imagine the army organizing elections to get Morsi back or the equivalent of Morsi back in power. So this is rather very much unlikely, to say the least.

Now, what will happen, I mean, that's precisely what I was hinting at when I was mentioning this issue of the Nasserite candidate. So, will this kind of heterogenous opposition front, will they go together in the election with one candidate? And, well, if that happens, this candidate won't be the Nasserite one but will be someone like Baradei or something like that, a liberal.

And in some way this will be but another stage, inauguration of another stage in a revolutionary process which will be far from extinct. It will carry on, and it will carry on for many years, if not many decades, of instability before you reach a situation where things can really change profoundly with a different social economic policy. So that means you need a profound social political change in order to get that. For the time being, this is not visible. So it's too early to make predictions in that regard.

But what we can say is, however, that it is really unlikely that the army tries to repeat what it did after the previous coup of 11 February 2011, when you had in the same way, I mean, the army pushing Mubarak out of power. Now they are doing that with Morsi. Now, the first time they presided over the country until the election of Morsi, for a long time, I can hardly imagine them doing the same, because they understood that this is detrimental to them and that actually today power in Egypt is a hot potato. It is—I mean, who is willing, you know, to face all the problems that we'll be facing, not least of them the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood now—I mean, if—I mean, we'll see what will happen. But if they are just subdued, if they are just—you

know, if they just capitulate, they will do that with a huge resentment, and there will be a lot of opposition to whatever comes next from the Islamic circles.

And on the other hand, you have a terribly bad economic situation, extremely worrying that the country's on the brink of bankruptcy [incompr.] on the brink of a deep economic disaster. And the only policy put forward from the broad array of forces that goes from Morsi to Baradei through the military, etc., are the same neoliberal policies which the IMF is promoting in Egypt.

You know, it's just unbelievable how much the IMF is—how to say—is really the—as it has been called a long time ago already, the international monetary fundamentalism, I mean, how fundamentalist it is in its neoliberal perspective, to the point of advocating for Egypt, after everything you've seen, just more of the same economic policies that were applied under Mubarak and that led to this deep economic crisis, no growth anyhow, very low job creation, and huge unemployment, and especially youth unemployment. And they keep coming with the same. Now, the IMF has been, you know, exerting pressure

on the Morsi government for the implementation of further austerity policies, further reductions in the subsidies for the prices of, like, fuel and other basic staples and the rest. And, you know, they keep coming with such policies, and actually Morsi did not implement them because he could not. He was not powerful enough politically to do so. When he attempted at one point, there was such an outcry that he had immediately to cancel the measure that he announced on his Facebook page. I mean, that was ridiculous.

So, I mean, it's a hot potato. And, I mean, that's why again what we are seeing is but an episode in a long story, which is actually still in its initial phase. We'll see a lot more of developments in the years to come in Egypt and in the rest of the Arab world.

JN: Thank you. And we'll certainly keep following all these developments as they unfold.

GA: Absolutely. You're most welcome.

JN: And thank you for joining us on The Real News Network.

The video of this interview is on the The Real News site [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#).

' Back to the Roots' for Climate Justice

7 July 2013, by **Kandi Mossett**

Kandi Mossett : My name is Kandi Mossett and I'm from North Dakota. I'm member of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nations in North Dakota and I grew up in a reservation there. I work with the Indigenous Environmental Network and I've been with them since 2007.

Solidarity Webzine : What motivates you to be an activist against fracking ?

KM : In North Dakota, we have heavy, heavy hydraulic fracturing occurring. We're actually the second largest oil

producing state in the country because of hydraulic fracturing. If you look at the landmass and compare Texas and North Dakota, we're actually—and I'm not saying it's any worse—it's actually more [fracking] happening [proportionally], because we're a lot smaller. Right now, we're second in fracking, right behind Texas and in front of Alaska.

Fracking came to the reservation a long time before we even knew what was actually happening, but around 2006 was when we started to see the infrastructure, and the first thing that

really motivated me was that I had a friend who was killed by one of the [semi trucks transporting the gas]. We don't have the pipeline infrastructure for the natural gas, so they're just flaring all the natural gas and transporting with trucks. That was one of the first things that happened, probably in 2008, and I got really angry as I started finding a lot more about it. It's grown exponentially since then, so we're just trying to get more community members organized against it, ever since that happened.

It's pretty environmentally

destructive, especially on the reservation. You can drive around and see ditches on fire, you can see trucks driving around with their valving open, just dumping the production water right on roads, and they get away with it because there's such slack regulation. You have fracking in general—then you go to a reservation, where it's even worse.

So, it has motivated me to find out what else is going on out there and what people are doing about it.

SW : Where do you see connections between the anti-fracking movement and other movements for social justice ?

KM : Well, being with the Indigenous Environmental Network, we don't have the luxury of working on just one issue. I would like to focus all of my attention on hydraulic fracturing, but I also have to work on coal mining, uranium mining, [and other issues]. There's definitely connections because of the way people are impacted, both socially and environmentally. Whenever these types of businesses, industries, and corporations come into the community, they're pretty much destructive and predominantly it's folks that are low-income [who are affected]. They're not doing fracking in Hollywood, for example, where folks have power and resources.

There's a really big necessity for people to understand that everything is connected. It's not just the anti-fracking movement, it's the food movement, it's all the farm workers that are affected, it's people really understanding connections in all the work that we do [that is needed].

It's something that's ingrained in me, so I like to tell people to think in terms of a larger "ecosystem" of how one thing interacts with other things. And if you want to use science, you know, what is it, "every action has an equal and opposite reaction"—who was the scientist ? [Laughs] But OK, if you want to use science, there you go !

SW : What do you think it will take to stop fracking ?

KM : I can tell you a fear that I have...I have a fear that people will stop

fracking and something else will take its place, because I think that's how fracking was born and grew in the first place. Everybody was against coal, saying "carbon dioxide is in the air, it's coming from coal," so [their response was], "natural gas, let's switch to that," without realizing that it's not just natural gas, it's also oil that they're getting from hydraulic fracturing, and it's actually worse because of the methane emissions, when it comes to greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere. So, we're "dealing" with carbon dioxide, but we're having methane which is 22 to 23 times worse. I think it has to be an end overall to the fossil fuel "movement," whatever you want to call it...

Since the industrial revolution, we've done all these horrible things in the past couple hundred years to the planet, and it's like "wake up, and think about it," Native people and indigenous folks were living here the past 1000 years and didn't do the things that have been done in the past couple 100 because of fossil fuels, extraction, and waste. What we need isn't just a ban here or there, or a moratorium here or there, it's gonna have to be an outright end to fossil fuels, with a just transition for workers that are in those positions. Because I have uncles and cousins who are working in the fields, I'm not against the workers by any means. The people need to see that we're out for completely changing our system and society—system change, not climate change.

SW : You're talking about broader, systemic change. What type of world would you like to see and what do you think it will take to get us there ?

KM : I think it's going to have to take a really close look at capitalism, colonization, going back to our roots and saying, "this is what it was built upon." Unless we go back to the basic building blocks of how we built it up, it's never going to get to the root cause. It's going to take a much larger force of people being informed about what's going on in our country, what's happening locally, nationally, and internationally. It's going to take political will, and what I keep hearing from people is that the way to move

political will is to get the people [into motion]. I really believe in the grassroots and being able to build things from the bottom up.

But, right now, what I see a lot of is big NGOs and "big green" organizations that have this mentality that—and I don't think they are intentionally saying things "we can help"—but I think what happens is, they forget that the grassroots have a lot more power than [the NGOs] think they have. That's one thing we've been struggling with, that our folks really do have an answer. Give us more leeway, give us more resources to be able to help and find our place and space.

Environmental justice is all about how we speak for ourselves and, a lot of times, we're not given that opportunity to do that. I think if that changes, if it really changes to looking at your average person living on front lines, we can at least move in that direction [toward environmental justice].

It's not gonna be one thing, it's not gonna be overnight, it's not gonna be one thing that comes in and saves us. People talk about solar power, they'll talk about wind power. I'm down with that, but not with a corporate scale, not with large scale. It's going to have to be small scale, decentralized systems, and that takes power away from these big corporations. And that's just going to be how it has to be. We're going to have to go back to small scale things. Otherwise, we're putting ourselves, as human beings, in jeopardy.

Our planet is hurting, but she'll shake us off like a batch of fleas on a dog and get on with it, spinning around and doing what she needs to do to heal herself. That's our one true mother and that's who we have a responsibility to protect. If we don't, we're doing ourselves in. As humanity, we need to come to a common understanding that we have a responsibility to save ourselves and those that can't speak for themselves, the plants and animals that are here now. I think they'll eventually bounce back, but I don't think that's the same for humans.

I think that if we do ourselves in, we're going to go the way of the dinosaur. It's not far-fetched, things have become extinct before. We've put ourselves above the system instead of

part of the system. So, once we get ourselves back into the balance of things, things will turn out good. It's a little ways down the road, but it's growing, it's exciting, and I'm glad to

be a part of it.

The original article appears here , together with a link to the video <http://www.solidarity-us.org/site/n...>

Self-organization in the Syrian people's revolution

1 July 2013, by Ghayath Naisse

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The revolution that began in March 2011 continues, against the Baathist regime led by dictator Hafez al-Assad from November 1970 and by his son Bashar since his death in June 2000.

By force and through ruthless repression, the ruling clan was able to consolidate a military-police dictatorship that crushed for more than forty years any hint of opposition or independent activity. This dictatorship rests on loyalty to the state apparatus, based on family and regional or even religious ties, and widespread corruption. It also relies on its organic links with the bourgeoisie and all the religious or denominational hierarchies.

Neo-liberal socio-economic policies, accelerated by the savage repression of any popular or working-class protest since the early 2000s, have had devastating effects: the share of capital in GDP rose to 72 per cent in 2005, over a third of the population fell below the poverty line (less than \$1 a day) and nearly half live around this threshold (\$ 2 or less a day).

This is a genuine popular revolution; the driving social forces are the workers and more broadly the impoverished urban and rural social strata. These forces have been able to create, despite the outrageous violence of the regime, a popular armed resistance, in the cruelly felt absence of a revolutionary political leadership. They have created

structures of self-organization and coordinating bodies, as well as embryos of self-government, local councils and civil advice bureaus. These forms of control and administration from below are more developed in the Syrian revolution than in any other process in the countries of the region.

The following documents are part of a publication on the current experiences of local councils, published in issue number 13 of the newspaper *Al Khatt Al Amami* ("The Front Line") of the Current of the Revolutionary Left in Syria. Some of the articles are taken from the website of the critical democratic opposition *Zaman Alwasl*, established in Homs in 2005.

1. A report on the local councils

The General Commission of the National Coalition presented at its meeting a report on the local councils in Syria. This report goes back to the beginnings of the revolution, which coincided with the humanitarian crisis caused by the violence of the regime, causing suffering to a very great number of people in all the cities and villages. People began by offering offer basic services to people in need, but with the increased needs, individuals and small groups could not continue to provide these services without cooperating or coordinating with others.

From this there originated the local

councils, which reflect the sense of responsibility and the ability of citizens to take steps to run their own affairs, based on their own frameworks, experiences and energy (...). This leads us to affirm the strategic necessity of the project of local councils, and the importance of supporting them by all possible means (...) free of partisan, racial or ideological considerations. The councils are a concrete demonstration which belies the assertions about the spread of anarchy and disorganization because of the present revolutionary situation or the fall of the regime. All the declarations regarding the ability of Syrians to find an alternative to the Assad regime, to ensure stability and security by meeting the basic needs of the population and leading it towards development, remain theoretical and devoid of credibility in the absence of this concrete example which will prove to the Syrian people and to the world the possibility of such an alternative.

The local councils in Syria constitute an administrative structure for managing the daily lives of citizens in the absence of the state (...). They exist in various forms, in areas still under the control of the regime as well as in those which have liberated themselves. They are entirely run by the people.

Leadership and representation

The report states that running things is up to the individuals and groups who have offered their services to a large number of needy people, in the

best way possible and with a long-term perspective. Most of the material and moral support was provided by Syrians in the country and those abroad, until the needs become immense. That is when fundraising began abroad (...). The decisions regarding distribution of aid were usually taken by the person who provided it. But the need was felt for a method of distribution that was more thought-out and more just, getting away from quotas and considerations based on belonging to a particular group. This is the role that local councils are trying to fill. This is what will give them national credibility (...).

Due to the exceptional circumstances through which Syria is living, it is clear - according to the report - that the methods of choosing representatives cannot be as exemplary as in elections held under favourable circumstances. It is necessary to make permanent efforts to achieve the most scrupulous representation at all levels of government. The report indicates that the local councils take care to be in contact with the revolutionary opposition groups, civil or military. In addition to the above objectives, they play an important role in the revolution through the provision of civil services to these groups, designed to help them continue their work (...).

The report shows that the main objective of the local councils at this stage is to fill the void left by the state, by providing public services to the greatest number and in the best conditions. It is a question of forming the embryos of the municipalities that will be elected tomorrow, in liaison with the future provisional government. The essential objective is to fill the administrative and organizational void by providing services to the public. This means managing civilian life in the fields of education, cleanliness, water and electricity supply, fuel, civil status, the distribution of aid (...).

The councils must provide services according to need, in terms of aid, medicine, information, civil defense, law, reconstruction and administrative, professional and media development. Whether their purpose is the defence of the popular

movement or guaranteeing the functioning of social networks, they help to reinforce the values of community life and civic culture. They also aim to preserve the institutions of the state, public buildings and private property, and to protect citizens, in cooperation and coordination with the military brigades and councils.

The values to disseminate

The report states that the action of the local councils, in all areas of civil power, shall disseminate core values, including commitment to the goals of the revolution: realizing the aspirations of the people, mutual respect for the establishment of a homogeneous functional milieu, governed by friendship and cooperation (...).

The principles are those of consultation and election, of decisions taken without despotism or in an arbitrary way, within a framework of loyalty, transparency and sharing, of creation, innovation and perseverance, with the aim of developing interactive exchanges between all components of society, of strengthening coordination and complementarity, of equality of rights between Syrians without discrimination based on religious, ethnic or national criteria.

The report highlights the many difficulties that the local councils have faced, which have weakened them and which they are working to resolve. Not the least of these problems is inexperience, since the local councils were constituted in a situation of crisis (...). To this must be added the lack of clear definitions on the level of responsibilities and prerogatives, the difficulty in ensuring the soundness and the veracity of the information that makes it possible to assess needs and thus develop plans of action.

The stages in the creation of the local councils

The report examines the stages in the creation of the local councils. The first meeting was held in early July 2012 in the presence of representatives from Latakia, Homs, Deraa, Damascus and its suburbs, Hassaka and Idleb, and in the latter part of the meeting, from

Aleppo. Its aim was to discuss the idea of local councils and to open channels of contact between governorates to ensure better coordination between revolutionaries. Out of this meeting came a committee responsible for monitoring representation, consisting of seven persons for each governorate, whose task was to outline a unified set of rules for functioning.

The second meeting, three weeks later in Istanbul, was of the monitoring committee. The revolutionary situation in each governorate and the mechanisms for selecting the seven representatives from each governorate were presented. Representatives of Latakia, Homs, Deraa, Damascus and its suburbs, Dir, Hassaka and Idleb attended.

The third meeting was held in Ankara two weeks later, in the presence of representatives of Latakia, Homs, Deraa, Damascus and its suburbs, Dir, Hassaka, Idleb, Hama and Aleppo. This meeting drafted a unified set of rules that the monitoring committee would present directly to the revolutionaries within Syria (...).

Source :

<http://www.zamanalwsl.net/readNews.php?id=35993>

2. The local council of a border village

A local council was established in Aqrabat, a village situated on the Syrian-Turkish border, in the Idleb region. It comprises ten offices, including relief, finance, services, justice, security, education and medicine.

Captain Abdessalam Abderrazak, liaison officer of the council, told *Zaman Alwasl*: "The council was established on the basis of uniting all the populations through representation of their families. The founding committee has twenty members who represent these families. The need for such a council was felt because of the resurgence of the problem of internally displaced persons". He mentioned the need for

organization and services to compensate for the void resulting from the absence of the state as regards security and subsistence, "as a result of the reprisals of the regime against the liberated regions, depriving them of all vital services".

Regarding the projects of the local council for the coming days, Abderrazak spoke of the construction of an oven that would serve the village and the nearby camps, where there are forty thousand refugees, the establishment of a police station to maintain security, the reactivation of the judicial office through an Implementation Committee respected by the entire population, and finally he mentioned the possible installation of an electric generator. *Zaman Alwasl* has learned from different sources within the council that it identifies impoverished families in the village in order to meet their needs. The proposed automatic oven should also provide dozens of jobs to those who have been unfairly dismissed from government employment.

The sources indicated that the quintessence of the democratic experiment was demonstrated by the election of the president of the council; two administratively competent people were candidates and one was elected by a difference of one vote. The population of Aqrabat is about two thousand; the creation of local councils in the Idleb region is considered as an important step on the road to building a free Syria.

Source:
<http://zamanalwsl.net/readNews.php?id=35814>

3. A democratic dream has been realized in Deir Ezzor

Under the bombardments, the opposition is organizing local elections in the "liberated" areas of the city in an election which is a first in 40 years. In the galleries of the old market town of Deir Ezzor, which is daily prey to mortar fire and is the scene of violent

clashes, a free electoral process "was organized for the first time in forty years" as it was described by Khadr, a member of the local council of the opposition which was elected on Sunday by the inhabitants of the "liberated" areas.

Khadr won one of the five seats on the "local council" in Deir Ezzor. Opponents of the regime, among them combatants, decided to create such councils, which administer the affairs of the populations in the zones evacuated by the forces of the regime and abandoned by the government. The newly elected official said: "This is a historic day for all the inhabitants of Deir Ezzor; they feel free to elect the person they believe can help".

In the neighbourhoods outside the control of the regular forces in the East of the country, signs call on people to vote and leaflets are distributed in the commercial areas.

It is in the neighborhood of Sheikh Yassin, underground, that dozens of voters, sheltering from the heavy rain and the mortar shells, check the list of candidates. Oum Chadi, 56, said she would vote for the first time in her life and added: "I want to vote to tell Bashar that all that we were asking for at the beginning was free elections like this, to participate in making decisions in our country". Her son was killed six months ago, fighting against regular troops (...).

Abdelhamid, a former engineer who oversaw the election process, said that "people came despite the bombing to support the revolution (...) this is a way for them to confront the regime without resorting to arms."

Today, nearly 200,000 people live in Deir Ezzor, according to activists, whereas before the population was more than 750,000, many of whom have fled the violence. A resident said, on condition of anonymity: "In the past, elections were held to show Syrian democracy to the world, while the winners were all in the Baath party", which has governed Syria for half a century.

Abdulmajid, 75, who put his voting slip in the ballot box to applause, declared: "The Assad family has ruled for forty

years, the time for change has come," and recalled that it "did not come to power in a democratic way", referring to the coup that brought the former president Hafez Al Assad, father of the current president, to power in 1970, whereas "the Syrian regime wants to convince the world that our uprising is illegitimate. We are only asking for what we were robbed of", and he continued: "Democracy will return to Syria."

Another voter, Mohammad Ahmad, said that Syrians "want a democratic state, not an Islamic state. We dream of a secular state governed by civilians, not by mullahs."

The Free Syrian Army has banned its members from participating in the elections. For the commander of the battalion fighting in the city, "it is an opportunity to listen to the voices of civilians. We are working to fight the regime "(...)

Source:
<http://middle-east-online.com/id=150017>

4. The local council of the municipality of Maadan

The "liberated" areas are full of examples of successful administration by local councils, which demonstrate the ability of people to organize their affairs, a flagrant refutation of attempts to alert the media about "the coming anarchy."

The answer comes from Maadan (Raqqah region), in the person of Nawaf Alaali, delegate of the partially liberated town, who depicts it as "a model that inspires pride as regards good administration".

He says that the local council runs the area with "very limited resources", highlighting the absence of any kidnapping or theft. Alaali, delegate of the local councils of Raqqah, speaks of the security and preservation of all containers of cereals, because "not a single grain was stolen, despite the lack of bread".

He says that the local council has protected public services and maintained them in good order, as it also has the schools, which function "despite the lack of salaries for civil servants and teachers," highlighting the fact that an education commission within the council is beginning to amend the programme after having removed the paragraphs eulogizing the Baath regime.

Alaali reveals that the village is now preparing to host a satellite channel that will highlight this exemplary role in the administration of liberated areas.

Source:

<http://www.zamanalwsl.net/readNews.php?id=35824>

5. The general constituent congress of the local council of the governorate of Raqqa

Information Office of Free Tell Abiad, 16 February 2013.

Today there was held in free Tell Abiad the general constituent congress of the local council of the governorate of Raqqa. It was attended by fifty members representing Raqqa, Tell Abiad, Suluk, Alibajalia, Maadan, Tabaka, Alkarama and Sabkha.

We proceeded to choose the presiding officer, the oldest member of the council, Dr. Hamad Soltan, and also his deputy, the reporter of the meeting and the secretary. There was a discussion on the proceedings of the

conference and an agreement on a percentage of representation of each area (...). Then the local councils of Tell Abiad Maadan, Tabaka and Alkarama spoke, and for civil society the youth association of Tell Abiad intervened.

The elections were conducted by secret ballot. Four people had applied for the post of president of the council. Professor Saad Chaouich got 25 votes. We then elected the vice-presidents. Then there was consensus on the 15-member executive committee and five members were chosen as members of the control commission.

There will be a press conference today to comment on the details of this historic democratic event. Tell Abiad will be the temporary seat of the local council of the governorate of Raqqa, until the liberation of the town (...).

Current of the Revolutionary Left

Appeal for solidarity with Syrian revolutionaries

The Syrian people has since March 2011 decided to revolt against a ferocious dictatorship, for its emancipation, freedom, dignity and social justice.

The Assad dictatorship responded to

the peaceful demands of protesters with unprecedented violence, leading to tens of thousands dead, hundreds of thousands injured and imprisoned, millions of displaced persons and refugees and ravaged and destroyed towns and neighborhoods.

The Syrian revolution is a genuine popular revolution. It has been able to thwart the attempts of the dictatorial regime to transform it into a sectarian war. The people in revolt is firmly attached to its independence from any attempt to impose hegemony.

The Current of the Revolutionary Left in Syria is engaged in this democratic and revolutionary social dynamic. It needs our help and our support to strengthen its role and its ability to intervene in the popular struggles in Syria.

Long live the people's revolution in Syria! Long live international solidarity!

The Syria Solidarity Association (Association Solidarité Syrie, an association registered in France) aims to assist the Current of the Revolutionary Left.

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