



IV463 - August 2013

A Jewish Marxist “accused” by the Neo-Nazis

31 August 2013, by **Michael Löwy**

Savas Mikhail is an unusual person and a thinker quite beyond norms: an anti-Zionist and internationalist Greek Jew, he is the author of a considerable oeuvre, unclassifiable, somewhere between literature, philosophy, and class-struggle, with an outstanding originality and dynamism. The first thing which impresses the reader of his writings is his immense culture: the author is familiar with the Bible, the Talmud, the Kabala, the ancient Greek theatre, European literature, contemporary French philosophy, modern Greek poetry, Hegel, and Marx—not to speak of Trotsky, his main political inspiration—and one could enlarge the list.

One of the most singular characteristics of his thought is the attempt to re-interpret Marxism and revolutionary theory in light of Jewish Messianism and mysticism, and vice-versa. It is an inventive and paradoxical experiment, which belongs—like the writings of Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin, two of his favourite authors—to the universe of religious atheism, or, if one prefers, of profane Messianism.

These ideas are for the first time discussed in a central way in a remarkable collection of essays published in 1999, *Figures of the Messianic*. His last book, *Golem: On the Subject and Other Phantoms* is another example of this religious atheist, Judeo-Marxist approach. It is a

collection of essays concerning not only the Golem legend, but also Kafka, Hölderlin, Lacan, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Hegel, Marx, and some modern Greek poets such as Andreas Embirikos. The coherence of the book is given through its unique way of associating, combining, and fusing Jewish mysticism, literature (Greek and universal), and revolutionary Marxism.

Savas Mikhail has never hidden his anti-fascist commitment, and has not ceased, in the last years, to denounce the sinister activities of the Greek neo-Nazi organisation “Golden Dawn” (Chryssi Avghi), which should rather be called “Bloody Sunset”. In 2009, this organization, which openly and insistently claims the heritage of the Third Reich, presented, to the Greek Courts, a lawsuit against a great number of militants of the entire Greek Left or Far Left, as well as against all the immigrant associations, cultural groups, and independent personalities. By decision of the Prosecutor—named by the Neo-Liberal Right-wing government—the police called in 2012 all these personalities for interrogation. All of them refused to come, but presented by their lawyers legal depositions answering and rejecting the accusations.

After examining these documents, the Prosecutor decided to bring to the Courts only two of these dozens persons accused by the neo-Nazis:

Savas Mikhail and the former Dean of the Polytechnic School, Constantinos Moutzouris, who was accused of having permitted Indymedia, an alternative social media, to use the facilities of the School for its emissions. As for Savas Mikhail, he was accused of “defamation” toward the neo-Nazis, because he denounced them as criminals; of “incitation to violence”, because he called to fight fascism; and “attempt against civil peace” for having called, in a pamphlet, to demonstrate against Chryssi Avghi. Meanwhile, the Greek neo-Nazi unleashed a brutal anti-Semitic campaign against Savas Mikhail, denouncing him in their media as “an agent of the Jewish world conspiracy against the Greek Nation, aiming to provoke a civil war and establish a Judeo-Bolshevik regime”. It gives a sinister feeling of *déjà-vu*.

This affair has of course raised numerous protests in Greece and Europe, but nevertheless the trial will take place, and the date will be September 3, 2013. It is an important issue: beyond the accused persons, it will be decided if it is still possible in Greece, in the future, to freely express antifascist ideas. The whole affair illustrates not only the extraordinary arrogance of the so-called “Golden Dawn”, but also the more and more obvious complicity of the present Greek government, presided by Mr Antonis Samaras, with the Greek

fascists. Several of the Ministers in this increasingly authoritarian and repressive government come from the Far Right: the "adviser of the Minister" for Immigration, Kostoulas, is the author of a negationist book glorifying the Third Reich; the ruling party's (so-called "New Democracy") parliamentary group's spokesperson at the Parliament, Makis Voridis, is a

former leader of the "Nationalist Youth Movement" promoted by the dictatorship of Colonel Papadopoulos (1967-1974). The recent decision of Antonis Samaras to pure and simply close ERT, the Greek public television, and throw out all its employees—a decision which provoked a governmental crisis, with the departure of the moderate Democratic

Left Party—was warmly supported by Chryssi Avghi.

We will know, on September 3, if anti-Semitism has become the law in Greece or if a minimum of democratic guarantees still exist.

August 22, 2013

[Solidarity](#)

All coal is dirty coal

31 August 2013, by Chris Mastrangelo

Chanting "all coal is dirty coal, leave it in the ground" and "green jobs, union jobs, justice for Somerset," protesters called on Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick to close down the largest single source of greenhouse gases in the northeast and provide a just transition to clean, renewable energy for the area's residents and workers.

Represented at the rally were activists from a host of organizations, including 350 Massachusetts, the Better Future Project, Occupy Fall River, Fossil Free Rhode Island, and System Change Not Climate Change, the Ecosocialist Coalition. In an act of civil disobedience, a contingent of protesters at the head of the march walked onto the power plant's property to be arrested by police while hundreds of activists behind them chanted "Shut it down! Shut it down!" By the end of the march, 44 protesters had been lead away by police.

Had the police been interested in protecting local residents from a genuine threat, they could have turned their attention to the power plant towering above them. Over 13,000 tons of coal are burned at Brayton Point every day. The plant regularly spews toxins and carcinogens such as mercury, arsenic, cadmium, sulfur and lead into the surrounding water and air; on more than one occasion, entire neighborhoods in Somerset have been blanketed with coal dust.

Unsurprisingly, this constant pollution has lead to dramatically elevated rates of asthma, lung disease, and cancer in nearby Somerset and Fall River. In 2000, a Harvard School of Public Health study found that pollutants from Brayton Point were responsible each year for 28,900 asthma attacks, 1,140 emergency room visits and 106 premature deaths.

"Make no mistake about it—this plant kills people," said Craig Altermose of the Better Future Project. "It kills people in Somerset and Fall River, where they have higher rates of asthma and lung disease and cancer. It kills people in West Virginia where they're blowing the tops off of mountains and turning people's lungs black. And it kills people through climate change."

BRAYTON POINT is the largest single source of greenhouse gases in the region, producing over 6 million tons of carbon emissions a year. And in the summer after Hurricane Sandy—a summer that has seen record-breaking heat waves, droughts and wildfires spread across the globe—the price of powering a world economy on carbon has become far too high for far too many.

But the plant's corporate owners, energy giant Dominion Resources, have little interest in the environmental destruction caused by

burning coal—not as long as they can make a profit off it. The operation of Brayton Point, and dozens of plants like it, has made the company billions of dollars in profits, even as it destroys our health and our environment through the burning of fossil fuels—to say nothing of that fuel's extraction.

Much of the coal burned at Brayton Point is mined through mountaintop removal—literally, by dynamiting the tops off of mountains, a process that destroys vast tracts of critical wildlife habitat, pollutes air and water with a slew of toxic chemicals and heavy metals, and has resulted in high rates of cancer, lung disease and birth defects in surrounding communities.

"We're losing our history, our culture, our everything," said Chuck Nelson, a retired West Virginia miner and an activist with Keepers of the Mountains. "And the only reason they do it is that they went from deep mining in the seventies and eighties when we had 130,000 miners, to mountaintop removal, where we're producing just as much coal with 17,000 miners. That's what it's all about. It's about maximizing the industry's profit."

The fossil fuel industry has crassly exploited its workers as readily as it has the natural world—a fact that stands in stark contradiction to Dominion's claims that plants like Brayton Point are valuable for the jobs they provide. As protesters erected

model wind turbines and solar panels outside the plant, speakers called for both the plant's shutdown and its replacement with clean, renewable sources of energy that could provide both a sustainable future for the planet and good union jobs for the community.

"My union has long rejected the choice between jobs and the environment," said Peter Knowlton, an organizer with the United Electrical,

Radio and Machine Workers of America. "We have the capability and the capacity for the mass production of renewable and life-sustaining generation of electricity. Hire community residents for renewable energy projects. Provide them with the support and sustenance necessary to maintain a decent union standard of living."

To make that transition will require

more pressure applied by protests like these, which in turn will require greater organization and cooperation between activists, workers and affected communities. But the July 28 action, the largest protest by far in years of organizing against the plant, is a promising sign in the growing fight against an industry—and an economic system—that would burn the world for profit.

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Solidarity with the people of Syria

30 August 2013, by International Socialist Network, Socialist Resistance

The defeat of the government pro-war resolution in Parliament is important. Even though Labour voted against the Tory motion, it too had submitted a pro-war resolution, albeit calling for a pause until after the report from the UN weapons inspectors. That resolution was also defeated. These votes reflect the anti-war mood in Britain. But as far as the USA is concerned, the threat of war is still on the agenda possibly using bases in Britain.

The regime of Bashar al-Assad is every day carrying out more massacres of increasing cruelty against the people of Syria, whether it be the bombing of civilian areas or the use of chemical weapons. Two years into the uprising against the dictatorship, over 100,000 have died, two million are refugees and many more are ?displaced? out of a population of just 20 million. This tragedy fills us with horror and rage.

We continue to extend our solidarity to the movement for democracy in Syria. We pay tribute to all those who have lost their lives in the fight against the brutal dictatorship and to all those who are continuing to resist.

But the hypocrisy of imperialist countries also makes us angry. They bear the primary responsibility in the tragedy and in allowing the murderous

Assad dictatorship to remain in power by allowing the rebellion to be starved of arms whilst Assad is supplied by Russia and Iran. They wring their hands at the plight on the Syrian people but deny them the means to defend themselves.

For over two years, Britain, the USA and France have stood by, refusing to deliver defensive anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons to the progressive and democratic components of the opposition, for fear that the toppling of the Assad regime may extend and deepen the revolution which started in Egypt and Tunisia in 2011. At the same time, they allowed Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states to support Islamist reactionary forces, in their attempt at transforming the Syrian revolution into a sectarian war. They know that the victory of the revolution in Syria could spread to the region constituting a major threat to their regimes.

Now, Britain, the USA and France are discussing yet another ?humanitarian intervention?, with targeted military strikes to warn Assad that they have the monopoly on the use of chemical weapons.

We continue oppose with the utmost determination any foreign direct military intervention in Syria, be it

that of the USA, Britain, France and their allies or that of Iran and its allies. Those within the rebellion who support this are making a big mistake. We believe that the people of Syria should be enabled to free themselves from the Assad dictatorship. For their struggle to be successful, they should receive all the necessary material aid, including arms and humanitarian assistance, without conditions imposed by the West.

There has been a deafening silence from Western states in the face of the huge refugee crisis gripping Syria. This reflects the long-term racism and islamophobia against refugees and economic migrants.

The Assad dictatorship has burnt all the bridges to a possible peaceful and negotiated transition to democracy. Both the USA and Britain on one side, and Russia and Iran on the other want a solution imposed from above: maintain the regime but remove Bashar al-Assad.

We reject the notion that this rebellion has been co-opted by imperialism. This remains a popular revolution by a people struggling to free itself from oppression. It is a key component of the Arab spring which has inspired the masses of the region and beyond.

We oppose both the 'humanitarian intervention' of Britain, France and the USA, and the pro-Assad intervention by Iran and Russia. Instead, we choose to be on the side of the revolutionary masses struggling for their emancipation, and extend our solidarity in particular to the democratic and progressive components of the revolution.

Alongside the Stop the War Coalition,

we will continue to campaign against intervention in Syria by Britain, France and the USA, and to send practical relief and humanitarian aid to the Syrian revolution. We also extend our hand of solidarity to Syrian socialists such as those in the Revolutionary Left Current, who have stated that their 'revolution has no sincere ally, except the popular revolutions of the region and of the world and of all the militants

struggling against regimes of ignorance and servitude and exploitation'.

No to imperialist intervention.

Solidarity with the revolution against the Assad dictatorship.

Let the people of Syria determine their own future, free from foreign intervention.

Statement on Imminent U.S. Intervention in Syria

30 August 2013, by Solidarity

McCain, Boehner, Graham, Kerry, Biden...the call of U.S. war hawks from both parties is growing louder. Their pretext, of course, is the chemical attack that killed hundreds of civilians near Damascus, adding to tens of thousands killed, and millions of refugees displaced, all manifestations of the cruelties of the Syrian civil war.

According to a senior administration official, President Obama has made "no decision" on military intervention [1], but warplanes and military transporters are massing at Britain's Akrotiri airbase on Cyprus, less than 100 miles from the Syrian coastline. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel has announced that "all military assets" are in place for an imminent rocket attack on Syria from the eastern Mediterranean.

Advocates of military intervention point to the atrocities of the civil war, including the nerve gas attack. It seems overwhelmingly likely, though not absolutely certain, that the Syrian regime perpetrated that attack. But

the United States and Britain are no strangers to committing war crimes or using chemical weapons — from the carpet bombing of Dresden ordered by Winston Churchill and the U.S. use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II, to Agent Orange and napalm in Vietnam to white phosphorus in Fallujah, Iraq.

Declassified documents published by Foreign Policy magazine just days ago detail U.S. support for Saddam Hussein's chemical attacks against Iran and the Kurds in the 1980s [2]. Those attacks jointly constitute the largest use of chemical weapons in modern history.

Solidarity condemns U.S. military intervention in Syria. That's not because we have any sympathy or support for the Assad regime. It's because missiles, whether delivered from ship or plane, will certainly cause civilian casualties. It's because bombing Syria will have nothing to do with protecting the population from further atrocities. *And it's because the United States has no legitimate right to attack countries whose*

governments it doesn't like.

An attack by the U.S. and its allies could even have the consequence of strengthening Assad's hold, giving the government cover as a fighter against Western imperialism. As one socialist group in Syria proclaimed, "Our revolution has no sincere ally, except the popular revolutions of the region and of the world and of all the militants struggling against regimes of ignorance and servitude and exploitation...No to Washington! No to Moscow!" [3]

The Solidarity Political Committee calls upon our members to participate and help organize rallies and demonstrations against a dangerous and illegitimate U.S. military action that is likely to make an unfolding tragedy even worse.

**Solidarity Political Committee,
August 28, 2013**

IV463 - August 2013 PDF

30 August 2013, by **robm**

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Imperialism, sectarianism and Syria's revolution

29 August 2013, by **Joseph Daher**

How would you characterise the current balance of forces in Syria?

The military balance of forces is clearly on the side of the regime. It has been continuously provided [arms] by its allies (Iran and Russia), high inflows of money and in the case of Hezbollah has participated directly on the field, while training some new soldiers.

On the other side, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) completely lacks any real material and financial support. The Islamists reactionary forces such as Jabhat al Nusra and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) are being well-funded by some Gulf countries.

They fund the Islamist reactionary forces to transform the Syrian revolution into a sectarian war. The victory of the revolution in Syria and its spread to the region would be a threat to their own regimes.

We must not forget also that the tensions between FSA groups and Islamist forces of Jabhat al Nusra and ISIL have expanded recently. The latter are accused of murdering members of the FSA, including Fadi al-Qash, the head of a FSA battalion and his two brothers.

The ISIL also expelled FSA forces from several regions the FSA liberated and declared their will to establish

Islamic emirates, while refusing to fight on the front lines in Aleppo, Homs and Khan al Asal.

Despite the clear advantage of the regime militarily and their destruction, the determination of the Syrian popular movement has not diminished. There are continuous demonstrations and other forms of resistance in many regions throughout Syria.

How is it that in the face of such unequal military force, the Syrian people continue?

There is no coming back to the era of Assad regime and no alternative to the continuation of the revolution. One of the main slogans in Syria chanted by the protesters is "Rather death than humiliation". In addition the Syrian popular movement knows very well that if they stop they will face terrible repression from the regime.

Can you explain some of the economic and social factors underpinning the uprising?

The regime's bourgeois credentials started in 1970 when Hafez al-Assad put an end to some radical policies of the 1960s of the left wing of his Baath Party. They were accelerated with the implementation of neoliberal economic policies when [his son] Bashar al-Assad took power in 2000. These

policies especially benefited a small oligarchy.

Rami Makhoul, the cousin of Bashar al-Assad, represented the mafia-style process of privatisation led by the regime. A process of privatisation created new monopolies in the hands of relatives of Bashar al-Assad, while the quality of goods and services declined. These neoliberal economic reforms allowed the appropriation of economic power by rich and powerful.

At the same time the financial sector has developed with private banks, insurance firms, the Damascus stock exchange and money exchange bureaus. Neoliberal policies have satisfied the upper class and foreign investors, especially from the Arab Gulf, at the expense of the vast majority of Syrians, who have been hit by inflation and the rising cost of living.

These policies, accelerated by the savage repression of any popular or working class protest since the early 2000s, have had devastating effects. Capital's share of Gross Domestic Product rose to 72 per cent in 2005, over a third of the population fell below the poverty line (less than US \$1 a day) and nearly half live around this threshold (\$2 or less a day). Before the revolution there was between 20-25 per cent unemployment, reaching 55 per cent

for under-25s (in a country where people under 30 are 65 per cent of the total population). The percentage of Syrians living under the poverty line rose from 11 per cent in 2000 to 33 per cent in 2010. That is, about seven million Syrians live around or below the poverty line.

The uprisings in Idlib and Deraa ... and including the suburbs of Damascus and Aleppo, [these areas] are historic bastions of the Baath Party that had not taken part on a massive scale in the insurrection of the 1980s. This shows the involvement of the victims of neoliberalism in this revolution.

What role do the Local Coordinating Committees play in the opposition controlled areas and what kind of support do they have?

The LCC is only one actor in larger popular movement, concentrating its work especially on the provision of information, videos of demonstrations, but also working at a ground level with local popular councils, while providing services to local population and internal refugees.

We have to understand more generally the crucial role played by the popular committees and organisations in the continuation of the revolutionary process, they are the ultimate actors that allow the popular movement to resist. This is not to undermine the role played by the armed resistance, but even they are dependent on the popular movement to continue the battle, otherwise without it we would not stand a chance.

What is your response to some on the left who assert that the Syrian opposition are proxies for Western imperialism and the oil rich Gulf states?

The problem with some of the Western left, especially the Stalinists, is that they have been analysing the Syrian revolutionary process from a geo-political perspective, ignoring completely the socio-economic and political dynamism on the ground in Syria. Many of them also consider Iran, Russia, or Syria to be anti-imperialist states struggling against

the USA, which is wrong on every aspect. Our choice should not be to choose between on one side the USA and Saudi Arabia and on the other side Iran and Russia, our choice is revolutionary masses struggling for their emancipation.

As Pierre Frank, French Trotskyist, wrote : "Let us note that the greatest theoreticians of Marxism did not at all define the political nature of a bourgeois regime by the positions which the latter held in the field of foreign policy but solely and simply by the position it occupied in relation to the classes composing the nation"

In addition, both sides have been trying to impose a solution from above that would maintain the regime with a Yemeni solution (change the head of the regime, while maintaining its structure). The only difference between the positions of the Western governments and the Gulf monarchies on one side and Iran, Russia, and China's positions on the other, remains the same: what fate for the dictator Bashar al-Assad? Russia wants to maintain the dictator, while Western powers want a new leader, even more open to their interests than Bashar al-Assad.

There have been reports of armed Islamist groups attacking other groups in the opposition. What impact has this had on the opposition and how have the revolutionary forces responded?

The Syrian revolutionary masses have increasingly opposed the authoritarian and reactionary policies of these groups. In the city of Raqqqa, which has been liberated from the forces of the regime since March 2013, many popular demonstrations occurred against the authoritarian actions of Jabhat al Nusra and ISIS in the city. Similar demonstrations took place with masses challenging this kind of behavior in Aleppo and other cities.

It should be said as well that Jabhat al Nusra has not hesitated to strike deals with the Assad regime, for example the regime is paying more than \$150 million Syrian lire [AU \$2.4 million] monthly to them to guarantee oil is kept pumping through two major pipelines in Baniyas and Latakia. Jabhat

al Nusra fighters have also been involved in other businesses.

The Syrian National Council, instead of defending the principles of the revolution and doing everything possible to develop the democratic components of the FSA, have let these groups, which are and were part of the counter-revolution since their establishment, to develop without condemning them and actually providing them with cover. These groups, just like the Syrian regime want to divide the Syrian people into sectarian and ethnic entities. The Syrian revolution wants to break the sectarian and ethnic division.

What has been the response to the recent attacks by Islamist groups on Kurdish areas?

We have seen support from various popular committees in Syria for the Kurdish masses against the actions of the Islamist groups. Sections of the FSA are divided. Some are fighting alongside Islamists, but others joined the Kurdish militias and denounced abuses committed by Islamist groups.

The traditional opposition, from Islamists to nationalists and liberals, is in favour of Kurdish cultural rights, but not autonomy. The Current of the Revolutionary Left in Syria has reaffirmed its commitment and support to the self-determination of the Kurdish people in Syria. Support for self-determination of the Kurdish people does not prevent us from wishing to see the Kurdish people to be a full partner in the struggle against the criminal regime of Assad, and in the building of a future democratic, socialist and secular Syria.

We also condemned the behaviour of Islamists and other reactionary forces and their attempts to divide the Syrian people. Similarly, the refusal of some in the Syrian opposition, including the Syrian National Council (SNC), to recognise the rights of the Kurdish people in Syria are unacceptable and are no different of the nationalist policies of the Assad regime.

What distinct left wing organisations and forces exist inside the Syrian revolutionary

movement?

Different leftist forces have been involved in the Syrian revolutionary process since the revolutionary process began. We can find numerous smaller leftist groups and youth in Syria participating in the revolutionary process, in popular committees on the ground, organisation of demonstrations and of the provision of services to the

population. The left has mostly been engaged in the civil work, in opposition to the armed work.

From the very beginning, despite our modest capacities, we, the Current of the Revolutionary Left has not once faltered in our engagement with the revolution, calling for democracy and socialism. We have struggled alongside the people and all democratic forces for the victory of

this great popular revolution, just as we struggle for the formation of a socialist workers' party.

23 August, 2013

Read the Current of the Revolutionary Left's [statement on Assad's chemical weapons massacre](#):

Interview first published in [Solidarity magazine](#).

"The Act of Killing"

28 August 2013, by **Alex de Jong**



The country's president at the time of massacres, Sukarno, was one of the leaders of the nationalist movement that in the late 1940s had won independence against Dutch colonialism. Of the three major sources of political power – the army, Islamic movements and the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) – the PKI gradually became his favorite in the 1960s. The charismatic populist and the Indonesian Communists drew closer and closer as Sukarno vehemently denounced western imperialism and the influence of western powers over the formally independent ex-colonies. He became an ally of Mao's China and started talking about a worldwide anti-imperialist front and 'Indonesian socialism'. Loyally supporting the popular Indonesian leader, the PKI became the largest Communist party outside the Communist bloc with millions of members and supporters. The autocratic Sukarno appointed prominent PKI-leaders to symbolic posts in his government.

Counter-revolution

The Indonesian elites and army leadership watched with growing unease. After bloody conflicts between the PKI and right-wing forces in the

1940s, the PKI had chosen a legal, peaceful strategy but it remained an opponent of the army. High ranking (retired) officers grew wealthy as entrepreneurs or plantation-owners where they confronted an increasingly confident, PKI-dominated labor movement. Religious leaders had their own reasons to oppose the PKI; they abhorred the left-wing 'atheists', even though many PKI-members were devout believers. Religious organizations owned large portions of land and opposed Sukarno's and PKI's plans for land reform.

The political situation grew increasingly tense as the 1960s progressed. The spark that lit the powder keg was a putsch on the 30th of September, 1965. A group of middle-ranking military officers abducted and killed a number of right-wing senior officers that were known to oppose Sukarno. Only hours later, the putschists declared a 'revolutionary council' that would replace Sukarno's cabinet. However, troops commanded by general Suharto swiftly crushed the '30 September Movement'.

In the following six months, Indonesian society was transformed as the country underwent a massive wave of violence. The PKI, its mass organizations and the left-wing of Sukarnoist nationalism were violently destroyed by a 'coalition for violence' composing of senior officers, big

capitalists, religious movements and their militia. [4] Conservative estimates put the number of victims at between 700.000 and one million. Sukarno was swept aside, Suharto became the undisputed new ruler of Indonesia.

The 30 September Movement, or G30S in the Indonesian initials, is one of the great riddles of 20th century history. Indonesia's new rulers claimed it was a front of the PKI that tried to seize power. The Communists were said to have compiled kill-lists and to have prepared mass-graves. Especially singled out was Gerwani, the PKI-allied women's organization. The new regime concocted grotesque stories about how communist women had supposedly sexually tortured the captured generals. But the PKI didn't organize any actions in support of its supposed coup d'état and the number of communists that actually participated in the G30S was small.

The most convincing explanation of the movement is given by John Roosa. [5] The G30S didn't plan for a coup but wanted to impose a purge of the army leadership. However, after a number of botched kidnappings resulted in deaths, Sukarno couldn't support the movement. The declaration of a 'revolutionary council' by the movement was a panicked attempt to gain control of an escalating situation. PKI involvement was limited to a few leading members,

among them secretary general D. N. Aidit, who acted without informing the rest of the leadership, let alone the party.

The G30S handed the army a dreamed for excuse to move against its opponents and seize power. Western powers supported the army's coup, donating money and weapons and signaling their approval of the bloodbath. Robert J. Martens, from 1963 to 1966 political officer at the United States Embassy in Jakarta, admitted handing a list with the names of 5.000 Indonesian leftists to the army, practically signing their death sentence. Martens reportedly later said; "It really was a big help to the army.... They probably killed a lot of people, and I probably have a lot of blood on my hands, but that's not all that bad. There's a time when you have to strike hard at a decisive moment'. [6]

Present history

This history is only briefly dealt with in *The Act of Killing*. That is because this is a movie that is not primarily about the past of half a century ago, it is about the present, the continuing power of the perpetrators of '1965' and the kind of society they have made.

The film follows members of one of the militias that were part of the coalition for violence, the *Pemuda Pancasila*. In one especially disturbing scene, a group of former militia-members remember their youthful glory-days in the sixties, when they decided the value of human life, when they decided who would live and who would die. One man laughingly recalls the pleasure of raping teenage girls. The other men enthusiastically agree...

The movie focuses on three *Pemuda Pancasila* members. One of them, Herman, is followed as he makes an unsuccessful bid for political office. His motivation is the possibilities for fraud and corruption the job would provide. He is seen shaking down small business owners, members of the country's discriminated ethnic Chinese minority, together with his *Pemuda Pancasila buddies*. He

relishes explaining how he would enrich himself if elected. This man claims to have murdered dozens of people in 1965 and after and shows an absolute lack of remorse. It seems possible he is too dumb to realize the enormity of his crimes.

Haji Anif is different. Of the three killers portrayed, he is the wealthiest. He has obviously done good for himself and became an affluent *pater familias* who takes his family on shopping trips to Jakarta's gaudy malls. He enjoys good relationships with powerful politicians - not despite the fact that he is a killer but because of it. After all, he is supposed to be one of the 'heroes' who 'saved Indonesia'. He too feels no remorse and explains why when he relates that morality and crime are relative. As Haji explains, when George W. Bush was president, 'Guantanamo' became legal: why would the permissibility of '1965' be any less dependent on political contingency? 'What do you mean, 'crimes against humanity'? It is history's winners who decide who are guilty and who innocent, what is a crime and what not. And since Haji is a winner, he has nothing to fear.

The 'star' of the film is Anwar Congo. Like his friends, he was a small criminal before 1965 but became a local 'hero' when as a *Pemuda Pancasila* recruit he tortured and killed dozens of people. The vain Anwar enthusiastically agrees with Oppenheimer's suggestion to make a film about his experience of 1965. This film was not supposed to be factual documentary (do Anwar and his friends even know what that is?) but would be a work of fiction that portrays their experience and feelings. The most surreal moments in *The Act of Killing* are scenes from this 'movie in the movie'. Just like Anwar was inspired by Hollywood movies in his killing techniques, the movie he wants to make is inspired by Hollywood. Different scenes see him playing a cowboy, a mafioso... As the process of making this movie progresses and Anwar remembers his acts, a sense of what has done seems to dawn on him. After watching one of his own scenes, he wonders whether maybe he has sinned.



A former militia-member demonstrates his execution technique

A former militia-member demonstrates his execution technique

Myths

The anti-communist propaganda of the post-1965 'New Order' regime seems crude, contradictory, sometimes even counterproductive. If the PKI was really such an existential threat to the nation as the New Order propaganda claims, why was it absolutely no match at all for the army, supposedly heroic defenders of Indonesia? And what to make of the new rulers' insinuations that Sukarno was a sympathizer of the same movement that tried to dispose him? Indonesia expert Max Lane described the New Order's style of propaganda by comparing it to that of other anti-communist dictatorships: most dictators would claim that Communists were evil because they wanted to take people's possessions away or they would give a similar distorted picture of the goals of Communists. In the New Order's propaganda, the Communists committed evil acts because they were evil people, that is all. The complete obscurity of the political goals of the PKI was part of the general depoliticization of the population that was the New Order's goal. Unlike other right-wing dictatorships, the New Order didn't aim at mobilizing the population for its own ideology but at turning them in to an a-political, apathetic 'floating mass'.

Some times, the New Order propaganda just ignores all victims except those killed by G30S. For decades, each year Indonesian television showed the propaganda-movie *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (The treason of G30S/PKI), a movie that portrays the communists as such bloodthirsty animals that watching it still helps Anwar get rid of feelings of guilt. A brief comment in *The Act of Killing* shows the effectiveness of this kind of blunt historical manipulation: one crew-member is surprised to hear that the PKI was ever a legal party...

Commenting on the effect of *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI*, Indonesian academic Ariel Heryanto relayed how like in other countries kids played cops and robbers, in Indonesia kids would play 'communists and army' – but kids especially liked playing the communists who were fierce and strong, unlike the gentle soldiers who were most of all victims!

Another center-piece of New Order propaganda seems to have a similarly counterproductive effect. Near the monument for the officers murdered by the G30S, there is the *Museum Pengkhianatan PKI (Komunis)*, 'museum of 'communist treachery', with dioramas supposedly portraying revolts and coup-attempts of the PKI. No explanation of the motivation of the Communists is given, the museum doesn't even attempt to present a convincing narrative, as befits the complete de-politicization of the New Order. Leftist leader Amir Sjarifuddin Harahap for example is (of course) supposed to be one of the villains but it is hard to imagine that the museum's creators really thought that simply by omitting the fact, visitors would forget he was one of the leaders of the independence struggle and even prime minister of Indonesia. Since the army of course will not admit to executing prisoners like Sjarifuddin, leftists like him are all supposed to have defiantly refused to surrender, fighting until their death. The PKI's thinking will remain a mystery to the museum's visitors if they have no other information, but they will get the impression the PKI was a party with considerable support, capable of almost continuously launching insurrections and Communists appear as extremely dedicated, willing to do for their cause.

Another, orientalist reading of '1965', admits that there was massive bloodletting but is still compatible with the New Order myth of the army as a national savior. According to this version, the PKI had violated some supposed cultural taboos and the Indonesian population 'ran amok' in large numbers. This interpretation allows the army to present itself as the defender of peace and order and fits the 'official' histories of 1965 published by the army.

But mass killings on the scale of 1965 also leave behind millions whose family-members, friends and loved ones who were killed. Every day, they live with yet another, very different version of the memory of 1965. The reality of living among murderers who often have become rich and powerful constantly reminds them of what the ruling elites are capable of. The institutionalized impunity is a form of state terror, constantly reminding everybody who even thinks of resisting of what the rulers are capable of, of what lengths they will go to protect their privileges.

The contradictions and gaps in the official myth made it more versatile, capable of presenting difference versions of 1965 to different audiences. And 15 years after the end of the Suharto regime, this versatile myth still holds power. Recently, 'Coordinating Political, Legal, and Security Affairs Minister' Djoko Suyanto rejected findings by the National Commission on Human Rights that 1965 was a gross human rights violation. As if echoing Anji Hanif's musings on the relativity of Human Rights, he declared; 'Define gross human rights violation! Against whom? What if it happened the other way around?' And; 'This country would not be what it is today if it didn't happen.' [7] In a few words, he showed the versatility of the New Order myth, implying there was no violation of Human Rights, that it anyway it was 'us or them', and that killings were necessary and justified. Incoherent yes, but powerful.

The Act of Killing explodes the propaganda of the post-1965 'New Order' regime by relating the views of the perpetrators themselves. The stories of Herman, Anjif and Anwar make the contradictions in the official myths about 1965 unavoidable and make the crucial role of terror in sustaining these myths explicit. Hearing it out of their own mouths, it is impossible to ignore the brutality they remember or to dismiss the testimonies as politically motivated. If even the militia members explain that they, and not the PKI, were the real monsters, then what can excuse their actions? Saving the nation? By raping children?

Fear

Despite popular stories of Indonesia as a success story of democracy and development, fear is a persistent element of Indonesian society. Ten years ago, while trying to make a documentary about a trade-union, Joshua Oppenheimer came into contact with this fear. People he spoke to didn't dare to be critical of the ruling powers since they knew what could happen. At first, Oppenheimer tried to make a movie that would relate the stories of survivors of 1965 but he found they were still too afraid to talk. The perpetrators didn't have this fear and after talking to many of them, Oppenheimer decided to structure his film around Herman, Anji and Anwar.

The Act of Killing shows the power of the perpetrators of 1965, their confidence that nobody will ever keep them accountable for what they did. It gives a rare perspective on an episode of mass violence from the perpetrators' view. Survivor accounts from genocides roughly divide members of the institution that organizes the killings in three groups. There is a small minority that refuses to engage in the killing and a much larger group who go along with instructions from above, *Mitl'aufer* who do what they are told. And there is a small group of people who enjoy their power and freedom to do as they please.

The Act of Killing gives a glimpse of the mental world of people in the third category. Most testimonies we have from the side of perpetrators are defensive accounts, trying to minimize the killings and/or their role in them. But the Indonesian *génocidaires* know they have won an irreversible victory, so they don't need to deny or disparage their actions, they are free to relate the enjoyment they felt as they raped, tortured and killed. In fact, there is reason to doubt the figures they volunteer about the number of people they have killed, at times it feels like they are boasting. *The Act of Killing* shows men for whom boasting can take the form of emphasizing their cruelty and possibly exaggerating the number of their victims. It should be emphasized that

these perpetrators are men, routinely exhibiting extreme misogyny – obviously a powerful way to dehumanize many of their victims.

What has been obvious for decades for survivors of 1965, that the violence of 1965 was not ‘spontaneous’ or ‘excesses’, becomes an unavoidable conclusion for viewers. The film shows

1965 to have been an act of immense political terror. The result is a film that is truly shocking experience, causing at times physical revulsion. *The Act of Killing* is difficult to watch, as any attempt to really deal with crimes of the magnitude of 1965 inevitably is – and should be. It is essential viewing for anybody trying to understand mass violence or modern

Indonesian society. Many of the Indonesian collaborators on the film need to remain anonymous and in the country itself, the film can only be shown in semi-underground conditions. The shocked, enraged and saddened responses of many young Indonesians to the film offer some fragile hope that the murderers’ will not remain victorious forever.

With arms, for the people

28 August 2013, by **Daniel Princen**



Meeting RPA members takes some effort. After a long drive over an almost abandoned country-side road, our car continues in the dark on a mud path. We stop at a small hut and get out. Our Filipino comrades exchange greetings with a few men wearing military uniforms, carrying rifles. With one of the armed men as our guide we walk along a small path and over slippery dikes between rice-fields. Our guide exchanges passwords with another barely visible figure in the dark and we arrive at a house made of bamboo and palm-tree leaves. On the porch and inside are more armed men, wearing the improvised uniforms of the “Revolutionary Peoples’ Army” (the spelling reflects the RPM-M’s view that Mindanao is home to different nations, the Muslim minority, the Christian majority and Indigenous Peoples), the armed wing of the Philippine section of the Fourth International. We sit down for coffee and introductions.

Meetings like these are a regular part of the visits of international comrades to Mindanao, the southern part of the Philippines where the RPM-M is based. They are a way to share experiences and explain to international visitors the decision of the RPM-M to maintain an armed force – although actual fighting is only part of the tasks of its members. Since 2005, the RPM-M has a ceasefire with

the government army but the government does not seem very interested in pursuing the negotiations beyond that. And the official government army, which is guilty of regular Human Rights violations, is far from the only threat.

A need for self-defense



From the beginning, the RPM-M had an armed wing. Like most of the Filipino left, the RPM-M has its roots in the maoist Communist Party (CPP) for which “armed struggle is the primary form of struggle”. During the 1970s and 80s, the CPP build a powerful underground movement and guerrilla-army, the New People’s Army (NPA). After the fall of the dictatorship of Marcos in 1986, the CPP was disorientated: for years, it had been the principal anti-Marcos force but it played only a marginal role in the urban protests that brought down the dictator and it was side-lined by a wave of popular sympathy for the liberal opposition. Attempts to discuss revolutionary strategy and the party’s approach to the changing situation were met by the CPP-leadership with expulsions and a re-affirmation of the maoist dogma. A series of splits followed in the nineties. What is now the RPM-M started when a large part

of the Mindanao section of the CPP broke away, together with the NPA-fighters under its command. The NPA units were re-organized as the Revolutionary Peoples’ Army.

But the reasons for the maintenance of the RPA are far from historical. Mindanao is a volatile region. And violent. The Philippine state is characterized by what Benedict Anderson called “cacique democracy”; local bosses (“caciques”, a term from Spanish colonialism) combine economic power as landlords and entrepreneurs with political power as mayors, governors et cetera. Elections are an opportunity for the caciques to compete with each-other for the control of parts of the state-apparatus. The most powerful caciques build their own dynasties, like the Dimaporo clan that has ruled large parts of Mindanao as their personal fiefdom for decades.

Especially in areas that are far removed from the capital city Manila, like Mindanao, the national state-apparatus is weak. The weakness of state apparatus and contradictions between the caciques mean the state does not have a monopoly over the use of armed force. Many caciques employ their own armies. When another powerful clan in Mindanao, the Ampatuans, in 2009 massacred 58 journalists and members of a rival clan, they were revealed to control a (legalized) private army of 2000 heavily armed men, including armored

vehicles. The Ampatuans also controlled the local police and judiciary. Often, government-organized militia that are supposed to be counter-insurgency forces shade over into the private armies.

The strongest insurgent armed groups in the Philippines are also based in Mindanao. Those are the secessionist movements of the muslim minority, the Moros. In the 1970s and 80s, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) fought against the Marcos regime and for self-determination. The MNLF entered into a peace-agreement with the government in 1996 and was supposed to turn in its weapons. Everybody knows they did not. A recent show of force saw the MNLF gather hundreds of fighters carrying automatic rifles and anti-tank weapons.

The main Moro rebel group at the moment is the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which is negotiating with the government over extending the autonomy of the Islamic community. The MILF is the strongest insurgent group in the country. The RPM-M has a "non-aggression" pact with the MILF but relationships between the party and the Moro-group have become uneasy because of criticisms the socialists have of the MILF's lack of respect for rights of the Indigenous Peoples. The MILF is a loosely structured organization and its leadership is unable to control all the actions of its local commanders. And there are other, smaller but more unpredictable Moro-groups like the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters.

And of course there is the NPA. Mindanao used to be one of the strongholds of the maoists in the 1980s. Nowadays, the CPP is far weaker than in its heyday; except from the splits, the party here was heavily damaged by revelations of murderous purges that were concentrated in Mindanao and cost the lives of hundreds of party-members and sympathizers. But in parts of the island, the CPP still maintains relatively strong guerrilla-units. The maoists are trying to rebuild themselves and are violently hostile to other left-wing groups.

Those are only the "official" armed groups. There are others: armed cattle-rustlers, kidnapping-gangs, vigilante groups... RPM-M members enjoy riling up international visitors by listing all the different risks. The weakness of the central government on large parts of the island and contradictions between caciques open up spaces in which armed groups of radically different kinds can flourish. Add to this fierce competition over the rich resources of the most underdeveloped part of the Philippines and you get a sense of why the island is sometimes called the "wild west of the Philippines".

Obviously, any political organization that tries to win support of communities in such an environment needs to think very seriously about self-defense of itself and its supporters. Securing the meetings of the underground RPM-M is one of the main tasks of the RPA. The RPA is a modest force and no match militarily for the major Moro-groups or the private armies of the powerful clans. But their presence does make other actors more hesitant to use force.

Politics over arms



The RPA-members we are meeting are "full timers"- the core of the RPA. They carry the best equipment and move around in areas where the local population is sympathetic to the party. The RPA also organizes local defense forces. Unlike full-timers, members of the local defense forces remain in their communities and do not depend on the organization for their livelihood. In principle, new full-timers are recruited from the local defense forces. Bong, the commanding officer of the group we are meeting, and Jojo, another officer, do the talking. The other members are satisfied with listening while other comrades translate between English and the local Bisaya.

Bong explains that the RPA could be a larger force: there are enough (young) people who want to join. A larger force of full-timers would be a heavy burden

on the party: except from the livelihood and equipment of the combatants, the party is also responsible to the family of the RPA-member since they will be lacking a pair of hands. But this hurdle is not impossible to overcome, Bong says. However, the RPA is very selective in who it accepts and only lets in new recruits that have shown to have a longterm commitment to the movement. It is one reason why a large part of the RPA-membership consists of veterans of the NPA-days. Bong compares the RPA recruitment policy to what they learned in the NPA. The NPA, he says, would eagerly recruit anyone who wanted to join, for example to take revenge on the army for the abuse of a family-member or on an exploitative landlord. But, he asks rhetorically; "what happens after taking revenge? Is such a narrow, selfish motivation enough to be a revolutionary?".

In theory, the CPP demands NPA-fighters should be soldiers as well as political militants but the maoists' stress on armed struggle means in practice that they give priority to building military strength. "In the NPA, we only learned how to kill", is how one veteran described it. With a term also used by the NPA, Bong describes the RPA as a "political-military" organization that balances preparing for armed struggle with political work. A crucial difference with the maoists is the strategic conception of revolution of the Mindanao comrades. For the CPP, revolutionary struggle in the Philippines is "essentially a peasant war", but the RPM-M does not prioritize armed struggle over other forms of struggle. Armed struggle is one component of a strategy of building revolutionary mass movements.

The RPA is under the command of the RPM-M but not all RPA-member are party-members. Part of the "political-military" orientation is that all RPA members undergo political education. If they express interest and have shown to be reliable, RPA-members can be asked to join the party. Although the party controls the RPA, the combatants elect their commanding officers at their own congresses. The congresses evaluate

not just on the candidates' military qualities but also their relationships with the local communities and their ability to win support for the movement.

Protecting the communities

The RPA full-timers are supported by local communities they help to protect. The RPA for example protects the communities against cattle-rustlers that try to steal from the peasants their water buffaloes. Bong also relates how RPA-members recently caught several members of a gang that was engaged in kidnapping-for-ransom. The gang-members were handed over to the local police. Bong laughs; "it was one of the few times the police was happy with us". Another way the RPA-members gain support is by helping the local communities in their daily work, most often as peasants. Most of the RPA-members come from peasant families and are familiar with the work. Helping the local population also provides a good opportunity to talk with them about party-campaigns such as for food sovereignty and to share knowledge about ecologically sustainable agriculture. To make sure the RPA does not lose the support that they depend on, members follow a strict code of conduct. No gambling, no drinking liquor and always show respect to community-members. Jojo: "we need the local population to genuinely put their trust in us, and not to just keep quiet because we carry weapons. To win support, we have to show we are revolutionaries and that we are different from the armed gangs."

Another threat the RPA has acted against is thugs employed by landlords. The weakness and corruption of the official law-enforcement forces gives members of the elite more or less a free hand. Not very far from where we meet, a

landowner hired thugs to chase tenants of the lands they had been tilling for decades because he wanted to sell the area. One leader of the tenants organization was murdered. And in June 2012, Venecia "Inday" Natinga, a peasant leader, was murdered because of her activism for land reform.

Without the RPA, such murders would be more frequent but the organization is walking a tightrope when acting against the elite's thugs. Normally, the government army and police do not pay much attention to what goes in these communities, but that would easily change when an armed left-wing group draws attention. In such a case, RPA combatants could probably evade the security-forces but the communities that support them could not. They would be subject to harassment and the disruption of daily life as soldiers move into the area. Jojo again draws a comparison with experiences in the NPA; "the NPA didn't have much problems with provoking the military into aggression against local communities. On the contrary, their idea was that oppression would automatically drive people to join the revolutionary movement. But right now, the revolutionary movement is weak and we need to consider how people will be able to survive if the movement is not able to protect them against the armies of the elite."

Continuing threats

The comparisons with the NPA bring up one of the most painful experiences of the RPA. After the splits and expulsions in the nineties, the CPP hardened its hostile attitude towards other parts of the left. It has denounced left-wing movements outside its orbit as "saboteurs" and "counter-revolutionaries" and its armed wing has murdered left-wing activists from different organizations and tendencies. Bong; "After we left

we CPP we tried to have an agreement with the NPA. We suggested a truce and to build our own strength in different parts of the island. But the CPP-leadership declared us to be enemies. One of our commanders thought he could negotiate because he had been in the NPA with many of them. But when he approached them for negotiations he was killed. Now, we can't allow the NPA-units to enter into our areas because they would attack us and our comrades on sight. There have been several clashes with them. We still regard the NPA-members as revolutionaries and we wish it would be possible to have a ceasefire with them."

The RPA also assists in the creation of other defense groups. In the recent period, members of the RPA have been helping to organize and train self-defense groups of the Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples have clashed with security-forces and goons of loggers and mining companies that destroy the natural environment that local peasants and fisher-folk depend on. Several RPM-M comrades express the fear that in the future, after the MILF reaches a final agreement with the Philippine government, the Indigenous Peoples will have one more enemy since the MILF denies them autonomy and claims control over the resources in their lands.

Facing all these risks, a capacity for armed self-defense remains of vital importance for the Mindanaon socialists. Basing themselves on the principle that the only justification for lethal violence is the self-defense of the popular movements, the RPM-M and RPA have developed their own distinct approach to armed struggle. When explaining the need for armed struggle to their foreign visitors, the RPA comrades seem almost apologetic; "the Filipino ruling classes will never stop oppressing the people unless they are forced to, that is why revolutionaries need to prepare for armed struggle, it is not our choice. What we want most of all is peace."

Peace in Kurdistan?

27 August 2013, by **Masis Kürkçügil**

Over the last five years a strange relationship has been established between the Kurdish question in its totality and Turkey. On the one hand the autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan has evolved towards a quasi-independence and the region has entered a process of economic quasi-integration with Turkey; on the other, following the beginning of the uprising against the regime in Syria, western Kurdistan has acquired a de facto status of autonomy. And above all, the maintenance of the status quo “the continuation of the state of low intensity conflict” in Turkish Kurdistan goes increasingly against the regional interests of Turkish capitalism. All this has led the AKP to seek a solution to the Kurdish problem. The victory of the Kurds has not then been a military victory, but rather the fact that the balance of forces which has played against this people for centuries has changed in its favour.

In 2009, the AKP had entered into secret negotiations with the representatives of the PKK in Oslo, so as to find a solution to the Kurdish problem. Following this unexpected development a small guerrilla detachment symbolically crossed the frontier without weapons, to surrender to the authorities. They were brought before courts set up at the border to keep up appearances, and then released. However the enthusiastic welcome reserved for the guerrillas by huge crowds gathering at the customs posts irritated Turkish nationalist circles and also a large part of the AKP's electoral bases. Immediately, the AKP backtracked. Then came a great wave of arrests targeting the unarmed civilian wing of the Kurdish nationalist movement, the KCK (Union of Communities of Kurdistan): thousands of KCK members, including mayors, were imprisoned. Immediately the situation was worse than had been the case before.

By affirming that his party had the majority of Kurdish deputies and the majority of votes in the Kurdish region Erdogan declared that he recognised no other interlocutors than himself “his party being represented by its leader” to negotiate the Kurdish problem.

But the Party of Peace and Democracy (BDP) scored a considerable success in the parliamentary elections of 2011 and exceeded the threshold of 10 % by designating independent candidates. The BDP had 36 deputies elected including three socialists who were not BDP members in Istanbul, as well as a candidate known as a conservative Islamist in Diyarbakır. The party thus came to construct in its region a sort of national front including Islamists and conservatives in its ranks while appealing to socialists in the west of the country. Despite the success of the BDP, the AKP still refused to allow it as interlocutor. As for the BDP, it wanted the imprisoned PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, to be its interlocutor.

With the withdrawal in 2012, of the Syrian army from the Syrian Kurdistan, the PYY (an extension of the PKK) gained a serious influence in the region. Suddenly, a de facto autonomous Kurdish region in joined the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan. The PKK declared a revolutionary peoples' war to form a liberated zone in Hakkari, but this initiative ended with the loss of a thousand guerrillas.

Following these developments, the Turkish government began to seek means of recommencing negotiations with the Kurdish movement and now addressed itself directly to Öcalan. They knew very well that Öcalan was perfectly capable of imposing a ceasefire on the PKK, as had been shown during the discussion he had begun with the authorities since his arrest in 1999, including during the

Oslo negotiations. Finally a BDP delegation made up of three deputies “approved by Erdogan himself” was sent to the island of Imrali where Öcalan is imprisoned, and the process of negotiations recommenced.

According to the terms of the pre-agreement between the parties, the PKK was first to take a decision to call a ceasefire and withdraw its armed forces from Turkish territory. Then there would be a series of constitutional and legislative amendments, beginning with a special status for the Kurds. Then the PKK would end the armed struggle, and finally the current situation of Öcalan would be revised and improved; also conditions would be created to allow the reintegration into normal life of PKK activists.

This agreement was never made public by the government, which did not wish to appear as being party to negotiations. The talk was solely of “putting an end to terror”, “stopping the bloodshed” and it was specified that was the National Information Agency (MIT) which was conducting the negotiations. However, the Kurds were open about the negotiation process, stressing that it was the “leadership”, that is Abdullah Öcalan, which had taken the initiative for them. But outside of some articles in the press there is still no written text listing openly the terms and conditions of the agreement. The fact that the handwritten texts drawn up by Öcalan were delivered by Turkish state agents to PKK leaders in Europe and to Kandil, who are fully behind their leader on the resumption of negotiations, demonstrate clearly that there must be a more detailed plan.

According to the declarations of BDP spokespersons, the second phase of the plan “which would undoubtedly necessitate certain legal regulations” should begin following the withdrawal beyond the frontier of PKK

militants, which seems to be taking place up until now without major problems.

On the other hand, those who have remained outside of this process of negotiation – in which the US and Barzani are also involved – express serious worries as to its result. While certain components of the socialist movement clearly oppose and agree with the AKP or adopting a neutral position in relation to the process, others have raised serious doubts on possible concessions made by the Kurds (or rather by A-calan) to the AKP in exchange for the granting of a status; all while being of the opinion that the process in itself is a positive development and in no way inadmissible. They affirm that the Kurds would be liable to support the Erdogan plan which seeks to establish a presidential system in exchange for the granting of a kind of autonomy by the strengthening of the powers of local government. However there are others who think that it will be necessary in any case to support the ending of the war and that the Kurds have the right to resolve their problem by the compromise that suits them.

However the themes of “the thousand year union of Kurds and Turks” as well as that of the “Islamic fraternity” that A-calan sometimes uses in his discourse have begun to return in force. The famous Turkish sociologist Ismail Besikçi (who has devoted his whole life to defending the rights of the Kurdish people and spent a total of 17 years in prison for his

sociological studies depicting Kurdish reality) condemns the use of this type of discourse. The publication by the press on February 28, 2013 of reports of an A-calan interview with BDP deputies, as well as his message addressed to the peoples of Turkey (stressing “Islamic fraternity”, “the thousand year union of Kurds and Turks” ; as well as the “growth of Turkey” , hence all kinds of formulas which are not necessarily incompatible with the ideological and political line of the AKP) and which was read by the deputies of the BDP before a crowd gathered in Diyarbakır during the feast of Newroz [8] disturbed all those who did not recognise themselves in such a history and more especially the Alévis. It should be stressed however that in the 1990s, at a time when PKK was supposed to be more radical, A-calan adopted a similar discourse in an interview with the journalist Cengiz A-andar.

The initiative taken by the AKP to launch negotiations with the Kurds with a view to resolving the national question, which nobody had dared to do until now, has created an atmosphere of optimism among broad layers of the population, in the west and especially the east of the country. But this hope cannot in itself ensure the success of the peace process.

The Kurds have not been beaten. On the contrary, they have succeeded in developing their identity over the last thirty years. On the political level,

they henceforth hold a force capable of forming for two consecutive legislatures a parliamentary group (minimum 20 deputies) in the National Assembly; the Kurdish movement which has been in power for three five-year terms in most of the local authorities in the region, and notably in Diyarbakır, is not made up of guerrillas in the mountains: it now rests on a huge and solid civilian base and participates in the everyday life of people.

Also, it should be noted that the limit of the armed struggle to achieve significant results had already been reached. Abdullah A-calan affirmed that it was impossible to obtain a total military success, and he said that not only after his capture, but already twenty years ago.

Much more than the pursuit of the armed struggle “to the end” the demands of those who vote, help and support the movement, are rather to seek teaching in the mother tongue, the liberation of the prisoners, the normalisation of the situation of those in the mountains, and above all improved living conditions. From this point of view, we should not hesitate to proclaim loudly and strongly that “from wherever it comes, peace is welcome”!

It should nonetheless be noted that there is a serious gap between Kurdish demands and what the AKP is disposed to grant, a gap the personal prestige of A-calan among the Kurdish people fills for the moment.

After the Taksim revolt, whither Turkey?

26 August 2013, by **Masis Kürkçügil**

This explosion took place in Turkey, held up as an example of a neo-liberal paradise in the Middle East and for other developing countries. It was not the outcome of a specific social demand, as had been the case in other popular uprisings in the past, or as in the current Brazilian uprising,

inspired by the Taksim resistance. To date there has been no looting.

In a climate where the intervention of a Prime Minister who thought he had consolidated his power on all levels had reached its height – interference in several aspects of daily life from flirtation to dress, to drinking

alcoholic beverages and even how many children to have, people took to the streets as soon as they found out via social networks or a friend what the police had done to people opposing cutting down trees in a park in the centre of Istanbul, and in a short time their numbers rose to the

millions.

The government, which had created a rather optimistic climate by undertaking a negotiating process with the Kurdish national movement, took a very hardline stance against the

demonstrators. This added fuel to the fire and the number of demonstrators grew after every speech by the Prime Minister and every incident of police violence. Thus, the government succeeded in uniting all its opponents in a united front, both those who were already known as those who took part

in political action for the first time. As a consequence, everything now seems to be up for grabs, as Turkey enters a critical period with elections and debates about the new Constitution.

Istanbul, 25 June 2013

August 14

24 August 2013, by **Charles-André Udry**

A few days before 14 August 2013, the workers at the steel-works in Suez, who have been in dispute since the end of 2012, found out about the dismissal of 12 their colleagues. Then the so-called security forces arrested two of their representatives: Amr Yousif and Abd-Al-Ra'uf. The directorate of the firm, under state control, invoked losses in order to justify not meeting the demands of the workers. However, it had donated a significant sum in order to pay the national debt (partly private or semi-private in origin) of the Egyptian state. The Minister for Labour, Kamal Abou Aita, did not express any eagerness to condemn this attack on the rights of employees. President Adly Mansour, the Prime Minister Hazem Beblawi and Defence Minister Abdel Fattah Al-Sissi had indicated the effective content of their policy: to replace any policy in favour of the democratic and social rights (such as a popular majority demanded on June 30, 2013) by "a war against the terrorists" (to use the terms of the police force): in the event the Moslem Brotherhood (MB).

On 13 August 2013, the security forces intervened into serious confrontations between "Morsi supporters" and their opponents. On August 14, at 5 am, the police force started to use strong teargas on one of the two positions occupied by the pro-Morsi forces. The trains were halted to prevent demonstrations outside of Cairo. Around 12.30 pm, on August 14, the Egyptian Ministry for Health announced that the intervention by

the police - the army gave the impression of not being in the forefront - had led to 149 deaths across the country. At Rabaa Al-Adawiya square in Cairo, epicentre of the pro-Morsi mobilization, an AFP journalist counted the bodies of 124 demonstrators. There was firing with live ammunition, with the head and chest serving as "targets". According to convergent sources, at least 35 died there in the province of Fayoum, in the south of Cairo. The effective number of dead and casualties will much exceed these official figures.

A little after 2 pm on August 14, a one month state emergency was declared and a curfew was imposed in Cairo and in eleven provinces. Both will not only be used to repress the MB, but also future strikes and other demonstrations. At 6 pm, a security spokesperson affirmed that Rabaa Al-Adawiya square was "completely under control". A conventional formula in this kind of situation and revealing of uncertainties. During a short televised speech in the evening, Hazem Beblawi thanked the police force "for acting with the greatest restraint". Another note with a characteristic tonality. Moreover, the Prime Minister insisted that on "no self-respecting state could have tolerated" such occupations. The Ministers of Interior of Rajoy in the Spanish State or Samaras in Greece would not contradict him. The Egyptian Prime Minister prepares the immediate future.

In the middle of the afternoon on

August 14, Mohammed El-Baradei, vice-president, resigned from the government: "It became difficult to me to continue to assume responsibility for decisions with which I do not agree", he wrote, after having covered Sissi's political-security operation. The possibility of serious confrontations, localised in the country and over a certain period, is far from ruled out. When the MB (or forces comparable to the latter) are repressed with violence, in cases of minimal resistance, that causes a response from those groups; weapons are not lacking in Egypt. Moreover, the social and political reality of the MB - all the more given their position as a force targeted by repression which has marked their whole history - cannot and should not be underestimated.

However, currently, the army is more openly than ever running the country. This is what the "Western" powers fear. The army faces three difficulties (at least). That of controlling the security situation on a country wide scale - even if it means declaring, tomorrow, that the police force has "committed excesses" - in a situation of skewed political bipolarisation, largely constructed by itself and which paves the way for so-called confessional confrontations. The attacks against Copts, for example in Sohag, indicate this. That of seeking a "compromise", as its Western tutors request, after the failure of all the mediations, and in particular that of the grand sheikh of Al-Azhar who attempted to bring together the interim government, the military and

the MB before August 14. That of meeting social and democratic demands, even if a sector of the population seems for now to have given Sissi the mandate to deal with the MB. Then there is the coming trial of Morsi, and numerous other trials - Mubarak and family, Morsi and family, as well as the members of the forces who killed the martyrs of the revolution of 2011.

These three challenges could, in case of failure, open a phase where the

genuinely democratic and social aspects of the revolution are expressed with force. Nothing is certain. But it is this fear which stalks the Western governments.

All the Western representatives will insist on the civilian façade of the government being restored. Prime Minister Beblawi thus undertook on the evening of August 14 to prepare an electoral process for early 2014! US Secretary of State John Kerry has asked the army to organise elections

and regretted the manner in which the Muslim Brotherhood was “dispersed”, which should reassure the Egyptian prime minister and police. For now we will not deal with the other pieces of the regional jigsaw puzzle, as they appear difficult to bring together. Except of course for the self-proclaimed “anti-imperialist experts” of a world in which everything is ruled by “plots” (planned by the White House), plots whose mechanism is as reliable as it is complicated, in this watch which few clockmakers master.

A major disappointment

23 August 2013, by Åge Skovrind

Twenty-three thousand unemployed workers lost their benefits in the first half of 2013 due to new legislation adopted in 2010. This social disaster is the major single issue that has discredited the Danish Social Democratic government.

Parliamentary elections in 2011 paved the way for Helle Thorning-Schmidt as head of government, the first female prime minister ever in Denmark. After 10 years of right wing rule (most of the time led by Anders Fogh-Rasmussen, now general secretary of NATO, and with permanent support by the far right, anti-immigrant Danish Peoples Party), expectations of a new course, a left government, were high. However, expectations have turned into disappointment because policies continued along the very same lines as before.

The elections resulted in a coalition government of three parties; however, without parliamentary majority: Social Democracy, the left reformist Socialist Peoples' Party, and the Social Liberals (in Danish, for historical reasons, called “the Radical Left”). In fact, the election result was not a victory for these three parties compared to the previous 2007 elections but just a redistribution of their seats: While the Social Liberals gained 8 seats, for Social Democracy the result (24.8

percent) was the worst since 1903! Thus, only the 12 seats of the far left Red Green Alliance (up from 4 seats) ensured a majority for the formation of a new government.

Austerity measures

Quickly after the formation of the new government, many voters got disappointed with a “red government implementing blue policies”. Already in the first program declaration, the new government stated that “point of departure for the government is the economic policies by the VK-government [i.e. the former, bourgeois government] in broad terms.... The government will implement reforms that increase the supply of labour supply in order to increase growth in Denmark ...”

To base itself on the economic policies of the former government meant among other things to accept recent legislation that reduced the period of unemployment benefits from four to two years. To “increase the supply of labour” meant working more and reducing social benefits.

One of the first moves was an attempt to make a deal with the unions to increase the working week by one hour. For most workers, this made no sense at a time with rising

unemployment, and negotiations broke down when the metal workers federation - known as a federation with a rather right wing leadership - dug their heels in and said no as a result of an organized protest among shop stewards.

Following this failure, a series of austerity measures has been implemented with the right wing opposition:-

- A tax reform involving a reduction of the top tax by raising the borderline for top tax and a postponement of the upward regulation of social benefits ;
- Reducing benefits for thousands of disabled people and reducing their access to the labor market, without any demands to the employers;
- Reducing the social benefits for people between 25-30 years old by 50 percent;
- A budget law punishing local governments with heavy fines if they pass certain limits for spending;
- Reduction of student benefits.

Thousands losing

unemployment benefits

The single issue that caused most worry for the government is the big number of workers losing their right to unemployment benefits. In 2010, the Liberal government passed a law, supported by the Social Liberals, reducing the period of unemployment benefits from four to two years and increasing the working period for regaining the right to unemployment benefits from a half to one year. This happened at a time when unemployment was rising. As a result, from July 2012 thousands of unemployed workers faced a dramatic fall in income, many even losing the right to the smaller social benefit (because it is dependent on spouse income).

For the Red-Green Alliance, together with the unions, and with major media attention, it became the number one demand to the government to find a solution to this problem. To some degree, the campaign succeeded in forcing the government to do something, but on the other side all measures have been insufficient and temporary.

Teachers' strike

Another major development was the lockout of all teachers in primary and lower secondary schools in April 2013. After one month, the government intervened and stopped the lockout with a law following the demands of the employers in most aspects. As a result, national regulation of the working time of the teachers was removed, i.e. the head of every school is now entitled to decide how many lessons the teachers must teach (in practice this means more lessons and less/worse preparation).

The counterpart of most teachers is not the state but the National Federation of Local Councils. However, the negotiation roadmap was agreed beforehand with the government as part of a planned new law on primary schools including more lessons. The national teachers' federation, organizing more than 90

percent of all teachers, refused to abide and mobilized members in an impressive way but had no strategy to win the fight by seeking active support from other unions.

Most people were taken by surprise that the government let the lockout continue for a whole month and by the ultimate stance of the employers, refusing any real negotiations. Generally, the "Danish model" for labor regulation is praised highly as an ideal system - i.e. workers as well as employers organized in one sector federation, bargaining every two years and ending up with national agreements after real negotiations providing both parts with some improvements - and no major labor disputes after the agreement is accepted in a referendum by the members. However, the behavior of the government (and the National Federation of Local Councils) totally disregarded the "spirit" of this model by refusing any real negotiations at all.

The defeat of the teachers is a sign of future attacks on other workers in the public sector. This is part of a government plan of "modernizing" the public sector to get it more efficient by pushing the workforce to work harder. A recent "growth plan" upgraded the goal of financial saving in the public sector from 5 to 12 billion Danish kroner by 2020.

In line with this plan, goals for public sector growth have been reduced. While Social Democracy and Socialist Peoples' Party in a common plan before the elections set the average annual growth in public sector to 1.4 percent - opposed to 0.8 percent by the former government, the goal is now downgraded to 0.63 percent annually until 2020!

Declining support

A poll among teachers conducted during the lockout showed support for the three government parties dropping from 65 percent in the elections to only 5 percent (!) while 34 percent would vote for the Red Green Alliance.

This is a remarkable poll reflecting the

mood among teachers during their labor struggle. However, the trend is general. Popular support for the three government parties has declined in opinion polls continuously since the elections while support for the Red Green Alliance has grown very much (up from 6.7 percent in 2011 to 12 percent in July 2013). However, the right wing parties are getting voters too and are already discussing how to form the next government after upcoming elections not later than September 2015. In particular the decline for the Social Democrats is remarkable (19 percent in July 2013), as well for the Socialist Peoples' Party (down from 9.2 in 2011 to 5 percent in July 2013).

Despite criticism and disappointment in the union movement, protests, mobilizations and organizing have been modest. Union leaders don't want to disturb the government (too much) and are not pushed from below to mobilize, while the presence among union members of radical left activists is not sufficient to represent a credible alternative for action.

Challenges facing the Red Green Alliance

For the Red Green Alliance, this situation presents a series of challenges. The fast growth of popular support gives the party a real public audience, media access etc. At the same time, increased membership (now more than 10.000, half of them signed up during the last two years) opens new possibilities for organizing, involvement in social movements and party building.

However, there is a political challenge concerning the relation to the government.

The Red Green Alliance supported the formation of the government but is opposed to most of its economic and labour market policies. Some improvements have been implemented: all "poverty benefits" (extraordinary small social benefits introduced for specific groups by the former government) are removed;

conditions for asylum seekers are improved; restrictions for obtaining residence in Denmark eased; more spending for public transport; investment programs will be initiated ahead of schedule; a deal about renewable energy (concluded with all parties); more money to fight social dumping; and several "rescue measures" to help unemployed people losing their benefits.

As guiding line, the Red Green Alliance holds on to the principle of "supporting any improvement - even the minor ones, while opposing any

reductions, even the minor ones". However, the practical interpretation of this simple principle showed to be not so simple and caused much discussion in the party.

Most controversial and with most consequences is the vote on the state budget which has to be adopted in December every year. Without a parliamentary majority for the budget law, the government will be forced to resign and call new elections. While there was a general agreement in the party to support the first budget law in late 2011, the next year the

leadership was divided with a minority recommending not voting for the budget law. According to SAP, the Danish section of the 4th International, it was a "major mistake" to vote for the budget law. [9]

The annual party conference in May 2013 showed a party with increasing political polarization without taking a specific position on the budget vote the year before. The conference adopted a resolution assessing the government and the role of the Red Green Alliance, including criteria for supporting the next budget law. [10]

The extermination of the people in revolt

23 August 2013

The dictatorial regime continues its policy of extermination of our people. Hundreds of Syrians, including a significant number of women and children, died in the early morning of August 21, 2013, the victims of weapons of extermination using toxic gases and the undeniable use of chemical weapons, in the neighbourhoods of eastern Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus, in the context of the most violent military attack by the regime carried out this morning on the areas in revolt.

For more than two years, the list of abuses and sacrifices suffered by the masses of our people has grown incessantly. It is impossible to count the hundreds of thousands of martyrs, the wounded, the imprisoned and the millions of exiles and refugees. The torture of our people continues. Their cries are lost in the air and a deadly silence engulfs human consciousness.

The massacre and coercion of our people continues, perpetrated by the

machine of death and destruction of a regime which transcends fascism in its savagery. It is a tragedy that the world has not known in a long time, the tragedy of a people insurgent for its freedom and its liberation from the grip of a dictatorial regime, savage in its repression and in its exploitation of the oppressed of our country, in the service of the interests of a small bourgeois clique.

Our revolution has no sincere ally, except for the revolutions of the peoples of the region and the world and the militants who work to free themselves from obscurantist, oppressive and exploitative regimes.

This odious criminal act by the ruling clique against isolated civilians reflects cynicism about human life and this at the very moment when the counter revolutionary forces have begun to organise their attack against the revolutions at the regional level, led by Saudi Arabia and its allies. The

regime will have found there an opportunity to commit its abominable massacre. Yet our people, in revolt and determined, tested by their wounds, will continue their resistance against the criminal tyrants, will defeat them and punish them as they deserve for their crimes.

We will bury our dead and tend to our wounded. We will be more determined and resolute in our struggle for the fall of the murderous and predatory regime and the victory of our popular revolution.

For the building of a Syria of freedom, justice, equality and social justice!

Neither Washington, nor Moscow!

Neither Riyadh, nor Teheran!

Glory to the martyrs!
Recovery to the wounded!

Victory to the popular revolution!

All power and all wealth to the people!

Continuation and difficulties of the revolutionary process in the Arab region

21 August 2013, by **Gilbert Achcar**

The revolutionary process in the Arab region continues to surprise the media. How do you analyse the recent events in Egypt and Tunisia?

There are certainly qualitative changes that have taken place, but the fact that there are twists and turns in the process is not surprising. We must understand that what began in late 2010-early 2011 is a long-term revolutionary process. The idea that the electoral victories of the currents coming from Islamic fundamentalism in Tunisia and Egypt would close down the changes under way proved completely wrong.

These forces were doomed to failure since, they, like the regimes they replaced, had no answer to the very serious social and economic problems that caused the uprisings. They are a continuation of neo-liberal policies and therefore cannot solve these problems which have only got worse.

The revolutionary process can take surprising forms, but we will continue to pass from upheaval to upheaval in the region as a whole, before the situation stabilises. This would mean, in a positive hypothesis, a profound change in the social nature of the governments in the region and their move towards policies based on the interests of working people .

How do you see the battle going on today in Egypt?

We must distinguish two levels: the manoeuvres and conflicts between those concerned with political power, and the underlying wave of popular discontent. The second has been unleashed, but like the unrest of 2011, has ended in a military intervention.

Mubarak, had already been dismissed in February 2011 by the military,

which then took direct power, placing the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces at the head of the executive. This time, they have not repeated the same operation, having burnt their fingers trying to govern the country in a state of upheaval such that it would rapidly wear out any government that limited itself to carrying out neo-liberal. But the civilians that have been appointed to head the executive cannot hide the fact that it is the army that has the power.

However, the argument that the army intervened against a democratically elected government is a very right-wing view of democracy. That would be to say that elected officials have carte blanche to do whatever they want during their term of office, even if they blatantly betray the expectations of their constituents. A radical conception of democracy involves the right to recall elected representatives.

This is the form that the movement took in Egypt with the petition calling for Morsi to go and for new elections to be held launched by the youth movement "Tamarrod" (Rebellion). In a few months they gathered an impressive number of signatures, a much higher total than From this point of view, his dismissal was entirely legitimate. the number of votes Morsi obtained in his election to the presidency.

However the big problem is that rather than organising the broad movement to overthrow Morsi by means of mass struggle - a general strike, civil disobedience - we saw the opposition leaders, both liberal and left, agree with the military and applaud the coup whose ultimate logic is to capture the potential for popular mobilization and impose a return to hard-line "order", which has been

confirmed by the actions of the military. This is extremely serious and in this respect there is a strategic failure on the majority of Egyptian left. The army's image has been restored, and the commander in chief of the army (Al-Sissi) has been covered with praise.

Al-Sissi is the strong man of the new *ancien regime*. Although only Defence Minister, called on the people to demonstrate in support of the army - completely ignoring the new government.

Today, even the youth of Tamarrod have begun to worry - rather late in the day "about the trap of their own making they have fallen into. The coup has allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to rejuvenate itself politically, posing as martyrs, and victims of a military coup. They have reconsolidated their social base, which is important although it is now clear it is a minority. The military action has polished their image anew.

So the position of the Islamist movements who took the place of the previous regimes in Tunisia and Egypt has quickly deteriorated , but the weakness of the left is now equally a big problem ...

Apart from the revolutionary left that remains marginal in Egypt, most of the left have put their forces behind the National Salvation Front. Most of those who originate in the traditional Communist movement and those from the Nasserist current, which remains the left with the most influence on the people at large, have participated in the process of mystifying the role of the army. This is all the more unfortunate in that these forces were in the streets against the army in the months leading up to the election of Morsi!

When Hamdeen Sabahi, the Nasserist leader, explained a few days before June 30, that it had been a mistake to have shouted a year earlier “Down with the military government” he drew the wrong lessons from history. The real mistake was to repent and to say now that we should be applauding the army.

What do you think of Tunisian plans to end the power of Ennahdha?

Unfortunately, there is a risk that Tunisia will develop into a similar scenario to Egypt: a left that does not have the political insight to fight on a left-wing agenda, and is preparing to build alliances even with the parts of the former regime. These links are present in Nidaa Tounès. [11] Such an approach ultimately benefits the Islamist forces who have a golden opportunity to denounce the agreements of the left with remnants of the former regime. This allows the Muslim Brotherhood or Ennahdha to pose as bearers of the legitimacy and continuity of the revolution.

There is a problem of political representation of the working classes in the revolution?

Yes. The problem is that instead of trying to win hegemony in the mass movement - fighting primarily on social issues - which would unite against it supporters of neo-liberalism ranging from fundamentalists to men of the old regime and even the Liberals, the Tunisian left has made a short-sighted alliance with sections of

the old regime.

In a country like Tunisia, in my opinion, the trade union Federation, the UGTT (General Union of Tunisian Workers) is a socially hegemonic force and can easily become the politically dominant one. But a wall is erected between union struggles and the political. Tunisia's left now heads the UGTT. But rather than launch the union federation into the political battle, with a strategy of forming a workers' government, this left seems to be moving towards alliances - against its own interests - between its different political groups organised in the Front Populaire, on the one hand, and the Liberals and the remnants of the former regime, on the other.

Despite these difficulties, the uprisings are continuing in many countries, we are seeing “Tamarrod” movements in Libya, in Bahrein...

In the six countries which were most deeply affected by the 2011 uprisings, the mass movements are continuing. In Libya it is constant turmoil. The media do not report it but there are constant popular mobilizations, in particular against the fundamentalists; the elected institutions are subject to different pressures from the popular base.

In Yemen the movement goes on even though it has been weakened by the compromise that a section of the opposition forces has made. Radical forces, particularly from the youth and the left, are continuing to fight against

this pretence of change. In Bahrain the popular movement against the monarchy is continuing.

And in Syria the civil war is in full swing, it is at a tragically high level today with a ferocious counter-offensive from the regime supported by Russia, Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah. Syria is a flagrant case of the cynicism of the great powers, who are allowing the massacre of a people in whom they have no confidence.

So, two-and-a-half years after the beginning of the process it is still continuing?

A revolutionary dynamic was unleashed in 2011, a long-term process that will have its ups and downs, periods of reaction, of counter-revolution and revolutionary upsurges. But for there to be a positive outcome to this process forces that defend progressive answers to the social and economic problems posed must emerge.

If not, there are other possible scenarios, regression, reaction, repressive alliances against the populations between those who today seem to be in different sides: the military and the fundamentalists. There is nothing determined in one way or another. It is an open situation, in full turmoil.

The left must urgently find a third, independent, way, against the old regimes and against the fundamentalists, in order to satisfy the social demands of the women and men who rose in revolt.

The path of the “Islamist movement”

20 August 2013, by Masis Kürkçügil

This followed the expulsion in 1969 of its leader, Necmettin Erbakan, after the cancellation of the elections for the leadership for the Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Stock Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) by the ruling Justice Party under Demirel. The essential reason underlying the

foundation of the Party of National Order (MNP) was then the inadequate representation by the ruling bloc of the interest of the Anatolian bourgeoisie, that is the small and medium industrial and commercial capital of the Anatolian towns. Despite appearances, it was not then religious

or cultural considerations which gave rise to the transformation of the Islamist movement into a political party, but class interests. Also, the religious hierarchy has never played any role in this political movement whose leadership has always been “secular”.

The movement gained strength after the coup d'état of March 12, 1971 – the electoral base of the new Islamist party, the Party of National Salvation (MSP) was around ten per cent – and also profited from the fragmentation of the political spectrum to play a key role in the country's political scene, participating in coalition governments, in 1973 with the centre-left, then from 1975 with the centre-right alongside the far right (the Grey Wolves) to form a national front (MC). The MSP defended positions which were more "progressive" in the context of the centre right: for example it envisaged the solution of the Kurdish problem within the framework of "Islamic fraternity" while its socio-economic programme (national developmentalist), summed up in the slogan "the just order", was a kind of Keynesianism which put the accent on a more equal division of income.

Islamist renaissance under the dictatorship

Although the Islamist movement had lost its electoral base after the coup d'état of September 12, 1980, the 1980s were a period of renaissance for Islamist thought as well as for its reception by various social categories. It should nonetheless be noted that some second ranking political cadre of the MSP, which had been dissolved by the junta, were not banned from political activity and continued their careers inside the Motherland Party (ANAP) founded just before the elections of 1983 by Turgut Özal, who was himself a candidate for the MSP at the parliamentary elections of June 5, 1977. The architect of the famous measures of January 24, 1980 which were the basis for the neoliberal economic policies of the junta, Özal, was also the director of the Organisation of State Planning (DPT) in the 1960s, the president of the federation of engineering employees, and the CEO of Sabancı Holding, the second biggest industrial group in Turkey after Koç Holding. It should also be stressed that the Anatolian bourgeoisie had achieved its real take off, to rise in the hierarchy and

become the "Anatolian tigers" thanks to the neoliberal economic policies of the junta which had established a new regime of accumulation favouring exports through subsidies to investment and downward pressure on wages. These policies had been pursued by the ANAP governments which remained in power until 1991. Özal was moreover made minister of the economy by the junta after the coup d'état, before becoming prime minister in 1983, then president in 1989.

The movement then constituted itself once more as a political party under its historic leader Erbakan, and the new party thus founded, the Party of Prosperity (RP), participated in the parliamentary elections of 1991 in alliance with the National Party of Labour (MHP) which was the continuation of the far right MHP party, as well as with a small nationalist party, but was unable to surpass the threshold of 10% of the vote required to enter parliament.

Politics from below

The 1990s saw a significant change in the history of the movement: from its establishment, the new Islamist party had chosen to practice politics from below, by organizing those in the poor neighbourhoods, including at the trade union level, and it adopted positions against neoliberal policies during the municipal elections of 1994. It was also opposed to US policies in the region (it should be remembered that the current president, Abdullah Gül, condemned the coalition against Iraq during the first Gulf War while Hafız Assad offered it his support). It also profited from the disarray and fragmentation of the centre-left and by mobilizing the discontent of the poor suburbs disappointed by the corruption of the municipal centre left leader, and succeeded in winning control of the town halls in the two biggest cities, Istanbul and Ankara. Whereas the combined vote of the three centre left parties was 36%, the current Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was elected mayor of Istanbul with only 25 % of the vote (thanks to the single round electoral system). In conditions where the Kurdish national movement

had not participated in the elections, the RP also won the mayorship of Diyarbakir and increased its vote to 19 % nationwide. Thus a new Islamist conception of local government, which included elements of solidarity in the everyday life of citizens and organized meeting in the houses of ordinary people provided a fertile terrain for the formation of an organic movement which moreover maintains itself today and has constituted the social base of the current Party of Justice and Development (AKP) whose organization and propaganda are based on its experiences.

First government

However the RP, which previously envisaged in its programme an economic system alternative to capitalism and socialism called the "National Vision" (Milli Görüş), had already adopted (although in a controlled fashion) a market economy from 1994. This turn would then with the AKP take an obvious neoliberal orientation.

The RP, which participated in the parliamentary elections of 1995 without an electoral coalition, came first with 21% of the vote, benefiting from the fragmentation of the centre-right and centre-left, thus becoming the key party on the political level. The RP had gained an advantageous position in relation to the other parties, who had lost credibility above all because of the war waged against the Kurds, and sought the means to make a coalition with the two parties of the centre right (the ANAP and the DYP) who each won 19 % at the elections. After long negotiations which lasted around six months, the historic leader of the movement, Dr. Necmettin Erbakan, finally became prime minister. Although they had obtained in total 25% of the vote, the two centre-left parties had no influence in Parliament.

The coming to power, even in coalition, of the RP, which represented different Islamist sectors and above all the nomination of its leader as prime minister, added to the fact that the new élites in power had begun to enjoy the benefits of power, led to discontent among the ranks of the

traditional Kemalist sectors, and tension rapidly intensified. The reception at the prime minister's residence of religious leaders, including members of the religious sects and the fact that on a visit to Libya, Erdogan had been incapable of responding to an "undiplomatic" speech by Kaddafi on the form of government in Turkey, the Kurdish problem and NATO, all gave the pretext for strong criticisms of the prime minister.

In November 1996, the accidental death in the same car of a high ranking police officer and a fascist with gangland connections who was involved in a series of murderous attacks before the coup d'état of September 12 (and whose affiliation to the national intelligence organisation, the MİT, is almost certain), as well as the fact that a deputy of the Justice Party (DYP) – head of a pro-government Kurdish militia – who was in the same car escaped with serious injuries, led to public indignation and some protests. Erdogan underestimated these incidents, but the protests spread through the country. Erdogan did not pursue the investigations on the accident and thus broadened the opposition to his government.

A postmodern coup d'état

On February 28, 1997, the National Security Council [12] took certain decisions which directly targeted the prime minister. Following these decisions, the DYP, the coalition partner of the Erdogan government, was split and withdrew from the coalition. The president at the time, Süleyman Demirel, as well as the army and judiciary together forced the

government to resign. The Constitutional Court on January 16, 1998, dissolved the RP on grounds of "activities against the principle of the secular Republic".

The Party of Virtue (FP) set up to replace the RP gained 15 % and 18 % of the vote at the parliamentary and municipal elections which followed the dissolution of the RP. The ban on participation in the elections of the historic leadership of the movement created a vacuum in the party. The FP was in turn dissolved in June 2001 on the grounds of "demonstrations of fidelity to its leader, banned from political activity" during its congress.

Even if this time the movement immediately put in place a successor to the FP, namely the Party of Happiness (SP), the young guard of the party, who believed in rebellion against the old oligarchy led by Erdogan, profited from the opportunity not to join this new party.

Neoliberal renewal

This young guard preferred to create its own party, the AKP (Party of Justice and Development), shaking off first the "National Vision". Like the RP, the AKP was set up out of a political vacuum. The government emerged in 1999, from an extremely fragmented parliament, made up essentially of two left nationalist parties on the left and the right, the Democratic Left Party (DSP) and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), who had found a new élan thanks to the rise of a nationalist wave following the arrest and repatriation of Abdullah Öcalan. As to the third partner of the coalition, it was none other than the party of Özal which then became a small centre right party.

The economic crisis of 2001 hit the government hard and the illness of Prime Minister Ecevit compromised the future of the coalition. In May 2002, speculation as to Ecevit's successor began to circulate and finally the parties of the government took the decision to hold early elections at which none of them was able to reach the 10 % threshold required to enter parliament. The same went for the DYP which was in opposition. Thus the whole political class and all the old parties and leaders paid the price for the crisis.

The AKP emerged victorious from the first elections it contested, without making the least promise or claiming to defend a specific programme, presenting itself as a new party faced with a system of political parties which had already collapsed and putting an end to a decade long period of coalitions.

Many who claimed for so many years to be opposed to the West, the EU and even sometimes to capitalism, now adopted neoliberal policies and transformed themselves, into a new centre right party, benefiting from the disarray and fragmentation of the centre right, instead of remaining a dissident movement.

The AKP profile during the November 2002 elections raised many doubts. First it organized visits to the USA to reassure the US administration. Then, the representatives of capital both at home and abroad found these people, whose discourse had in the past been rather radical, a little strange. The state institutions, above all the army and the judiciary were extremely distrustful of them. They had not yet understood that the AKP, although it originated from the RP, had betrayed its old tradition to integrate itself in the system.

Statement on the suspension of COSATU General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi

19 August 2013

As expected the COSATU Central Executive Committee took a decision to suspend Vavi, its general secretary. An internal probe will now sit and in all likelihood find him guilty of bringing COSATU into disrepute and he will be permanently removed from the leadership of COSATU.

Women's abuse is a very serious offence. Abuse of power is very serious. No-one should be above the law. In this case Vavi's guilt has not been established. And it is obvious that the rapid and determined way some in the CEC went about taking up this issue is part of the bigger campaign to rid COSATU of Vavi's leadership. If Vavi, or any official is guilty of serious abuse the workers movement must act principally.

However, COSATU has for a long time left the plane of principle and the defense of working class political interests. In the 1990s the leadership of COSATU was captured by a political faction that has subordinated the independence of the labour movement to political interests of the ruling ANC. This faction has a name: the South African Communist Party. At the ANC's Mangaung conference this faction ensured the ANC clinched tighter control of COSATU by ensuring senior leaders sitting in its national leadership where now in the ANC National Executive Committee. Thus reflecting a desperation and realization that coopting worker leaders through giving them seats in parliament was not enough to ensure control. The politics of control of the SACP/ANC sacrificed working class independence for an accommodation with capital and big business with disastrous results for workers.

As could have been expected the

transition from Apartheid, where working class independence was subordinated to the so-called national interest, the position of the working class and the poor has suffered. Unemployment has more than doubled, large sector of the employed has been informalised and consequently the wage share in the national income has declined as against profits. South Africa has become one of the most unequal countries in the world.

This un-principled politics took its worst form with COSATU liquidating itself into the campaign to have Jacob Zuma elected President of the ANC.

Vavi's, suspension comes after he, together with several principled leaders in COSATU and its affiliates started to reposition COSATU to fight for workers against capital and the state. Since 2010 COSATU has made the "predatory elite" and the threat of the emergence of a "predatory state" a major target. Potentially powerful campaign were launched against corruption, labour brokers, "the jobs blood baths", e-tolls. Government policies such as the New Growth Path and National Development Plan were criticised. This was not just an attack against the ANC leadership but the leadership of the SACP that had liquidated itself into the Zuma-led state and now occupying major Cabinet positions and at every level of government. The turn away from ZUMA was also a challenge to business unions inside COSATU, linked to the SACP/ANC faction trying to control COSATU, and engaging in shady BEE deals behind the backs of workers

For this reason, even before,

COSATU's 2012 Congress the SACP/ANC faction in COSATU has run a campaign to get rid of Vavi. Now they may have succeeded.

However, the global crisis, the deepening crisis of unemployment, poverty and inequality will force principled leadership in COSATU, such as that of NUMSA to continue the struggle and to continue to fight for COSATU's independence and working class independence - with or without Vavi.

The crisis of many affiliates in COSATU in the form of corruption, sweetheart relations with management, lack of servicing of its members, bureaucratisation, etc. which Vavi was trying to arrest will inevitably lead to further splits and fragmentation of the labour movement.

Vavi's suspension is not the end of the story. It will accelerate a process of re-organisation and re-alignment of the labour movement in South Africa. As the DLF we expect to play a major role in assisting the renewal of militant anti-capitalist trade unionism. We call on workers to reclaim their unions from below through worker control and we call on NUMSA to convene its long declared commitment to a Conference of the Left. Out of the wreckage will emerge a renewed labour movement capturing the spirit of principled trade unionism, namely of working class independence, solidarity and militant struggle.

Comrade Zwelinzima Vavi may very well be found playing a critical role in this renewal.

ISSUED BY THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT FRONT

Letter to Egyptian revolutionaries

19 August 2013

Terrible massacres and violent repression, a huge escalation in attacks on Egyptian Christians and churches, the consolidation of the repressive military state continues apace. These are the momentous political developments we have experienced during the last few weeks.

They pose enormous challenges to the revolution, but they also contain opportunities to prepare for the coming waves of the revolution, which the Revolutionary Socialists can use effectively to build the movement, provided that we develop tactics capable of dealing with changing circumstances.

Revolution or military coup?}

After millions took to the streets to topple Mohamed Morsi and Al-Sisi made his declaration removing him from the presidency, there has been widespread debate about how to characterise these events. Was this a revolution of the masses, or a military coup aimed at removing the president in order to establish a military dictatorship? The answer to the question "revolution or coup?" lies in its importance to the development of a strategy for the months, and perhaps the years to come of the Egyptian revolution.

Whoever dismisses the intervention of the gigantic mass movement which launched the new wave of the Egyptian revolution is fleeing from dealing with its inherent contradictions, and thus from both the new challenges in front of the Egyptian revolution, and the opportunities that the future holds. Unsurprisingly, the revolutionaries who dismiss the value of the intervention of the masses – or at least consider the masses to be simply the object of a counter-revolutionary game – are suffering today from deep frustration as a result of what they call the retreat or end of the Egyptian

revolution, and their denial of the available opportunities.

Nor are they alone in dismissing the direct intervention of the masses in Morsi's downfall, and the downfall of the legitimacy of the ballot box with him. Almost all the forces intervening in the political situation today, including the international forces, dismiss the role of the masses.

The exception here is the military establishment, which was burnt by the fire of the mass movement previously, and thus was unable to ignore or overlook it. Rather, the prospects and development of the mass movement are the principal factor determining its policies and interventions. The military establishment represents the mainstay of the ruling class, the regime and the state. It is the spearhead of the counter-revolution which imposes itself on the mass movement as a fait accompli, even while it sows panic about the possibility of the development of the mass movement and strives by every possible means to either contain it within a specific framework which does not threaten its class interests, or by direct repression as happened in the past.

The army certainly wants to contain the gigantic mass movement demanding Morsi's downfall within the limits it sets and the steps it calculates. It wants to prevent the movement from escaping from the framework of Morsi's downfall to become a deeper challenge to the regime in its entirety. The primary goal of the military was return of the millions who filled and controlled the streets to their homes in the shortest time possible, and to stop the movement at the limit of overthrowing the head of the regime and getting rid of him. This goal was compatible with the aspirations of the military after Morsi's failure to abort the revolution in face of the confusion which had gripped the ruling class in the face of the revolution throughout his year in office.

For after Morsi's rise to power last year, with the blessing of the US, the military establishment, and a large section of the business elite, he failed to achieve the objectives of the ruling class in aborting the Egyptian revolution. Morsi was initially a better option for the majority of the ruling class, as he adopted the neo-liberal project and aligned himself with the interests of business. He had no qualms about alliance with the US and was careful not to disturb the Zionist state, in addition to being the first elected president after the revolution. Most importantly, he had a base in the largest mass organisation in Egypt, an organisation which works on the ground with hundreds of thousands of members, sympathisers and supporters. They would be able to absorb the anger of the people and convince the masses of the neo-liberal project and the cruel plans for austerity which accompany it, sparing the ruling class the danger of a mass uprising during its attempts to deal with the economic crisis – or at least to mitigate its effects – at their expense.

Instead, the economic crisis and the failure of Morsi to implement the demands of the revolution (or more accurately his explicit challenge to these demands and objectives) led to a decline in his popularity and the popularity of his organisation to the extent that the ruling class and its institutions could no longer rely on them in the face of the masses.

When it became clear that popular anger had risen enough to overthrow Morsi, it became necessary for the most powerful and cohesive institution in the ruling class – the military – to intervene quickly to contain the anger of the masses and implement their demand. It was necessary to get out of a losing bet on the head of the regime and to rearrange and unify the ruling class around new leaders who would appear as heroes, carrying out the people's demands and uniting with the people in "one rank".

The army was really caught between

two fires. The first was the fire of the mass movement, and the possibility of it breaking through its limits in the event of Morsi continuing in power. The second was the fire of the Brotherhood and the Islamists in the streets, and with the opening of complex fronts in Sinai to a greater extent and some areas of Upper Egypt to a lesser extent, in the event of Morsi's overthrow. Not to mention the differences which would develop with the US administration and the threat of what they call "the democratic path".

The Army chose to avoid the fire of the mass movement, despite the consequences. It decided to knock out Morsi, while absorbing the masses and stopping the development of their movement, and face the fire from the Brotherhood which was less threatening than that of the masses. As for the US administration, and the EU to a lesser extent, they have long-term strategic relations with the Egyptian military establishment which are capable of absorbing any tensions caused by the overthrow of Morsi. Thus the military panicked about the possibility about the development of the mass movement and its escape from its leash. The other option was fraught with danger, for if the army did not overthrow Morsi, and the movement developed in a more radical and deeper direction, the confidence of wide sections of the masses in the army - a confidence which was born out of the absence of any other alternative which could deal decisively with Morsi - would be shaken. This was a factor which could push the movement off its tracks.

In order to complete the work of containing the mass movement, the military appointed an interim president and a new government as a civilian face. The aim was to preserve firstly all its powers and privileges and its interventionist role in violent repression when necessary. Secondly, it aimed to complete the project of counter-revolution at both a political and economic level. This did not mean a retreat of the military from power, but rather the opposite. For in spite of the military's retreat behind the civilian cloak of the new government, it still manages everything just as it did during the year and a half of the

Military Council under the leadership of [Field-Marshal] Tantawi and [General] Anan.

So we have witnessed the mass wave of protest on 30 June and the few days which followed, and seen the military riding on the revolution after 3 July in order to cut the road to the development of the mass movement. The mass movement could have developed greater and more radical dimensions, in particular with the beginning of partial strikes in the Public Transport Authority, the railways, in Mahalla, and among the civil servants at the Cabinet Offices and many others. We are also seeing the return of the ruling class with its military symbols and old leaders in full force, after the expulsion of the Brotherhood from the state, in order for the military to lead the ruling class and the forces of counter-revolution to achieve what Morsi failed to do. That is, to abort the revolution and a hugely confident mass movement, which was however full of contradictions in consciousness and organisation. Inevitably, we have to deal with the movement including its contradictions and exploit the possibilities inherent in it to prepare for the stronger waves of the Egyptian revolution to come.

From this angle, 11 February does not exactly resemble 3 July 2013, and is in fact completely unlike it in many aspects. In the first case, the ruling class was forced to get rid of the head of state and open the door to greater confusion among its own ranks. The state was in a condition of much greater weakness than it appears today, after the collapse of the Interior Ministry and the extreme hostility to Mubarak's cronies. In the second case, however, the ruling class got rid of the head of the regime in order to unite its own ranks, shuffle the cards in its hand, and mend the cracks in order to prepare for attacks on all revolutionary movements. But this does not mean that the political and economic crisis of the ruling class has ended.

In the face of Morsi's overthrow, the Brotherhood and their Islamist allies sought to escalate their mobilisation on the ground with sit-ins and marches in order to restore the "legitimacy" overthrown by the masses along with their failed project

hostile to the goals of the revolution. In the process they have committed heinous crimes which cannot be forgiven in many areas and provinces, as well as their sectarian rhetoric and their incitement against Christians, by pouring their anger out on them and attacking churches. As Revolutionary Socialists we must stand firmly against this aggression and any attack on the Christians of Egypt: this is a matter of principle for us.

We are well aware that for the Brotherhood this is a battle for survival and they will not easily surrender. In parallel to the Brotherhood's attacks and crimes they themselves are facing violent repression at the hands of the military and the Interior Ministry, beginning with the massacre at the Republican Guards HQ, and ending with the barbaric breaking up of the protest camps in al-Nahda Square and Raba'a al-Adawiya, not to mention the killing of three of their women members in Mansoura, and so on.

The crimes of the Brotherhood have led most factions of the left to take an extremely opportunistic stance and to ally themselves with the military and support the repressive state, even repeating the same lies of the bourgeois and feloul media, and completely abandoning any revolutionary or class position. This perspective is built on a catastrophic analysis which considers the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies to be the greatest danger to the Egyptian Revolution, while in reality, if the Brotherhood poses a danger to a certain extent, the institutions of the state which monopolize the means of violence represent a far greater danger to the revolution. This is manifested in the return of the repressive state in all its brutality, in the dictatorial Constitutional Declaration, in the appointments of provincial governors from military and police generals and the old regime and the attack on the Suez Steel strikers and so on.

In addition to the opportunistic and treacherous position of so-called liberals and leftists in support of the military (led by those who participated in Al-Sisi's government), there are many who see the battle between the

Brotherhood and the new/old regime as a battle which means nothing to the revolution and the revolution has no stake in its outcome. From this perspective, revolutionaries must take a neutral position, as if the two parties to the conflict are of equal strength and represent the same danger to the revolution. These views are extremely short-sighted. They do not see the real meaning of the current regime's actions, and the grin on the military's face in the face of the Islamists as they crush the sit-ins at Raba'aal-Adawiyya and al-Nahda. These massacres are a dress rehearsal for crushing the Egyptian Revolution, and will be repeated tomorrow against any genuine opposition force which appears on the scene, particularly the labour movement. This is what we saw a glimpse of in the attack on the Suez Steel strike. The massacres against the Islamists are only the first steps along the road map towards counter-revolution, and we must expose this in sharp and principled attacks on them.

Today we are exposed to a great deal of attacks on our position for condemning the violence of the institutions of repression against the Islamists, and for our attacks on Al-Sisi as the leader of the counter-revolution. But this will not lead us to dilute our position by creating a kind of "balance" in our attacks on the military and the Islamists as if there was equality between them in terms of the danger they represent to the revolution. We are in the process of a comprehensive and sweeping counter-revolution and the crushing of the Muslim Brotherhood's sit-ins and protests is only the first step. We will not waver in our firm position against the military and its fierce repression. "Balance" between the two sides would only reflect hesitancy and indecision instead of taking clear and bold position against the repressive state. We cannot be silent about the military's massacres which have killed dozens of Islamists and we cannot support the state in crushing their sit-ins. Nor can we stop recalling the military's crimes, and warning about the Interior Ministry and demanding the prosecution of their criminals at every opportunity. Likewise we must warn of the return of Mubarak's state and its repressive institutions in full force, and direct our attacks against it.

Nor must we be driven behind the attempts of the supporters of the old regime and their thugs to harass the Islamists and kill them in the streets. There is a vast difference between the self-defence of the masses – even if by violent means – in the face of attacks by the Brotherhood as we saw in Manial and Bayn al-Sayarat and Giza a few weeks ago, and the violence of the institutions of repression and the thugs of the old regime against the Muslim Brotherhood. The latter is not violence defending demonstrators and the revolution, but rather an attempt to stabilise things in the hands of the new regime without opposition from any quarter. The army, police and old regime elements did not intervene, not even once, during the last few weeks, to protect local people or protesters in any of the clashes. It is in this context that Tamarod "Rebel" movement and the left which is stuck to the military's boots, is calling for popular committees to protect the state and the institutions of repression and to help them crush the Islamists. These are fascist calls and we cannot accept them or repeat them.

We must confront the lies the media which give political cover to pinning all the crimes of the military and the old regime on the Muslim Brotherhood. We must challenge the obnoxious narrative which seeks to erase the revolution of 25 January and replace it with the 30 June revolution, in which "all classes" participated, which was not about "burning police stations" and "attacking institutions". This narrative presents the January Revolution as a pure conspiracy by the Brotherhood, which required a revolution against them and not a revolution against the ruling class and its state and repressive institutions. In addition, we hear hateful racist rhetoric against the Palestinians and the Syrians.

The state is mobilising almost all political forces and (formerly) revolutionary forces behind it, and large sections of the masses, in order to confront the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamist alliance around them. In what they call the "war on terror", they are whipping up a disgusting nationalistic atmosphere, claiming that "there is no sound louder than the sound of battle" in order to suppress

and garble the demands of the revolution.

As for the talk of "exclusion" [from the political process] and "reconciliation", the Revolutionary Socialists cannot build their position on this issue in isolation from the moods of the masses and their orientations – in spite of their strong internal contradictions. These masses will not accept reconciliation with the Muslim Brotherhood. As one of the statements of our movement stated, "beating the drum for reconciliation suggests equality between murderer and victim, which is completely unacceptable, without bringing the killers of the martyrs, all the martyrs, and the instigators of violence, to a fair trial". If the masses, under the influence of the media and bourgeois propaganda, want to exclude the Brotherhood, while ignoring the old regime elements and the military, we must also attack the return of the old regime supporters and the return of Mubarak's state under Al-Sisi's flag. All of the main enemies of the Egyptian Revolution and its future prospects, and Al-Sisi is much more dangerous than [Muslim Brotherhood leader] Muhammed al-Beltagi by any measure.

In these circumstances, we must directly and boldly and clearly and without any hesitation raise the slogan "Down with military rule... no to the return of the feloul ... no to the return of the Muslim Brotherhood".

Are we afraid of isolation?

There is no doubt that the tactics of Revolutionary Socialism depend fundamentally on determining the level of development of the consciousness of the masses and of the working class at their heart and their vanguard on the one hand, while assessing the possibilities and opportunities for the development and deepening of the mass movement during the course of the revolution, on the other.

The mass movement today suffers from great contradictions within it, and faces great challenges, and

perhaps the greatest of these is the apparent reconciliation between a section of the masses with the institutions of the state, and particularly the military and the Interior Ministry - the head and heart of the counter revolution. Yet despite the massive frustration which affects large sections of revolutionaries who fought against the Military Council during a year and a half of the revolution, and who continued their struggle against Morsi's regime, there is no other way to carry out a living role within a mass movement, except to deal with it as it is and to understand its contradictions without either overlooking or exaggerating its current potential.

The alliance of the old regime elements and liberal media, with the security services, military and Interior Ministry has succeeded to a large extent in swaying the masses by projecting a false image of the neutrality of the military and the Interior Ministry who they portray as being aligned with the people against Morsi, the Brotherhood and their Islamist allies, in an attempt to also erase the crimes of the state in murder and torture from the memory of the masses. Many political forces, most notably the opportunistic National Salvation Front, the Tamarod campaign, and the Popular Current, have played the most opportunistic and dirty roles in burnishing this image through calls for "unity in the ranks". They praise the national role of the army and the state institutions in meeting the demands of the people to finish with the Brotherhood regime, which they considered to be the biggest and only danger to the Egyptian revolution. However, this perspective only represents a thin crust around the consciousness of the masses. True, it is a solid crust, and almost all parties are working to harden it further, but underneath lies a genuine consciousness of the demands of the revolution and its goals of bread, freedom and social justice.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that, in the midst of these contradictions in consciousness, large sections of the masses have great self-confidence, despite all the distractions and the fog of the "war on terror". The masses

have genuinely imposed their will and overthrown two presidents and four governments since the beginning of the revolution. This confidence which lies under the crust of contradictory consciousness, is what prompted the masses to rise up against Morsi in the first place, and it is this which allows some to prepare gradually to complete the struggle against the new government, as its economic and political policies opposed to the demands of the masses becomes progressively clear. This is despite the partial hope among some sectors of the masses that the government will meet the demands of the revolution.

At this stage we have to find every way possible to reach the genuine core of the poor and working masses' consciousness, in whose fundamental interests it is to continue the revolution and implement its demands. We must continue to emphasize the giant capabilities that the masses exhibited in the wave of 30 June and the previous waves of the revolution by spreading the genuine demands of the Egyptian revolution, and mobilising for them in every province and every workplace. But this cannot and should not push us to hide or delay some of our policies and principles in order to enjoy the temporary, close support of the masses behind our rhetoric and our slogans.

On the contrary, concealing some of our slogans or our policies in order to achieve short-term political goals will only lead to opportunism. This is not the way that the Revolutionary Socialists work, and we have completely avoided opportunism as we have built our organisational project in the midst of the masses and for the victory of the Egyptian revolution. For example, we cannot slacken in our attacks on the lies presented by the media of the old regime and the bourgeois liberals, or stop our attacks on the rehearsals for counter-revolution which the military and the Interior Ministry are carrying out today. We cannot stop recalling the criminal history of the Military Council and Mubarak's cronies, and demanding that they be put on trial side-by-side with the Brotherhood's leaders who have excelled during the last few weeks in incitement to violence and killing, and the

unleashing of disgusting sectarianism. We cannot, in any event, slacken in directing political attacks against the old regime elements and the opportunists in Beblawi's government, the clear liberal tendencies of this government, and the consolidation of the repressive state by the appointment of new provincial governors. We cannot relent in our attacks on the huge powers and privileges which the military enjoys according to the constitution, and its control of around 25 percent of the Egyptian economy, and on the continuation of the humiliating Camp David agreement and so on. We have to deal with these things in a strictly principled manner.

Belittling the return of Mubarak's state and the military repression is extremely dangerous. The state of Mubarak, which - it is true - did not disappear from the scene since the beginning of the revolution, returns today with its full powers, free of internal crises, and with the support of wide sections of the masses. It is this situation which forces us to go onto the attack, immediately against this state, and its symbols, which will not wait long before launching attacks on all who call for the demands of the revolution.

Our principled position may result in our temporary isolation in the midst of the masses. Our message will not generally find a wide reception in the masses, despite all the efforts we will expend in work and activity in the workplaces, the university campuses and the local neighbourhoods. This isolation had already begun in reality before 30 June, as a result of our principled position against the military, the old regime and the Brotherhood. But we must not allow ourselves to give into any degree of frustration, for as long as contradictions continue in the consciousness and capacity of the masses to organise themselves, the mass movement will remain a vehicle which can be affected by many intersecting factors, which force it to proceed along winding roads and not constantly along a straight and rising path. The real content of the repressive regime now in power will be revealed before the eyes of the masses who will gradually will begin

the struggle against it.

This does not mean complete isolation and separation from the masses, as there are tens of thousands of revolutionary youths who fought fiercely against military rule in the waves of the Egyptian revolution, and who completed the struggle against Morsi's regime. Their memories are still rooted in revolutionary principles, they have fewer contradictions in their consciousness, and they are not betting on the institutions of the state, particularly not on the military, the backbone of the counter-revolution. These will find the principled position of the Revolutionary Socialists attractive, in

the light of the wholesale drift of the political forces to the side of the military and the new government it has appointed. From this angle, the situation is better than it was after February 11 2011, when for months, only the Revolutionary Socialists and few individual activists would speak out against the Military Council.

In the weeks and months to come, we have the opportunity to attract and win some of these revolutionaries to strengthen our ranks, in order to play a more vibrant and stable role in the coming waves of the revolution. But at the same time we also want to integrate workers and the poor who

made the revolution and participated in the last wave of 30 June for the goals of the revolution which were never realised. Here it is of the utmost importance to revive the project of the Revolutionary Front with principled parties which do not drift into the arms of the state and the new government, neither are they allied with the Islamists against the state and which adopt a programme of the demands of the revolution and its goals.

Revolutionary Socialists

Egypt

15 August 2013

The Taksim resistance

18 August 2013, by Masis Kürkçügil

Diversity, solidarity and tolerance

Despite the fact that no social content was expressed overtly during the resistance, one of the subjects debated during the discussions underway in the forums held by youth in the various city parks focused on the possible political results of this resistance. The question is whether this explosion of anger aimed at the government and above all the Prime Minister will merely weaken the government a bit while strengthening the main opposition party, the CHP, without transforming itself into a political movement, or if it will open up a new channel of opposition.

It is hard to make a precise judgement on the composition of this movement, which has spread to several cities around the country. However, we can observe that sectors which could be considered as the nationalist left and CHP members massively participated in the demonstrations which took place in Ankara, where the attitude of

the police was much harsher than elsewhere.

Initially there was participation, albeit limited, of the far-right Grey Wolves, in the demonstrations. But they quickly departed, after warnings from the MHP leadership. In a rather strange way, MHP and BDP thus took a common position regarding a situation for the first time in their history.

As for the Kurdish movement, it remained on the sidelines at the beginning of the demonstration when it saw Turkish flags and nationalist left activists, concerned that these events could harm the negotiation process. The message of support Abdullah Â-calân sent from prison was nonetheless an appeal, albeit a little late.

Even if there were not many of them, as the days passed young Kurds took their place in the streets with their dances [halays] and for the first time ever found themselves alongside the nationalist left in such a celebration.

But a mass well beyond the usual elements (such as socialists, the

nationalist left, the Kurdish national movement and CHP supporters) took part in this movement. Thus, it was thanks to new participants in the struggle that such a heterogeneous mass succeeded in uniting. Even the barricades were not built by the activist left alone: here again, there was a vast spectrum ranging from LGBT activists to people participating in a political action for the first time.

Some specific groups came to the fore, the most popular being fans of the Beşiktaş football team known as ÂRSİ (with the letter A written like the anarchist symbol). This group, which had already expressed its sensitivity to a whole series of social questions, became a Taksim resistance legend. The anti-police songs this group composed, with their experience of confrontation acquired during football matches, were on everyone's lips during the demonstrations.

Moreover, anti-capitalist Muslims, who had begun to make their voice heard in left journals and newspapers, as well as on television, by taking part in the Mayday demonstrations for some years, became a centre of

interest during this resistance. During a religious feast at the time of the Taksim revolt, Gezi Park youth distributed little sesame cakes (a religious symbol of celebration) to other demonstrators, to show that everybody respected their religious practices, without any request to this effect by the Muslims.

Feminists and the LGBT movement seized an opportunity to make themselves known. At first there were no common slogans the broad masses could take up, so insults replaced these. The feminists erased sexist and obscene graffiti, to show the youth how to correct their language. And the youth broadly followed this approach.

The movement's most serious omission was its failure to form rank and file committees, which could have built a coordination with strong representativity. Currently, the forums in surrounding parks are attempting to tackle this lack. It is no doubt difficult for such a broad mass to form such a coordination, but it would have been important, in order to counter police attacks and keep the movement's dynamism alive.

The creation of a free kitchen, infirmary, crèche and library for everyday life in common led to the formation of an interesting "moral" economy. Although common life in Gezi Park during these days developed various practices of solidarity encompassing very different sectors, with direct democracy relations to some extent, no "left" demands or questioning appeared.

The place of socialists

Erdogan tried to blame the radical left for the events, but this did not correspond to reality.

In recent years, May 1st demonstrations had become an occasion for the socialist movement to measure its strength. The demonstrations which sometimes took place with participation by rightwing unions and the curious (then counted among participants), became merely scenes of confrontation with the police. They were then seen as a show

of force and nothing more.

This year Erdogan had closed Taksim Square, which had remained open for demonstrations last year. The police cut access to the square and the demonstrators barely succeeded in maintaining their positions around Besiktas just below Taksim, where even CHP MPs were exposed to tear gas. One month later, resistance at Taksim transformed the square into a liberated zone, surrounded by barricades, where no security forces and police could set foot for a fortnight! That is something the socialist movement could never have done.

Although socialist activists took a massive part (throughout the country) in the resistance at Taksim, the total number of socialist activists was never more than 10 % of all demonstrators. With the outbreak of events, various socialist groups and parties went to Taksim Square with their flags. Some of these relatively small groups, camping mainly at the edge of Taksim Square and Gezi park, succeeded in becoming full-fledged components of the movement; but most remained nothing more than "visitors" while others were not at the forefront of physical confrontations with the police.

Academic studies on the composition of the demonstrators have shown that, rather than seeking a social or political outcome, the youth above all opposed the government's interventions in every area of everyday life, as embodied by Erdogan's paternalist and authoritarian personality. The major demand was freedom. Even if they did not view the socialist groups as part of the political system they opposed, they did not see them as having the ability to contribute to the solution of their problems.

The socialist left's main advantage was its participation was in the movement as a legitimate component. Despite this, it cannot be said that the flags and slogans they wished to impose on people there for other reasons were really appreciated!

Of the three main socialist groups, only the Communist Party of Turkey,

the TKP, participated in the 2011 parliamentary elections (it won only 0.14% or 60,000 votes, 25,000 less than in the previous elections). If the Freedom and Solidarity Party (Ā-DP) had been able to take part, it would probably have obtained a similar score. As for the Community Houses (Halkevleri), which present themselves as a movement and not a party, their social weight would have no doubt earned them a similar percentage of votes. In these circumstances, none of these movements had the means to make a leap forward. Furthermore, even if they could have formed a common party they would not represent a pole of attraction.

The election of an independent socialist candidate as MP following a campaign waged in a single Istanbul electoral constituency, with participation of broad socialist and other sectors but above all thanks to the Kurdish vote (the Kurdish movement began this campaign), still remains before us as a significant experience.

It is not possible to find in Turkey even the shadow of a Syriza, borne by the élan of struggles against the crisis. Each of the main socialist organisations has an electoral base totalling only 0.5 %. Thus it is easy to understand why they could not form a pole of attraction for the demonstrators, even cumulatively.

The socialist movement's incapacity to wage at least a united struggle has revealed one of its weaknesses during the resistance in Taksim. If a credible alternative cannot be created, also bringing in the new elements emerging from the resistance, it will become increasingly difficult to face a regime that will become more repressive in the coming period.

Social opposition, in recent years confined to struggles against hydroelectric power stations, unsuccessful strikes and routine Mayday demonstrations, has regained self-confidence with the Taksim resistance.

The socialist movement must absolutely resolve the problem of building an alternative, which can

meet the challenge of upcoming elections. But that requires restructuring, succeeding in taking part in new areas of struggle and not

limited to current forces alone. The Taksim has shown that it is possible to win if we fight. The movement has been from the dead weight dragging it down. To Strengthening this new

position will demand new struggle and integrated struggles not confined solely to questions of liberties but also putting forth social demands.

Down with military rule! Down with Al-Sisi, the leader of the counter-revolution!

15 August 2013

The bloody dissolution of the sit-ins in Al-Nahda Square and Raba'a al-Adawiyya is nothing but a massacre"prepared in advance. It aims to liquidate the Muslim Brotherhood. But, it is also part of a plan to liquidate the Egyptian Revolution and restore the military-police state of the Mubarak regime.

The Revolutionary Socialists did not defend the regime of Mohamed Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood for a single day. We were always in the front ranks of the opposition to that criminal, failed regime which betrayed the goals of the Egyptian Revolution. It even protected the pillars of the Mubarak regime and its security apparatus, armed forces and corrupt businessmen. We strongly participated in the revolutionary wave of 30 June.

Neither did we defend for a single day the sit-ins by the Brotherhood and their attempts to return Mursi to power.

But we have to put the events of today in their context, which is the use of the military to smash up workers' strikes. We also see the appointment of new provincial governors"largely drawn from the ranks of the remnants of the old regime, the police and military generals. Then there are the policies of General Abdel Fatah Al-

Sisi's government. It has adopted a road-map clearly hostile to the goals and demands of the Egyptian revolution, which are freedom, dignity and social justice.

This is the context for the brutal massacre which the army and police are committing. It is a bloody dress rehearsal for the liquidation of the Egyptian Revolution. It aims to break the revolutionary will of all Egyptians who are claiming their rights, whether workers, poor, or revolutionary youth, by creating a state of terror.

However, the reaction by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists in attacking Christians and their churches, is a sectarian crime which only serves the forces of counter-revolution. The filthy attempt to create a civil war, in which Egyptian Christians will fall victims to the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood, is one in which Mubarak's state and Al-Sisi are complicit, who have never for a single day defended the Copts and their churches.

We stand firmly against Al-Sisi's massacres, and against his ugly attempt to abort the Egyptian Revolution. For today's massacre is the first step in the road towards counter-revolution. We stand with the same firmness against all assaults on

Egypt's Christians and against the sectarian campaign which only serves the interests of Al-Sisi and his bloody project.

Many who described themselves as liberals and leftists have betrayed the Egyptian Revolution, led by those who took part in Al-Sisi's government. They have sold the blood of the martyrs to whitewash the military and the counter-revolution. These people have blood on their hands.

We, the Revolutionary Socialists, will never deviate for an instant from the path of the Egyptian Revolution. We will never compromise on the rights of the revolutionary martyrs and their pure blood: those who fell confronting Mubarak, those who fell confronting the Military Council, those who fell confronting Mursi's regime, and those who fall now confronting Al-Sisi and his dogs.

Down with military rule!

No the return of the old regime!

No to the return of the Brotherhood!

All power and wealth to the people

The Revolutionary Socialists

14 August 2013

Republished from [Socialist Worker](#).

Solidarity with Texas women

14 August 2013

Passage of the bill came after five weeks of angry protests inside and outside the Texas state Capitol building—including a "people's filibuster," in which hundreds of pro-choice demonstrators shouted down legislators' attempts to pass the bill. In the end, legislators approved the bill, which outlaws abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy and places such strict restrictions on abortion providers that it will result in the closure of all but five abortion clinics out of the existing 42.

But for abortion rights activists, this is part of a larger fight. Pro-choice activists called the day of action not just to draw attention to the attack on women's reproductive rights in Texas, but to link the fight to the ongoing assault in states across the country.

Hundreds gathered at the state Capitol in Austin, after marching through downtown, many of them singing Twisted Sister's "We're Not Gonna Take It," a song that has become a sort of rallying cry for local activists. Speakers included author and liberal radio host Jim Hightower.

ACTIONS WERE also planned in about 20 cities on July 15. Here are reports from activists in a few of those cities.

— In Oklahoma City, some 75 activists braved the rainy weather to attend a rally at the State Capitol. Poet Lauren Zuniga kicked off the rally by reciting her poems "To the Oklahoma Lawmakers" and "Personhood."

Martha Skeeters of the Oklahoma Coalition for Reproductive Justice and Teri McGrath from Lawton/Fort Sill Progressives rounded out the speakers. A few members of the audience then spoke about their experiences in being activists on women's issues and how important it

is especially in such a conservative state.

— In Washington, D.C., abortion rights supporters joined anti-racist protesters gathered to protest the acquittal of George Zimmerman, who shot Black teenager Trayvon Martin. When a few dozen women's rights activists arrived at the White House for the 8 p.m. event, about 40 people were already there after taking part in a march from Malcolm X Park in Northwest D.C.

Some pro-choice protesters just joined in, and, after some discussion, all the pro-choice demonstrators joined in chanting for Trayvon and against the verdict. The growing picket alternated chants that encompassed both issues, like "Gay, straight, Black, white. All unite for human rights!" and "Pro-life that's a lie. You don't care if Trayvon dies."

Eventually, the group switched seamlessly to several chants in solidarity with the assault on abortion rights in Texas. Feminist activist Alli McCracken said, "This is a really exciting rally that ended up being a mutual fight against oppression in the forms of racism and sexism."

About a half hour later, a loud contingent of more than 200 demonstrators organized by Howard University students against Zimmerman's acquittal arrived from Farragut North and the growing demo switched back to anti-racist chants.

At the end, National Organization for Women President Terry O'Neill spoke. "We cannot end sexism without also ending racism," she said. "Racism, sexism, homophobia—all oppressions are linked."

— In Madison, Wis., more than 50 activists came together to stand in solidarity with Texas women. The loud and angry protest started out a few

blocks from the Capitol building at a major intersection.

Republican Gov. Scott Walker recently signed a bill into law requiring transvaginal ultrasounds for women seeking abortions. This bill also requires physicians at abortion clinics to have admitting privileges at hospitals—a transparent move to create financial and bureaucratic barriers to the functioning of these clinics.

From its initial location, the crowd occupied State Street for a short march to the Capitol, where there was a speak-out featuring members of the International Socialist Organization, Jobs Not Vaginas and the National Organization for Women. A solidarity statement was read by Planned Parenthood, whose members and staff were in court fighting Walker's new law.

— In Denton, Texas, about 40 people attended a rally organized by the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, the Radical Alliance for Gender Equality and the International Socialist Organization.

A diverse crowd attended the event, including women from the pre-Roe v. Wade era alongside younger women. Beginning with an open-mic session, many of the speakers held a megaphone for the first time during the event. They shared personal stories and their outrage at how the anti-abortion bill would affect the women of Texas, many of them connecting the ways that the bill primarily affects poor and working-class women.

The experiences of women of color who have been forcibly sterilized was also addressed by speakers, as well as why abortion providers are important to the LGBTQ community.

Seen as only a small step in the long

battle to stop the effects of the bill from becoming a reality, the rally showed that women and allies of Denton, Texas are ready and eager to finish the war against abortion rights and turn it into a movement that works toward women's equality.

— In Providence, R.I., more than 40 women and men marched from Burnside Park in downtown Providence to the Rhode Island statehouse, showing solidarity with women in Texas and protesting attacks on reproductive rights in that state and across the country.

At the statehouse, women spoke out against attacks on abortion rights both nationally and in Rhode Island, where the state legislature recently voted to fund so-called crisis pregnancy centers—non-medical facilities staffed by anti-abortion activists who pose as medical experts in order to shame and intimidate women seeking reproductive health care.

While this bill was vetoed at the last minute by Rhode Island Gov. Lincoln Chafee, the proliferation of these fake clinics—which by now outnumber actual abortion clinics in the state by

three to one—dramatically compounds the problem of lack of access to reproductive health care, especially for low-income women and women of color.

The demonstration ended with a call for full reproductive health care for all women—meaning fully funded and fully accessible—and for true universal health care for all. "This doesn't end with abortion and reproductive health care," said organizer Lindsay Goss. "This about full comprehensive health care for every single person."

<http://socialistworker.org>

Environmentalists and Labor Unite to Protest Chevron Disaster

14 August 2013, by Barry Sheppard

Richmond is predominately non-white. Latinos make up 39 percent of the population, and another 27 percent are African American and other people of color. For years, people in the Richmond community have been battling the environmental racism of Chevron, the major industrial plant in the city, and many other chemical and other polluting industries, whose wanton spewing of toxins disproportionately affects the areas where non-whites live.

The fire and explosion at Chevron last year brought this truth home to hundreds of thousands throughout the Bay Area. The catastrophe happened as a result of deliberate negligence (cost cutting) on the company's part that resulted in a ruptured pipeline. Workers, who rushed to the leak in response to this emergency noticed a plume of volatile hydrocarbon gas visible as a shimmering in the air, knew that an explosion was imminent and fled the scene in the nick of time. The resulting explosion and subsequent fire spewed a huge cloud of toxic black smoke for hours across Richmond and neighboring cities, visible for miles and miles. In spite of

a timely order by city authorities for people to stay indoors, some 15,000 were hospitalized with respiratory problems in the following days.

The coalition that organized the demonstration, a two-mile march that ended with a rally at the refinery, included 350.org and its local supporters and a range of community groups, including the Richmond Progressive Alliance. There were banners and signs reflecting local community issues with the Chevron refinery, as well as those of the national "Summer Heat" protests: "No more toxic hazards, no Keystone XL pipeline, no refining tar sands or fracked crude – yes to a just transition from fossil fuels to union jobs and clean energy!"

It also included Richmond Mayor Gayle McLaughlin of the Green Party and other city officials. 350.org national leader Bill McKibben flew in for the action. He noted that Richmond was the only stop on the "Summer Heat" tour where he received a red-carpet treatment from City Hall. At the end of the rally McKibben and about 200 others

staged a civil disobedience sit-in on Chevron property.

Speaking at the rally, McKibben said, "The reason that we're here is that Chevron is a really bad actor. In places where they get their oil, they're a bad actor. Ask the people in Canada fighting their fracking. Ask the people of Ecuador who have had to live with their waste. When they get it here to refine it, they're a bad actor. They sent 15,000 of their neighbors to the hospital. And they are bad, bad actors on this planet. They have nine billion barrels of oil in their reserves," which, if burned will have a severe effect on climate change.

McKibben also applauded that there was a labor contingent on the march, which included unionized nurses, government workers, longshoremen (warfies), teachers, and communication workers, as well as representatives from Walmart workers seeking to organize. The local coalition appointed an organizer to do labor outreach. Included among the demands of the demonstrators was one supporting better safety standards for the Chevron refinery workers.

Veteran labor activists Steve Early and Suzanne Gordon wrote, "The speakers reflected growing diversity in the local environmental movement. Native-Americans led off, followed by African-Americans, Laotian, and Latino critics of "climate chaos." Andres Soto of Communities for a Better Environment said, "We know that we're the little guys and that they're the big and powerful multinational corporation - in fact an international criminal cartel...They have the money power; we have the people power. And as long as we continue to organize, continue to bring people out, we know that Chevron ultimately is going to have to deal with us, because we can't allow them to control our lives here in Richmond."

Thousands joined together to protest on the anniversary of the disaster.

Health care workers Estelle Schneider told of effects of the fire a year earlier. "The fire affected primarily people who are older, younger, have chronic diseases or have issues like asthma. So people whose immune system is weaker were greatly affected. But, in general, it affected everybody. We saw people come in with difficulty breathing, with a lot of coughing. We saw people whose asthma was exacerbated and who had to get emergency treatment. We saw a lot of kids with respiratory problems. And we saw skin issues."

Retired Richmond teacher and RPA activist Eduardo Martinez said that the school where he taught students with breathing problems had formed an after-school group known as the "asthma club" because they couldn't participate in regular sports activity. Asthma and cancer rates are much higher than normal in Richmond's toxic ally downwind from the refinery and chemical plants.

The day before the demonstration, the City of Richmond filed a lawsuit against Chevron, citing "a continuation of years of neglect, lax oversight and corporate indifference to necessary safety inspection and repairs." After last year's fire, the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration cited Chevron for eleven "willful" safety violations and imposed the largest fine in the agency's history, \$1 million that the company is contesting.

As Early and Gordon note, Chevron just posted second quarter profits of \$3.37 billion. \$1 million, or \$0.001 billion, is part of the rounding off of these profits. Two days after the demonstration, Chevron pleaded no contest to six criminal charges related to the fire and agreed to additional oversight over the next few years and pay \$2 million in fines as part of a plea deal with state and county prosecutors.

No actual people responsible were fined or will face jail.

Mayor McLaughlin replied the next day, "The thought of Chevron thinking that \$2 million is going to be sufficient in terms of addressing the problems, the ongoing threat that they cause to my community, is outrageous. Our city council owes it to the residents of Richmond to pursue this lawsuit, demanding accountability from Chevron." McLaughlin also noted that it was "really great on Saturday to join with our allies all over the Bay Area and California coming to Richmond and really making it clear the community of Richmond does not deserve and will not stand for these kinds of toxic releases that impact our health and safety and also impact the sustainability of our planet."

She also pointed to the support to the demonstration from the government of Ecuador, which is waging its own battle with Chevron for the truly horrendous environmental disaster it wrought in that country. Leading up to the demonstration, Ecuador bought ads in the local newspapers, saying the people of Ecuador stand with the people of Richmond. "So we had the spirit of people all over the world with us, and 2,500 people marching and rallying in front of the gates of Chevron. And we will definitely will be continuing this momentum, because so much is at stake, and we're not backing down."

Obama's spy methods exposed by Snowden

12 August 2013, by Jeff Mackler

This "war," codified since 9-11 in the Patriot Act and the associated Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, has been routinely reaffirmed and expanded in scope by the Obama administration. It has been routinely employed to justify endless National Security Agency, FBI, and a myriad of other public and private government-funded spy operations that violate with impunity democratic rights and civil liberties at

home and justify real wars abroad in which the Pentagon and privatized mercenary Blackwater-type death squads murder oppressed people around the world. Indeed, close to half of the U.S.-paid armed forces operating in Afghanistan today "hundreds of thousands of trained killers and their back-up operatives" function as private mercenary armies.

Judging that perhaps some embarrassing excesses have been committed in this "perpetual" state of war, President Obama suggested that the "Authorization for Use of Military Force" measures approved by Congress after the Sept. 11, 2001, bombings committed by Egyptian terrorists, might be modified a bit to avoid "keeping America on a perpetual wartime footing."

He added, "Unless we discipline our thinking and our actions, we may be drawn into more wars we don't need to fight, or continue to grant presidents unbound powers more suited for traditional armed conflicts between nation states." The latter, as we all are supposed to understand, are being "phased out." We can only assume, therefore, that the trillion-dollar annual military budget will be largely restricted to America's "non-traditional," daily wars conducted around the world largely in secret!

The Obama speech was laden with tedious and moralizing platitudes devoid of a single specific measure to remedy the avalanche of crude, brutal, illegal, unconstitutional, racist and even genocidal measures that today define the daily ruling-class policies and practices of a declining social order. The president's speech was prompted by recent revelations that one or more of his spy agencies had wiretapped the home, office, and cell phones of some 20 Associated Press reporters and previously their counterparts in The New York Times.

The "humble" and posturing president also suggested that he and his successors might be restricted a tad in utilizing the present "kill list" to murder suspected terrorists, and that ways might even be found to limit torture and indefinite detention with regard to the hunger-strikers at the imperial U.S. military base in Guantanamo, Cuba. These prisoners have been held for years without charges, access to attorneys, or any other form of due process—and often have been subjected to torture.

Obama discussed only his short list of possible government transgressions, while promising to ask their very perpetrators, as if he himself was guiltless, to investigate themselves! Virtually absent from the president's discourse were references to the vast array of blatant violations of fundamental rights that any "democratic" society would take for granted.

There was no mention of ongoing FBI threats to fine internet companies who refuse to install devices in their equipment to facilitate government surveillance of every person in the

country. That such devices are operative is beyond doubt, but we are told that the acquired information is funneled into some "non-government-associated" holding apparatus accessible only when permission is granted by some secret government oversight body—to be sure, one "sworn" to protect our constitutional rights from people or institutions like the president, the NSA, the FBI, and all the others who might be tempted to abuse them.

Snowden: The spy who came in from the cold

To the great embarrassment of Obama and his posturing co-conspirators at every level of government, within days of his "pledge of openness" speech, the lid was blown off any and all pretence of democratic functioning in the U.S. This took place when a 29-year-old former CIA intelligence technician, Edward Joseph Snowden, currently employed at Booz Allen Hamilton, a multi-billion-dollar government-contracted spy agency, publicly announced what no one could deny—that he was the source of the British Guardian and Washington Post revelations during the previous week.

Snowden disclosed secret and longstanding FISA court orders demanding that virtually all of the nation's internet providers—including Yahoo, Microsoft, Paytalk, AOL, Apple, Facebook, Skype and YouTube—allow for the unprecedented, secretly conducted, and ongoing government sweep of phone calls, audio and video chats, e-mails, photographs, documents, connection logs, and other communications used daily by American citizens.

The government spy program, code-named Prism, supposedly allowed corporations like Apple Computer to officially deny that they were the "direct" source that inspected the information or allowed immediate government access to it. They could point out instead that they served as merely a conduit that funneled all

such information into Prism. In all, the whistleblowers reported that the NSA collects phone records on 3 billion private communications per day!

The leader of the Senate Foreign Intelligence Committee, Diane Feinstein, blithely dismissed the revelations entirely, insisting that since they were FISA court-ordered—that is, issued by a secret court with virtually no government oversight—they were perfectly legal. Feinstein did indicate that some unnamed government officials had been "briefed" on the matter.

While government officials also retorted that all three branches of government had "signed off" on the telephone spying, a top ACLU official, Anthony Romero, denounced the program as a fundamental violation of civil liberties, saying, "A pox on all three houses of government," regardless of what hidden approval devices were employed.

Another just-released 18-page presidential memo has Obama, according to Glenn Greenwald and Ewen MacAskill, writing in The Guardian, ordering intelligence officials to "draw up a list for potential overseas targets for U.S. cyber attacks." This never-published October 2012 Presidential Policy Directive 20 states that Offensive Cyber Effects Operations "can offer unique and unconventional capabilities to advance U.S. national objectives around the world with little or no warning to the adversary or target and with potential effects ranging from subtle to severely damaging." The same objectives can be perpetrated within the U.S., says Obama's directive, but only with prior orders from the president, except in cases of "emergency."

This alone should cause some anxiety among activists who might suffer under the illusion that Facebook and other such social media devices can function as a permanent democratic instrument to challenge capitalist abuse and power and organize mass opposition. With a push of the government's "emergency" button, these new and undoubtedly valuable but ultimately limited forms of communication can expected to be

shut down in an instant.

And thus, in a matter of days, the Obama administration's effort to posture as defenders of civil liberties went up in flames, and the police-state-type mechanisms that had been meticulously put into place and illegally used for more than seven years, officially, were exposed around the world. What a small layer of political activists had justifiably taken for granted for decades and longer is now the public knowledge of millions—and exposed by a handful of leakers who will inevitably face severe government persecution. How could it be otherwise?

Mushrooming spy apparatus

Edward Snowden was one of some 1.4 million intelligence technicians, operatives, security specialists, or just plain spies who have earned “after the minimum of a one-year investigation” top-level national security classification status. Moreover, all of these individuals work for a mushrooming number of government and privatized spy agencies charged with collecting data from every conceivable source. Indeed, the very rivalry between many of these agencies has fueled internal debates as to whether or not their efforts should be coordinated and the results “shared” to increase their efficiency and avoid duplication of effort.

It was these very “sharing” concerns that allowed Snowden, a relatively low-level employee at Booz Allen who specialized in such technical coordination, to gain access to the data of multiple agencies and their associated collections of government-classified documents. As with Bradley Manning's leaks of millions of pages of classified “dirty-op” material to Julian Assange's WikiLeaks—including the release of videotapes of deliberate murder—this once again reveals that capitalism recognizes no limits when it comes to advancing its interests.

Here it is critical to state that Snowden's revelations, the magnitude of which have yet to be determined, go

far beyond the unprecedented spy network daily used against American citizens in violations of their right to privacy, free speech, and association. It is highly probable that Snowden's computers, four or five of which he is reported to keep in his possession at all times, contain classified material that includes the illegal U.S. spy operations conducted against virtually all nations on earth. This material ranges from military secrets to private-sector intellectual property and data on scientific breakthroughs that relate to key aspects of capitalist production and trade, to documents of the very government and private banking institutions that collectively constitute the core operations of all U.S. rivals.

Snowden has now been charged under the Espionage Act with at least three violations, which would total some 30 years in prison, assuming he is extradited, indicted, and convicted. The government is looking for other avenues to persecute this bright and conscience-driven youth, who has little or no previous political experience. Major pressure was exerted on the Chinese government to extradite Snowden from Hong Kong, where he was reportedly in hiding with fears for his very life at the hands of U.S. operatives. The Chinese government was in no hurry to accede to the barrage of U.S. demands, especially when it learned from Snowden's revelations that it too had been subjected to illegal U.S. spy operations. Undaunted, the courageous Snowden continues to release swaths of illegal and secret U.S. government spy operations, creating an unprecedented nightmare for Obama and the U.S. government.

It is interesting to note here that both Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden state that they took care to not release material that might cause harm to U.S. spies or otherwise directly jeopardize their operations, a form of innocent self-censorship in this writer's view, that they perhaps believed might limit government efforts to lock them in jail forever—if not worse. This distinction was also employed by the Washington Post and other media who in the past, as with The New York Times's 1971 release of the Pentagon Papers and the more

recent Wikileaks material, actually submitted the materials they received for prior government perusal—that is, censorship.

In the case of the corporate media, it is simply a matter of doing the bidding of the U.S. ruling elite while attempting to maintain the semblance of a “free press” at the same time. A 1996 Times article noted that the Pentagon Papers, which revealed secret U.S. operations in Vietnam over the course of some 25 years, “demonstrated, among other things, that the Lyndon Baines Johnson Administration had systematically lied, not only to the public but also to Congress, about a subject of transcendent national interest and significance.” The Pentagon Papers, were not declassified and publicly released until June 2011, that is, some 40 years after they were first leaked by RAND Corporation top-level military analyst and former Pentagon military specialist, Daniel Ellsberg.

The prosecution and punishment of the leakers remains a top priority, with government officials already investigating how to inflict the greatest harm to Glenn Greenwald, one of the country's most democratically minded bloggers and the British Guardian reporter who first exposed this most recent wholesale violation of fundamental rights. Greenwald has toured the country and the world for years warning of the dangers of today's unchecked surveillance and the resulting criminal acts perpetrated in the name of national security. This includes a national tour last year, when Greenwald minced no words in damning the government's persecution of 700,000 members of the U.S. Muslim community since 9-11.

These latest revelations are but the tip of the iceberg. It is only a matter of time until the thousands and more of the millions of U.S. spies “come in from the cold” to expose the daily police-state measures, engineered wars, and mass murders that constitute a key portion of ruling-class policy today. What Snowden has revealed with regard to government spying differs little from the ever-deepening coordinated military-police

measures being put into place in preparation for quelling the massive protests the ruling elite fully expect as their ongoing austerity measures inflict deepening misery on U.S. workers.

National security is ruling-class security

Obama's backfired and bungled plan to defuse public outrage before the recent internet exposés left out the 99.9 percent of his administration's daily and heinous offenses. The president declined to explain, for example, why he has all but pledged to sign on to the deadly Keystone XL Pipeline project. But "White House and State Department officials," according to the May 5 New York Times, "insist a pipeline ruling will be made strictly on whether the 1,700-mile project [from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico] is in the economic, environmental and security interests of the United States."

"Oil wars" too are routinely justified on "national security" grounds, as are military coups, "energy independence through fracking, off-shore and Alaskan tundra drilling," "regime change," and now the pipeline aimed at transporting tar sands and other deadly fossil fuel material whose continued use spells doom for all humanity.

The president declined to explain why it is today the norm for corporate lobbyists like Citigroup's and other private top banking specialists to write their own legislation to soften financial regulations to their advantage. The May 24 New York Times reports: "In a sign of Wall Street's resurgent influence [an understatement if there ever was one] in Washington, Citigroup's recommendations were reflected in more than 70 lines of the House committee's 85-line bill. Two crucial paragraphs, prepared by Citigroup in conjunction with other Wall Street banks, were copied nearly word for word."

Of course, the fact that these same

corporations write the tax codes to exclude 70 percent of all businesses from federal taxation, the latest example being the Apple Computer Corporation, went without comment from the "democratically minded" president. To be sure, protecting and expanding the profits and global competitiveness of American multinationals against all comers is always capitalism's prime directive and therefore its prime "national security" justification, as was the case with the Microsoft Corporation 15 years ago when the U.S. Supreme Court formally trashed historic anti-monopoly legislation to guarantee Microsoft's supremacy in the U.S. and on world markets.

Drone bombings defend "national security"

There was little specific mention in Obama's oration on the drone bombings that have to date taken the lives of almost 5000 civilians around the world, including a number of Americans in foreign countries deemed to be "terrorist suspects" and killed by some remote satellite-guided drone operator halfway around the world. The president did suggest that perhaps the Pentagon, rather than the CIA, might be assigned to drone warfare, thus leaving the CIA free to focus on perhaps more important objectives, including economic and military espionage.

Stealing corporate secrets, patents, research, and "intellectual property rights" of America's corporate competitors—an activity always considered fair game in today's thus-far mostly non-military competition for global economic domination, ranks high in top corporate circles. To be accurate, Obama did pledge that drone "signature strikes" would perhaps now continue with some vaguely-stated congressional or secret "public oversight," as opposed to the present criteria of murdering people because they live in a region alleged to be in the vicinity of "terrorist operations." The latter are defined as any that challenge the ongoing U.S. wars and interventions against their

countries.

As in the decade of the Vietnam War, where the unofficial U.S. objective was, perhaps humorously stated, to "teach the Vietnamese not to invade the land that they were born in," a war that slaughtered four million Vietnamese, terrorists are defined as anyone who opposes U.S. occupations and the rape of their country. In decades past this included the South African forces of the African National Congress, today the governing party of that nation.

To be sure, Iraq and Afghanistan were excluded from the president's new and non-specific guidelines because these are "real wars," as compared to Pakistan, where thousands of civilian drone murders have been systematically documented even though the U.S. is not "officially" at war in that country. Given this "fact," the U.S. admits to no drone killings there, a fiction necessary to maintain a semblance of credibility—that is, to everyone except the Pakistani victims.

The use of surveillance drones to daily spy on American citizens was excluded—at least for the time being by the "democratic" chief of state. Again, maintaining the fiction of U.S. capitalist democracy at home still concerns U.S. policy makers, although this fiction stands exposed today more than ever as a crude fraud. The most recent revelations include evidence of the use of drones for U.S. domestic surveillance.

The FBI's subpoenaing 24 members of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization to appear before a Chicago Grand Jury investigating terrorism tells us that the now officially-admitted spying on virtually the entire nation will be accompanied by persecution and imprisonment of social activists merely because of their political views. This attack on a socialist organization, the first in a generation, and on a group prominently involved in the U.S. antiwar movement and in the leadership of the broadly representative United National Antiwar Coalition, is an ominous sign that worse is to come. The list of antiwar and social justice organizations that have reported and

proven government and police surveillance is ever increasing.

On the trade-union front, Obama neglected to explain why top government officials threatened to use the military to break strikes by the Longview, Wash., longshore strikers last year and in the not-so-recent past, when the striking ILWU was threatened with “national security” injunctions and the use of Navy crane operators to break a West Coast ILWU strike.

The monstrous persecution of “whistle blowers” like Bradley Manning—who exposed hundreds of thousands of pages of illegal government spying around the world as well as revealing videotape proof of the conscious murder of U.S. and foreign journalists, as well as civilians, by U.S. helicopter pilots who followed orders to gun down the innocent—never made the president’s list of democratic concerns. Persecuting the truth tellers rather than the murderers is standard U.S. policy—necessary, again, to defend the “national security” interests of the U.S. elite.

The shattering of fundamental constitutional rights is today commonplace in today’s legal system. In the name of the war on terror, attorney-client confidentiality has been eliminated via “legalized” electronic surveillance. In the case of Lynne Stewart her private government-taped conversations with her client, Sheik Omar Abdel Rachman, were introduced in court as evidence against her—yet another example of trashing democratic rights in the fake war on terrorism.

Persecution of immigrants and Muslims

Obama also declined to mention that his administration has deported more immigrants, 300,000-plus over each of the past three years, than any administration in history—criminalizing, again in the name of national security, the poorest sectors of the working class, who labor most often at sub-minimum

wages to satiate agri-business and other corporate requirements to remain competitive in world markets.

Furthermore, the Obama administration is using the immigration system to expand surveillance of the entire U.S. population. A FOIA request submitted by immigrant rights groups in 2011 revealed that Secure Communities, a program used to deport immigrants through the jail system, is the precursor of a national biometric database called Next Generation Identification, which is currently being developed by the FBI. And the latest immigration reform proposal expands E-verify to cover all workers in the U.S. Soon everyone could be required to show a biometric ID when applying for any job. Its clear from these few examples that attacks on immigrants are attacks on all workers.

Since 9-11 the ever-expanding Homeland Security apparatus has investigated more than 700,000 Muslims, again with the “justification” that this community represents a threat to the nation’s “national security.” There were no Obama apologies for these blatantly racist persecutions, as there are none for the “stop and frisk” legislation wherein hundreds of thousands of Black and Brown working people are daily harassed, persecuted, and jailed. The U.S. today imprisons the largest number and percentage of its population than any nation on earth. It ranks first as well in the number of executions, in both cases the majority victims of Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans.

With regard to his just admitted, and still unpunished, and therefore impliedly justified, civil liberties incursions, Obama pledged “to strike an appropriate balance [sometime in the future] between our need for security and preserving those freedoms that make us who we are.” His contemplated formation of an “independent board” to preserve civil liberties, as if the myriad of Constitutional/Bill of Rights protections and the entire system of judges and juries sworn to defend them were no longer adequate to guarantee these rights, is more than ironic.

These measures signal that the U.S. ruling class has been well aware of the massive mobilizations of workers around the world who have gone to new lengths to challenge the austerity measures imposed on them by a failing world capitalism that has no choice but to resolve its contradictions at the expense of the great majority. This includes the increased use of force, violence, and repression in its multiple forms to thwart the inevitable concerted fightbacks ahead.

Preparation for deepening repression

While the elite purport to use their police and military powers to rule with the assent of the masses rather than through compulsion, the latter is their ultimate weapon. When the 99 percent begin to take the fightback road in earnest and bring forth experienced and revolutionary-minded leaders deeply imbedded in the social movements to mobilize hundreds of millions to defend their interests, the measures for police state repression in preparation today will be unleashed with a fury not seen in generations.

Americans today do live in a government-defined “national security” state—and in a police state of sorts as well. The ever refined and well-honed measures in progress, at least partially hidden from public view, are prerequisite institutions to enforce minority rule—with a vengeance when necessary. This has always been the case, varying in intensity according to the times and needs of the oppressing minority to retain its rule and power with the least possible opposition from the great mass of the working-class population.

Today’s national security state will meet its match only when a mass democratic and revolutionary response in numbers and with an intensity far beyond the control of any government repression takes the road to challenge every and all aspects of the capitalist state power.

Pipe dream, you say? The state is

invincible, you say? I beg to differ, but not from the vantage point of my admitted revolutionary optimism. The history of every society that has ever existed demonstrates that every tyrant and every repressive social order has fallen to the massive mobilization of the oppressed. None, however powerful, however heinous, however well armed and organized to eliminate all challenges, have beaten this historic law of human development.

We need not recount the lessons of every nation and pre-nation on earth, all of which mark their histories with the dates when the many defeated the few. The most recent example that is familiar to Americans is the Vietnam War. Here the world witnessed a confrontation between the world's most well-armed super-power and one of the poorest nations on earth. The 10-year U.S. war, was waged by a country whose corporate media pilloried the Vietnamese as terrorists—“not to mention as uncivilized “gooks” and communists. It was a country whose spy apparatus was unmatched anywhere, that routinely used poisons and napalm bombs to strip the jungle foliage along the Ho Chi Minh trail, that maintained a force of 500,000 ground troops, and that sought to justify its genocide in the name of “fighting for democracy.”

On the Vietnamese side stood a peasant army whose organized contingents never exceeded 50,000 fighters, who lacked any air power at all for 99 percent of the war and who used bamboo snares and booby traps against the world's most sophisticated armaments. The Vietnamese received a pittance of doled-out aid from the former Soviet Union while the Chinese Stalinist government headed by Mao Tse-tung fñated the warmongering U.S. President Richard Nixon in Beijing after he had extended the war to North Vietnam. The Vietnamese had no navy, while the U.S. possessed the world's most powerful navy and mined Vietnam's harbors with impunity.

Yet the U.S. lost the war. In its last days the world's media was compelled to televise the panicked helicopter evacuation from Saigon of the last contingents of U.S. troops and their handful of complicit Vietnamese agents and hangers-on who had

staked their future on a U.S. victory. And this was in the face of the victorious army of the Vietnamese people marching unimpeded and triumphantly into the South's capital, Saigon.

But it was far from the Vietnamese army and people alone that won this victory for self-determination. The U.S. soldiers had lost the will to continue to fight a war that the whole world condemned as immoral, illegal, racist, and genocidal. The American youth who were drafted to do the fighting—“in great part Blacks, Puerto Ricans and other Latinos, and working-class whites—“came to see the war as criminal in every respect.

They took no pride in following orders to raze entire villages and indiscriminately murder women and children. Indeed, increasing numbers refused to do so; they shot the officers who ordered them to become murderers, or wounded themselves sufficiently to be sent home from the slaughter. Hundreds of thousands joined in, at first as individuals and then in uniform, to lead the unprecedented antiwar protests whose numbers began in the hundreds, then thousands, and ended in the regular periodic and coordinated mobilizations of millions.

By the war's end, polls showed that 75 percent of the American people supported the demand for the immediate and total withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Vietnam and Southeast Asia, where the U.S. war had spread to Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia.

The antiwar movement cut deep into the fabric of U.S. society. What began as a movement led by small groups of revolutionaries—“near underground victims of the still virulent McCarthy-era witch-hunt era who were compelled to hide their political identities—“ended in a mass movement, perhaps the first in U.S. history, that unabashedly challenged an imperialist war in progress. Whistleblowers appeared in the millions in the form of U.S. soldiers—“even military officers—“who told the truth about the genocidal policies that were the daily routine during the Vietnam War

and in fact, during every imperialist and colonial war ever fought.

Antiwar sentiment became deeply rooted in the trade unions, whose compliant Cold War-era bureaucrats initially backed the war with patriotic pandering to the warmakers. In the end, the ranks could not be denied, and millions of organized workers protested the slaughter in mass protests and even in some antiwar strike actions, where for the first time in memory, millions declared a “Moratorium” on war, and abandoned their workplaces to close down significant parts of the country, albeit for short periods of time.

The power of this movement spread to every social sector. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s opposition and his joining with the national antiwar leadership combined the struggle against wars abroad with the struggle for civil and human rights in the U.S. McCarthy-era witch-hunt legislation was largely declared unconstitutional as an enraged public rejected the “national security” myth perpetrated by the government to justify its 10-year genocide.

In summary, the world's greatest economic and military power, replete with ever expanding institutions of domestic repression, from the FBI and the CIA to countless others, could not and did not prevail against an American movement, led in significant part by conscious revolutionary activists of many persuasions and especially those of the Socialist Workers Party. This movement combined with a U.S. military whose ranks had in great part been imbued with the mass antiwar sentiment that was years in the making and the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people to inflict an historic defeat that has not been forgotten to this day.

How can we explain this historic defeat? The answers are many but a few critical points were decisive. First, the Vietnamese, who had previously defeated over a century and longer invasions of foreign powers, including those of Japan, France, and China, refused to forfeit their sovereignty—“their right to self-determination. The Vietnamese losses were staggering at the war's end in

1975. Four million were murdered, almost 10 percent of the entire population. The U.S. loses were 58,000.

The war and the McCarthy era

During the infamous McCarthy witch-hunt era of the 1950s, as today, the “national security” interests of the ruling-class minority were “legally balanced” against the right to “individual liberty.” This was codified by the U.S. Supreme Court itself in the infamous 1951 case, *Dennis v. the United States*, where Associate Justice Felix Frankfurter’s decision for the court majority, as with Obama’s decrees today, held that individual liberties as guaranteed by the Constitution must be “balanced” against “the ‘national security’ interests of the nation” that is, to the interests of the ruling minority who decide these matters.

With the *Dennis* decision affirming the arrest of some 10 Communist Party members for their ideas only, the Supreme Court subsequently rejected all challenges to the myriad of anti-communist laws approved by Congress at that time and thereafter. These included the Communist Control Act, the McCarran-Walters Act, the 1940 Smith Act (which was first used to imprison the central leadership of the Socialist Workers Party), the Taft-Hartley (“Slave Labor Act”), and the innumerable mandatory “loyalty oaths” approved by states across the country that became a requirement for employment in the public sector.

This shredding of the Constitution included the routine imprisonment of many of those subpoenaed to appear before various state and federal witch-hunting committees established to investigate “Un-American activities.” Those ordered to appear were asked to “name names,” that is, to provide lists of their “un-American” political associates, especially members of communist organizations, that were deemed as a matter of course and the “law” to be a threat to “national security.”

Many who refused were cited for contempt, often imprisoned and then blacklisted from employment. Lives were ruined with abandon while fear prevailed everywhere. With the near-total compliance of the corporate media’s “free press,” those who spoke out against war and oppression anywhere and who championed the struggle for Black civil rights, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. himself, were ostracized.

The McCarthy era was America’s relatively short-lived experiment with a more repressive form of capitalist rule—though one that was unlike the fascism adopted across Europe in the pre-World War II and wartime years when the European workers’ movements were highly combative and led by Socialist and Communist Parties with deep roots in the mass trade-union and associated working-class political and social organizations. These latter forces had the immediate capability of shutting down significant portions of capitalist production, and with this the potential to usher in a serious socialist challenge to the capitalist powers—not to mention avoiding the imperialist-inspired Second World War, which cost the lives of as many as 80 million people. This potential was thwarted through the treachery of the Stalinist-led Communist parties.

Stalinism and social democracy failed to recognize the horror that a fascist order would bring, and avoided the effort to mobilize working people to stop it—engaging instead in fruitless denunciations of each other. This opened the door wide to fascism in Europe, allowing the crippled “democratic” capitalist state officials, with the full agreement of the corporate elite, to turn political power over to Hitler’s fascist thugs for the purpose of unleashing a mass terror aimed at the destruction of all working-class organizations and their leadership.

This began with Hitler’s formation of extra-legal armed military formations, largely middle class and lumpen (dispossessed workers) in composition. In this important sense, fascism had a mass character, comprised in the main of enraged middle-class layers that large-scale

capitalist development had marginalized or driven out of the workforce entirely. Hitler’s storm troopers were increasingly given free rein to break up union meetings and other working-class gatherings until finally the “democratic” state power itself officially appointed him as Germany’s chancellor. The terrified capitalist class viewed the “iron heel” of fascism as qualitatively more preferable to majority working-class rule.

Fascism, always buoyed by a significant mass base of middle-class malcontents and workers permanently cut off from their traditional identification with working-class organizations, is the most extreme and virulent form of capitalist (private property) rule. It includes a near total ban and repression of all political protests and the mass incarceration and/or murder of huge portions of the leadership and activist core of all working class organizations.

Fascism was embraced by the critical components of Spanish, German and Italian capitalism, despite any misgivings about ceding political power to leaders whom they considered to be inferior to their previous “democratic” government “representatives.” Given the crisis of their system and its near total loss of legitimacy, it was viewed as the only way to maintain their private property in the means of production. In the case of Germany, fascist rule later included the genocidal murder of six million Jews, Roma (“Gypsies”), and others scapegoated for capitalism’s failures.

With the defeat of Nazi Germany, Japan, and their wartime allies—in significant part at the hands of the Soviet Union’s Red Army, which heroically and sometimes almost alone challenged the German military behemoth—European capitalism was largely discredited. Ninety percent of Germany’s troops were massed on the Russian front. They were driven back across vast swaths of Europe, and with them, the pro-fascist armies and regimes of the East that had collaborated in the Nazis occupation.

In Italy and France, the Communist parties became by far the largest

parties of all, given that the previous capitalist wartime governments and leading politicians had collaborated with the Nazis occupation and assented to its politics and mass repression.

The discrediting of capitalism itself in Eastern and Western Europe led to a great wave of revolutionary anti-capitalist fervor that swept over Europe, only to be dampened in the West and thwarted in the East especially by the betrayals of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The latter sought an accommodation with world capitalism ("peaceful co-existence") in the postwar period rather than a revolutionary challenge to its discredited world system.

The wave of rebellion nevertheless swept Europe, and the U.S. as well, with the postwar 1946 U.S. strike wave mobilizing the largest working-class challenge to capitalist prerogatives ever. Millions of workers, whose wages had been frozen during the war while wartime profiteering reached unprecedented heights, closed down the great centers of industrial production.

In response to this and to the European working-class upsurge, fearful U.S. rulers launched the Cold War, seeking to re-arm and rebuild their discredited capitalist allies abroad, to limit the growing influence of socialist ideas, and to limit the threat of rebellion at home with a relatively moderate level of repression, the McCarthy era. This was designed to rid the trade unions of Communist Party influence.

The virulence of the anti-communism of the McCarthy era was also in significant part temporized by the postwar economic boom, in which new markets around the world had been opened to the victorious U.S. imperial victors, and by the relative ease with which CP members were run out of the unions due to their wartime alliance with the American bourgeoisie in maintaining the wartime "no strike pledge."

The Communist Party of the U.S., which had seen a million members pass through its ranks in the 1930s, sought a permanent rapprochement

with U.S. capitalism in the postwar period. In the name of "peaceful coexistence" with what CP leader Earl Browder now defined as "progressive" capitalism (i.e., the capitalists who had allied themselves with the USSR during the war), the CPUSA was dissolved. The word "party" was stricken from its name, and it was re-organized as the Communist Political Association. Those who disagreed with Browder were summarily expelled.

Browder had earlier pledged to extend the CP's wartime "no-strike" pledge into the postwar period. This was no insignificant gesture, as at that time CP members led unions in the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) that represented 30 percent of the federation's membership.

With the world in utter chaos and Europe's infrastructure in significant part destroyed, and with the Russian victory won at the unprecedented cost of the near destruction of the country's infrastructure and some 27 million Russians dead (close to the combined losses of the rest of the world), the U.S. emerged as the preeminent world power. It was not only capable of bailing out and rearming a bankrupt European capitalism but granting significant economic concessions to U.S. workers as well. This both cut short the immediate postwar radicalization and made a prolongation of the McCarthy-era experiment with heightened repression unnecessary.

Meanwhile, the postwar rise of the civil rights movement and the associated massive mobilizations against the Vietnam War took place in the context of an economic boom and prosperity achieved by virtue of a war that killed 80 million and left the U.S. with virtually no international competitors. On the ashes of this world conflagration U.S. capitalism achieved a new lease on life.

By the mid- and late 1960s, much of the McCarthy-era legislation was ruled unconstitutional and soon afterwards, all of it was. The period has been portrayed as an "unfortunate" and perhaps even "accidental" product of a few right-wing fanatics, as opposed to the reality—a conscious decision of the

ruling class to prepare for a war with its own working class should it pose a threat to its power.

Palmer raid in the 1920s

A similar phenomenon took place soon after the World War I era when revolutionary socialists in Russia had led the world's first socialist revolution, which tore one-sixth of the land surface of the earth from capitalist domination and ushered in a period of a vibrant socialist democracy that won the hearts and minds of the world's best working-class fighters in every nation.

While the subsequent invasions of the armies of virtually the entire European capitalist world, 17 countries as well as the U.S., attempted but failed to destroy this first workers' state, the terrible imperialist-orchestrated invasions considerably slowed its progress and in time created the conditions for the rise to power and consolidation of the conservative and counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy. In Europe more generally, the response to the initial wartime revolutionary wave was the "white terror," wherein 50,000 revolutionaries and militant workers of all types were murdered or imprisoned.

In the U.S. the government's response was the infamous Palmer raids, described on the website "History Matters" as follows: "The climate of repression established in the name of wartime security during World War I continued after the war as the U.S. government focused on communists, Bolsheviks, and 'reds.' This anticommunist crusade climaxed during the 'Palmer raids' of 1919-1921, when Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's men, striking without warning and without warrants, smashed union offices and the headquarters of Communist and Socialist organizations [and anarchists as well, 'JM]. Palmer believed that communism was 'eating its way into the homes of the American workman.' Palmer charged in this 1920 essay that communism was an imminent threat and explained why Bolsheviks

had to be deported.”

Thus, the U.S. has a long history of abrogating fundamental rights in the name of “national security” or alleged imminent threats of terrorist acts or even “ideology, nationality, or religious preference.” During the 1941 Smith Act anti-communist trials launched against the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party—the party that had led the victorious Minneapolis Teamsters Strikes of 1933-34—the SWP’s central leaders were arrested and imprisoned for 18 months for their Marxist ideas only.

During World War II tens of thousands of Japanese-Americans were interned in concentration camps and deprived of all rights and property based on their nationality alone. Today, hundreds of thousands of Muslims in the U.S. are held suspect, investigated, detained, or otherwise persecuted, with the “war on terror” employed to justify the denial of their basic constitutional rights.

In all of the above instances a fearful ruling class exhibited no compunction in the use of police state measures. The justification was always the same. “National security,” that is, the protection of the power and property interests of the elite few, was invoked against any and all who might challenge its heinous crimes in the U.S. or anywhere in the world. This includes mass repression and arrest, imprisonment—and today, the “legalized” murder and torture of those who resist.

World capitalism faces perhaps its greatest crisis in the modern era. Its solution, with few if any exceptions, is to make working people and the most oppressed pay the price of the system’s universal economic failures.

The tens of trillions of dollars exacted through near-universal austerity measures are used to bail out a system with no recourse other than more of the same—if not famine, endless wars, and the destruction of the environment.

What the capitalist minority fears most is the conscious organization by dedicated, disciplined, and deeply rooted revolutionary fighters of the vast majority, who alone can challenge its rule and replace it with an egalitarian society where the fulfillment of human needs of the earth’s people and the construction of a world free from war and environmental destruction trumps the dictatorship of the capitalist profiteers.

This dictatorship reveals its pearly sharp teeth in the threatening code words imbedded in President Obama’s still guarded rhetoric, including his promise of “democracy” for all. Behind this stilted language, always inclusive of explicit “national security” justifications for repression, murder, and war, stands a failing system preparing to use any all means necessary to achieve its politically and morally degenerate ends.

Today, U.S. capitalism still rules with the relative consent of the majority, who despite their growing anger and frustrations, retain the illusion that their lives can be improved, in time, by the operation of the system itself rather than through their active intervention as revolutionary subjects.

But the ruling rich nevertheless constantly prepare for the time when these illusions are shattered, and mass working-class forces led by conscious revolutionary socialist fighters and parties that have earned a reputation

for being the most consistent representatives of the broad workers’ movement in all its manifestations, begin to call into question the system itself.

Today, we see important institutional elements for future repression being methodically moved into place, from major infringements of civil and democratic rights, to preparations for mass arrests, detentions, and imprisonment. A whiff of fascist repression is in the air, awaiting the time when its real expression becomes a requirement for continued capitalist rule. Between now and then, time remains to organize the working-class millions to defend their own interests and thwart this onslaught with a power far beyond the control of any and all would be tyrants.

The anthem of the world workers’ movement, “The Internationale,” once again sounds its call to action:
“For justice thunders condemnation

A better world’s in birth.

No more tradition’s chains shall bind us.

Arise, ye slaves, no more in thrall!
[Thrall is a reference to ancient history’s most oppressed layers.]

The earth shall rise on new foundations

We have been naught, we shall be all.”

The “we” is nothing less than the vast majority of the earth’s working people, who have no interest in their own repression and every interest in organizing to bring into being a new world free from capitalist repression and exploitation in all its forms. The name of this new social order is socialism

Peace policy and the reconstruction of politics

10 August 2013, by **Jorge Gantiva Silva, Daniel Libreros C**

The recurrence of the latifundio

As happened in most of the peripheral countries, the development of capitalism in Colombia was based on the political and economic power of the latifundio having opened an endless number of recurrent tensions involving the state, the makeup of the regions and local powers, and the aspirations of the peasant movement. As the accumulation model consolidated around what is known as "import substitution", a contradiction appeared between the extension and deepening of the commodification of the economy and the permanence of the model based on the big latifundio, which has sought to keep to the peasant proprietors in premodern forms of work, particularly in the coffee zones, amidst competition around the international price of the coffee, the construction of infrastructures and the impact of globalization, which have triggered the gigantic increase in land prices. This contradiction underlies the peasant movement and the mobilizations and struggles for recovery of the land, a process that has produced a crisis in the conventional hacienda based model and confronted "hacienda seigneurialism" as Antonio García Nossa calls it.

The government of López Pumarejo, with law 200, introduced in 1936, managed to calm peasant radicalism by reducing adverse possession in estates occupied without opposition of the proprietor for thirty to five years. This concession was granted in a narrow context limited in time to occupations taking place before 1935, and did not recognise inequality in access to rural property and the appropriation of uncultivated land in the border zones. The same law established the loss of the capacity of proprietor in the absence of

exploitation of one's estates for a period of 10 years; nevertheless, the provision did not have significant consequences.

Law 200 had as its corollary the expulsion of settlers, renters and tenant farmers in the zones of conflict and the reduction of the cultivated area to avoid clashes with the renters, a situation that forced food imports. In 1994 law 100 closed the possibilities of challenging the ownership of the haciendas while normalizing sharecropping. This historical process embodies the configuration of the Colombian state once the cycle of the capitalist modernization was consolidated. The modernized state basically preserved the skeleton and spirit of the hacendista-authoritarian and clerical system that legitimized the "Regeneration" of Rafael Núñez in 1886.

The corporate state form

Designed under the political weight of an elitist bipartisanism that defined the political-military action of the classes in power and within the framework of a modernization that took impulse under conservative hegemony (1886-1930), the Colombian version of the modern state appeared marked by a precarious institutionality, incapable of integrating the population under the assumptions of liberal philosophy; and forced to compensate this deficit, the Catholic church worked to guarantee its privileges and to give continuity to the Concordat with the Vatican.

However, these political and ideological, historical and institutional rationales were sustained in a pattern of accumulation of capital, whose basis has been, in the first instance, the export of coffee, controlled by the National Coffee Federation, making it possible to obtain significant foreign currencies that determined a form of

development and a type of industrialization. This specific weight at the economic level was projected at the political plane preventing the Colombian state from appropriating the profits from foreign trade and making public decisions outside of the private interests of fractions of capital. The ominous consequence of this process was the crystallization of a certain model of corporate state, whose patrimonialist characteristics weakened the modern meaning of the public and democracy. The formation of the business associations that represented these fractions of capital formalized this corporatism. In certain way, this "capture of the State" on the part of private groups has in the long run led to the dominion of the mafias, corruption and the clientelist regime.

The hacienda-based seigneurial republic and bipartisanism

After the killing of Gaitán in 1948, this system of political domination entered into serious contradictions and acquired the face of a "hacienda-based seigneurial republic" that generated institutional chaos, "autonomization" and confrontation of local powers, with an incapacity of the state to exert the monopoly of armed force, so that the elites and the conservative government, in particular, would use the police and the first paramilitary groups, then called "chulavitas" or "pájaros", to maintain power and control. In the countryside, again in the coffee growing zones and in a conjuncture of favourable international prices for coffee, the violence was concentrated and produced peasant displacement on a great scale.

Beyond noting this historical process, we should stress the fact that the degraded mass violence destroyed

values of collective reference and social ties, opening a recurrent phase of despoliation in the countryside that is not yet finished, with indiscriminate robbery of land, massive displacement from the countryside to the city, promoted and executed both by paramilitarism and neoliberal policies. What history confirms is that the political-institutional operation is sustained in the binomial: latifundio-state terror.

It should not be forgotten, for example, that the Rojas Pinilla dictatorship (1953-57) was born from a bipartisan agreement in which the then Liberal leadership committed the Liberal guerrillas to a demobilization. In the end, their main leaders were assassinated. The Frente Nacional arose from another bipartisan agreement in which the people responsible for the violence of the previous years enjoyed impunity and the despoliation of the land was legalized. The association between agrarian latifundistas and capitalists deepened the industrialization of the countryside in some regions in accordance with the requirements of the import substitution model imposed at the end of the 1970s.

Nevertheless, from the initial years of the Frente Nacional it was evident the unproductive latifundio had consolidated in the structure of rural ownership, precisely in the most fertile regions. Technical reports from international bodies (Currie and Le Bret) emphasized this situation and argued it was irrational before the necessities of capitalist development, where extensive cattle ranching was located in the fertile plains and most of the peasants were crowded onto the mountain slopes in conditions of poverty and precariousness. In this same period, once the triumph of the Cuban revolution was consolidated, United States government reoriented their policies towards "subversive containment", opening a space of agrarian reforming policy and combining repression and social aid in the region.

Counter-insurgent

agrarian reform

Against this background the Liberal Party led by Carlos Lleras Restrepo advocated a policy of development of capitalism in the countryside based on small ownership which was considered more socially integratory. Law 135 of 1961 created the National Institute of Agrarian Reform, INCORA. Agrarian policies during the 1960s continued along this course, to the point that it was under the government of Lleras Restrepo that one of the most authentic peasant movements developed under the slogan "the land to those who work it". The government's idea was to integrate the peasant movement into the state, creating a small farmers' organisation, the Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesino, ANUC. The measures taken by Lleras included means for combating rural migration to the cities, promoting and strengthening smallholdings.

The "Pact of Chicoral" signed in 1972 between Colombia's then president, Misael Pastrana, and Alfonso López Michelsen, leader of the Liberal Party, signalled the closing of the cycle of attempts at reform in the countryside, which in reality had little lasting effect. For the rest, the official policy of Pastrana's government expressed in the "Four Strategies" development underestimated the question of rural migration to the cities, offering the construction of similar housing and economic zones not requiring high professional qualifications as an alternative to unemployment.

In this complex scenario, the most deplorable para-militarism flourished as a weapon against the democratic peasant movement for land, with killings and displacement which contributed to strengthening the position of the dominant landowners, consolidating the agrarian counter-reform through the violent appropriation of more than 7 million hectares and the strengthening of paramilitary power in the regions. This counter-reform served as an instrument of accumulation through the laundering of financial assets while dispossessing more than 4 million peasants and other inhabitants of the rural areas.

The growth of self-defence groups organised by the paramilitaries took place in the context of the policy of state terror, with official authorization (Decree 3398 of 1968), and operating with the support of sectors of the military high command. In this sense, this process led to the configuration of the Colombian army as a shock force for internal confrontation and for violent imposition to maintain the social order. This army was modelled precisely to confront workers' revolts of the 1920s and consolidated as a counter-insurgency body post 1945 with US military aid, around the doctrine of anti-Communism. Subordination to the Pentagon has been a structural factor in its structuring, training and ideological training. At the same time, this dependency has determined the unconditional nature of Colombian diplomacy towards the US empire. During the Frente Nacional and under the state of emergency known for a long time as the "State of Siege", the bipartisan institutions gave the army the legal power to deal with the political rebellion and social struggles through the imposition of military criminal.

The desertion of Colombian liberalism

Any explanation of the specific political power of the latifundio should look at the role of liberalism. The government of López Pumarejo (1934-38 and 1942-45) showed its capacity to adapt a liberal modernizing project, and the so-called "revolution on the march" led to some transformations in state functioning, particularly in employment and taxation policy; however, their scope was meagre enough. For example the confrontation with the latifundio never took place, despite the ringing declarations preceding the introduction of law 200. The precarious configuration of an industrial bourgeoisie prevented the consolidation of a material force which would contribute to dissolving the latifundista regime. The defeat of the peasant movement prevented the concretisation of this possibility, while

para-militarism became the force destroying the democratic peasant movement. The project of modernity ended having only a diffuse echo inside the "late modernization" of globalised and transnational capital and of social and political violence.

The incomprehension of the reactionary character of the Colombian bourgeoisie and its intimate articulation with the Empire has generated much political confusion and equivocation. There is a certain mythology on the Colombian left concerning the supposed progressive role of the López Pumarejo government; however, this mythology only served to justify a strategy of class conciliation with the government of López Pumarejocomo as promoted by the recently founded Communist Party, and which the reformist left has maintained time and again to validate its alliance with a supposed "national bourgeoisie".

The Colombian liberal bourgeoisie has been extremely conservative. "Centenarismo" lasted only one, insignificant, liberal generation, which renounced the ideas of democratic and social liberalism. What followed immediately at the end of the 1940s was the attempt by the sector of Eduardo Santos (Liberal president from 1938-42) to consolidate the agreements with Conservatism and the Catholic church against the spectre of Communism and any structural reform of the Colombian state. After the defeat of the second government of López Pumarejo, there came the presidency of Mariano Ospina Pérez, one of the Conservative figures most opposed to reform, who manoeuvred in favour of institutional continuity after the assassination of the popular caudillo, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán.

Subsequent historic events led to the abandonment of liberalism in the process of the construction of modernization. In the initial years of the period of Conservative terror know as the "Violencia", the Liberal Party went along with the decision of the Liberal guerrillas to rebel. Once they had succeeded in winning support from the masses, they urged them to support the pact of reconciliation without guarantees,

abandoning them to their fate. Shortly afterwards their leaders were assassinated with the complicity of their former mentors. These sectors would support the bipartisan pact as an oligarchic and authoritarian model; they would continue a sort of modernization based on the latifundio and would maintain intact the "seigneurial republic". They would then become advocates of the dogmatic application of neoliberal globalization. The historic note of the backward character of Colombian liberalism is obvious. However, an illusion continues of a supposed reforming liberalism with the vain idea of "democratic development" and the formation of a supposed progressive political front to put an end to the systematic violence into which Colombia has been plunged, as well as to backwardness, state terror and the anti-democratic system. This strategy is obviously erroneous and has only served to undermine the capacity for rebellion and resistance of the masses.

2. The insurgency: resistance and territorial power

The FARC emerged as a peasant self-defence group of Liberal peasants against the Conservative regime and the private groups who had unleashed the "state terror". Its form of social cohesion was articulated on the model of familial traditions and neighbourhood. When the guerrillas of the plains were demobilised with the fatal consequences that followed they abandoned this option and in confrontation with Rojas Pinilla and the Frente Nacional evolved towards a Communist position, fusing in the so called "Bloque sur". From 1957-1964 they passed from the struggle between parties to peasant resistance against the state, which cemented its ideological nature, established in the platform which gave birth to the FARC in 1964. The government of Guillermo León Valencia then reacted with a vast military plan called "operation Marquetalia", one of the military actions of greatest scope carried out across the region in this epoch, advised and directed directly by the

US. The FARC survived, consolidating its political-military structure, while initiating a process of implantation in the south east of the country.

Peasant resistance

Taking this process into account is important given that the global ideological offensive, associating the military with the so called "anti-terrorist struggle", has established, at the internal level, a false symmetry between guerrilla struggle and paramilitarism, intended to elude the responsibility of "state terror", and seeking moreover to eradicate from the collective memory the history of the resistance of the peasant movement. Independently of ideological and political differences, with the political project and actions of FARC, there is the historic fact of their link with the peasant resistance. Not to admit this is to follow the scenario established by the Pentagon and the Colombian oligarchic circles.

During the 1980s when the country became a producer of coca leaves and the crisis of the substitutionist model in the countryside produced a peasant displacement towards the areas where FARC had installed itself, and the latter found economic and population bases to articulate and centralize a hitherto dispersed presence. In the 1990s the confrontation on the ground with the paramilitaries obliged a change of military strategy, leading to control of the territories as a support base for the war economy; also obliging the FARC to impose taxes on the purchase and sale of coca at the point of production, becoming thus the intermediary of the illegal capital which obtained it as a raw material.

The leadership of the FARC also succeeded in positing an alternative discourse which renders the state responsible for the cultivation of coca in these regions because of its long term abandonment of the farmers and poor of the countryside. The coca producing markets in this were valorised according to this orientation. The territorial positioning of FARC explains why a new possibility of peace negotiations has opened since December 5, 2012. In Havana, the FARC have posed the question of the

constitucionalization of peasant territories with their own internal political organization, which means a qualitative change in comparative terms in relation to the proposals they have advanced in previous peace negotiations.

The land in the context of globalization

The period which began with a decision of the US empire during the Nixon presidency to pass from a mode of political domination inside a system of unequal states, defined in the second world war, to the hegemony of the dollar in the international financial system, a decision that produced the termination of the dollar-gold parity with its complementary means (variable exchange rates, deregulation of capital flows), ended in the mid-80s with the control by some of the big financial intermediaries (hedge funds, investment banks, pension funds, insurance companies) of the production and distribution of an ever more concentrated wealth, a control realized through the capital markets. This historic turn determines the generalised rentier character of capitalism in the current phase of the accumulation of capital. Within this framework, the investments of the transnational groups take the form of securities on the financial markets.

This functioning of the capital markets relates to the importance of investments associated with the land, the reason for which the transnational companies located in primary production (agriculture, oil and mining) have made high profits in recent years from the soaring prices of commodities, as the result of a "boom" of securities in the sector, caused by deliberate decisions of the US financial authorities. This is one of the reasons why, in the Colombian case, there is a pressure from international capital on the government of Santos and the rural employers to increase agricultural investment.

However, the significance of the land is not just due to conjunctural reasons but also to structural conditions.

Neoliberal globalization produces a new international division of labour. This is articulated around the big transnational corporations which have transformed the majority of international trade into an intra-company trade (transactions between subsidiaries and parent companies). Enrique Arceo sums this crucial transformation up very well: "It is a fundamental change in the centralization of management and the specialisation of subsidiaries which makes possible the passage from provision by the subsidiaries of products for the markets where they are implanted, to the production of intermediary goods or spare parts in the context of a global productive process which develops in the regional or world market (...) We have gone from an international division of labour centred in the exchange of products manufactured by the centre for primary products from the periphery, to one based on the exchange of manufactured products whose production requires different proportions of capital and qualified labour" ("Neoliberalism y Sectores dominantes, CLACSO, Buenos Aires, 2006, p.37).

Arceo adds that the peripheral bourgeoisies in this new transnational productive scenario must insert themselves in conditions of "subcontractors in global networks". The particularity of unequal geographical development produced by the division of labour in the phase of globalized capital is based on the fact that Latin America, having experienced during the 1980s the debt crisis, has been supplanted by Asia (China, India and the "Asian Tigers" mainly) in the new scenario of transnational productive organization and is condemned to refocus on the primary sector.

3. The game of power and the negotiations table

These considerations explain why the Santos government and the rural entrepreneurs claim that political negotiations with the FARC offer the opportunity to adapt to the

requirements of globalized capital. The first step to doing this is to formalize land ownership after decades of dispossession. That requires legitimating internally, and before the international community, the theme of the displaced. Law 1448 of 2011 adopted by Congress at the request of the President before the beginning of the Havana negotiations, limits the use of land returned to the victims, respects the mining and agro-industrial mega-projects by excluding them from restitution and defines an indemnification by means of public debt securities for displaced people who do not wish to return to their lands.

A normative instrument of these characteristics has limitations for negotiating with a guerrilla force which claims to represent thousands of peasants involved in production over four million hectares. This reality obliges a negotiation that includes the theme of territorial organization. At the negotiations table, the governmental proposal turns around this regional theme towards focalization in the areas where the guerrillas are present, avoiding confrontation with the latifundistas in the rest of the country. At the same time the government claims to ensure political order in these territories so as guarantee to big capital the same corporatist control it enjoys in other regions.

Corporatist control of the territories allows the territorial integration of the rural population, to the extent that one of the specificities defining globalized capital is the geographical or spatial accumulation by which it appropriates and organizes under its logic of functioning the regional economic circuit as a whole (production, distribution and consumption). In the case of agriculture this type of accumulation takes the form of productive chains which can function through associative alliances independently of the size or type of property. Multiple reports by international institutions on this theme can be cited. According to the FAO, "Productive alliances involve different actors in the productive processes. These actors, associating in a voluntary form to exchange resources, generating commitments in

the pursuit of a common objective, whose main virtue is to aggregate value..." (Pineros Vargas Silva, Acosta Avila Luis Alejandro, Tartanal Florence, "Alianzas Productivas en agronegocios experiencias de la FAO en America Latina y El Caribe", FAO, Santiago de Chile, 2012). Capturing this added value becomes a decisive question given that the major part of this value is currently obtained outside of the big estates.

Rafael Mejía, President of the farming organisation the SAC, echoes these orientations of the spokespersons of global capital. "Therefore, rural development with a territorial focus is an integral concept that includes aspects like the promotion of agricultural production, initiatives which promote food safety, education, infrastructure, health and the development of the rural capacities of citizens, the strengthening of rural institutions and the protection of vulnerable groups, all this in the context of a rural space...". On this basis the concept of associative alliances that includes rural entrepreneurs as well as small and medium proprietors, the indigenous and Afro-descendant population is formulated for the execution of the productive chain.

In the context of the spatial accumulation of capital the peasant economy of small owners should not only be respected, but promoted. Former minister Rudolf Hommes, basing himself on the research of José Leibovich according to which land productivity in the minifundios (measured according to the indicated of weight and annual yield per hectare) is 40 times greater than in the big estates, 28 times greater than that of medium producers and six times greater than that of small proprietors; Hommes concludes that with the ceding of "10 per cent of the land to cultivators in minifundios or small holdings, agricultural production could increase by 16 per cent if productivity were maintained. And if 20 per cent were transferred, it would increase agro-industrial production by around 32 per cent..." ("La productividad de los campesinos", *El Tiempo*, January 18, 2013). He adds however that the lands to be divided among the minifundistas should be

taken from the National Drugs Fund.

In this proposal there is an implicit aspect which should be uncovered. The forms of production and the technological processes that accompany them will be those of a predatory capital using fertilizers based on petrol chemicals and which will encourage production using GMOs. There will be expropriation of the right to soil use of the peasants, and an end to the familial economy based on ancestral knowledge. In a word, it will officially sanction the passage from the minifundista and smallholder to the capitalist rural micro-entrepreneur, integrated in the commodification of the land, the technical assistance and credit system of financial capital. In regions of settlement under the influence of the FARC, this proposal of integration would be accompanied by a process of transition through the substitution of illicit cultivation to that of crops with a market value.

The same logic of spatial functioning also applies in the reserved peasant areas. The state recognises them to articulate the commodified space. Juan Manuel Ospina, ex-director of the INCODER, has noted "The reserved peasant areas will be assimilated to indigenous reservations and the Afro-descendant collectives, combining collective ownership and housing and familial plots; scenarios for an active community life which is the motor of progress and democracy; [they will] be opened up in an organised manner to the markets, and to the productive chains articulated with the agro-industrial sector...".

The FARC has made other proposals for the peasant reserved areas, associated with the concept of peasant collective territories which will have different standards of functioning to those of market transactions and with political autonomy in their decisions as is the case with the indigenous reservations.

Consolidating a project with these characteristics requires acting in terms of spatial resistance. A plural political unity needs to be built between all the oppressed of the countryside in the perspective of alternative regional political powers

that can articulate with time with the urban rebellions to produced social transformation. This spatial resistance also implies the need to implement collectively forms of economic exchange different from those of the capitalist market. In a word, it is about affirming a process of "partial delinking" from globalization. Hence the importance of peace and the sense of social and political transformation.

4. The historic meaning of peace and the construction of the Common Good

The peace negotiations in Havana represent a historic event for Colombia to be able to undertake processes of democratic transformation. Aware of the enormous difficulty and the fierce opposition of reactionary sectors, this peace process has the advantage of posing strategic questions for the construction of new possibilities for political and social change. Transnational capital will insist on the logic of "real subsumption" and will wish to limit its scope to commodification, capitalization and entrepreneurialization, without taking account of social links, ancestral knowledge and popular cultures. The élites will seek to minimize its projection and reduce their objectives to the anticipated failure of the peace process. The government and the oligarchy refuse systematically any change in the macroeconomic and political order. The will for peace of the various actors also has its limits. The government, harassed by the offensive of the project of the "democratic centre" paramilitary led by former president Uribe, the outbreak of social protest before the resurgence of neoliberal policies and the proximity of the presidential elections, will continue to experience turbulence. For all parties it will be a complex challenge. Different kinds of pact could emerge. They could benefit all the participants, without definitive strategic results. Also they could lead to a transitional agreement which

could encourage a democratic movement in favor of large scale transformations. But this could also be one of those peace processes that Colombia has already experienced and that history will record as a temporary armistice prior to new conflicts and new peace processes.

Obviously some of the weaknesses of the current peace process encourage the oligarchy. In particular, the absence of a vigorous social, civil and democratic movement for peace which supports the agenda of negotiations has created the impression that it amounts to an agreement between warriors. The precarity of citizen participation and the absence of public enthusiasm sow doubt and malaise. But the major weakness lies in the dispersal of the left, in its deep division and lack of strategic thinking. In particular, the predominance of an

instrumentalist approach has hindered the understanding of the historic dimensions of the current peace process. In this context, the projection of the peace negotiations requires a left totally committed to a political solution to the armed conflict. For this, it would be necessary to adopt another logic, reinventing politics. The corporatist and instrumentalist vision should be replaced by a politics of the "common good". In the same way, the social movements, regional resistances, mobilizations and solidarity require the construction of a national project for democratic change. In this complex scenario the construction of the "common good" is not a sum of demands, but a project of multiple interpellations and collective creations on the basis of the ideas of democracy, wellbeing and peace. It is necessary to insist on the need to change the structure of the

latifundista state, change the regime of the big landowners and go beyond the "seigneurial republic".

On this basis, the peace process must be supported by the convening of a National Constituent Assembly. No peace will be possible without the popular will. The fear of some sectors that this Assembly will be a leap in the dark benefiting the opponents of the 1991 Constitution is without political, moral and social basis. On the contrary, it will be the historic scenario to create a "route map" to big democratic transformations and the space to consolidate alternative social, regional and popular aspirations. It is then about rethinking peace as a historic process of democratic change. On this horizon rests the construction of the common good and of Colombia as a democratic country.

Draft statement for consideration from the Reclaim the Net conference

9 August 2013, by **Dave Kellaway**

Introductory note

This statement was discussed by the main contributors to the conference and is being distributed more widely for further discussion. It is the beginning of the discussion and already at the conference there were some points raised by contributors and accepted by the drafters that will be incorporated later. These additions were a) a third section needed on how the left and the movement can best use the Internet in our intervention b) more on how the Internet is used in its 'bread and circuses' function to distract and divert people e.g. porn, games, gambling c) an organisational consideration on how the left should continue this discussion at least on a European basis d) how to use state or European wide political or legal mechanisms to limit or control power of the Internet companies e) develop

further this idea of the left championing the idea of defending common goods vital to everyday life such as education, health, water, energy, transport and place the Internet within that as a right to the best communication.

A full report on the proceedings of the conference is available at [Luxembourg conference on the Left's engagement with the Internet](#)

Reclaim the Net

We recognise two key areas of discussion in order to develop a left political stance on the Internet:

1) **Participation: the social aspect is key**

The Internet, version 2.0, in its idealised presentation, is the modern

way of participating in social, cultural or political life. Great hopes are invoked for its potential to encourage democracy, to provide transparency and to allow powerful communication. Today anyone who stands out against interactive participation through the web is seen to be obsolete or else an opponent of citizen's democracy. If we look beyond the buzz created by the Internet as a democratic area we discover an reality that should be seen in a more balanced way.

What cannot be ignored is that the Internet has the power to boost involvement. If the net is accessible then using it to communicate directly, independently and in real time is possible with each user also becoming a potential correspondent. The Internet allows us to have an overall view of things and re-dimensions notions of distance.

It is therefore important to put forward and defend these key propositions regarding the use of the net.

The neutrality of the Internet must be maintained

The state must open itself up to these new democratic mechanisms by accepting transparency, participation in the democratic process as well as ensuring much greater public resources are allocated to support this.

However the fact is that this means of communication is not available to everybody. From the beginning of the Internet we know that there is a clear statistical difference, a segregation, between those who have access and those that do not. When we talk about access we mean all the obstacles related to it. The key question is the quality of access, which depends on broadband speed, the specification of the home computer, people's numeracy levels and technical knowledge. Therefore practical knowledge is as important as the technical quality of web access.

If we look at these factors we can see that an emancipatory policy of developing numeracy is closely linked to other political policy areas and is part of the struggle for social equality. Consequently we find that the people at a disadvantage are those who for financial reasons cannot acquire good quality computers and obtain fast broadband and/or are much older with lower educational qualifications. Often people in rural areas are at a disadvantage compared to those living in cities. Generally there are gender and ethnic differences in terms of access and use of the infrastructure. In global terms the advanced countries of the West and North are generally more equipped to use the web. We need to oppose these inequalities and act against them:

Media and ICT teaching in schools needs to be much better as well lifelong training in this area.

Free access to the internet provided by local councils must be provided.

Obstacles to access need to be removed - multilingual teaching, effective pedagogy and free access must be guaranteed in publicly provided courses.

In addition to this segregation there is another, second division between people using the Internet. How does one use the Internet? We can identify on the one hand an 'active and effective' use and on the other hand its use as a purely entertainment platform. Research shows that this divide follows class lines. How one uses the Internet depends on your income, your job, your educational background, your gender and your family. More and more people are using the Internet but it is alarming what the majority are using it for. There is a tendency for the Internet to reflect the divisions between social groups that already exist in society. The risk is that even if the instruments for participating online are established a significant proportion of the population will not participate, nullifying somewhat the legitimacy of this democratic struggle.

Setting up the means for participating in the Internet must aim to guarantee the involvement of all.

Alternatives to online participation must be created (or maintained)

Projects involving all must be carried through with clear targets - in order to encourage minority groups and remove obstacles to access.

It is dangerous to only see potential being based on the Internet. A left policy on the web has to highlight and fight against the unequal use of the web. Left parties need to bring those excluded people into the debate about the Internet. All those points about equality in general must be part and parcel of left parties' policy on the web - whether we are talking about immigration (right of web access for asylum seekers), the struggle against sexism or the fight against the influence of political lobbyists and so on. We need to support those whose voice is not heard when we discuss internet use, particularly by arguing for training for all (not just at a basic level to use games or entertainment).

2. The public interest, the state or the market?

Generally members of Dei Lenk have taken up the struggle against the dominant companies that increasingly commercialise the public space of the Internet. This involves ideological campaigns and legal challenges that

include: Facebook and co in terms of data privacy and protection; the digitalisation and commercial exploitation of public resources (e.g. Google Books, Google Art-Project); the management of knowledge (Open Access to the state and science as opposed to science as a commodity) and finally the sharing of personal data and the constraints of commercial control of our access and participation on the net (Youtube and Facebook).

A public interest confronts both the interests of the state and private enterprise. Left parties can organise around defence of the public interest leading to clear demands and objectives in relation to the state, pushing the latter to take a position against the commercialisation and privatisation of the Internet while explaining the importance of building this new movement around these issues.

Apart from the multitude of small projects and blogs there are many well-known examples of this principle of public interest e.g. Wikipedia, Open Source software like Word Press or free programming languages or operating systems such as Linux and many others. At the same time there are also alternative ideas around distribution and copyright (Copyleft, CreativeCommons).

From the state there are digital projects like Europeana or the BNL digital archive in Luxembourg which provides information and advice such as 'culture.lu'. There are several initiatives taken by the state or local councils that encourage access and involvement in the Internet as a public service for citizens. Obviously the flipside of the state influence is the surveillance and monitoring of the web.

Privatisation is considered a key principle by the dominant commercial interests on the web, beginning with Bill Gates (with the scale of his global brand) who, at a given moment, decided to declare a source code within the public domain as being his private property. Apple culture is no alternative since the user has very little influence over his/her own computer or device. The infrastructure

of the Internet is mainly in private hands: Google and Amazons' servers store most of the Internet's data and would like to have exclusive control of it. The recent scandals (Prism exposed by Snowden) also show that these companies pass over this data to the secret services or police or exercise a blind self-censorship. It is known for example that Amazon's servers block Wikileaks.

The influence of the private companies is remarkable - they place their specialists in strategic areas of the

state and civil society, they keep close control over considerable technical knowledge, they protect themselves legally, they lobby assiduously and create fait-accomplis on a daily basis. Debates such as that on the passing on of data illustrate clearly how these companies are developing policies outside the control of anyone in order to achieve private goals but also to take over and share out among themselves the potential of the Internet.

We can only understand the Internet and develop a political line if we start

from this triple reality of the state, the market and the public interest (or people). Current discussion turns around the interaction and dialogue between these three social forces.

In conclusion here are some headings for this discussion:

Observation, privacy, whistleblowing, Deep Packet Inspection
Filesharing, Piracy, Access to cultural goods/knowledge, Google Books
Neutrality of the net, privatisation of the infrastructure.

Luxembourg conference on the Left's engagement with the Internet

9 August 2013, by **Dave Kellaway**

Organised by Dei Lenk, the left party in Luxembourg with the support of the Left Party group in the European party, the conference met in the Transport union's historic building right beside Luxembourg's main railway station. It brought together over 60 activists and some specialists in this area to discuss how the Left should respond to the new challenges posed by the role of the internet in production, communication and society. What were the new questions that these seven trade unionists could never have imagined and what are the fundamentals of class organisation, struggle and programme that remain essentially the same?

The youngest contributors were from the Chaos Computer Club in Luxembourg and they were able to put across how the way they did politics was dominated today by the use of the internet. For instance Twitter was praised as a means of accessing live summaries of a wide range of political sources which you could later interrogate in greater depth through the web links embedded in the tweets. They also used their own experience of school to show how the teaching and curriculum was far behind the

changes in the way young people used the internet.

Four pillars on which to build greater participation were outlined : much more use of open source software such as Linux rather than Windows/Microsoft; demands on governments to challenge the power of Google, Microsoft et al; a drive for a real differentiated publicly funded pedagogy throughout society to train people in using the new technology and finally the need to develop our own independent media against the big monopolies. These are all good points and were further developed throughout the conference.

Some of the older comrades present did pick up on some of the more extreme statements made by this group such as 'radio is dead', 'books will be replaced' and that 'brevity was best'. Radio as a medium is very resilient and often provides more depth and analysis than a more visual medium. Listening figures for stodgy old Radio 4 prove this. Digital books have encouraged more reading and printed books have not gone into a downward spiral, the new technologies have enabled a

greater range of cheaper publishing, something the left has gained from too! Brevity is not always best, slow learning and following a complex but linear argument in depth is still important for learning. There is some research that raises questions about the negative effects of digital media on cognition and learning.

A representative from the German Die Linke party who works as an advisor for a Euro MP outlined in some detail the various legislative initiatives that the left can take to protect the neutrality of the net and to protect personal data. A later round table explained how private companies are interested in accumulating huge amounts of commercial data in order to try and sell us more stuff whilst governments and the security services are doing the same to monitor and control political challenges to the state. We should not underestimate the political importance of this battle given Wikileaks and now the data released by the Snowden about the NSA Prism programme which is relayed by our own GCHQ. Some debate took place over the importance of developing technical expertise on the Left in order to both defend

ourselves and to intervene in the discussion.

Julien Bernard from the French Parti de Gauche gave an excellent presentation on the 'Power and Strategy of the Multinationals on the web'. It is the first time I have heard someone explain this so clearly. He identified the actors and their interests very effectively - distinguishing between service providers such as Facebook, Twitter and Google, content providers such as Disney, Universal and Sky and the network providers such as Orange, Deutsche Telecom, AT+T, Virgin and BT.

The service providers get their income from advertisers and their true clients are other companies. They offer us free and 'cool' services to gather valuable information about us, the users, who become the products sold to the companies who advertise. Google and others mine key information about us and our relationships which are useful to businesses. The service providers are rather against limits and controls because their main interest is increasing the millions who access the web. Their model is a bit like the difference between the Guardian website (open access) and the Times (subscription).

However the content providers like Disney or Sky are managers of intellectual or entertainment rights and their strategy is to control the network access to organise sufficient rarity for the public to pay for access. Their main concern is the widespread piracy and free downloading of content which is very prevalent in Russia and the East. Hence they are for more controls and laws.

Finally the network providers such as Virgin and BT in this country need to get people to pay to go through their gateway. Their strategy is multiple payments so we pay for our internet service as end users but they also want smaller network providers to pay them to use their major networks and even the service providers. Of course they cannot force Google to pay since they are too big but they get payments from YouTube or Daily Motion.

Consequently as always there are some contradictions between competing capitalist interests and it helps us understand the different positions they take on various issues in the public domain.

The emergence of the 'Cloud' where software and data are concentrated and centralised is interesting because although service providers may be keen on this since centralising all the data enables them to sell more targeted advertising the network providers are much less enthusiastic as they want an ever increasing flow of information and data, they want traffic.

John Naughton in the British newspaper *The Observer* 28/7/13 has made some very pertinent comments about the risks of the Cloud - advising companies or institutions not to entrust their data to companies who have already handed data over to the spooks.

Julien outlined a few ways the left could fight back against the multinationals, for example by developing P2P (peer to peer) internet applications, more web servers outside their control and a more distributed network.

Another area of conflict is over so-called intellectual property rights. The net is transforming notions of property, for instance you do not buy software from Microsoft, you buy the right to use it in particular conditions. In fact this is rather symbolised by the fact that you do not even get a disk these days but a code that you key in and the software is downloaded to your computer. Microsoft sells us something we do not really own. Their software is a totally closed system. Possible solutions are to encourage more use of open source software, that no one owns but can also be continually modified and improved, and to time-limit intellectual property rights in time and nature (whilst protecting the lesser paid artists and authors in various ways).

Recent moves by Disney to extend copyright from 50 to 70 years so that it can continue to make money on its older back catalogue shows how these companies are using the defence of author's argument for their own profitable interests. People are often

not aware how companies like Google have a huge power over the way end users can search over the internet. Today more and more scientific articles are locked up in very expensive subscription sites. Wikipedia and certain open access university courses provide examples of a democratic counter tendency that has always existed since the start of the web.

The left should try and build on this freedom loving, democratic tendency within the net community and should place the struggle within an overall one of increasing free public vital services that contribute to everyone's well-being - the notion of the commons.

Susanne Klinger, a left journalist from Germany made a contribution about women and the internet. She tried to answer the questions: Are there no barriers between men and women on the net? Is the internet more modern than society? As you might have expected the answer to both is negative. For instance although many women author blogs or host websites they tend to focus on homelife, cuisine or childcare. Men dominate the political blogs - I think this is borne out in Britain too. 85% of the Wikipedia editors are male. In some ways the record is worse than in the printed media.

A major part of her talk dealt with sexist verbal aggression on the web against women. Many men are unaware of this. She herself had experienced the most disgusting abuse. Just this week in Britain there is the example of Caroline Criado-Perez, who had led an admirable internet based campaign around women's representation on banknotes but received horrible abuse for her efforts. It is surely the anonymous, private nature of writing at a computer that makes some men think they can be verbally violent and somehow it is less serious than doing it face to face. Moderators and a serious response from service providers are important as a first step. Participation by women on the net is a function of the differential access to free time given the child care responsibilities and dual work burden often taken up by women. Susanne also raised the issue of organised

women-only spaces on the web.

Dave Kellaway made a contribution to the conference about Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement (M5S) and how it has particularly embraced the internet, not just as an organisational tool but as the process and site for what it sees as a new democratic system. The M5S movement has made a huge impact on Italian politics in a relatively short space of time. It has gone from scoring an average of 3% in elections three years ago to 25% and claim to be the biggest single party. Today it is the main opposition in the Italian parliament to the austerity government that is backed by both the mainstream 'left' and right parties.

On the one hand the skilful use of Grillo's website for many years before intervening in elections did help build the movement and it subsequently drew into politics many people, particularly the younger generation. On the other hand those commentators who see the internet as the explanation of its rise are about as wrong as the people who reduce the Arab spring to the use of social media. There already existed in Italy an absolute rage against the way the mainstream parties of left and right abused their positions both corruptly, in getting kickbacks for contracts distributed, and legally through the immense expenses and state party funding they receive.

This rage worsened by the experience of the coalition Monti government which had imposed one of the most

brutal austerity packages on the Italian people. Grillo had been denouncing the *particrazia* (or party mafia) for many years and had taken up radical demands around the young employed and ecological issues. Informed by his guru, Caseleggio who is an internet specialist, the movement has developed a political project based on the idea of removing the political parties and making parliament a transparent democracy organised through the web. They talk of direct democracy where local citizens would select candidates online and then once elected they would become delegates to be recalled at any time. Also the citizens would be able to put forward propositional referendums on any policy without the need to pass a quorum when it is voted. At the moment referendum can only abrogate legislation. Proceedings of parliament would be directly streamed at all times and the net would be organised for total access and with much better information for citizens.

At the same time the M5S organise itself completely through the central website run by Grillo, Caseleggio and his staff. There are no congresses, no regional structures and no possibility of forming platforms or tendencies. MPs are expelled after proposals from the centre and then an online vote - and this has already been used. The party symbol and name is personally owned by Grillo. Candidates are all selected online, some of the surprised winners in the recent general election were only voted by a few hundred

people. The fundamental criticism of this glorification of the net is that it does not take account the reality of state power or the control of the system of exploitation by a dominant class.

There is a naïve almost touching belief in an abstract pure parliamentary democracy. The parties are seen as the source of all evil and the system behind austerity is only intermittently criticised. In some ways the project reproduces a growing individualisation of politics where voters ask what is in it for me and mainstream parties relate to its electorate in a similar way. It is an individualisation which can have a radical, libertarian tinge that many younger people alienated from traditional politics can relate to. Verbiage about the superiority of online organising over the traditional party model is also used as a cover for a sham internal democracy that will be incapable in the end of providing a project for a better society.

Having said all this the Left can learn some positive lessons from the way M5S has skilfully used the net to build a movement without conventional mass media support. A fuller version of this contribution will be available shortly in an extended article. The contribution is also available, in English, in video form at this link <http://reclaimthenet.wordpress.com/2013/06/19/dave-kellaway-beppe-grillos-m5s-movement-and-the-internet-new-ways-for-political-participation-and-democracy/>

The emergency economic tasks of a government of national salvation - Plan for a national financial mobilization

9 August 2013, by LGO

Tunisia

League of the Workers' Left

The emergency plan for national financial mobilization, demanded by the League of the Workers' Left (LGO) in the framework of the Popular Front

and of a government of national salvation, is based on the following principles and procedures:

1 - Confront the question of external financial hemorrhage, including in particular :

â€¢ Debt: suspension of reimbursement of external debt for a period long enough to conduct a review before taking a sovereign national decision on its cancellation...

â€¢ The privileges of foreign capital, which are harmful and contrary to the national interest, are embodied in different types of tax exemptions that are colonial in nature, including:

â€¢ Cancellation of exemptions from import VAT that are granted to foreign companies...

â€¢ Cancellation of exemptions from taxes on profits of foreign companies...

2 - Tax Justice.

â€¢ Fair taxation of all Tunisians requires a tax on fortunes and revenues that is proportional to the sums involved. And in order to achieve tax justice and an increase in state resources, and to be able to strengthen the independence of the state vis-à-vis international financial circles, it is the duty of a government of national salvation to take the following budget measures:

â€¢ Introduction of a tax on large

fortunes ...

â€¢ Extension of the qualifying threshold for the flat-rate scheme and expansion of its base, in anticipation of its radical revision...

3 - Confront the system of corruption and financial crime which flourished under the dictatorial regime and continued after the revolution, by :

â€¢ Combating all forms of capital flight from Tunisia, whose value, under the reign of the ousted President, amounted to 54,000 billion millimes ...

â€¢ A national campaign to recover the sums owed to the National Treasury, resulting from the activity that is most harmful to public finances, namely tax evasion; and control of tax collection: to do this 1,000 new tax workers must be recruited..

â€¢ An audit of all concessionary contracts for the exploitation of oil and natural gas that have been awarded to foreign companies; these contracts must be examined in order to recover the serious lack of revenue due to the Treasury ...

â€¢ An audit of all operations of privatization carried out since 1987 and the taking of appropriate measures, including confiscation and nationalization ...

â€¢ Submit state officials and the way the state works to a strict austerity plan, and make the positions of the President and the members of the government of national salvation unpaid and without any financial privileges ...

4 - Mobilize a campaign of national financial solidarity to support the efforts of the government of national salvation, in order to enable it to implement its emergency programme:

â€¢ A national campaign to collect solidarity funds from all Tunisians, including those living abroad ...

â€¢ A voluntary solidarity contribution from workers, representing one day's pay, for six months ...

â€¢ The emission of bonds through a national public appeal, in order to fund the programmes of the popular government without incurring external debt ...

Tunis, August 3, 2013

"Justice for Trayvon" Protests and the March on Washington: A New Chance

7 August 2013, by Dan La Botz

Those involved in these demonstrations have been mostly African Americans, though Latinos—who face similar issues—were numerous in California and white allies were present in small numbers everywhere. Young African American men and women as well as teenagers showed up in large numbers, easily identifying with Trayvon's all too common tragic experience.

Rev. Al Sharpton, with a keen sense of

opportunity and with a national organization, the National Action Network, called for demonstrations on Saturday, July 20, and tens of thousands—perhaps hundreds of thousands—responded in cities across the nation. President Barack Obama's response to the growing discontent in the African American community — holding a press conference and discussing his own experiences as a black man with white racism — has contributed to a sense

that the issue is before us and something must be done. Though strangely, at the same time, Obama considers appointing New York Police Chief Ray Kelly, responsible for the city's racist stop-and-frisk policy, to be head of Homeland Security.

The Underlying

Problem: the Economy

Underlying these demonstrations about Trayvon Martin, racial profiling and what so many perceive as the "criminal injustice system," is a deeper desire to end racism—economic, social, and political—in America once and for all. Economic inequality stands at the center of the country's racial problems: the gap between African Americans and other Americans continues to grow. While the United States has its first black president, African Americans have not been so badly off in comparative economic terms for decades. The economic crisis of 2008 may have ended for banks and businesses and for a layer of more prosperous mostly white Americans, but it has not ended for millions of black Americans. While the monthly national unemployment rate remained constant at 7.6 percent, for African Americans it increased to 13.7 percent from 13.5, almost twice that of other Americans.

While joblessness is the immediate problem, the deeper issue is that African Americans have been seeing their assets—bank accounts, pensions, homeownership, automobiles—decline in comparison to those of whites. A study a year ago by the Pew Research Center based on 2009 data found that, "The median wealth of white households is 20 times that of black households and 18 times that of Hispanic households....From 2005 to 2009, inflation-adjusted median wealth fell by 66% among Hispanic households and 53% among black households, compared with just 16% among white households. As a result of these declines [in homeownership and housing values], the typical black household had just \$5,677 in wealth (assets minus debts) in 2009; the typical Hispanic household had \$6,325 in wealth; and the typical white household had \$113,149."

The Obama administration has not simply neglected the African American population; it has actively pursued policies which are inimical to it. President Obama negotiated NAFTA-

like trade deals that lead to a loss of job security and lower wages. He froze federal workers' wages. He and his Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan have worked to weaken the teachers unions and promoted charter schools, policies that affect the employment and wages of black teachers, and harm African American communities, and students. Obama's bailout of the auto industry at the beginning of his first term saved the corporations, but several auto plants were closed, thousands of jobs lost, and workers' wages, conditions and benefits were sacrificed. As corporate taxes have been cut and jobs lost and workers' wages lowered, the tax base has been eroded, which in turn becomes an excuse for cutting services and laying off public employees, many of whom are black. The bankruptcy of the auto industry capital, Detroit—a bankruptcy that is principally an attempt to eliminate the city's obligation to pay pensions to about 6,000 retired workers—in a city that is 83 percent African American and 7 percent Latino, symbolizes the state of black America in the era of Obama.

African Americans may be marching now principally because of Trayvon Martin and may also march in August 2013 to commemorate Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s great "I Have a Dream" speech and all that it implied—but they will also be marching because the American economic system is failing them and the American political system and its first black president has not stood up for them. Even as African Americans for completely understandable reasons remain loyal to President Obama, still proud of the accomplishment of election the first black president, they increasingly find intolerable the economic crisis and the continuing racism of American society and begin—if not to criticize the Obama administration—to demand an improvement in the economic and social situation, that is, to demand once again as they did fifty years ago "Jobs and Freedom." We may be seeing—we hope we are seeing—the beginning of a longer march not simply to Washington and the reflecting pond, but of a march through America from sea to sea.



Black unemployment has consistently been around twice as high as white unemployment.

Lessons of the Past

African Americans facing today a deteriorating economic situation and continuing racial discrimination will have to create their own leadership to take them forward. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s—the greatest labor movement in U.S. history since the 1930s—was largely a movement in the South of poor farmers, agricultural laborers, domestic servants, and service and industrial workers (such as sanitation workers and steel workers), as well as of high school students and some college students. Yet, while it was a movement of working people, driven by anger and indignation at their super-exploitation as black workers and at their oppression under the Jim Crow system and white violence, in few places did black working people control the movement.

The movement thrust up from below new organizations—the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)—and pushed forward new leaders, many of them local activists in churches and labor unions, many of them the women of the black communities. Women and men with radical backgrounds, like the modest Ella Baker, played a significant role. The African American poor of the South and the ghetto dwellers of the North pushed forward mostly male leaders of whom the most famous is Martin Luther King, Jr. almost all of them from the black middle class. Yet at the same time this middle class movement was pushed to take up the economic and social demands of its working class base.

While it was a movement against Jim Crow and lynch laws and for civil rights, the civil rights movement was also from the beginning a fight for jobs and higher wages as well and it was economic necessity as much as a demand for social equality that drove

it. African Americans made significant strides in the late 1960s and 1970s, winning greater access to corporate jobs and other employment, though mostly in the lower echelons. Yet, the hope for a genuinely more just society for all was not achieved, and the frustration of the movement in the 1960s and 1970s led to the emergence of the more radical Black Power movement, largely destroyed by repression before turning in a nationalist and ultimately pro-black business direction courted by Richard Nixon who embraced the term "black power" and created the Office of Minority Business Enterprise.

A Movement under Middle and Upper Class Leadership

Everywhere, the leadership of the African American civil rights movement was grasped by the historic black business and professional class and by a newly emerging group of corporate black leaders created by the movement's very success. The black upper- and middle-class professionals tended to have their own understanding of the movement and its goals, which were not necessarily those of the black working class majority. They used the movement to advance their interests in politics, government, and business. Since the end of the 1970s the leadership of the African American community has been in the hands of its traditional and moderate civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the SCLC, of black ministers such as Rev. Jesse Jackson and Rev. Al Sharpton, though in every city African American corporate executives, labor union officials, and Democratic Party politicians have

played a somewhat less visible but usually more decisive role.

The "participatory democracy" proposed by Ella Baker and SNCC was obscured by a narrowly construed, financially corrupt, and morally bankrupt electoral democracy dominated by party political machines, political action committees, and advertising and the media. The African American organizations—like the AFL-CIO labor unions and like the National Organization for Women—counted upon the Democratic Party as their shield if not their sword. It failed them. The Democrats, dependent on funding from the world of high finance and big business had no desire to and could not go after the banks foreclosing on black people or the corporations busting unions.

A New Opportunity

The mass movement for Justice for Trayvon, the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington, and the economic crisis facing the black community represent an opportunity for the reconstruction of a civil rights movement. Once again it will principally be youth and working class African Americans and white allies—and today their Latino allies as well—who will propel the movement forward. What is missing in the equation at present is an independent black workers' movement that could give the movement both the truly representative character and the power that it would need to change our economy, society and government. While black workers make up a disproportionate share of service and industrial workers and of union members, they have yet to wrest the unions from leaders committed to partnership with the employers and dependence on the Democratic Party.

To change that situation it black workers will have to join with their white, Latino and other immigrant coworkers to build a broad rank-and-file movement that can turn the unions from compromise followed by retreat to conflict followed by advance. We are not yet there.

When we do get there, when we have that combination of African American working class power, a broad social alliance with Latino and white workers, and an independent political movement, the goal will be to wrest power from the banks and corporations and to create a democratic and egalitarian society. A working class movement in America, of which African Americans will form a leading component, will put back on the American agenda the demand for jobs for all, for a living wage, for free public education from K to Ph.D., and for an end to corporate health care and instead free universal health care. Implicit in every modern struggle for justice is the struggle against the corporations and against capitalism and for the alternative whose historic name is socialism. It is not surprising that A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, James Farmer and other African American socialists were among the organizers of the great March on Washington in 1963.

We are not there yet, but we may be on the cusp of a new African American movement with the possibility of reviving the labor movement and through independent political action challenging the vicious two-party system which holds us all prisoners. We will be marching for Trayvon in our hometowns, we will be marching in Washington in August, and we will be either activists or allies of the new African American movement on which the fate of democracy and social justice in America will once again rely to carry us forward.