



## IV474 - July 2014

### The shame of France

31 July 2014, by **Michel Warschawski**

Two years ago, on behalf of the Alternative Information Centre (AIC), I received the 2012 Prix des Droits de l'Homme de la République Française from French Justice Minister Christiane Taubira for our fight against Israeli impunity. This week, while reading the news, I thought a moment about returning this prize to the French authorities in response to the ban by Francois Hollande and Manuel Valls' government of a protest in Paris last Saturday against the crimes committed by the Israeli army in Gaza. Last week we again protested in Tel Aviv with the same slogans as those of the banned protest in France. Hollande is more Zionist than Netanyahu and Manuel Valls is less democratic than Aharonovitch (Israel's interior minister from the ultra-right-wing Yisrael Beiteinu party)!

Later on, I saw that thousands of protestors had ignored this unjust order of their politicians, assembling en masse in Saint Etienne, Lille, Strasbourg, and in a dozen other French cities. I told myself that the

prize AIC had received in honour of the struggle against injustice was actually given by France, not by the prime minister. France should be proud. It was Valls and Hollande who brought shame upon themselves; the French people held mass protests against the impunity afforded by its leaders to the state of Israel.

One of the arguments used - which one might say is stale and overworked - by Valls and friends is that they don't want to 'import the conflict into France.' I have never understood what 'importing a conflict' means. Since when is solidarity with victims of aggression called 'importing a conflict'? This argument, however, is inapplicable when they talk about their friends at the Conseil Représentatif des Institutions juives de France (CRIF), the organisation which has become the primary ambassador of Israel in Europe and which has tried to hold European Jewry hostage in unconditionally supporting the war crimes committed by the Jewish state.

France's honour is also shown by the late Stéphane Hessel and his partner Christiane, who worked tirelessly to express their support for the people of Gaza. They visited Gaza on several occasions to declare loud and clear their solidarity with the martyred population.

By supporting the Israeli aggressor and forbidding protestors to march in support of the people of Gaza in several French cities, most notably in Paris which to the world represents the capital of human rights, Manuel Valls and Francois Hollande have disgraced themselves. Not the French people, however, a majority of whom knew which camp to choose: indignation in the face of war crimes and solidarity with the massacred children of Gaza. These protestors, in disobeying the government's edict, have made eminently clear their refusal to see these massacres continue.

*Alternative Information Centre.*

## Podemos : An inside view of a radical left sensation

**31 July 2014, by Iñigo Errejón**

In Spain, the surge of discontent caused by structural adjustment policies and hostage taking of popular sovereignty by the oligarchic powers gave rise to a series of protests and created spaces for social cooperation. However, it had no effect on the political system and its internal balance.

Until now, despite its difficulties and its crisis of hegemony, the dominant power bloc has been leading an adjustment process (we should not reduce this to economic policies because it also has a political horizon to transform the state to bring about the domination of a smaller oligarchy and to a post-political governance which reduces the scope of the issues being debated in the political system). The goal is to reduce the power of subordinates within the system in order to carry out the offensive against the social pact of 1978. [1] The strength of the state apparatus and government has ensured that no "catastrophic eruption" of popular protest has been able - beyond important local victories - to bypass the country's political impoverishment or of preventing the sacking of Spain and its inhabitants.

The European elections of May 25, 2014, occurred at a time when social mobilisation had been in retreat. Among large sections of the left the most pessimistic assumptions prevailed, and that despite the rapid loss of credibility of political elites and major institutions of the political system. In addition to the social crisis and the crisis of legitimacy, the main feature of the day is the rise of inorganic widespread discontent that has been expressed outside the codes of traditional political identities within a civil society in general disarray. This has been accompanied by a breakdown of community ties and decades of decline in the values of social cooperation. A state of self-denial that is diffuse and fragmented.

## European elections

In this context, the European elections were conducted along a purely national lines, with a predominance of Spanish political themes, and it is in this light that we must read the results. The first and most important of them is the resounding failure of the two dynastic parties, the Popular Party (PP) that emerged victorious yet lost 2.6 million votes, while the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) lost 2.5 million. The crisis of PSOE is central, if not fundamental, to the crisis of the system introduced in 1978.

The two main political parties have lost 30% of popular support and their cumulative scores fallen from 81% to 49% of the the total votes cast between the European elections of 2009 and those of 2014. For the first time, parties that have been in power have not convinced half of the voters. The game of communicating vessels, which breathed life into the political system in providing its central consensus, did not work and the losses of one of the duo were capitalised upon by the other. This is a historic event that reconfigures the entire Spanish political system.

In Catalonia, Esquerra Republicana (ERC) won with its independence project. And an array of parties elected significantly expanded their share of the vote. Izquierda Unida (United Left), in coalition with other groups, won 10% of the vote and six MEPs.

## Podemos

But the big event of the election, however, was the emergence of Podemos, which was created only four months earlier with the aim of "transforming the hard hit social majority into a majority for political change". It received 1,250,000 votes, or 8% of the total, establishing itself as the fourth-largest party vote in the country, and even third in some

regions such as Madrid (11%) and Asturias (13.67%). Podemos' votes seem to come from very diverse sectors : abstainers, traditional PSOE voters and other formations, some of which are difficult to fit into a rigid ideological arithmetic.

Sociologically, defying labels again, this is a thoughtful vote (45% from the age group 35-50 years) ; an electorate of cities and urban peripheries beaten down by austerity measures ; an educated electorate that is far from recognising itself in the stigmatising label of "extreme left" the conservative media have wanted to put in circulation (3.7 on a scale of 0 to 10) ; a very diverse electorate, for the most part, escaping from the traditional identifications and loyalties.

## Breaking PP/PSOE's symbolic monopoly

Beyond its quantitative dimension, the emergence of Podemos should be measured by its qualitative impact : the interest it has elicited within the media ; the fierce attacks suffered at the hands of the most conservative forces and their opinion formers ; the appearance of new terms in the political lexicon to evoke a cultural emergency that is at least as important as its electoral impact. Taken together, the "small earthquake" of Podemos has helped break the symbolic monopoly of political representation of the PP and the PSOE, paving the way for new possibilities.

Podemos was born as a tool in the service of "popular unity and citizenship", namely the articulation of "floating" discontent in order to create a popular mobilisation to reclaim sovereignty and democracy held hostage by the oligarchic "caste". The election campaign was riddled with unpleasant comments and harsh criticism from some sectors of the left,

essentially a static shared vision of the political spectrum. They thought that, at best, Podemos would get a seat at the expense of Izquierda Unida. A quarrel between rag and bone men disputing votes at the left margins.

Throughout the campaign, however, we advanced in the polls and the media were finally forced to take into account. As the election date approached, the curve for Podemos climbed. If the election were held today, the result would probably be higher than that 'shock' outcome that was obtained.

Podemos is a very new initiative, but it is rooted in an intellectual and political hypothesis developed in the academic and activist movement, particularly in the Complutense University of Madrid. This hypothesis is as follows : Spain faces a crisis of regime resulting primarily by a breakdown in consensus and the dislocation of traditional political identities ; the conditions exist for a populist left - which does not consist in symbolically carving out positions within the regime, but seeks to create another dichotomy - articulated in a new political will with a majority vocation.

This initiative would not have been possible without the climate of rejection of elites born out of the great cycle of social mobilisation ("indignant ones") commenced May 15, 2011 (15M) at the Puerta del Sol de Madrid, and by changes in the political culture that this has caused.

However, nothing in this cycle necessarily leads to an electoral expression. In different countries of the European Union, the dissatisfaction with elites has led to abstention, a simple alternation of traditional parties, or an extreme right-wing vote. This ensures that, in politics, there is no "space", but sensibilities that emerge and confront each other.

## Pillars supporting a dangerous

## assumption

This assumption is based on three pillars. The first is a particular reading of the 15M movement or indignados, in which the plebeian eruption would not have any effect on the electoral balance, but would have changed the key aspects of the political orthodoxy of the moment. This would start a process or at least make possible a new political frontier which symbolically postulates the existence of a people not represented by the dominant political castes, and which is beyond left and right metaphors.

The second pillar is the development of a theoretical-communicative practice, combining the analysis and creation of unique programs for community television channels. This experiment sought to learn to translate complex analysis and diagnostics into discursive narratives and direct stories broadcast in the programs La Tuerka and Fort Apache and the high media profile of Pablo Iglesias, head of the Podemos list for European elections on major television shows. This visibility turned into a particularly powerful communication tool and symbolic catalyst for popular articulation of the campaign.

This work, sometimes depreciated by parts of the left, for being "simplistic", created a crucial discursive style in a campaign where emotions and symbols carried much weight and in the key decision to give "new meaning" to the main signifiers of the moment and so to lead the fight on favourable terrain and not one where our opponents or ideological inertia led us. Guiding this practice is the belief that politics is a struggle to build shared sensibilities that do not necessarily arise from a social condition. From this point of view, politics is not only about listening ; we must also speak and create. Taking risks and check whether the practice validates them.

## Latin America's influence

The third pillar is a thorough analysis and learning of recent Latin American

processes of popular rupture and constitutional overhaul. Processes driven by new national-popular majorities that required profound political changes demanding access to power and that sparked a war of positions for the conquest of the state. During these processes, and at a time when the traditional order was in a state of decomposition, virtuous interventions have opened completely new political opportunities, almost always causing shock and discomfort within the traditional left. A number of Podemos leaders went to Latin America to observe what was happening and we recognise that without the on-the-ground learning of Latin American experiences, the launch of this new political experiment in Spain would not have been possible.

Upon these three pillars, we have built a very dangerous assumption. It starts from the premise that to successfully establish a connection with a large number of disgruntled Spaniards, offering a narrative in which they can positively fit, it is necessary to mark a distance with respect to certain taboos of the traditional left. Notably, three of them.

## Breaking traditional left taboos

For example, we dared to criticise the rigidity of the concept of "social", which constitutes a separate entity that precedes politics, and which needed first to accumulate forces, and only then could translate electorally. Contrary to the argument claiming that there is "no shortcut", defended by "movementist" currents and the extreme left, Podemos - born from "above" and not "from below" - argues that election time is also a time of articulation and construction of political identities.

We also challenged the leadership taboo. According to certain liberal ideas - but also those rooted in the left - a charismatic leader is incompatible with real democracy. For Podemos, the use of the media leadership of Pablo Iglesias was a condition sine qua non of the crystallisation of

political hope that allowed the aggregation of dispersed forces, in a context of disarticulation of the popular camp.

The decision, unprecedented in Spain, to use the photo of Pablo Iglesias on the ballot paper as the best-known communicative sign, has been strongly criticised by purists. But it proved decisive in an election where voters decided their vote at the last minute. This strategic use of leadership was not a complement or even an anecdote, but a central component of the political process.

Finally, the third taboo, that of words. The Podemos campaign assumed that, in politics, the signifiers themselves live within struggles to give them one direction or another, and that the choice of one depends on all positions of the authors of them. This constructivist view of political discourse has allowed a transverse appeal to a disgruntled social majority, which is beyond the left-right divide. It is these kind of divisions that the regime positions and ensures its stability. But by offering the dichotomies “democracy/oligarchy”,

“citizenship/caste” or even “new old” Podemos established new borders to isolate elites and propose a new identification to better position ourselves in relation to them.

## **Walking between precipices**

Such a “secular” rather than religious use of political terms has enabled our campaign to produce a vast narrative with one foot in the specific sensibilities of the time and another in emancipatory perspectives. Lenin said that politics is “walking between precipices”. Podemos built its campaign positioning itself in a still unstable balance between the powerless marginality and the full integration into the system, traversing a large consensus and assuming the risks of hegemonic politics, always impure, not to be on the left margin of the chessboard, but to reorder it. Decisive breaks usually result from a different production of meaning, always heretic and against the flow of text books and certainties.

The Spanish political system, born in 1978, is breaking up. The system is

not yet broken, but it is showing large cracks and its intellectual and political elites appear to be retreating, and are on the defensive ; they are visibly worried, as has been shown with their haste in organising the monarchical succession.

The emergence of Podemos shows a possible way to attack the existing order. This raises as many hopes as questions, as many perspectives as responsibilities and difficulties, amid an accelerated time in politics where the intimidation by the powers that be will become increasingly aggressive. Contenting ourselves with recent gains is not an option. The nature of the new cycle that seems to be starting depends on the open audacity and speed of protagonists favourable to change and democratic rupture. We don't have to witness an oligarchic restoration, but focus on opening a constituent process that is built, from a plurality of positions, on a new popular will. And those who dare to propose a new project for Spain.

4 July 2014

[Revoluting Europe](#) [2]

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**31 July 2014**

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## **Contradictions of the Ruling Class ?in Ukraine: inter-imperialist competition and internal social upheavals**

**30 July 2014, by Sean Larson**

The following attempts to sketch the contours of the various sections of the ruling class in Ukraine, with an eye toward their fractures, determinations, and the central role of the oligarchy. In characterizing the different fractions of the Ukrainian ruling class, economic, and not political or ideological, determinations are decisive. The actions of the oligarchs are most productively explained through the prism of pure class interests, economic competition, and the political power blocs that derive therefrom, rather than fidelity to any transcendental ideologies of nationalism or democracy. It is hoped that this sketch of the balance of forces can contribute to further analysis of the often chaotic and confusing developments in the post-Maidan Ukraine of today.

## Oligarchy

Most of the oligarchs acquired control over large sectors of the Ukrainian economy during the rapid privatizations after the fall of the Soviet Union. A fifth of Ukraine's GDP is controlled by twenty people, and in 2012, the combined henchmen of two oligarchs (Akhmetov and Firtash) constituted a fifth of the elected representatives in the 450-person parliament. Oligarchs are essentially exempt from all taxes on their profits, and the Ukrainian state is frequently bent with surprising pliability to enrich them and deter domestic and foreign challenges to their power. These shared class interests have predominated even through all the maneuvers between rival groups of oligarchs for control of the state apparatus. The interests of the oligarchs have thus formed the horizon of possibility for Ukrainian politics, though their hegemony has been far from uncontested (see below). It is in the industrial sector (metallurgy, chemical industry, natural gas, machine-building, automobile- and ship-building, among others) that the presence of the oligarchs is most prominent, where a few individuals wield not only economic, but political power over entire industries. However, the largest and most powerful oligarchs have branched out into other sectors as

well, with assets spanning the service sector, retail, media, and banking. In Ukraine, oligarchy thus represents a unique combination of multiple forms of capital (industrial, financial, commercial) with direct control over the levers of state power.

To exemplify how this plays out, take two key areas of activity of Ukraine's richest man, Rinat Akhmetov: metallurgy and power engineering.<sup>1</sup> In June 2010, Akhmetov prevented a significant expansion of Russian capital in the metallurgical industry by having the recently appointed Prime Minister from his Party of Regions, Mykola Azarov, invalidate the sale of Ukraine's second largest metallurgical plant as an attempt at an illegal takeover. In 2011, Akhmetov's companies acquired from the state 1) leases over companies controlling over 50 percent of energy coal production in Ukraine, 2) controlling stakes in three power plant complexes as part of tenders (ensuring Akhmetov control of 30 percent of Ukraine's electricity production), and 3) demonstrable preferential treatment (even against state-owned companies) in the purchase of tenders for electricity export to Ukraine's neighbors. This meant that by the end of 2011, Akhmetov had secured himself an integrated production chain, using his own coal as fuel in his own power plants to produce electricity distributed through his own export contracts. This is not to mention that Akhmetov also has significant assets in media, transportation, finance (having recently merged two of his banks), and retail trade, and his group HarvEast is now one of the best positioned to seize large portions of the agricultural market as its privatization begins to accelerate.

## Orange Fragments

Given this context, Ukraine is not known for its free market. On the contrary, it is consistently ranked among the bottom rungs on so-called "economic freedom" indicators (155 out of 178 on the 2014 Heritage Index of Economic Freedom).<sup>2</sup> This state of affairs has led to discontent within the ruling elite during Ukraine's post-Soviet history. However, while the (largely industrial) oligarchs have

been able to act in concert to institutionally dominate the state, other sections of the ruling class have struggled to maintain a coherent power bloc.

The so-called "Orange Revolution" of 2004, although involving hundreds of thousands of protestors in the street, has been dubbed the "revolt of the millionaires against the billionaires" largely due to its outcome. This event brought a political alliance to power that was led by a small section of big capital and had its base mainly in small business owners. Although this alliance consisted of diverse tendencies and motivations, they have long been interested in the regulation of economic competition and establishing the "rule of law" in order to level the economic playing field with the more powerful oligarchs. Even today, the Orange ideology consists primarily in making the exploitation of workers an equal opportunity affair. Many of the more powerful oligarchs feared the liberal reforms promised in the rhetoric of the Orange power bloc which had consolidated against them, not to mention the more populist slogans (e.g. "send the crooks to prison") of one of its leaders, Yulia Tymoshenko. The initial plan of the oligarchs was to have Viktor Yanukovych administer their political affairs as president, but mass protests at an election fraud and material support from Washington brought the Orange leader Viktor Yushchenko to power instead.

The delicate unity of the Orange bloc, along with its economic inferiority, made it weak and unable to sustain itself against the interests of the bigger oligarchs without the added pressure from below. Less than two years after the elections, a split within the Orange bloc and an inability to form a parliamentary coalition paralyzed the state, preventing it from carrying out even minimal economic reforms. In these circumstances, the takeover of Yushchenko's erstwhile oppositional "Our Ukraine" party by sectional oligarchic interests was inevitable, which led to small business shuffling its allegiances within the Orange framework during the parliamentary elections of 2006 toward the more radical pole of the



Orange coalition, â€˜Bloc Yulia Tymoshenko.’ Between 2005-2010, the financial sector was also largely behind Tymoshenko’s Bloc, including the brothers Buriak (owners of the Brokbiznes Bank, one of Ukraine’s largest financial institutions) and Kostyantyn Zhevago, who heads the Finance and Credit Group. Ihor Kolomoyskyi and Henadiy Boholyubov of the Privat Group, who own Ukraine’s largest bank, alternately backed different wings of the Orange coalition depending on their needs. In the run-up to the 2010 elections, however, Tymoshenko further undermined the economic backing of her own bloc through zealous populist policies that had particularly negative consequences for small businesses and the banking sector.<sup>3</sup>

## The Working Class

All of these capitalists, of course, rely upon the continuous exploitation of the Ukrainian working class. In rough outline, slightly less than a quarter of Ukraine’s working population is employed in the industrial sector, just over half of the workforce is in the service sector (healthcare, education, communications, trade, etc.), and almost a tenth of workers are in public administration, while the official unemployment rate has fluctuated around 8.3 percent over the last decade, peaking during the economic crisis.<sup>4</sup>

In the post-Soviet sphere, the development of independent workers’ political and economic organizations faces its own particular difficulties. Such organizations are essentially nonexistent, and representation is instead directly mediated by the state in the form of the trade unions and the parties of the oligarchs. In an increasingly dire economic situation, with months of unpaid wages in some industries, shrinking pensions, and rising unemployment, the willingness of union members to take action is quite low. This is due not only to intimidation tactics by bosses, but also to a lack of confidence in both the efficacy of direct actions and in unions as an institution. Mounting discontent with this situation, in both the east and west of Ukraine, has for the most part been channeled through other

ideological institutions. According to an opinion poll from the beginning of 2013,<sup>5</sup> Ukrainians had far less confidence in trade unions as institutions than they did in the Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian media, the courts, and political parties. The opinion predominates that trade unions are relics of the communist era for the purpose of organizing vacations or children’s summer camps (functions largely responsible for sustaining union membership) rather than fighting organizations pushing for the interests of workers on the job and in politics. Even the minuscule attempts at rank-and-file activism must contend with the fact that the political influence of the unions is severely limited by their organizational weakness, as well as disunity among the different union federations.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, there is almost no mutual support organized for protest actions among unions, and alliances are merely formalities to satisfy requirements for political representation. In addition, trade unions in Ukraine have faced the same difficulty as their counterparts in Western countries when confronted with organizing the growing informal sector and â€˜precarious’ service jobs.

## The Imperialist Contradiction

In its economic, political, and even ideological aspects, the entirety of Ukrainian society is continuously animated by an inter-imperialist rivalry between the United States and the European Union on the one side, and Russia on the other. By means of alternately suppressing and deferring this contradiction, the Ukrainian oligarchy has carefully prevented it from coming to a head, and thereby retained their power.

Before the emergence of the Maidan movement in late 2013 and early 2014, Russia sought to include Ukraine in the Eurasian Customs Union, which was and is an attempt to build an economic bloc capable of competing with the EU, but more powerful because it would have a common military strategy. Not only would it culminate in a powerful geopolitical bloc, but the EU itself

would be almost completely reliant upon it for energy and natural resources. The position the Ukrainian oligarchs have taken with regard to the potential customs union has been contradictory, as has been evident throughout the years of negotiations. Ukrainian industry relies upon Russian gas, especially in the chemical sector. Remaining outside the customs union has kept gas prices significantly higher than otherwise, and has contributed to the decline in competitiveness of Ukrainian plants. Russian manipulation of gas prices has significantly increased Ukraine’s trade deficit, a fact Russia has attempted to use to force Ukraine to either join the Customs Union or merge Ukraine’s gas pipeline controller Naftogaz with the Russian state-owned Gazprom. Whether through access to a newly unprotected market by Russian businesses or the new possibility of unfettered manipulation of the gas supply, the sharp limitations upon Ukraine’s economic sovereignty in either case would comprise the economic content of Russian imperialism.

Yet the Western alternative has not only threatened the living standards of ordinary Ukrainians, it has also posed an economic threat to many oligarchs. Despite their diverging and conflicting interests and fickle maneuvers in the contest over the state apparatus, all oligarchs have held an interest in common: preventing the introduction of regulated and strictly enforced free markets to Ukraine, as this would significantly impact their infrastructure of profit extraction, and open up the Ukrainian market to competition from Western corporations. From the perspective of the oligarchs, political candidates are to be selected and supported insofar as they are politically pliable and present a low risk of change being introduced into the system. The majority of oligarchs backed Yanukovich in the 2010 presidential elections against Tymoshenko precisely because he was considered a weak president (as was Yushchenko, in the last analysis). Affiliating with the West in the form of IMF loans and the EU Association Agreement would to a certain extent begin to reverse this form of oligarchs’ direct dominance over the state as Western

imperialist interests play an increasingly dominant role in the state and economy.

Thus, maintaining the balancing act between imperialisms, precarious and contradictory as it always was, has been the domestic and foreign policy interest driving the oligarchic bloc. Ukraine was hit hard by the economic crisis of 2007-08, with its GDP plummeting by 15 percent in 2009. The crisis dramatically impacted the country's capacity for economic independence, as up to 60 percent of Ukraine's GDP is reliant upon exports. When combined with the growing gas deficit, this situation made ever more urgent a decision on alignment with Russia or the West. Suppressing the imperialist contradiction through illicit protectionism or deferring it through postponing a decision was thus made all the more difficult. In mid-2013, the economic crisis in Ukraine reached its pinnacle,<sup>7</sup> fusing mounting economic and social discontent as they moved toward the surface. Yanukovych's rejection of the EU Association Agreement, the last attempt by the oligarchy to defer the imperialist contradiction, proved utterly impotent in the face of a social upheaval whose time had come.

## Recomposition and Restructuring

Riding the wave of the Maidan movement, a neoliberal power bloc was brought to power and promptly began betraying that very movement. The new power bloc attempting to consolidate hegemony over the state and society is comprised of three major economic trends: oligarchs increasingly reliant upon Western markets, finance capital domestic and foreign, and small business owners. The first group comes partly from within the industrial oligarchy itself, and is driven toward an association with the West by a combination of the collapsing Russian economy facing stagflation and capital flight, and a need for state stability after growing frustration with Yanukovych's overstepping his role through his personal usage of the state to enrich his family and attempting to enter oligarch territory. Although the

westward-looking oligarchs remain to a significant extent dependent upon the Russian market, the undependability of the latter is making the long-delayed shift to the west increasingly unavoidable. Leading members of this group include oligarchs such as Pinchuk and Poroshenko, the latter of whom also had his imports into Russia restricted by Moscow. The second section of the rising new power bloc is finance capital. Today, independent finance capital in Ukraine is comparatively weak. In 2012, the banking sector<sup>8</sup>—consistently described by international financial institutions as one of the weakest in the region<sup>9</sup>—was distinguished by a large share of foreign investors (39 percent) and a comparatively low level of oligarch presence, with only two of the ten largest banks (which in total control 54 percent of the assets in the banking sector) owned by oligarchs (Privat and FUIB). The most powerful oligarch of the finance sector, Kolomoyskyi (whose Privat Bank is Ukraine's largest) has long been politically oppositional toward the ruling industrial oligarchs: he was staunchly in the Orange camp in 2004, and in early March of this year he was enlisted by the provisional Kiev government to be governor of the Dnipropetrovsk region in the East. The third major component of the aspiring power bloc is the class of *“entrepreneurs”* and small business owners, in other words, the petty bourgeoisie. In Ukraine, this class has a history of coming out en masse against perceived oligarchic abuse of power.<sup>8</sup> Given the economic heterogeneity of this rising power bloc then, its corresponding ideology is expressed as a motley mixture of 1) pro-European sentiment (with demands for both reliable rule-of-law in the economic sphere and political democracy), 2) nationalism (consolidating around “our” oligarchs and opposed specifically to the historic colonizer, Russia), and 3) neo-fascism (the fascist Svoboda party takes pride in its exclusively middle class funding). The militarization and xenophobia of the fascist component also play an important and increasingly dangerous role in diverting class anger away from the capitalists within this coalition.

These economic and ideological components of the new power bloc find their political articulations in the Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reforms (UDAR) party headed by Petro Poroshenko and Vitali Klitschko, the Fatherland party headed by Yulia Tymoshenko and Arseniy Yatsenyuk, and the Svoboda party headed by Oleh Tyahnybok. UDAR and the westward-looking oligarchs backing it occupy the strongest position in this coalition; their interests determine its direction in the last instance. The pro-European nationalism of the Fatherland party serves as an ideological palliative shoring up working and middle class support with anti-corruption rhetoric, but it has also played a political leadership role along with UDAR, despite the inferiority of the economic forces behind Fatherland. Although initially relatively small, the influence of fascism (politically represented by Svoboda and the Right Sector) has grown in proportion to the inability of the new power bloc to consolidate hegemony over a unitary state. This is manifested most strikingly through the increasing reliance of this bloc upon militarized fascist militias and street gangs during the “Anti-Terrorist Operation” to quell rising discontent in eastern Ukraine.

Part of the difficulty this power bloc has had in retaining political power lies not only in its internal contradictions, but also in the nature of the state apparatus itself. The economic interests of the (primarily industrial) oligarchy, dependent as it is on the stability of the Ukrainian social formation, required, on the political level, simultaneously a weak state to instrumentalize and upon which to impose interests, and a strong state with which to protect Ukrainian economic sovereignty and resist the ever-present imperial impositions from both East and West. The state inherited by the new power bloc had undergone a comprehensive centralization and shift to executive dominance under Yanukovych. It was thereby designed for maximum domestic instrumentalization by the powerful oligarchs, a group to which Yanukovych's family itself increasingly aspired. In practice this meant the continued deferral of imperialist impositions: under Yanukovych the size of the Ukrainian armed forces

was considerably reduced while the riot police were fortified. This state apparatus was built to stabilize the teeming contradictions of Ukrainian social relations under the hegemony of the existing oligarch bloc and its interests, not the interests that comprise the current Kiev government. This is illustrated by the fact that the provisional government was plagued by inconsistent and undisciplined parliamentary support, with frequent failures to meet vote quotas and lack of motivation due to a blinkered focus on the May elections. But it is seen most apparently in the disintegration of the repressive apparatus that has led the provisional Kiev government to alternate repeated hollow threats to uprisings in the east with the mobilization of fascist militarized elements for spectacular displays of impotent violence, which are not a particularly telling sign of a stable hegemony.

In its attempt to secure this hegemony over the entirety of a unified Ukraine, the new power bloc has relied upon the political and economic supplement of Western imperialism. The intersection of its economic interests with its reliance upon the IMF loans points toward both more stable trade deals with the West as well as the introduction of neoliberal reforms in Ukraine. Although all oligarchs will benefit from the increased access to Western markets (even more of a necessity with Russia's impending economic downturn), there will be a trade-off for some of them (beyond the social disaster of austerity, which the oligarchs are more than willing to tolerate for the sake of profit). In order to make the investment climate more attractive, part of the neoliberal restructuring of the economy and the legal apparatus will involve combatting the arbitrary practices of the oligarchs used to support and expand their wealth, such as the raiding practices that reached unprecedented levels after Yanukovich took power and which affected medium-sized Ukrainian businesses and foreign businesses alike. This conflict in oligarchic interests marks the Western aspect of the imperialist contradiction that has resulted in the political inertia of many industrial oligarchs. The intensity of this impasse has

contributed to the halting and contradictory nature of the recondensation of the state apparatus since February. However, the crisis in the social formation triggered by the autonomous actions of the Maidan mass movement has resulted in the majority of the oligarchs passively supporting the Western-backed Kiev government initially. What at first appeared to be the likely endurance of the neoliberal power bloc has begun to demand the tenuous participation of more of the larger industrial oligarchs, and will lead to a shift in their own economic activities should the process continue.

The most formidable challenge to the hegemony of the new bloc has been posed by the actions of Russia and mass discontent in eastern Ukraine. Based upon the interests in the Customs Union and the gas supply manipulation outlined above, Russia has attempted to undermine the legitimacy and position of the new Ukrainian authorities on the international stage through internal destabilization, thereby preventing the loss of Ukraine from the de facto Russian sphere of influence, and forcing a resolution to the crisis of Ukrainian society on Moscow's terms. At the moment, this is achieved through cynically emphasizing the legitimacy and independence of the eastern separatists. Should the turmoil in the East continue and gain the upper hand, oligarchs with industrial and political bases there will most likely use the resulting decentralization of the state or federalization to attempt to ward off the regulations of the EU association while keeping access to western markets open by retaining connection to the Ukrainian state. However, none of this should distract from the fact that working Ukrainians in both East and West have compelling reasons of their own not to accept either of the imperialist futures.

## Internal Resistance

The Eastern Ukrainian economy has traditionally bankrolled the poorer West of the country, and the manufacturing and coal mining based

there comprise 35 percent of Ukraine's exports. Association with the EU will lead to tougher production standards, the decline of Ukrainian coal and metallurgy industries, and loss of jobs in the East of Ukraine, whereas Russia has little need for Ukraine's coal mines. The social inequality already endemic to the oligarchic capitalist system will thus be amplified throughout these regions, regardless of which imperialism wins out. Protest against this inequality, whether targeting the oligarchs or the austerity programs from the West, has struggled to achieve a voice independent of the omnipresent inter-imperialist rivalry. Complete lack of organization makes the discontent of Eastern Ukrainians susceptible to Russian influence and the packaged solution on hand of separatism or federalization, and the discontent has as of yet no independent political expression. At present, the clashes in the East are spiraling Ukraine toward civil war. The very visible presence of fascists on both sides is a symptom of the growing embattlement of the ruling classes at the source of the conflict.

In recent years, many trade unions have been forbidden or had union leaders fired in enterprises belonging to multinational corporations—these are generally more difficult spaces in which to organize. The new trade agreement with the EU would open up Ukraine to a greater role for the multinationals, and thus further weaken the capacity of the working class to organize itself. The relative isolation of Ukrainian unions from practical solidarity with international unions will need to be broken as these multinational firms and their Western political backers begin taking over larger sections of the Ukrainian labor market and determining Ukrainian economic policy. The historically most class-conscious part of the working class and the best positioned politically right now are the miners of the Donbass region. These miners' unions have already shown small signs of political activity and uneven involvement with the uprisings of the East, and even spoken of a political strike, which has once before (1989) proven to be the key link in the chain that exploded the entire contradictory social formation. Yet the trade unions



of the mining industry have had divided allegiances, as Nick Evans points out: "Imperial competition between the U.S. and Europe, and Russia, and splits between the different oligarchic blocs in the Ukraine are reflected in the bureaucracy of the respective sections of the trade union movement."<sup>9</sup>

Prospects for a socially just resolution to the crisis are bleak. But the germs of genuine resistance persevere. The elements of the Maidan, drawn from all over the country, that fought for democracy and against the deterioration of their living standards, will soon be just as dissatisfied with the IMF-imposed austerity as they were with Yanukovich. Now, though, they have yet another experience of popular uprising that has played a determining role in politics, even if not carried all the way through due to lack of effective left organizations.

A grassroots anti-imperialism opposed to the ruling classes of both East and West is the precondition for the resolution of the imperialist contradiction on the terms of the working class. Crucial to any future unification strategy will be the linking of anti-austerity protests with anti-imperialism, the expansion of the trade union movement to the informal sector, and the creation of popular democratic institutions and eventually independent political parties. Popular struggle on all of these fronts, and their eventual unification, will be required to melt the ideological cement binding the workers of the West to the nationalists of the ruling class and replace it with a class-conscious counter-hegemonic project. The return of Maidan activists to their hometowns, spread all across the country, has laid the infrastructure of

a united cross-regional movement in a way that can lead to grassroots protests exceeding the bounds of the narrow ruling-class political oscillations of the last decade. Today, as murderous imperialisms and the onslaught of Ukrainian capitalism rage on, one thing is clear as the dawn: it is the oligarchs of all stripes who are responsible for the misery of the Ukrainian people, and it is the oligarchs who will need to be targeted by workplace actions and political protests if the people of Ukraine are to begin taking their future into their own hands.

12 May 2014

From *New Politics*. Summer 2014, Vol:XV-1, Whole #: 57 :

\* Sean Larson is a doctoral candidate in German Studies at New York University and a socialist activist.

## Resisting the New McCarthyism

29 July 2014, by **Against the Current**, Rabab Abdulhadi

Rabab Abdulhadi: AMCHA accused Abdulhadi of securing university funding on a false pretext of attending a conference of the Center for American Studies and Research (CASAR) at the American University of Beirut. In fact, as she explained in detail in a response to AMCHA's charges: "To my dismay, I was unable to attend the conference in Beirut because of university delays in approving my travel authorization request. Because SFSU and CSU (California State University) delayed funding approval for my travel to areas that the State Department defines as 'high-risk,' I was not able to confirm my attendance to conference organizers by their deadline."

Ken Monteiro, the Dean of the SFSU College of Ethnic Studies confirmed, after additional review, that "Dr. Abdulhadi's travel claim is correct and appropriate," that "her travel involved

meetings and discussions with people who are related to her research," that "her past, current, and in preparation publications evidence publicly that her travel is the basis for her scholarship, scholarship that is internationally regarded," and that "the College of Ethnic Studies does not censor any of our scholars, nor does the college condone such censorship." "We hired Dr. Abdulhadi explicitly for her work in Palestine and with Palestinians in the Diaspora including, but not limited to, the USA," Monteiro added.

The latter clause is a response to AMCHA's allegation that the delegation met with "terrorists," including Leila Khaled. Further pursuing its vendetta against Dr. Abdulhadi and San Francisco State, AMCHA on June 25 issued a letter which demands "that California State Controller John Chiang conduct a state audit of SFSU." The letter's co-signers include StandWithUs, a

heavily funded campus-oriented Zionist advocacy group, and the extreme rightwing Zionist Organization of America.

In response to AMCHA's attack on Dr. Abdulhadi's work and reputation, a wide assortment of groups and individuals have rallied to her defense (a partial list appears at the conclusion of the interview below). David Finkel and Dianne Feeley interviewed Dr. Abdulhadi by phone for *Against the Current*.

**Against the Current: How serious is AMCHA's attack on you and their new demand for a state audit of the university?**

Rabab Abdulhadi: It's serious on the one hand, not because of their size—AMCHA is two or three people, and most of the other groups they list are tiny—but they are very well-financed, including by Sheldon Adelson [the casino mogul who

claimed to be spending \$100 million in 2012 supporting Mitt Romney and who forced New Jersey Governor Christie to apologize for calling the West Bank occupied territories - ed.]. And they're part of the network around the Reut Institute in Israel, which came out with a big report in 2010 describing how to target pro-Palestinian activities and stop what we're doing.

They're not a little grassroots organization, so it's serious when they ask the State Controller to investigate. They, AMCHA and company, requested and received all the documentation from the university regarding my travel authorization request and reimbursements, both of which, I might add, have been fully reviewed several times by SFSU and CSU before it was authorized. AMCHA copied also the California attorney general, trying to get me implicated in criminal charges and "terrorism."

In addition to Dean Monteiro's report on May 28th immediately following AMCHA's latest attack, SFSU Counsel reported to me and my lawyers on June 4th that the University had thoroughly reviewed my documents and found no wrong doing. On June 24th, SFSU President Wong cleared me and further said that AMCHA's false allegations had no merit and reported on the university website.

Although I knew all along that I did not violate any SFSU or CSU guidelines, nor did I do anything wrong from a legal standpoint, what's disturbing is that AMCHA has targeted so many other scholars. Needless to say that they haven't succeeded in a single case. However, they continue to try to raise the cost of speaking up on Palestine. I believe that AMCHA's strategy is to try to get me fired, investigated on criminal charges and charges of aiding and abetting terrorism, and to ultimately destroy AMED as an academic program whose mission is to produce knowledge for social justice, including intimidating SFSU from signing any collaborative agreements with Palestinian universities. A California colleague reported that she too was attacked during her sabbatical. Using McCarthyist era tactics, they really want to make me an example to other

people and scare everyone so they won't dare get involved in the struggle for justice in/for Palestine.

They started by saying I was teaching children to kill Jews. That did not work because folks know me and know that I live by the principle of the indivisibility of justice, i.e. opposition to hatred and racism against any people. As a result we received overwhelming support from our broader communities. Their next line of attack was to target the (North American Academic and Labor) delegation by selectively drawing from the blog of my colleague, Joanne Barker, who wrote about our activities. For example, although we met with 189 individuals, in its smear campaign, AMCHA chose to focus only on two, Leila Khaled and Sheikh Raed Salah, using the anti-Palestinian pro-Zionist standpoint of U.S. dominant circles, on one hand, and widespread Islamophobia on the other. Then they (AMCHA) attacked our report back event by asking the university to cancel it.

After we held a very successful and a standing room event, AMCHA and its ilk made false allegations anew but in addition to attacking me this time around, they also spelled out their goals of undermining our plans to formalize collaboration between SFSU and Palestinian universities, calling them "terrorist." They also claimed that our event harassed Jewish students. In fact, and as our videos of the event show, we had a beautiful discussion, with everything transparent and where all members of the audience allowed to raise questions and debate the issues with no coercion. The campaign's escalated to accusing me of "anti-semitism." However the Jacobin article by Selma James and Sara Kershner, as well as the letters sent to President Wong, including that by Sherry Gorelick published on Mondoweiss, have been beautiful responses to such false claims. More recently, there is also the letter signed by over 500 Jews from the US, Israel and around the world.

AMCHA's attack did not stop after President Wong exonerated me of all wrong doing. Rather, they have now started a new campaign directed at

the California Controller claiming again that I misused public funds and demanding another investigation. The bottom line is that they are arguing that that public dollars shouldn't be used to advocate for social justice. I'm saying the opposite: that we need to produce knowledge for social justice. That's the mission of AMED, and it is supported by the College of Ethnic Studies and SFSU. This was the reason why I accepted the position at San Francisco State: to teach, research, and write about social justice issues and not only for Palestine, but all over the world, including the United States.

This is not unreasonable; for every U.S. resident person who pays taxes—that includes undocumented workers, who pay taxes too—a portion goes to subsidize Israeli colonization of Palestine and violation of Palestinian rights.

**ATC: When we talk about BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions), it seems important to find particular campaigns that have resonance with people's concerns. The G4S company that builds prisons in Israel is also involved in private prisons here, for example, so there's a powerful connection with denying Palestinian rights.**

RA: We make the connection all the time, not in an opportunistic fashion but within the framework of what I define as the "indivisibility of justice." That's how we conceptualize everything we do.

In the case of G4S, through our campaign, "from Pelican Bay and Guantanamo to Palestine," we highlighted the struggle of prisoners on hunger strike in Pelican Bay, California; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and Israeli jails. It is instructive to know that G4S and the security industry operates prisons in all these locations.

If we understand global political economy, we can see the connections everywhere, and note how much is being spent on bombs and drones and prisons instead of the necessary investment in human needs in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world, including

in Palestine.

**ATC: Do you think the rightwing attacks are growing now because there's growing support on campuses for Palestinian rights, BDS, and criticism of Israel?**

RA: Yes. The racist and rightwing forces are freaking out over what's going on. The Presbyterian General Assembly has just voted to divest Church funds from Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola Solutions over their involvement in the brutal practices of the Israeli occupation. United Methodist Church divested its pension funds and the United Church of Christ is discussing divestment. The Association for Asian American Studies, the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association, and the American Studies Association have all responded positively and decided to join to the call by the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI). The Gates Foundation has withdrawn its investments in G4S.

What's happening today with regards to Palestine brings to mind the "South African moment" of the mid-1980s. Israel has always sought to present itself as exceptional, humane, and wonderful. The lie, however, is being exposed in the broader public and communities. As Israel's apologists feel the pressure they have started spending millions of dollars to counter our advocacy for justice in/for Palestine as part and parcel of justice for all.

We can observe the Israeli and Zionist arrogance of power in their shock that someone has dared to challenge their monopoly of public space especially in the U.S. It is as if they are saying, "How dare you build a movement against us? This space belongs only to us!" This reminds me of the climate in the United States immediately after the 9/11 attacks. The attacks were of course were horrible but the American mindset at that time obliterated any possibilities of critical thought and public discussion.

**ATC: The "South African moment" came at a time when the tide of the liberation movement there was clearly rising. The upsurge today**

**in support of Palestine comes at a very difficult moment for the Palestinian struggle, and certainly at a point when its leadership is weak and divided.**

RA: There are definitely severe problems with the official Palestinian leadership. This places an ultimatum to the PLO to either reform itself and act like a true leadership of an anti-colonial resistance movement or becoming totally irrelevant and face the possibility of the emergence of a new leadership that will replace it. Unfortunately and as we know, growing solid leadership takes much longer time than a single uprising—especially when we take into consideration the fact that Israel has, since the 1960s, assassinated one leader after another, not excluding PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in 2004.

At the same time, there are encouraging signs in Palestine today, from squatter movements of young people refusing to move from Palestinian lands confiscated by the Israeli military for the use of Jewish colonial settlements, to struggles of Palestinians inside Israel, including Druze and Christian Palestinians who refuse to serve in the Israeli army that oppresses their people. Palestinians are really resisting and mobilizing, even though there is indeed a huge vacuum of official leadership.

Right now, the disappearance of the three settlers has been a pretext for a huge Israeli effort to further harass the Palestinian population under occupation, deepen the blockade and starvation of Gaza, and destroy the Palestinian unity government. The United States and Israel have definitely participated in undermining the Palestinian leadership. Yes, things would be so much different if we had an effective leadership. But the Palestinian people are in struggle and seeking their self-determination, and receiving grassroots support around the world.

As we learned from revolutionary history and the history of social movements, people have always risen against injustices. This is what's happening in Palestine today and in due time we will see real leadership emerging and navigating people's

mobilization toward a qualitative change.

**ATC: Part of your purpose, as described in your report on the delegation, was trying to build connections between SFSU and Birzeit University in the West Bank. Can you describe the progress of that work?**

RA: We are working to establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between SFSU and An-Najah University first and then with Birzeit. These are my strongest connections—I have been collaborating with both universities for a very long time. I was a student at Birzeit as well as a visiting professor in 1998. My collaboration with An-Najah University goes back to 2005 and more recently An-Najah coordinated the full program for the Indigenous and Feminist of Color Delegation to Palestine. But it's not going to be exclusive to two Palestinian universities; we plan to connect with other universities in Palestine and elsewhere in the Arab world as well as in Muslim majority countries.

AMCHA calls these Palestinian universities "terrorist." Birzeit, Jenin, and other Palestinian universities have just been raided which reminds us of the closure of institution of education and higher education during the first Intifada. We believe that SFSU students can learn from students and professors in Palestine, and Palestinian students could also learn from students and faculty from SFSU, given the leading role of SFSU students, staff, and faculty who led in 1968-69 the longest strike for social justice when they insisted and succeeded in realizing the College of Ethnic Studies. We also hope to conduct joint research and student and faculty exchanges. The planning has been delayed because of AMCHA's attack, but we are serious about developing these MOUs. Also this is not exclusive to the Palestinian, Arab, or Muslim communities in San Francisco Bay Area, but the fruits of our collaboration will be enjoyed by what we call AMED's broader community that supports us.

**ATC: Was there much of a program in place when you arrived at SFSU?**

RA: No. I was actually recruited from the University of Michigan - Dearborn to create it. This was a practical step to implement the recommendations of the taskforce past SFSU President Corrigan formed in order to address the campus tensions in 2002 when the Palestinian students were unjustly sanctioned even though they were attacked by on and off campus pro-Israeli groups. When I arrived in 2007, there were five courses in Arab American and Muslim American studies. Now we have 24 new courses, 15 of which are already certified and 8 are in the queue for approval as part of General Education curriculum that every student at SFSU can take, including in American Ethnic and Racial Minorities, Social Justice, and Global Perspectives.

Our proposal for a Minor in AMED has been approved in the Race and Resistance Studies Program as well as by the College of Ethnic Studies. There is a real need for an AMED program that would cater to all students interested in learning about Arab and Muslim communities from a justice centered perspective, not only to Arab and Muslim students. Students who will be the future leaders in the US need to learn about the genocide and resistance of Native Americans, the kidnapping and enslavement of Africans, as well as the exclusion of Asian Americans and the colonization of Latin@ lands and

people. AMED organically fits within this conceptual framework.

This is also why AMCHA has targeted me: they would kill the program if they can wear me out or get me fired. They have also been attacking the College of Ethnic Studies for the same reasons. For example, AMCHA's leader, Tammi Rossman Benjamin has attacked Black Student Union and other activists who led the 1968-69 strike. She has targeted Dean Monteiro and has made several racist comments, some of which have been caught on YouTube.

**ATC: Can you tell us about some of the support you're receiving?**

RA: It's fantastic. A national coalition against McCarthyism and for academic freedom is building around my case as well as providing support for the American Studies Association, various chapters of SJP (Students for Justice in Palestine) including Northeastern, NYU, and UCLA, and other faculty and students who are being targeted by pro-Israeli right-wing group that employ McCarthyist tactics. As I said earlier, the Jewish letter has garnered over 500 signatures. An international academic and public intellectuals' letter that will be released in a couple of days has already more than 350 names. There is a letter of support from the

Palestinian Youth Movement and another initiated by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and signed by many scholars and activists in the African American community. The Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim communities have initiated a letter and so did veteran strikers of 1968-69 SFSU student strike. While I am gratified that I am receiving support from so many individuals, organizations, and communities, I am thrilled that we are coming together to fight these false allegations and insist on our right to speak up for justice in/for Palestine as an integral part of justice for all.

My colleagues who accompanied me on various delegations to Palestine have been amazing, particularly Joanne Barker who has been blogging and has also initiated a letter signed by members of delegations I either led or co-organized. The National Lawyers Guild, Asian Law Caucus, Center for Constitutional Rights, and the Council on American Islamic Relations have been incredible and so has the Palestine Solidarity Legal Support who stood by me at every step of the way. My academic colleagues have been great, especially the Dean and Chairs' Council in the College of Ethnic Studies. There's been a strong statement from the SFSU president Leslie Wong.

*July 21, 2014*

## **Internationalism Today - Ukraine: Democratic Aspirations ?and Inter-imperialist Rivalry**

**29 July 2014, by Kevin B Anderson**

**The Maidan Movement: A**

**Democratic Uprising on**

**Putin's Doorstep**

The 2013-14 Ukrainian uprising showed the creativity of masses in motion and the ultimate fragility of state power, even when surrounded by

a repressive police apparatus and enjoying the support of a foreign imperialist ally. The overthrow of the pro-Russian government of Viktor Yanukovich involved large-scale street protests of over 500,000 people and the occupation of Kiev's central square, the Maidan, for weeks on end in the dead of winter. Despite support efforts by Russia and police repression that resulted in more than 100 deaths, in the end the regime collapsed. The police melted away, the army refused to attack the people, and Yanukovich fled for his life.

The Maidan uprising rattled Putin's regime in Russia, which has experienced persistent democratic protests over the past two years, despite ever-increasing state repression. As the British journalist James Meek wrote: "Putin's great fear is that the people of a future better Ukraine might inspire an entirely different unification with their East Slav brethren on his side of the border—a common cause of popular revolt against him and other leaders like him. The revolution on Maidan Nezalezhnosti—'Independence Square in Ukrainian'—is the closest yet to a script for his own downfall" (London Review of Books, 3-20-14).

In a similar vein, the Ukrainian sociologist Volodymyr Ishchenko held that in annexing Crimea, Putin was motivated not only by territorial and imperial motives, but also by the situation at home: "Crimea was necessary to increase patriotism among the Russian population, and to decrease any chance that the Russian opposition—which was very much inspired by Maidan—might attempt anything like that in Russia" ("For Ukrainians, as for any other people in the world, the main threat is capitalism," LeftEast, April 30, 2014).

The Maidan uprising exhibited several contradictions, however. One revolved around the emergence of far right groups. Though only a small minority within the movement, these groups were well organized and prepared for street fighting. A recent report from an anarchist correspondent speaks to the relative strength of such groups: "The Maidan self-defense was organized in 'groups of one hundred,' with organizations or

currents setting up their own group. All together there were about fifty such groups of one hundred. However, despite the name many groups were made up of not more than thirty or forty people. About ten groups were dominated by rightists or fascists, others expressed nationalist tendencies but with more liberal or democratic elements." This account also mentions that the left was a very small, often marginalized part of the protests, sometimes due to attacks by right-wing groups. Nonetheless, some "anarchists, communists, and socialists" took part in an occupation by 300 students of the Ministry of Education in Kiev ("Ukraine: Report from a visit in Kiev in April 2014," libcom.org, April 29, 2014). Thus, while notions of the uprising as fascist or reactionary were a fantasy put forth by Russian state propaganda, the emergence of the far right as a tendency is certainly a serious danger for the Ukrainian democratic movement.

A second contradiction within the Maidan movement concerned a major part of its agenda, that of affiliating with the European Union rather than Putin's Eurasian Economic Union. This was the issue that sparked the initial protests in November 2013, as most Ukrainians were outraged by Yanukovich's rejection of a pact with the EU, which they evidently saw as a way out of Putin's increasingly authoritarian political and economic network. The EU offered a multibillion-dollar loan package in exchange for unspecified economic "reform." Little account has been taken by the Ukrainian democratic movement, then or since, of the terrible human costs of the austerity measures the EU and other international lending agencies would demand in return for loans, above all cuts in salaries and pensions and hikes in prices of basic commodities. And this in a country already teetering on the edge of economic collapse.

This lacuna was rooted in the fact that the working class did not appear under its own banner, and in the weakness of the left, which meant that the democratic uprising lacked a socio-economic, let alone an anti-capitalist, dimension. There have been some small protests with an economic

dimension, however, as recounted by the abovementioned anarchist correspondent: "On April 9 we went to a protest rally of social workers in front of a government building near Maidan. [They] are the first to be sacked after the agreement with the IMF. About 200 people (from different parts of the Ukraine) came to this ... rally outside the government building. Many workers showed up with self-drawn banners and slogans like proposing to the government: 'Let's exchange salaries,' 'Start the cuts with yourself,' and 'The reforms suppose improvements and not unemployment and poverty!' Most workers are women."

A third contradiction involved the narrow form of Ukrainian nationalism that dominated much of the uprising, as well as the new Kiev government. Thus, as Yanukovich was falling from power, parliament, which by now had gone over to the opposition, conducted a fateful vote to repeal the 2012 language law that had placed Russian on an equal footing with Ukrainian as a national language. Even though the repeal never took effect due to a veto by the acting president, huge political damage was done, giving a powerful propaganda tool to Putin and his allies in eastern Ukraine, where Russian speakers are the vast majority. Moreover, many eastern Ukrainians rightly feared that the kind of neoliberal policies favored by those coming to power in Kiev would open the industrialized Donbass region to competition from cheaper foreign imports of manufactured goods, resulting in mass layoffs.

Despite these contradictions, the Ukrainian uprising was on the whole a positive event, one that showed both the power and the creativity of a mass democratic movement in a region marked by increasing authoritarianism. Moreover, it actually succeeded in toppling a government, a rare event anywhere. This shook up not only Ukraine, but Russia as well, and also worried regimes as far away as Iran, where a dispute broke out between reformist and conservative newspapers ("La révolution ukrainienne dérange les conservateurs en Iran," Le Monde, 2-28-14).

# Inter-imperialist Rivalries and International Solidarity

Within days of Yanukovich's fall, Putin moved to annex Crimea, a territory that Russia has long claimed and which has one of its most important naval bases. Crimea has a clear majority of Russian speakers, plus lots of Russian military personnel residing there, although there is also a significant minority of predominantly Muslim Crimean Tatars (12 percent of the population), as well as of Ukrainian speakers (24 percent). These minorities were almost completely silenced during a snap sham election in which an improbable turnout of 80 percent was claimed, and an old, USSR-style majority of 97 percent supposedly voted to break off from Ukraine and join Russia.

Putin's annexation of Crimea resulted in sanctions and threats from the U.S./EU to isolate Russia, all of which carried the flavor of a new Cold War. The United States has shed its usual crocodile tears over Crimea, even as it occupies Guantanamo, an enclave carved out of Cuban soil. In fact, Putin's whole comportment since the Maidan uprising, with 40,000 troops massed on the border and belligerent statements about protecting Russian minorities everywhere, is nearly a mirror image of the way Washington has traditionally behaved toward Latin America.

A different type of international response was that of cross-border democratic and anti-imperialist solidarity. Inside Russia, the democratic opposition mounted a remarkably large, 50,000-strong demonstration on the eve of the Crimea referendum, March 15. Slogans included "Hands off Ukraine" and "No to war." A much smaller counter-demonstration took place under the slogan, "There will be no Maidan in Moscow" (Le Monde, 3-16-14). That is probably true for now, but the specter of Maidan surely haunts Putin, even as his jingoism has temporarily jacked up his popularity

ratings. The annexation of Crimea was also condemned by a lopsided vote in the UN General Assembly.

It is often mentioned by those parts of the left that have been reluctant to support the Maidan uprising—and by international experts of the "realist" school—that NATO has extended itself into most of Eastern Europe and the Baltics since 1991, in violation of assurances given to Russia's leaders as the Soviet Union was collapsing. To be sure, NATO has acted in true imperialist fashion, taking advantage of its former rival's weakness, in a form of veiled aggression that sowed huge distrust from the Russian state and people. Despite U.S./EU claims today that they are only interested in an economic partnership with Ukraine, not NATO membership, it should be remembered that Vice President Joe Biden declared during a visit to Kiev in 2009 that the United States would "strongly support" such a move (Ellen Barry, "Biden Says U.S. Still Backs Ukraine in NATO," New York Times, July 23, 2009, A8). Chastened by the disastrous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a public dead-set against more foreign adventures, and the sapping of its resources during the Great Recession, the U.S. government now speaks more softly. However, the overall goal of world domination has by no means been shelved.

What of Russian imperialism, vastly weakened since 1991? In this regard, it must equally be said that critics of U.S. and Western imperialism seldom mention that Putin has, like the United States with regard to NATO and Russia, violated the guarantees that Russia gave in 1994, when, along with Washington and London, it signed onto the Budapest Memorandum. In that agreement, the three powers pledged to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity in return for its agreement to give up its nuclear arsenal, then the third largest in the world. Ukraine did so by 1996, making it one of the only countries in the world, along with South Africa, to have given up its nuclear weapons.

Moreover, I would also argue that claims about Russia's sphere of influence being undermined by the United States and NATO follow an

imperialist logic, one that the left needs to question in all of its forms, whether that sphere is dominated by Washington or by another global or regional power.

Kerry and Obama tout their democratic credentials in supporting the Maidan uprising or in opposing Russian thuggery in Ukraine, but they remain silent about issues closer to home like the conviction of Occupy Wall Street activist Cecily McMillan, whose "offense" consisted of elbowing a cop who had grabbed her breasts during a crackdown on a 2012 demonstration. In a remarkable expression of internationalism from below, two Putin opponents from the Pussy Riot group, Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, made a solidarity visit to McMillan at the Rikers Island jail. "It was a very bad decision to put her in jail," said Tolokonnikova. The two Russian activists knew of whence they spoke, having finished their own jail terms earlier this year. (James McKinley, "Like-Minded Russians Visit Occupy Wall Street Inmate at Rikers Island," New York Times, May 9, 2014, A19).

## Eastern Ukraine and the Danger of Civil War

In a number of cities in eastern Ukraine where Russian speakers predominate, the largest of them Donetsk (population 1 million), heavily armed pro-Putin militants have taken over government buildings. The extent of the involvement of Russian intelligence operatives is unclear. The level of popular support for these irredentists who advocate breaking off and joining Russia is even less clear. First, it should be noted that they have not been able to take over Kharkiv (population 1.5 million), eastern Ukraine's largest city. Second, while some have seen an equivalency between these protests and the Maidan uprising, the level of mass participation is much lower. Third, a Pew Research Center poll released on May 8 found high levels of support for a united Ukraine in all regions: "Among Ukrainians, 77% say Ukraine should remain united, compared with



14% who think regions should be permitted to secede if they so desire.... A smaller majority (70%) in the country's east—which includes areas along the Black Sea and the border with Russia—also prefer unity.” Finally, it should be noted that the public face of these occupations includes many very doubtful figures, for example, Denis Pushilin in Donetsk, whose earlier claim to fame was as a swindler in a large Ponzi scheme.

But as the Pew poll also shows, support for a unified Ukraine is not the same thing as support for the current government in Kiev, composed of politicians from previous regimes, most of them with ties to corrupt oligarchs: only 41 percent of the population hold a favorable view of it, with some regional differences.

On May 11, secessionist militants held a much-disputed referendum on “self-rule” for the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In the days before, Putin gave mixed signals about this step, even asking at one point for it to be postponed. The results of the poll were predictably one-sided, but the actual level of participation was unclear. It was also unclear whether Putin would actually move to incorporate these two eastern regions, as he had with Crimea. What was clear was that this exercise was designed to disrupt the nationwide Ukrainian elections scheduled for May 25, where almost all observers were predicting a landslide victory at a national level (although not in parts of the East) for candidates claiming to support the legacy of the Maidan uprising.

A week before the referendum, the first serious clashes between pro-Russian militants and those supporting a united Ukraine took place in the large southern port city of Odessa, with more than 40 pro-Russians killed. While the exact details are in dispute, the following account conveyed to me by a sociologist with good contacts in Odessa and longstanding ties to the anti-Stalinist left rings true:

“There was a “pro-Russian” encampment in the city. Its members are armed.... On Friday, the “pro-

Ukrainian” forces marched for national unity. The “pro-Russians” attacked them. It is my belief ... that the police stayed idly by when the “pro-Russians” attacked them. In the ensuing battle, the heavily outnumbered “pro-Russians” were defeated and split into two groups. One went into a building, and fighting continued. The armed “pro-Russians” were shooting from inside the building at their opponents—some of whom improvised Molotov cocktails and threw them. The building burned with horrible results.... What does all that amount to? The “pro-Russians” have been trying, without success, to seize Odessa; they tried to attack a demonstration that opposed them; and they were defeated. This is not a coldly calculated massacre—it is the kind of tragedy that happens when a near civil war situation is developing.”

Even though it wasn't a coldly calculated massacre, which needs to be said, it of course also needs to be said that some grotesque emotions were expressed by some of the “pro-Ukrainians” as they saw the building burning and people dying. Odessa shows the danger, not only of Russian irredentism, but also of a narrow Ukrainian nationalism. This form of nationalism, as in the vote against the Russian language, or the more recent ill-conceived attempts by the very weak Ukrainian military to intervene with force in the East, are only serving to increase support for separatism there.

## **Putin's Amalgam of Neo-Stalinism and Pan-Slavism**

Putin's regime espouses a neo-Stalinist ideology that regards the collapse of the USSR as a tragedy. Reeking of Russian chauvinism, this worldview also contains elements of older versions of Czarist Pan-Slavism, especially the notion of “protecting” Russian minorities abroad. This odd combination is seen in how Putin reveres the conservative Slavophile Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (who denied the existence of a Ukrainian nation separate from Russia), even as he expresses nostalgia for the Stalinist

regime that imprisoned him. Putin confirmed that view on March 12 of this year when he telephoned Mustafa Dzhezelev, a venerated leader of the Crimean Tatar minority. Putin was ostensibly trying to reassure the Tatars that they would not be persecuted under Russian rule, as they had in the Soviet Union, which deported them en masse to Central Asia in 1944. But as a stunned Dzhezelev reported, Putin also suggested that Ukraine's 1991 independence from the former Soviet Union had lacked validity: “Putin noted the issue that self-proclamation of independent Ukraine did not quite correspond to the Soviet norms that stipulated withdrawal procedure from the USSR structure” (“Ukraine withdrew from USSR not quite legitimately,” QHA-Crimean News Agency, 3-13-14; see also Sylvie Kaufmann, “Après la Crimée, un autre monde,” *Le Monde*, 3-17-14).

These issues have a deep resonance in Russian and Ukrainian history. Lenin castigated Russian chauvinism, going so far as to support Ukraine's right to independence:

“If Finland, Poland, or Ukraine secede from Russia, there is nothing bad in that. What is wrong with it? Anyone who says that is a chauvinist. One must be mad to continue Czar Nicholas's policy.... This is a repudiation of the tactics of internationalism, this is chauvinism at its worst. What is wrong with Finland seceding? ... The proletariat cannot use force, because it must not prevent the peoples from obtaining their freedom” (Speech on the National Question, Seventh All-Russia Conference of the Russian Social Democratic Party-Bolshevik, April 29 [May 12], 1917).

Philosopher Slavoj Žižek has noted this revolutionary heritage in a recent article defending Ukraine's national rights against Russia:

“The golden era of Ukrainian national identity was not tsarist Russia—where Ukrainian national self-assertion was thwarted—but the first decade of the Soviet Union, when Soviet policy in a Ukraine exhausted by war and famine was “indigenisation.” Ukrainian culture

and language were revived, and rights to healthcare, education and social security introduced. Indigenisation followed the principles formulated by Lenin in quite unambiguous terms" ("Barbarism with a Human Face," London Review of Books, May 8, 2014).

The tragedy of Russia 1917, a revolution that transformed into its opposite, continues to haunt both Russia and Ukraine today, even after the collapse of the USSR.

Some very telling indications of what the pro-Putin forces have in mind for eastern Ukraine are foreshadowed by the first weeks of Russian rule in Crimea. If one holds that the position of subordinated minorities, ethnic and sexual, is a key measure of a political order's progressive or reactionary character, two disturbing trends can already be noted. (1) Persecution of the Tatars: Dzhomelev has been barred from returning to Crimea after a trip to Kiev, prompting a

demonstration by 2,000 Tatars at the border as he tried to return ("Crimée: heurts entre Tatars et forces de l'ordre," Le Monde, May 4, 2013). (2) Persecution of the LGBT community: the Pride parade scheduled for April 22-23 has been cancelled in light of Russian law banning "gay propaganda," as the entire community feels a deep chill, with some planning to emigrate as soon as possible (Daniel Reynolds, "Russia's 'Gay Propaganda' Law Takes Effect in Crimea," Advocate, May 1, 2014).

The terrible legacies of Stalinist famine and deportation, and of Nazi occupation and the Holocaust, as well as the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, all weigh down upon Ukraine and the region today, both as memory and as foreboding for the future. So does the danger of an ethno-regional civil war, as in the Balkans during the 1990s. Ukraine faces a deep crisis today, economically, politically, and culturally. It is caught between two

rival imperialisms at a time of deep economic and social crisis. Its path forward is by no means a clear one, especially since its democratic movement has abstained from addressing the oppressions of capital and class, and is being hemmed in by U.S./EU austerity. Nonetheless, in staging not one but two mass democratic uprisings over the past decade, the Ukrainian people have shown a yearning for self-determination in the broadest sense, and for grassroots democracy. To be sure, Ukrainian nationalist excesses, as in Odessa, illustrate the deep contradictions within this democratic agenda. Overall though, the Maidan uprising and its aftermath have challenged the regional imperialist power, Russia, whose increasingly authoritarian regime is working night and day in an effort to make sure Ukraine's democratic experiment ends in miserable failure.

[New Politics, Summer 2014, Vol:XV-1, Whole #: 57 :](#)

## March for Gaza banned in Paris after a week of tensions

28 July 2014, by **Lenaig Bredoux and Stephane Allies**

For the first time since the beginning of Israel's military intervention in Gaza, demonstrating in support of the Palestinian cause has been banned in a large western capital. Planned for this Saturday [19 July], the march was banned by the Préfecture de police backed up by the Interior Ministry, "considering that holding the march in acutely tense circumstances would pose serious risks to public order". The Préfecture added on Saturday that any person attending the demonstration would consequently run the risk of being arrested. However, demonstrations outside the capital have been allowed to take place, although two were banned earlier this week in Lille and Nice. As Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve explained without further details, "I

have asked local administrations to examine each planned march case by case."

In Paris, organisers appealed to the administrative tribunal according to a "référé-liberté". But the tribunal confirmed the ban on Friday evening. Whatever the result of the judicial procedure, it is almost inevitable that the situation will degenerate, according to the organisers speaking at a Paris press conference Friday morning.

For Youssef Boussoomah, leader of the Parti des indigènes de la République (PIR), "the ban further stigmatises a part of the population by accusing it of crimes that have not yet been committed". In vain, organisers claim

to have proposed an alternative route, from Barbès to the place de l'Opéra. Reminding the organising associations and parties that providing "any policing service of the gathering could be prosecuted", Tarek Beniba (activist for Ensemble, an organisation part of Front de Gauche) is extremely worried: "It is obvious that, in light of the escalation of violence in Gaza following the ground invasion, strong feelings of anger will be expressed. People will go to Barbès anyway, and then, what will the government do? Will it be another fight for Alger but in the heart of Paris?"

On Friday evening, the NPA nevertheless called for in a communiqué "all political, union and association forces mindful of

respecting democratic rights and enraged by the crimes committed in Gaza to publicly assemble and protest”.

According to Maître Hosni Maat, the organisers’ lawyer in charge of the “référé-liberté”, “potential threats to public order are not a sufficient cause to ban a demonstration, as any second year law student knows since the Benjamin case (CE, 1933). This was already put forward in the case of marching against gay and lesbian marriage rights, an event that occurred in spite of a counter-demonstration”. Others cited the cases of demonstrations by taxi drivers, farmers or campaigners against Notre-Dame-des-Landes [airport and infrastructure project], “events which were allowed in spite of them not always being calm and peaceful”. Hosni Maat insists that “if a definitive ban is announced, associations will not march since they respect the law. However, one should not expect us to make appeals for peace and calm. The state and government, which possess the monopoly on the control of violence, must fully take on this responsibility”.

On the other hand, the Interior Ministry asserts that the ban is justified because of, firstly, “heightened tensions” caused in France by events in the Middle East, “clashes” during the previous demonstration on Sunday, the “increased risks of confrontation between radical groups on each side deemed uncontrollable”, and finally, the fact that synagogues are highly frequented on Saturdays. “Furthermore, this is only the third banning measure taken by the Ministry. Yesterday (Thursday 18 July, Ed. note), 44 demonstrations assembling in total 11,000 people, took place without any problems”, noted the entourage of Minister Bernard Cazeneuve.

However, this time, the Ministry and Préfecture de Police considered that the risks of violence between the Jewish Defence League and certain pro-Palestinian groups, some of which are supporters of Dieudonné and Alain Soral, were too high. Police forces would not be able to protect all synagogues close to the route of the

march. “Social tensions are too high. Much more than in previous years,” claims place Beauvau [headquarters to the Interior Ministry].

“I understand that emotions are flying high and that some of our citizens are eager to call for a ceasefire. But we cannot authorise opposing demonstrations facing each other and thereby threatening public order. We must react when there are other objectives than merely demonstrating”, said President François Hollande speaking from a [trip in Niger](#).

According to Le Figaro, usually aware of what happens in the Interior Ministry, police intelligence forces have been working hard this week; 200 “threat-posing individuals” were wiretapped, “focusing particularly on [political activists from the far left, accused of throwing oil on the fire](#)” “There hasn’t been such a toxic atmosphere in the interior ministry since Guy Mollet! [postwar French Prime Minister]” says ironically Tarek Beniba (Front de Gauche).

As the number of available police is reduced in late July, the government decided to compromise by going against a large part of the French population. “Crimes against humanity are being perpetrated everyday in Gaza, and the French government’s main task is to stop people expressing their emotions!” regrets a scandalised Youssef Boussoumah.

The organisers of the march spent over two hours in the Préfecture de Police on Thursday. They are furious about the “intox” [false information] and “media manipulation” which they claim to be victims of since last Sunday’s clashes in Paris near the Isaac Abranavel synagogue, rue de la Roquette. They point the finger at the Jewish Defence League, a group whose existence has until now barely been raised by the political class.

## A slowly revised official version

Last Sunday [13 July], the march in support of Gaza was largely treated in the media as a collection of attacks on

synagogues. Following the [AFP dispatch](#) reporting “clashes” at the end of the march, Prime Minister Manuel Valls and SOS Racisme rapidly condemned the “anti-Semitic acts” and the “attempts to import” the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (read [here](#) and [here](#)). Roger Cukierman (President of the French Jews Representative Council (Crif) who was received during the week by [François Hollande](#) and then [Manuel Valls](#)), and Haïm Korsia (“grand” rabbi of France) both referred to an atmosphere of “Kristallnacht” (read [here](#) and [here](#)). They added to the two synagogues reported to be attacked another case in Aulnay-sous-Bois ([this one victim of a “Molotov cocktail”](#)).

After intense mobilisation on social networks and community blogs concerning the “JDLgate” [Jewish Defense League gate] (such as [Al-Kanz](#)), a few media outlets revised their stories so as to include the two versions of the clashes to which no journalist seems to have been an eye witness (including the AFP, as the TV programme [Arrêt sur Images](#) shows). The story of events on Sunday seems since then much more complicated. Videos showing clashes between JDL and pro-Palestinian activists, as well as screen shots from messages sent to social networks, disturb the original version portraying a deliberate attack on the synagogue by certain groups part of the march.

Many videos (including this one uploaded by [Citizenside](#)) emerging on the Internet have been “viewed” by organisers in the presence of police authorities while they visited the Préfecture on Thursday. Alain Pojolat (NPA) explains that “never during our interview did the police talk of ‘attack on the synagogue’ and that our questions were met by a number of ‘awkward silences’ concerning their policing of the rue de la Roquette.”

According to the organisers, “all along the march we cooperated with our referred police officer and everything went perfectly well”, quoting the example of when “the authorities asked us to put in place a policing service at the entrance of the rue de la Roquette, which we immediately did”. Michèle Sibony, from the French

Jewish Union for Peace (UJFP) which called to participate in Sunday's demo, [notes](#) a number of provocations during the procession. For example, at the corner of the rue du Pas de la Mule: "4 or 5 guys from the Jewish Defence League were high up on a bench, completely surrounded and protected by two rows of CRS [frontline police force], and were throwing insults and projectiles into the crowd and the march's policing services, while those responsible were trying to calm demonstrators: "Don't get angry, don't answer their provocations, that's all they're waiting for".

There is no doubt in their eyes: the JDL came to provoke those marching and managed to create incidents near a synagogue, without the police forces anticipating any of their actions ([see counter-reportage by iTele](#)).

The JDL is rarely sentenced, and even more rarely the object of banning measures. In spite of repeated cases of violence in France ([read here](#)), the JDL is today at the centre of discussions and surprised reactions concerning its immunity. The far right organisation is however banned in Israel ([after the massacre in the cave of the patriarchs by Baruch Goldstein in 1994](#) and in the US. It was branded a "protection service" by the grand rabbi Haïm Korsia in an interview for Libération. [For the Crif too](#), "young Jews present in front of the synagogue in the rue de la Roquette were only protecting people attending a meeting". Ten days ago, the JDL however took the initiative to "protect" by coming to disturb the end of one of the first gatherings in support of Gaza at the fountain of the Innocents ([see here](#)).

Many videos posted on YouTube, mostly instantaneous scenes without any information concerning their before and after, show JDL militants shouting: "Dirty Arab" and "Dirty Nigger" in front of CRS. For many pro-Palestinian activists, these are reinforcing feelings of bias and double standards. After watching images showing CRS protecting rather than policing JDL groups ("if you go on charging, we won't be able to help you anymore"), it is difficult for them not to believe in the police's affinity to such groups.

Neither do they understand the position of the Préfecture. How could it accept a route for a march walking past two synagogues, one of which had planned a "gathering in support of Israel" at the same time as the arrival of the march? Why wasn't a police barrage organised to filter the entrance to the rue de la Roquette so as to avoid threats to the synagogue? Especially considering that many messages calling for clashes were circulating on social networks before the march.

Following the debrief at the Préfecture de Police on Thursday, organisers explained that neither them nor the police were expecting the 15,000 demonstrators who attended that day. All "were surprised by the affluence" surpassing the "few hundreds" they had planned for. Protestors were also shocked to hear about the sentencing to 4 months in prison for a participant in Sunday's events accused of "rebellion" ([read the incredible report from the court in Libération here](#)). Organisers condemn the fact that arrests only targeted pro-Palestinian activists.

## Imagined "death to the Jews" chants?

Organisers swear they did not hear any march participant shout "death to the Jews" during the event. Crif President, Roger Cukierman, nevertheless asserted Sunday evening that this call to racial hatred had been heard. Tuesday, a journalist for Radio J and for LCP, Frederic Haziza, [was also using this chant to condemn](#) those he called "nazislamists", without specifying, however, that he had not heard the chant himself. On Wednesday, Cukierman again explains to i-Télé that these sentences were spoken through a "microphone" during the demo. This affirmation was later denied by the Crif website itself, in the text version of his interview...

Among the many videos of the march available online, it has not been possible to find evidence of this chant being used, either inside the procession or during the clashes near

the synagogue. In [this video by the collective Cheikh Yassine](#), one can see an Israeli flag burning, the word "Zionist" is often heard and many people are chanting "Hamass resistance, Jihad resistance, Palestine resistance, Citizen resistance!" But not "Death to the Jews". This of course does not mean that violent anti-Semitic slogans were not used on Sunday during the demonstration, but the lack of material evidence remains. In fact, the story now more often refers to their use on social networks rather than during the demonstration.

For many, the mere presence of the [French Jewish Union for Peace \(UJFP\)](#) confirms the impossibility of such misconduct. One of its activists, Emmeline Fagot made this point during a press conference for organisers: "Not only did I not hear any anti-Semitic chants, but we were very warmly received. This sort of demonstration is exactly what is required to fight against such amalgamations." Organisers also fail to understand why Bernard Cazeneuve is using his status of "Minister in charge of religious liberties" to justify the ban ([read here](#)). "We are not facing inter-community clashes, explains Alain Pojolat from the NPA, but an international political problem."

In any case, one organiser has confided that there is "a problem in the Parisian mobilisation". He regrets the overly careful attitude of certain organisations traditionally involved in supporting the Palestinian cause, which fear being associated with Islamist movements. "The 'Islamists', he says, are better with us than on their own, as this gives us a chance of channelling them". But he is as concerned with the influence of governmental decisions on the growing numbers of "Soralians" (supporters of Alain Soral, far right essay writer, close to Dieudonné).

During last Sunday's [13 July] demo, in spite of pictures of "quenelles" and model versions of rockets marked with bloody stars of David ([here](#)), organisers confirm that they have "always been extremely clear about our refusal to host the far right in our demonstrations", a point also expressed by most organisations participating in the event. "We even



spent the whole week smoothing out a call to assemble at the Bastille for Saturday, for which French flags, masks and smoke grenades were requested."

At the time of writing, the association France-Palestine (although active for gatherings outside of Paris) is retreating alongside parties of the left such as the greens (EELV) or the French communist party (PCF). If these parties have decided not to march, they nevertheless condemn the ban (read [here](#) and [here](#). On another note, and also without issuing a call to march, the Parti de Gauche (PG) has asked for a parliamentary commission to open an inquiry into the clashes in rue de la Roquette ([read here](#)). The line of the Socialist party, however, remains a mystery.

## Hollande's alignment with Israel and Netanyahu

Last week, French President Hollande completely took over Israel's narrative ([read our article](#)) in a communiqué which defended Israel's right to security without mentioning Palestinian victims and without calling for a ceasefire. The text was published, according to Le Monde, following pressure by Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet. This angered activists for the Palestinian cause but also many socialists and a large part of the Quai d'Orsay, the latter remaining attached to a "Gaullist-Mitterrandian" doctrine relying on UN resolutions for a two states solution, both with Jerusalem for capital and 1967 borders.

The next day, the Élysée attempted to make up for its gaffe by publishing a [second communication](#), while the Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian reasserted the official French position during the weekend.

Nonetheless, Hollande's first declaration was not a gaffe. Indeed, it confirms the Head of State's affinity

with the Israeli Government, even if this one is led by a right-far right coalition. As soon as Hollande made it to the Élysée, the French President [gave assurances](#) to Benjamin Netanyahu. A few months later, he hesitated right up to the end before voting yes to recognising the Palestinian State at the UN. In addition, he remains [reluctant to label goods made in the occupied territories](#), already put in place in many European countries.

Last November, while visiting Israel, François Hollande showed renewed signs of his connection to Netanyahu. The two men conversed on informal terms during their shared press conference, and they strongly agree to focus on the threats posed by the Iranian nuclear programme. During the state dinner, the French President gave a toast which provoked a polemic after being shown on French TV channel Canal Plus: "If I had been told that I was to come to Israel, and that on top of diplomacy, I would have to sing... I would have done it! If anything for the friendship between Benjamin and myself. In fact for Israel and France. (...) I would always find in myself a love song for Israel and its leaders."

As part of his speech at the Knesset, finally, the French President reiterated the French position defending a two states solution, but without following this with the 1967 border agreement nor the constantly deteriorating living conditions of Palestinians ([read our article here](#)). Two points which were however brought up by Nicolas Sarkozy during his presidency. Most notably, up until the last minute, Hollande's speech kept going back and forth, and a diplomatic source reveals it went through 30 different versions.

The main reasons for this position are François Hollande's personal feelings. Since his early days at the head of the socialist party, he has kept a reputation for being "pro-Israeli", if moderately so. His political formation, historically close to the Israeli Labour party, has always been divided about the conflict. In 2011, at the start of the

debate over the recognition of the Palestinian state at the UN, the leaders of the PS had [made their disagreements public](#). Amongst those against the vote was Manuel Valls, currently Prime Minister, as well as a number of personalities close to François Hollande.

Today, one can trace similar dividing lines in the executive branch of power. In the government, Valls but other Ministers such as Bernard Cazeneuve are extremely sensitive to the Israeli discourse over their right to defend their security and to the radical Islamist threats. The Interior Minister was one of the first to request a ban on demonstrations in solidarity with Gaza.

At the Élysée, a number of the President's diplomatic advisers share the same line. Others remain considered as "pro-Palestinian". MP Gwendal Rouillard, who is very close to Jean-Yves Le Drian, is also associated with various leaders of Fatah. The Quai d'Orsay is similarly divided and many diplomats are concerned about the [departure of regional experts](#) these last few months, as those perceived as pro-Palestinian have been replaced by members of the strategic affairs division known for its more neoconservative and pro-Israeli stance.

The PS is in an awkward position. Its only communiqué on the French position comes down to a [critique](#) of the "attack on the synagogue of Aulnay-sous-Bois", and recalls that "socialists will always be on the frontline against intolerance and violence". Regarding the situation in Gaza, only two well-balanced communications were put forward [at the start of the tensions](#), then another this Friday [18 July], after Tsahal's ground invasion in Gaza ([entitled "The PS calls out for peace"](#)). The only other action from the party regarding the conflict consists in [an encounter](#) in Paris between Jean-Christophe Cambadélis and his Israeli counterpart

*Translated into English by Ma'ã'a Pal and published on the blog [Lenin's Tomb](#) 25 July.*

# Letter to Jokowi

27 July 2014, by **Zely Ariane**

Brother, the presidential elections may be over, and you advise your supporters, people from all walks of life, to return to their everyday activities, to work as usual. Indeed, Brother, the past 2 months have drained the energies of everyone who has been involved in these elections, but for the majority of the people the problems of living have drained their energies much longer than that, in particular those people who are fighting misery every day. At this moment, not few among them, after throwing their support behind you, Brother, cannot yet return in peace. They still have to and continue to struggle because their employer has not yet paid out their holiday bonus; their work contract has been terminated before the end of the fasting month; the cement factory has not yet retreated from Rembang [local residents have resisted the factory and have been violently repressed for their protests, red.]; the Mobile Brigade has not yet been penalized for their violent repression of farmers and residents of the Jambe Bay in Karawang [the site of a land dispute between residents and a real estate development company, red.]; commodity prices continue to rise and the transport fares for returning home during the Eid holidays can hardly be afforded from the meagre holiday bonus; the Shiite refugees will not be spending Eid in their home country; and the Ahmadiyah community cannot perform the fasting month in peace. Then there are the activists and victims of human rights violations who are still demanding that human rights violators shall not happily go about their holidays free from justice, and shall not angrily demand a re-election. All of them, the people fighters, still continue to fight, Brother. They

cannot yet return to their work in peace.

Brother, politics should indeed be joyful. But not in a society where those with money and weapons are in control, where the justice system does not yet protect those without money and allows a free pass to those committing violence against women, forever asking patience and tolerance from those in difficulty while those with money are given concessions. There is no political joy in a situation like that. If there is, it is a hope, which has not yet become reality.

Brother, the politics of liberation that you mentioned last night has major, wonderful consequences if you have the courage to carry it through. It takes someone with an attitude that sides with the majority of the people who experience violation of their human right for a reasonable life and to obtain justice; someone that hears all protest, input, claims of history, of those who have long fought injustice and oppression; that speaks up loud and clearly not against us but against the World Bank, IMF, ADB, the heads of state of superpower countries, trans- and multinational corporations, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Indonesian Employers Association, as well as the state administration; that takes courageous action to control those in control of wealth and policy, and defends the ordinary worker. The politics of liberation is a means to fulfill the virtuous ideals of the constitution, and to add those ideals still lacking in the constitution. The mental revolution that you offer us, Brother, will not come to anything without a politics of liberation.

Brother, a struggle lies ahead. There

is no harm in doing this joyfully, but time does not allow us the luxury and much rest to feel it. Indonesian Unity will come after a just and civilized humanity. When all our humanity is being robbed by the power of the wealthy, by generals controlling weapons, by the richest corporations in the world, by global monetary institutions that are dictating our economy, then the true unity of Indonesia must still be fought for. We cannot unite with the corrupt elite, human rights violators, and criminal corporations. For too long have the people made sacrifices and lived in misery for them.

As you say yourself, Brother: let's roll up our sleeves and get to work, like us who have never rolled down our sleeves, or even had decent clothing, because we are always at work. Work harder, Brother, so do we. Draw clear lines, Brother, because those who have cast their vote on you do not want to live in peace and harmony with the corruptors and human rights criminals. Put them to jail immediately. If you do not yet have the courage, Brother, we will resist even harder.

If you know, Brother, that you find yourself in a crocodile nest, then you shall not lend your ear more towards the crocodiles. New channels of hearing have already been opened by your volunteers; a new footpath has already been opened by people who struggle around you and in the world. Now, Brother, it is time for you to choose: who will you hear and where will you step your feet?

We cannot, we will not, wait for too long.

A two feet greetings.



# Truths and counter-truths

26 July 2014, by **Murray Smith**

## Ukraine

Let us summarize this view of events. Victor Yanukovych was/is the legitimate president of Ukraine. The mass movement that toppled him is reduced to groups manipulated and funded (the figure of \$5 billion is cited) by the West. Moreover, these groups were and still are fascists, neo-Nazis, anti-Semites. The overthrow of Yanukovych was in fact a coup d'état. The present Ukrainian government, characterized as a fascist/Nazi junta, is unelected, illegitimate and the product of this coup d'état.

The Ukrainian armed forces are conducting in the east of the country a war against their own people. Russia is today, as it was 70 years ago, a bulwark against fascism. The goal of Russia is to fight fascism and promote a solution through negotiation, protecting the Russian-speaking populations who are supposed to be discriminated against.

This discourse is globally false. It serves only to destabilize and weaken the Ukrainian government in order to maximize Russia's influence on the country. As a weapon of the state, the discourse is of course flexible: it can be hardened or softened depending on the circumstances. It is necessary to dissect it in order to combat it.

## What does Moscow want?

Moscow proposes a dialogue of equals between the government and the insurgents in the East, with the prior cessation of the operations of the Ukrainian army. For its part, the Ukrainian government is ready to stop the operations provided that the rebels disarm and leave the buildings they are occupying. The difference between the two approaches is

considerable. Because every negotiation is conducted on the basis of a balance of forces, and the balance of forces will not be the same in both cases.

Moscow wants a federal Ukraine. But words like federal, federalism, federalization can mean different things. Proponents of increased centralization of the European Union call themselves federalists. And countries that are called federal cover quite different realities - the United States, Germany, Russia, Yugoslavia, the USSR ... In the Ukrainian case, what the Russian government means is a very extensive form of federalization/confederalization, with the right of regions to conduct their own economic policy and to conclude international agreements. It wants in fact to dismember the country so as to be able to carve out a sphere of influence in the East, and at the same time weaken the central government.

We will consider:

- The Russian version of events;
- The reality of the insurgents in the East;
- Russia's claim to be a bulwark against fascism;
- Moscow's links with the far right in Europe.

## Neither putsch nor coup d'état

The present government of Kiev is described as "non-elected" and illegitimate. So let us see how it was chosen. Who elects a government? Not the citizens directly, but the Parliament, which is elected by the citizens. After the flight of Yanukovych, the Ukrainian Parliament appointed an interim president and a government. This parliament was elected in 2012, so it is as "legitimate" as the ousted president, who was elected in 2010. Pending new

elections, Parliament is the only legitimate authority, as it was elected by universal suffrage at the national level.

The Parliament elected in 2012 had 450 members, 33 of whom were absent on the day of the appointment of the government, on February 27; a number of them were probably on the run with Yanukovych. The proposal to appoint Arseniy Yatsenyuk as Prime Minister received 371 votes, the composition of the government 331 and the destitution of Yanukovych 328. Neither putsch nor coup d'état, therefore, and the vote did not take place under the threat of armed men, contrary to what happened the following day in Crimea. However, the composition of the government had been submitted the day before to approval by the general assembly on the Maidan. The same assembly that had rejected on the evening of February 21 the miserable "compromise" negotiated and imposed by the Western Foreign Ministers, which would have left Yanukovych in power until December; it was this rejection which precipitated the flight of the president the following night.

To take note of these facts obviously does not imply any endorsement of the present government or its policies. As an activist of the Ukrainian left, Zakhar Popovytch, wrote, "We have never supported this government. We can put up with it temporarily, but not support it" [16]. In this article there is a list of far-right parties in Europe. Of these, thirteen are considered "committed" to Moscow (including, apart from those already mentioned, Golden Dawn in Greece, the British BNP and the German NDP), four as "open" (including Wilders' PVV in the Netherlands), two as "neutral" and three as "hostile". These are the Finnish, Latvian and Romanian parties.

## **“Ethnically Russian”**

The support of the far right in Europe to Putin is in fact in no way surprising. First, on the ideological level, what there is not to like? There is the cult of the nation, and not just any nation: it is clearly an ethnic nationalism, based on blood ties. In Russian, there are two words for “Russian”: “Rossiyane”, which means Russian citizen or subject, “Russkiye” which means “ethnically Russian.” One can for example be a citizen of the Russian Federation, but not “Russkiye” and get slaughtered in Chechnya or lynched by a racist mob in Moscow. One can be resident of Ukraine, Latvia or Kazakhstan, and even a citizen of those countries, and be considered “Russkiye”, therefore qualify to be “protected” by Putin, or rather instrumentalised for his geopolitical projects. The Hungarian neo-Nazi party Jobbik particularly appreciates this vision of the nation.

Because in Hungary too, the Orban government willingly hands out passports to Hungarians from neighbouring countries, who are now able to vote in Hungary. Behind this generosity looms the shadow of the Greater Hungary that existed before 1920. Moreover, Jobbik says clearly that Crimea is Russian and Carpatho-Ukraine is Hungarian, as it was before 1920 and from 1939 to 1945.

Jobbik openly defends the idea of Greater Hungary, and what Jobbik says out loud, Orban thinks quietly. In fact, not so quietly as that. He now

demands that Ukraine allows dual citizenship and grants “community rights” and the “right to self-government” to the Hungarian minority in Ukraine. Predictably, this “Putin doctrine” is already beginning to be emulated. It is a real can of worms that Putin has opened.

## **“The family, the nation, the divine”**

To the ethnic conception of the nation can be added the erection of the authority of the state into a supreme value, the notion of an imposed national ideology, the repression of any dissent, control of the media, homophobic laws, the cult of the authoritarian leader, the right of strong countries to dominate weaker ones and a generally reactionary ideology which extols Christian values and the central role of the Orthodox Church,. This is reminiscent of the “Work, Family, Fatherland” of the Vichy regime. Or as Aymeric Chauprade puts it, “the family, the nation, the divine”. The Russian regime and its friends on the far right in Europe share many of these ideas. They could even share their indignation after Conchita Wurst’s victory in the Eurovision Song Contest.

In addition to ideology, there is a geopolitical aspect. In general, the European far right is anti-American and anti-EU. They need an alternative other than national autarky. The notion of a Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis is not exclusive to the far right, but it is very present there. Marine Le Pen in

particular calls for it.

We obviously cannot exclude that there is financial support from Russia, without there being evidence of it so far. But the Hungarian authorities have begun an investigation into the financing of Jobbik. They have also requested the lifting of the parliamentary immunity of Jobbik MEP Béla Kovács, suspected of spying for Russia.

On the Russian side, the benefits are obvious. Contrary to his affirmed antifascism, Putin has absolutely no problem working with far-right parties from the moment that they are ready to defend his policy. This is what they do, very actively for some of them, on the Ukrainian question and, more widely, in defence of his Eurasian Union project. And as we know, the far right now has a bigger bloc in the European Parliament. This is good news for Putin.

### **Postscript**

This article was written at the end of May and was first published in French on the site of the electronic journal *Goosch* ([www.goosch.lu](http://www.goosch.lu)), which is associated with the Luxembourg anti-capitalist party déi Lénk. I have made only a few stylistic changes to the English version. Much has happened in the last two months. In particular, the scale of Russian aid to the militias in terms of arms and fighters is clearly much greater than was obvious at the time. The number of civilian deaths has also unfortunately increased as the conflict has dragged on. None of that seems to me to change the basic premises of the article. MS

## **Monsters and a Critique of Everyday Neoliberalism**

**26 July 2014, by Andrew Sernatinger and Tessa Echeverria, David McNally**

This second part will concentrate on McNally's book, *Monsters of the Market*, asking why the monstrous has captured popular culture. This will lead us into a critique of everyday life under neoliberal capitalism, discussing how the experience of waged labor has created an affinity for monster stories, particularly zombies, vampires, and Frankenstein's monster. The second part ends with McNally's thoughts on building a renewed socialism-from-below. AS

**Tessa Echeverria: It's of course important to understand how capitalism works and how the current crisis came to be in order to use that information to mobilize our social movements in a forward trajectory and not just see it as crazy people instituting this plan that's not good for the economy. I was hoping we could transition into talking about Monsters of the Market. In the introduction, you talk about how people say capitalism is a monstrous system and that's what we're up against, but we need to recognize the real monstrosities that capitalism has brought about and the way it forces us to live under the system every day. I was wondering if you could go into why you wrote the book—tell us why you thought this was an important book and what was your process?**

David McNally: It's interesting because we've been starting, I think appropriately, from the economic side of the equation in terms of the most basic thing that people talk about in their lives: paying the bills, paying the rent, paying the mortgage, can they find a few more hours of work and so on. But there's a danger in that, and I say that as somebody who writes a lot in the area of political economy. There's a danger that we don't pay attention to so many other dimensions of experience in a capitalist society. Here I think the image of monsters and monstrosity is really important.

There is something very unsettling about what goes on in modern society. We've created a society in which the mass of humankind is dispossessed of land and any other means of making a living except to go out onto the market and sell your capacity to work to an

employer. That experience is one that I don't think we reflect on much, and I think it's a problem. It has become so normalized. We treat it as such a natural fact of life that we often forget that you can't sell your ability to work, your creative energy, your talents and so on, without physically turning yourself over as well.

On one level we all know this: whether you punch a time clock at a factory or you log on to a computer as soon as you get to work to indicate that you're present the fact is that there is a rigid, orchestrated routine for most of us governing hours of work: when we get breaks, what kind of communication we can and cannot have with our coworkers, with management, never mind with our loved ones and so on. Literally we surrender control over our body and our wills for a significant part of our waking lives.

Of course we always try to steal a little bit of that back: sneak off and email someone or send a text message, or whatever. But the truth is that most of our time we are doing something that we don't think of as living. We think that our lives begin when we leave work. That's why we get all those expressions, like referring to work as "dead time," for instance.

What a remarkable expression to think of a part of our lives as if we are living dead! And of course the living dead is the classic image of the zombie. My own view is that one of the things that's happened under neoliberalism, that the power of employers over workers has become so significantly greater as a result of the defeat of unions, the reorganization of work on shop floors and the basic restructuring of labor that's gone on, that we are in fact more dominated than ever before. We are generally more sped up and stressed in our work than ever before.

The idea of being a living dead, and very often feeling "zombie-fied," as we leave work and all we're good for is opening up a beer, having a bite to eat and watching some mind-deadening stuff on our laptops or what have you, all of that I think is part of the social-cultural reality of what it feels like day after day when we're working. Your life energies are stolen from you. They're taken; they're appropriated by

somebody else who treats you simply as a means to an end, which is the profitability of their firm in whatever good or service it is that they're producing.

I think that within our culture there is a very deep hostility, but worse often after a very deep depression, about that reality. Part of what's happening with the proliferation of zombie images in our culture is self-recognition in the zombie. There's recognition that a lot of the times we shuffle around like the slow moving creatures: awkward, kind of ugly, not looking very uplifting. In some ways the zombie captures a part of our lives that we don't like to talk about. One of the things that I was trying to do in *Monsters of the Market* was to really reflect on the ways in which our popular culture is saturated with these images.

Having said that I think that too often in the Hollywood and the North American genre of the zombie we've lost what was once at the heart of it, literally, when the zombie image originated in Haiti. We've lost the image of the zombie laborer. That's what the Haitian image was about, living dead laborers for others. For a whole variety of historical reasons, Hollywood has fallen in love and the mass media in North America has fallen in love with the zombie consumer. You see it even in the idea of zombies as flesh eaters. That's very new imagery, which probably goes back to George E. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, which was one of the most powerful critical uses of the zombie as flesh eater. Interestingly, Romero didn't think they were zombies! They only got called that later. That idea that something monstrous where our life energy is captured and we are turned into something less than fully human is I think part of the story.

The other side of it, and the one that is very interesting, and one I think some of the best treatments of zombies sometimes get at, is the idea that the zombies might wake up. This is a central part of the Haitian story of the zombie, and the Haitian image is sometimes picked up in sub-Saharan Africa as well. Zombies can awaken.

Zombies most of the time lack memory, they lack identity and subjectivity, but under certain conditions they awake. This is the image of the zombie rebellion. The carnival of the living dead, who all of a sudden maraud through the streets, scaring polite society and showing them in some ways that those who've been downtrodden, those who've been zombie-fied and monsterized by this system actually have a monstrous power. Once they get it together, they can use that power in carnivals of revolt, insurrection, and rebellion. There's one really nice film from the 1990s by Wes Craven called *The People Under the Stairs* that really gets that image of the zombie revolt.

There's also a story of zombies coming up against big business, the bankers. The real zombies are those in life who have no purpose in life except to exploit others for ever swelling amounts of money in bank accounts somewhere. The zombie image can therefore be turned around or inverted to one in which we are criticizing zombie capitalism as a system on life support by governments, pumping trillions of dollars into keeping a certain kind of necrophiliac capitalism going and sucking our life energies to do it. The *Monsters of the Market* is how we all experience being zombie-fied in some ways when we become workers in a capitalist society and live at least part of our lives as the living dead. There are these other sides, the potentially radical usages of the zombie images where zombies awaken, recognize who they are, they come to a capacity for action in their society against those who are a different kind of zombie, another living dead.

**Andrew Sernatinger: Everyone I've talked to that's seen or heard about this book has already been fascinated by it, and I think that's a remarkable success. Here we just had this fantastic conversation about *Global Slump*, which I think is probably one of the best books about the crisis that I've read, but for a lot of people looking at that sort of political economy is intimidating. But then here you have something that seems almost fun and subversive in this way that everybody can relate to. Everyone**

**has a story or something they want to talk about with the mythology of zombies and vampires and things like that. It's a brilliant delivery on that.**

It's really interesting that you talk about the different ways that the zombie myth has been deployed because we're so used to thinking of the zombie as something you don't want to be or that you try to escape from. You're right that there is this kind of small current about the zombie that becomes awakened and transcends being a zombie. You brought up a Wes Craven movie, but even George Romero in *Land of the Dead* has that same zombie rebellion sequence. People have a discomfort about it, but then you can only take the zombie idea so far before it has to have a resolution. The rebellion motif is one of the places people have taken it to.

To some extent, the fascination with the zombie myth has changed with the arrival of this crisis and slump. The perception isn't about alienation as much as it is about survival, it seems. Here you are against a wave of people and you're competing for your spot. Literally, the alternative is death. That seems to be something that's really gripped the popular imagination.

DM: Yes. I basically wrote the book before the explosion of what I would call the "Zombie Apocalypse" idiom that you're describing there and I think it's very powerful and I'll come back to that in a moment.

On your first point, I think that one of the things that we need to be very careful about on the left is that we are able to talk about the quality of every day experience. Sometimes as huge as issues like employment, wages and so on are, the danger is that those of us on the socialist left may seem to project the idea that all we want is a society with full employment and better pay. Of course I want full employment and better pay, but that can be appropriated to the mythology of perfect full employment capitalism. We wouldn't be addressing alienated labor, the degradation of work, the fabric of our daily lives, and the exhaustion of people by mundane, boring, incredibly dreary and tedious

labor processes without any diversity or creativity to them.

One of the nice things about coming into this discussions about monsters and zombies and vampires is its one of the ways in which we do get to talk about what daily life experience is like being at work or searching for work in our society. It forces us to think if we really want to imagine a better society then full employment and better wages aren't enough! We've got to be talking about the very qualitative features of everyday life, the fabric of social existence, the question of human creativity, of dis-alienating labor, of finding entirely different rhythms of work and life.

Those are the kinds of discussions—particularly in a period where we've been retreating all the time—that we're not even having in a serious way in left circles. And yet in my experience if you really want to get across to people the idea of a socialist alternative to how our society operates, one of the things that is most attractive and captivating is the idea that we're talking about changing the very rhythms, the sensuous fabric of everyday life and creativity. That's one of the things that I've enjoyed about some of the conversations that the book has opened up.

I think you're entirely right on your point about the zombie apocalypse. The zombie was there as this incredibly adaptable image that when the crisis hit there was the idea that we could in fact be moving into a stage of capitalism where—forget all these stories about technological progress, which are the old fantasies of ever expanding capitalism—we could be in a meat grinder of a system! It could just chew things up as it rots; as cities rot; as disease spreads; as hordes of homeless people simply move about the land looking for a place to live.

All of those are just extrapolations of some of the trends of this crisis. The zombie image was highly resonant with that perception. It can also then get married to a certain kind of deeply conservative survivalism. I would suggest that a lot of that is going on in the very popular series *The Walking Dead*. If you go through the roles

played by actors of color in that series it seems to me that you see a certain kind of white survivalism that runs through.

It's important therefore to think about how we discuss and analyze why these kinds of images have such powers of attraction: there is something that people really do identify with in the collapse of civilization image, there is a sense that the growth phase of capitalism seems to have disappeared. That's important to connect with. But at the same time, if collective responses designed to remake the world in radically new ways just don't seem to be out there then the survivalist mode can kick in. Here I think that Frederick Jameson's pithy little comment tells us an enormous amount: "It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism." I think that's what we're seeing in these zombie apocalypse stories and scenarios: civilization is collapsing, but all kinds of capitalist modes of survival in the most elemental and brutal sense start to fill the void; you just beat your competitors into the ground. It's a scenario in which collective solutions to remaking the world tend to disappear. That's why I think the zombie rebellion idiom becomes really important in a political and historical moment like this. That's a subversive side.

There are these little events, the "Zombie Marches," that you get in a number of cities, that I think are really interesting because zombie marches increasingly have all these financial and capitalist symbolism about them. At the last zombie march in Toronto, I would say half of the zombie marchers had dollar bills pasted all over them and that sort of thing. That way of turning the imagery and talking about capitalism as the living dead system, the idea of zombies who are actually breaking through it, is something that is very difficult to sustain right now but has really huge creative possibilities. I find people responding to some of the better zombie rebellion type images really interesting in that regard.

**AS: One of the things that we like about this discussion about why people are taken with zombies is**

**because it is in a way difficult to grasp everything that's been happening. But I think you made the point in Monsters that the popular imagination can explain things in capitalism sometimes only through the fantastical. When things like crises happen, sometimes only the monstrous can really describe it. And that is something that Marx gets to also.**

The zombie wasn't really around when Marx was writing Capital, but Capital is full of all kinds of allusions to vampires and monsters, how there's a life-force sucking energy in capitalism. On the one hand I think that it's really interesting that you have to engage with this mythology and that it seems like even Marx was very aware of deploying popular mythology or creating a literary element to his analysis of capitalism. Also the vampire is the counterpart to the zombie in nearly the opposite way.

DM: There's no question about it. One of the things I really enjoyed about working on the book was exploring and recuperating what Marx was doing with those monster images. People often talk about Marx's political economy writings as so difficult and intimidating, and of course Capital is a big fat book and the opening chapters are just full of new concepts, dizzyingly so.

One of the things that we sometimes forget is that Marx was struggling to find a language with which he could express what was going on in capitalism. The existing theoretical languages (philosophy, political economy) that he had really weren't fully serviceable. He tried to use them to the extent that he could, but once he gets to the chapters on the working day and what it feels like to be in a factory, or his chapter on machinery and what that is like, Marx has got the whole Charlie Chaplin Modern Times-thing right there! The worker becomes a cog in the machinery; the machinery drives the worker.

But how does he express it? Chaplin can do it in a filmic way, with these incredibly powerful visual images, but Marx has to generate the imagery through the word. I find it just fascinating the way that he returns

over and over to the vampire as an image: the vampire who will not let go until every bit of blood has been sucked dry from the worker. He also returns to the image of giants. He's got the factory and machinery as Cyclops at one point. Production is just so overwhelming in the massiveness of the operation that the worker is reduced to mere insignificance in relationship to it.

I really find it interesting the way in which he's struggling to bring together all these narrative strategies: yes he's using some philosophy; he's using some political economy; but Shakespeare is in there! Faust is in there! Vampires are in there! When he hits the limits of some of the existing theoretical discourse of his day, he goes for the only thing that he can imagine can convey what he's trying to describe, which is a whole series of literary images. I think we need to appreciate that aspect of Marx.

In all the ways we think about rebuilding a radical left culture today, we need to put a much greater emphasis on the literary and the cultural as ways of communicating or expressing what it is we're trying to say in our society. There's a danger that we become kind of monotonal: we get a certain left discourse that was honed in a particular historical period and we imagine that that discourse and its vocabulary has magical effects because once upon a time the masses mobilized behind those images and that rhetoric. Well, if they're still effective and there are ways that they still speak to people, that's fine. But we need to be honest about the cultural transformations that go on in our society and I think it's important to find the resources within popular culture, in film and literature and so on, that allow us to communicate these sorts of things. That's why I loved your example from Romero's Land of the Dead, where there are fascinating scenes where zombies are learning to use weapons! It's not true that they can't learn, that they're uneducable. There's a learning process happening. There is the de-zombification happening, or what I was calling the "zombie awakening." I find it's really interesting the kind of discussions you can get into about our society by using those kinds of

cultural reference points as well as the political economy that we absolutely need, as well as the historical understanding. That's what I mean by not being monotonal: we can draw upon a lot of different languages, visual and imagistic systems to communicate what is going on in our society and how it could be different.

**TE: I wanted to go into vampires a little more. We've talked about how zombies have changed in their cultural significance and how they've fit into a various stories as capitalism has changed. Talking about vampires the same way, vampires of old were Dracula or Nosferatu; they were terrifying, evil creatures that destroyed every life force around them. Nowadays vampires are majestic and something to aspire to be, instead of something to fear. I was wondering if you could go into this development a bit.**

DM: If we go back to Bram Stoker's original Dracula story, it's an aristocratic image to begin with. It's deeply parasitic and frightening: these vampires do you damage! What we've got today is this fascinating romanticization of the vampire. One of my hunches is that, of course, in all kinds of ways the vampire image has lots of different sexual overtones expressed in different cultural artifacts. It particularly speaks to young people discovering their sexuality, and that's part of what's there.

But I find the analyses that only get that far to be a little superficial. I say that because it seems to me that part of the resurgence of the romanticized vampire actually is a kind of anti-alienation theme. It's speaking to a society in which people feel incredibly atomized, incredibly dissociated from each other; the sense that social connection is at an all-time low. Communities and their resources have been so eroded in the neoliberal era.

The idea of isolated, self-sufficiency and everything that's really unsettling and disquieting about that is also running through that image. At the most powerful level, the vampire is an image of incredible closeness. Literally bodies become

interconnected in the most intimate ways, and I think that's picked up again in the mobilization of vampire tropes as love stories, stories of closeness, passion, and belonging; the idea of being infinitely desired and inseparable from others. Sure, we can see various gendered tropes at work there that we'd want to be aware of and critical towards, but just as I was saying before we need to see what it is about the zombie apocalypse image that really is speaking to people's fears, so I think we need to see the romantic vampire as speaking to the really frightening sense of aloneness that is so pervasive in our society. We need to understand that the desire for an escape from other isolation is something that good politics and social movements of the left ought to be able to speak to.

There's a cultural barometer, a kind of reading of the social temperature of our times that we need to do there. All of this is speaking to the huge amount of experience of everyday life. Very often, saying in public something like, "My profound sense of aloneness is really frightening and it scares me"â€"that's not something that people do very readily! Those films or novels that capture this particular construction of the vampire I think give people permission to recognize those feelings and then have a fantasy-based projection of a world where they would be desired, where they would belong, they would have togetherness and communion with others. Seeing that side of it, I find it to be really significant.

**AS: One of the things I like about these discussions is that there is no singular "correct" answer when you're analyzing culture. There's a lot of room for thinking about all of the different things at work here and trying to pin down what people are really concerned about.**

Part of the reason why we brought this up is because we have these conversations from time to time where, for example, there are progressive institutions and all of their social funding has dried up. Now they're talking about the need for patrons, essentially, where some wealthy donor will hold up their progressive ideal. I almost see that in

the new vampire: the vampire is the image of power, and if someone needs to be lifted out of their situation they can get this vampire-patron, who's a "good vampire" that helps them out. To me, it doesn't have to take away from what you were saying before, I think it speaks to a sense that the way to get out of working class life is that you're lifted out externally.

DM: I think you're absolutely right. It connects back to something that is the flipside of the aristocrat image. The aristocrat is a dangerous individual in the Bram Stoker story, but on the other hand the aristocrat is not capitalist. Aristocrats operate according to a different social and cultural code, and one of the characteristics of that codeâ€"and I think you've nailed it in that descriptionâ€"is noblesse oblige. You have patrons, people upon whom you confer some of your wealth and beneficence. I think the fantasy for that, as you say the idea of someone who will rescue us from the fears, the dreariness of a life of wage labor is also probably part of that story in wages that deserve to be thought more about. So yeah, I think that makes a lot of sense.

**TE: I just love the story of Frankenstein and you mention it in Monsters of the Market. I was hoping you could go into the significance of that quintessential monster story. We talked earlier about how with wage labor, you're selling your body and giving up so much of yourselfâ€"talk about how that plays out in the story of Frankenstein.**

DM: It's such a wonderful story and it's a shame that people often know the story largely through later adaptations through film and elsewhere and in some ways don't get to appreciate what an interesting novel Mary Shelley wrote. In the early nineteenth century, Shelley created that whole resonant set of images of the creature and of Dr. Victor Frankenstein and all the interactions that the two have with each other.

The context is really interesting. Among other things, Mary Shelley is the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, the writer of *The Vindication of the*



Rights of Woman, one of the original modern feminist texts of the late eighteenth century. At the time of the French Revolution and its slogan of the rights of man, she wrote on the question of the rights of women. Then Shelley marries the great radical left poet, Percy Shelley. In conversation with others, Mary Shelley is exposed regularly to discussions around the so-called "Luddite Riots" in Britain in the period 1813-1820.

These rioters, machine wreckers, were basically poor workers across the small industrial towns of Britain who, when they were going to be displaced by various pieces of machinery for spinning and weaving, would show up at night under cover of darkness and burn down the mills or smash the machines. They were being hugely persecuted: they were being arrested and hanged and so on for their crimes against property. The circle of friends that Mary Shelley ran in was opposed to this treatment of poorer people who were trying to preserve their livelihoods.

What she does is incredibly interesting. She has her isolated scientist, Victor Frankenstein, decide he wants to create a living creature. How does he do it? He raids graveyards. He goes and gets pieces of human body parts and he melds them together with animal body parts. This was a constant theme for the working class in London at the time, because corpses were regularly raided from graveyards. Really only the corpses of the poor because the rich were buying these heavy lead vaults that couldn't be blasted open. The bodies of the poor were just being stolen from graveyards and sold for medical or anatomical experiments. This spoke to a working class fear that even in death your body could be chopped up and turned into a bunch of saleable commodities. Bad enough in life that you'd have to sell your body to survive, but then to have it chopped up in death was the ultimate indignity.

Mary Shelley is picking up on that to begin with. But also, she's imaging the proletariat, imaging the working class, in this notion of grabbing different bits and pieces of random, disparate individuals and cobbling them altogether. Well, that's what happens

when you go to the factory! That's what happens when you go to the mill or the mine. Bunches of people who have had no previous human contact with one another all of a sudden are thrown together as one creature, one entity: the workforce. She's imaging all of that and depicting all of it in the construction of this creature, the working class, by this one individual, Dr. Frankenstein.

I find all of that just incredibly powerful in the way in which it's depicting both anxiety about grave robbing that workers have—their bodily integrity was regularly being assaulted, and here was the worst possible imaginable result that they even get you as you lay in your grave—and also this idea of being thrown together and becoming one monstrous mass, an enormous creature capable of feats beyond what any one individual could do. Of course, that's what we are like when we're all assembled together in a workplace: we can do things that no one of us could do on our own, in terms of the amount of Big Macs we can produce or the amount of automobiles we can produce.

Contrary to the way in which Hollywood later turns the creature into a slow shuffling zombie without the capacity to speak, particularly in the Boris Karloff movies, that's not there in Shelley. What's so fascinating is that once the creature rebels and heads out on his own, he moves through the world quickly, but more than that: he learns to read! There is this amazing set of scenes where the creature sits outside the cottage of a poor family, one of whose young men has married what I can only describe as an Arab feminist. This is a literate, Arab woman and she reads to him the most radical, revolutionary tract of the day by a guy named Volney called *The Ruins*. It's about how humanity began in Africa, and it's still considered by Africanists to be one of the greatest anti-racist texts ever written. So you've got an anti-racist theme, a feminist theme, and a working class theme all running through this novel. This is how the creature learns to speak. He learns by hearing an Arab feminist read the greatest revolutionary tract perhaps of the late 1790s or early 1800s.

Then of course, we know that it has to culminate in a great conflict between the inventor and the creature, the monster that the inventor has created. We get an ending that leaves everything hanging: we don't really know where things lie. We know that Victor Frankenstein has died and the monster has disappeared. The creature has won a victory, it wanted Frankenstein's death for the murders he committed, but at the same time it's unclear whether the creature has killed himself or if he will live to rise another day.

This to me is one of the most powerful literary imaginings of how capitalism brings into being a monstrous creature that could be its own undoing. What I really am attracted to is that this is not a zombie. The creature learns to read and what it craves throughout the whole story is communion and association; it wants a partner. Victor Frankenstein's crime is that the creature wanted a partner. Frankenstein started to create it, and then he killed the female companion he was making for the creature out of the fear that a new race of creatures would be bred. Well, if that isn't the capitalist class's great fear of the multiplying masses of the proletariat, of the working classes, I don't know what is.

There's so much happening here. This is in my mind the original monster story about capitalism, but also the one that leaves open the idea that this monstrous creature of the working class might just be capable of educating itself; might just be capable of putting an end to this insane, alienating society; it might just be capable of starting something different. But that's left as a question mark. We're dangling and there are no easy answers. In some ways of course that is very attractive to me, because if the left ought to have learned anything in the nearly 200 years since Mary Shelley wrote that text, it's that there are no easy answers. Nevertheless, there are huge and explosive tensions in this society that she just captures so wonderfully.

**AS: That's a good place to finish with a conversation about the left. You're talking about, in the literary sense, an antagonism**

**within capitalism but at the same time an uncertainty about capitalism being overcome. We wanted to talk to you a little bit about your thoughts on the left right now, because as far as I'm aware you've written a couple of essays but it's something you haven't commented very much on recently. Maybe you want to start by telling us a little bit about your history on the left?**

DM: I was in university in the United States and I focused quite a lot on anti-racist and anti-war activism, particularly with the Committee to Free Angela Davis. When I later returned to Toronto for family reasons, there was a kind of radical leftwing that had just emerged in the social democratic party in Canada, the New Democrats. That left wing split off from the New Democratic Party and tried to launch a new kind of radical left party, and I joined it in my teens because it was the one place I could see a left group that actually had really significant working class membership: nurses, steelworkers, teachers, autoworkers and so on. That particular group, known ironically as The Waffle, self-destructed in the mid-1970s and a handful of us had gotten attracted to the "Socialism From Below" politics of the International Socialist groupings at the time. We found that much of what they were trying to do, particularly the rank-and-file labor organizing but also a rank-and-file organizing that was very open in terms of the feminist and anti-racist dimensions of that work; we found that very attractive.

I became a founding member of what became the International Socialist group here in Canada. I put a lot of years into trying to do activism in that guise. For a whole variety of reasons, that International Socialist current began, I think, to politically degenerate in the later 1970s: it became increasingly bureaucratic, increasingly fundamentalist in the sense of "we have the truth" and we don't need to ask any questions, and increasingly intolerant to feminism and anti-racism. This eventually, in the early 1990s, drove a bunch of us out and into the political wilderness. We then were involved in creating the New Socialist Group.

That organization continues today, and what really distinguishes it is that it begins from the premise that first we have lived through a period of the decomposition of the radical left of a previous era. That historic left in virtually all of its forms is effectively over: the social democratic, the Communist Parties, but also the far left versions. That history is basically done, not in the sense that we don't need to learn from it, but in the sense that I don't believe those organizations can be the basis for the next new left. Therefore, we need to be thinking about a longer-term process of recomposing the left. That is going to mean a process of socialist renewal in which the socialism that we develop is completely transformed by and shot through with the lessons of theory and practice from the queer movements, the socialist feminists, the most important strands of anti-racist and anti-colonial politics (in Canada of course this means of indigenous liberation politics), and also of eco-socialism.

Yes, there are very important inheritances from the past. As you can tell, Marx remains central to me for how I think about the world in which we live, but it's got to be a renewed, extended, developed socialism for the twenty-first century that is going to have a lot of new and unique characteristics that I think are informed by radical participatory democracy, more so than any left we have seen up until now. That's a big challenge to think about recomposing and renewing the left in those terms and breaking from all the vanguardism of little grouplets that think they are the center of a next left composition. They're not. If they're healthy, even semi-healthy, they'll have a role to play but it's going to be something very different.

Of course, it all presupposes a return of large-scale social movements: movements that can produce tens of thousands and sometimes even hundreds of thousands of people in the streets. As we get that, just like the last new left, people are going to look for different kinds of socialist traditions and approaches that can allow them not to have to reinvent the wheel. So the work of small circles and collectives of activists today who

are trying to think about what resources can we help preserve and develop for a new left will be really very important. That was true of the last new left, for good and for ill. Having a sense of what ailed the last left, and in particular the small group party-building projects, is important. They can produce fanatical energy, but they all hit a wall because that model has inherent limits. It doesn't matter if the group grew to a few thousand, as some of them got in France or Britain, because none of them proved capable of moving beyond that and most of them have disintegrated in one way or another since then.

That's a very daunting process, but it's nevertheless something that is our responsibility today. Those like me, and I think of myself as a 1970s radical, I think we have a responsibility to try to preserve and develop a kind of living tradition which has some roots in what we think has been best about past lefts but also a very high allergy to those sectarianized tendencies that did great damage to the last left. Yes, we need organization, that's absolutely true, but the organizational forms will be different, they will (I hope) be more open, democratic, participatory and thoroughly feminist, pro-queer, and anti-racist in ways in which our spaces weren't in the last left. It's a big task, but the truth of the matter is we're talking about what small groups, circles, collectives, networks and so on can do now just by way of trying to provide some resources for the next left. Those resources will get inherited, edited, deleted, transformed, and re-worked and so on by real social forces and real social movements.

But it is important that democratic, from-below socialist politics be out there and be available, because one of the problems is that neoliberalism also destroys historical memory. The sense that we have certain continuities that are precious to us and that go back to the great past struggles that people have waged, these are a part of our history, they're a part of our heritage and we need to make them part of our memory, but in that open-ended way that we know we're reworking the left and not trying to mimic and repeat as

if that could be something good. That's where I see the kind of task that I'm involved with, with New Socialist in Toronto, but also just staying in touch with all the currents

and people I can. We need one another, we need dialog, and we need ways of exchanging experiences and reflecting together. If history has taught us anything, of course mass struggles will emerge again but we

can never predict how. When they do, we could have kept resources that will be absolutely precious to the next left.

[New Politics](#)

# Mobilize for NYC Environmental Actions, Sept. 19-23

25 July 2014, by **Michael Gasser**

The UN has played a vital role in funding the science that, through the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, establishes beyond reasonable doubt the catastrophic consequences of climate change and its human origins. With respect to concrete action to halt climate change, however, the UN's track record looks more like its rate of success at "peacekeeping". Given the scale of the problem, the various agreements that have been reached, in particular the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the Copenhagen Accord (2009), have modest goals and at best would fail to even stabilize greenhouse gas emissions at their current level. Worse yet, the agreements are either non-binding or have not been ratified by key players (for example, the United States in the case of the Kyoto Protocol). The problem of course is that agreements with any teeth are routinely sabotaged by the powerful countries.

Given this litany of failure and a growing left tradition of disrupting the business-as-usual mentality of international gatherings of the powerful, UN climate change conferences have often been the scene for protests of various sorts, including walkouts by environmental NGOs (for example, in Warsaw, 2013), marches and direct actions (most notably in Copenhagen, 2010), and alternative summits (Copenhagen, 2010 and later that year in Cochabamba, Bolivia).

This tradition will continue in New York City this September; in fact some

are predicting the largest gathering of climate activists in history. A coalition of hundreds of organizations, spearheaded by 350.org, is planning a People's Climate March for Sunday, September 21. The organizers call for activists "to demand ... a world with an economy that works for people and the planet; a world safe from the ravages of climate change; a world with good jobs, clean air and water, and healthy communities." It's encouraging that "good jobs" is part of the call, and significantly, 36 labor organizations (at last count) have signed on to the event. Solidarity and System Change Not Climate Change are also on the list of endorsers.

In his June article in Rolling Stone calling on people to participate in the Climate March, 350.org leader Bill McKibben notably calls for "changing the system that's powering our destruction". But the "system" he's talking about changing is not capitalism itself. As important as the march will be, it will not provide a space for the articulation of radical, anti-capitalist perspectives on the environmental crisis. To complement the march and provide such a space, System Change not Climate Change and the Global Climate Convergence coalition are partnering to organize the NYC Climate Convergence: People, Planet, and Peace over Profit, to take place on the evening of Friday, September 19 and all day Saturday, September 20. The organizers are clear where they stand on the UN framework: "As the corporate captured UN proposes false solutions

like carbon trading and sets meager greenhouse reduction targets, we will show the world what tackling global warming from the bottom up looks like." They are also clear on what the real problem is: "an economic system that exploits people and the planet for profit". Solidarity was one of the first organizations to endorse the Climate Convergence.

The organizers have invited speakers for the opening and closing plenaries that represent the environmental justice movement in North America as well as in the Global South. The Program Committee of the Convergence is now accepting proposals for workshops and teach-ins for the conference, and the Ecosocialist Working Group of Solidarity is considering a range of topics for submissions.

The Climate March and Climate Convergence in New York City in September offer an unprecedented opportunity for North American ecosocialists to participate in and build the broad coalition that will be required to forestall the disastrous effects of climate change and environmental degradation, to create links with grassroots climate justice organizations in the North and South, and to convince receptive members of the mainstream environmental movement that our common enemy is the capitalist system itself. Solidarity members are urged to spread the word about the events in NYC, to attend the Climate Convergence on September 19 and 20, and to join the

# Capitalism, Global Slump & the New Normal

25 July 2014, by **Andrew Sernatinger and Tessa Echeverria, David McNally**

Part two [17] will concentrate on Monsters of the Market, asking why the monstrous has captured popular culture. This will lead us into a critique of everyday life under neoliberal capitalism, discussing how the experience of waged labor has created an affinity for monster stories, particularly zombies, vampires, and Frankenstein's Monster. The second part ends with McNally's thoughts on building a renewed socialism-from-below.â€"AS

**Tessa Echeverria: Let's start by talking about the history of the crisis that we're in now, neoliberalism and how capitalist states responded to the meltdown that began around 2007. Could you give us a quick rundown of how the crisis came to be and how that relates to the recent history of capitalism?**

David McNally: I see this as the fourth great slump in the history of global capitalism. The last quarter century or so of the nineteenth century was the first slump, the original "Great Depression" where the term was first used. It began in 1893 and ran for about 25 years. Then, of course, for most of us raised on 20th century history, there was the Depression of the 1930s, which was actually the second of the great slumps. That was followed by the slump in which I came into political activism, the crisis of the 1970s running more or less from 1971 to 1982. And then neoliberalism and the way it reorganized and restructured work, corporate power and so on, managed to engineer another wave of capitalist expansion, which really was exhausted by about 2007 when we entered the fourth of these great slumps. We're in year

seven or so of this slump, with, I would argue, no end in sight.

That's just to get us situated historically. Now of course, every great slump has its unique historical features. They show all kinds of different characteristics having to do with the ways in which capitalism has evolved and in our case particularly how it has globalized, much more so than in any time in its history. There is also the specific role of the financial sector, and the very esoteric financial kinds of transactions that have been a feature of the neoliberal era of the last thirty years or so.

You put those two features together, globalization and financialization, and it allows us to make sense of why it was that a crisis that began in the U.S. real estate sector, probably in 2006/early 2007, then became a full-fledged financial crisis. That has to do with all of these mortgage-based securities that financial institutions were trading back and forth and selling to investors and speculators globally. It explains why the crisis so quickly globalized, because banks in Spain and banks in Scotland and so on were all holding these mortgage-based assets. I say all of that to give us a wider historical perspective: this is the fourth of these great slumps and they tend to last anywhere from slightly over a decade, as the one of the 1970s and early 1980s did, up to a quarter of a century, twenty-five years or so, as the first one in the nineteenth century. But also to point out that each of these has unique features.

That doesn't mean that there are not some basic consistencies at work. I would argue that consistently in any economy geared for competition between private owners for sales and

for profit you are going to get manic waves of investment where capitalists all try and purchase the latest state of the art technologies that they think will give them an edge in producing the same good or service more quickly. And so computers were used for all of these "just-in-time" production and delivery systems and the like. As long as capitalists are doing that and also trying to corner their markets, at some point they inevitably build more state-of-the-art steel mills and auto factories, build more shopping malls and apartment blocks, build more housing and aircraft than anybody out there can profitably use in a capitalist society. Those crises, which I think can be correctly described as overinvestment and over-accumulation crises, then take some time to get resolved.

The irony is that the way in which the world central banks responsible to governments intervened to try and stop the financial crisis is I believe stretching out the whole crisis that we're looking at. When banks the world over started to collapse, central bankers, usually at the direction of governments, did what they did not do in the 1930s: in the 1930s they were so taken with their free market ideology that they thought they had to let the banks go down and let the market mechanism automatically correct itself. What they discovered was they had no idea where the bottom was! 1930 was worse than 1929, 1931 was worse again, all the way to 1933 at which point some governments, particularly the United States, began to try to counter the effects of the crisis by using government spending and banking policies.

But they learned that that huge collapse from 1929 to 1933 was catastrophic, both economically for capitalism but also socially and politically. This time, governments intervened massively. They did it basically by saying to the banks, "Give us all the toxic assets that you own, give us all the junk, the mortgage-backed securities that are worth nothing; the collateralized debt obligations that are worth ten cents on the dollar of what you paid. You give us that stuff, and we will give you back central bank money, the best stuff out there for investing, buying, and selling; the best paper that can be used for any financial interaction. We'll give you dollar bills for junk."

They threw the first few trillion into the system and that didn't solve the crisis. They threw some trillions more, and by my reckoning at least \$28 or \$29 trillion dollars got thrown into the banking system and a little bit into fiscal stimulus programs of the Bush-Obama variety in the United States. Now to give you an idea of what that means, because I suspect you, like me, have never seen \$28 or \$29 trillion, that's more than the value of all the goods and services that the U.S. economy produces in two years. In other words, the equivalent of taking more than two times the U.S. gross domestic product and giving it to the banks. Big surprise: that stopped the banking crisis!

As a result, that part of the crisis is over. Literally, there was no limit: they would just keep bailing out until the banks were stabilized. The problem is that they not only massively injected money into the banks, but they also effectively made the rate of borrowing money free! They made interest rates effectively zero for banks and prime corporate borrowers. What that has meant ironically is that the businesses that would otherwise have collapsed were either bailed out, think General Motors or Chrysler (which were directly bailed out by governments in the United States and Canada), or they were tacitly bailed out by being able to go to the bank and borrow with nearly zero interest attached. Essentially that free money has kept all sorts of businesses afloat.

I say it's ironic because in order for

capitalism to get back on its feet it needs to get rid of all the excess capital or excess businesses that are out there; all the over-accumulated, over-invested state of affairs. They do that by corporate bankruptcies.

In the 1970s and 1980s in the United States that is what happened: all kinds of steel corporations went out of business for instance. But we haven't seen that because money has been effectively free. So we're in the fourth great slump in the history of world capitalism, a massive intervention by central banks stopped a banking crisis, but by making money effectively free they've also blocked capitalism's own perverse mechanism for getting back on its feet. You bankrupt the least efficient, least productive, least profitable companies, and you let the most efficient, most productive and most profitable take over their markets so that they can now start to expand and invest again.

You have a bailed out capitalism where the banks aren't collapsing, but where there's effectively something close to zero new investment by businesses. There's this long, high unemployment, very low growth rates and so on. Capitalism needs a wave of bankruptcies to really get back to vigorous growth, but central bankers are worried that in an environment of high unemployment it would have politically damaging effects to see a lot of businesses go under. And maybe some of those companies, if they go under and can't pay back their loans, will start yet another banking crisis. That's why I've been saying since early on in the crisis that I expect this to be one of those longer kinds of crises, easily ten years, perhaps significantly longer than that.

**TE: I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about how this is more of a global slump than a short-term or localized "crisis."**

DM: Let me start with the first part of that on how global this crisis has been, because of course early on the claim was, "It's just a U.S. crisis." And when Europe was tanking within a matter of months, they said, "It's just a crisis in the Global North, the South is vigorous. China, Brazil, and India are going to keep the whole system

ticking over." And of course in the last while, it's been clear that there are big problems in those parts of the Global South as well.

This doesn't detract from the fact that there are uneven rhythms to a global crisis—a crisis does in fact have to start somewhere. But if it were only a local crisis, then you would expect just an individual economy, or a couple of regionally connected economies, to go through a crisis. We've had crises like that: in 1997 there was the so-called "East Asian Crisis," which didn't go global. It stayed within one region of the global system.

But this was different because a long wave of neoliberal economic expansion from about 1982 to 2007 was winding down due to over-accumulation. In that context, the whole system is vulnerable. Really, everybody is on the edge because it's just not productive to keep investing when you've got already a global capacity to produce 200 million tons of steel more than anybody needs, and that's where the world is at the moment.

Once the crisis hit in the United States, it wasn't long before it was a European crisis. Of course we now know that for a lot of interesting reasons Southern Europe was particularly vulnerable: Greece, Portugal, and Spain really stand out in that regard; Italy becomes part of that story. But not just Southern Europe, contrary to some claims: Ireland has been hit very hard and all the indications are that France is going to continue to just limp along. Those Southern European countries have unemployment rates around 50 percent for youth and about 25 percent of the workforce as a whole. That's Great-Depression-style unemployment rates that most of Europe is experiencing right now.

Right at the start of the crisis, China introduced a much bigger stimulus program than did the combined stimulus programs of Bush and Obama in the United States. China massively invested in airports, highways, bridges, hydroelectric stations, and so on as a stimulus response to the crisis, particularly in 2008 and 2009. They were really worried about losing their



export markets. That did help stabilize the system for a period of time. Therefore the stories that China, India, and Brazil would be the new growth centers were plausible.

Today, Brazil has been really sliding down for two years and all of a sudden when you read the business pages you see this incredible worry about China. They're now talking about all the bad loans that the Chinese put out as part of their stimulus programs five years ago accumulating to a point where they don't know if the central government can contain that crisis. The Chinese growth rate has already dropped by about a third, or 40 percent.

But it's happened unevenly and on a stretched out timeframe, so it's easy for people to lose the interconnections across this process and understand the way in which it is one large global slump, which I've referred to on some occasions as a mutating slump. It may begin in one specific sector, say real estate, and then move into the banking system, and then when the banking system is able to contain it, it moves into an unemployment crisis. Its epicenter may move geographically: if the U.S. banks are bailed out, then the pressure may fall on the European banks; if China does a massive stimulus, they may postpone the day of reckoning, and so on.

What we're really seeing is that while the temporal rhythm is stretched out over many years, each time the crisis in one sector or one region sneaks back into other sectors and other regions. China's turning down will now be very bad for all of those economies which export a lot to China, particularly for the huge building boom they've been in. All of those economies can expect to see a slowdown, which will be blamed on China's slowdown rather than recognizing that China's slowdown is just part of this wider pattern of a mutating slump that is changing form all the time as its center moves. It's as if you have an illness that moves from one part of the body to another: it's still the same organic illness at work, but it's manifesting in different parts of the ailing organism. That's really what we're seeing and the organism in question here is the global economy.

Different parts of it become the centers of pain or centers of distress in what is really one integrated global process.

**TE: Following that, a lot of people over the past few years have talked about austerity versus neoliberalism, and I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the distinctions between those forces and how that plays out in this slump?**

DM: I do think that this is the key to understanding why profits look so robust in the United States. The picture for corporate profits seems to defy the description I've given you. The understanding of austerity allows us to grasp some of the key political dimensions of this ongoing crisis.

Starting with the picture for business, when they recognized that it was not going to be possible to bail out the banks with just a few trillion dollars, the amount of debt governments around the world were going to take on was massive. Very early on, central bankers sent the message to governments that they would have to make somebody pay for the amount of debt governments were taking on to bail out the banks. The obvious candidate was the working class and poor people as a whole, who would in the first instance feel the effects of really dramatic cuts to social spending: education, healthcare, pensions, social assistance, and the like.

There the campaign has been orchestrated. We had the dubious distinction in Toronto in 2010 of having the G8 and the G20 meetings, the group of the eight largest and twenty largest global economies. They send their finance ministers, prime ministers, presidents, and so on to gather and strategize together. Prior to those meetings in 2010, there had been a phrase kicked around in the business press: "A decade of austerity." That was the rhetoric. It was going to take a decade to turn around the results of the massive government spending to bail out the banks.

Then all of a sudden, in and around the G8 and G20 meetings in the early

summer of 2010, the phrase "Age of austerity" appeared; the "decade" had been shelved. What they realized was that the scale of their intervention had been so massive, \$28-\$29 trillion, that there was no way they were going to pay it down and restore the kind of budgets they wanted within ten years.

But I think there was more to it than that. It was the scale of the debt, but also they recognized the political opportunity: they realized that if movements of mass austerity resistance were not going to topple governments, and that was an open question at first—it certainly looked like a possibility in the days of the Arab Spring, when governments fell in Tunisia and in Egypt—that if by and large they were not going to be swept aside by mass social protest, then they thought, "We can actually use this." They could use the crisis long term to roll back the kind of gains that have been historically acquired going back to the 1940s or 1930s by labor and social movements.

Governments beginning in the so-called western, industrialized countries in the late 1930s made concessions to working class and social movements around unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, socialized medicine (the United States being an important exception), public education, and, critically, higher education spending—all of that could be rolled back. You could privatize sections of it; you could move towards user-pay, so that even at public universities students pay more and more of the actual cost of attendance; you could starve the publicly-funded school system so that those of the middle class and above flee towards charter schools and private schools; you could undermine the so-called safety net in such a way that you could also systematically drive down living standards.

That has unfortunately worked. The majority of people in most of the Global North are poorer today than when the crisis broke in 2008. Their standards of living have declined and profits have soared. This is one of those cases where a really basic correlation works: wages down, profits up. That is largely what has driven the

profit recovery.

Here we have the paradox that corporations have been significantly restored to health thanks to austerity, but they're not investing. The amount of cash that corporations are sitting on in the United States is around \$2 trillion and in Europe it's around €2 trillion. These are historic highs! They're raking it in again, but because of the over-accumulation I described earlier there's not a lot of incentive to invest.

We have a capitalism that is profitable with high unemployment. It's a unique combination of capitalist austerity that is working in terms of profits but it is not restoring economic growth to any degree that would really resolve the jobless crisis.

Unfortunately, the power elite has discovered that they can enforce austerity to a level I think many of them did not imagine pre-crisis. I don't think they thought they could put the boot in this hard without mass social upheaval. They're just going to keep testing limits. So what if class sizes in Detroit will be sixty? So what if Latvia has fired one third of all of its teachers? So what if pensions have been chopped by 70 percent in Greece? This is profitable for business! This is great neoliberal austerity for governments.

As long as they expect that they can keep doing it I think they will. As a result we get the phenomenon that commentators are talking about all the time where we have some of the most extreme degrees of social inequality coexisting with an essentially stagnant global capitalism with high unemployment rates. That is the new normal. I think it will stay the new normal until there is a shift in the balance of social forces by way of the kind of upsurge of mass working class and social protest that we saw, say, in the United States in the second half of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

**Andrew Sernatinger: Could you talk about why having this understanding of the global political economy isn't just something that's abstract and "out there," but is really important for people in terms of movement work**

**and organizing?**

DM: I think this sort of analysis has a lot of value in terms of how progressive/left movements orient themselves and begin to think strategically in the long-term. Unfortunately, one of the things we learned during the neoliberal era from the early 1980s on, where gains won by feminist, civil rights, antiracist, labor, queer, antiwar movements, and so on were rolled back, is a kind of politics of defensiveness. I have so many buttons and t-shirts that begin with the word "stop". "Stop these cutbacks!" "Stop these attacks!"

That mode is of course important. We need to try and resist all the attacks we can, stop cuts, and so on. But the danger for left/progressive movements is that we get into a purely reactive mode where we're simply engaged in damage limitation. We're not having the discussions, doing the strategic thinking, and raising the organizational or political questions that follow about where are we in world history? Do we need to think in terms of the way the rulers are thinking? They're thinking of "decades" and "ages"—that's their rhetoric. If we want to do more than damage limitation and we want to recover a politics of social transformation, to get back to a genuinely radical, transformative, liberatory political and social agenda, then I do think we need to situate ourselves.

The other thing I think we need to do is actually challenge the idea that austerity is simply being done by a bunch of crazy right-wingers, and what they're doing is bad for quote "the economy" because it suppresses consumer demand by making us poorer. As though all we have to do is persuade those in power and corporate leaders that what they're doing isn't good for themselves. That's the classic Keynesian argument, all we need to do is restore effective demand and everyone will benefit.

The problem with that perspective is that austerity is working for business and pro-business governments. Their interest isn't something called "the economy." Their interest is the corporate bottom-line and austerity is

working for that. It's true: austerity isn't producing jobs. But that requires us to reckon with the fact that the purpose of a capitalist economy is not to create employment. That's not why businesses invest. It's not why bankers give loans. They don't do it to create jobs. They do it to help borrowers and investors maximize their profits.

The outgrowth of the view that austerity is some deluded, deranged right-wing agenda is that if only we could get good Democrats in office in the United States, or good New Democrats in office in Canada, then somehow all these attacks would go away. I'm sorry. I just don't believe it. I think that the analysis that I've been describing says to us that this is in capital's interest. This is in the interest of corporate power and of the bankers in our society and they're going to persist with it.

If you want to stop it, you can't simply try to do this educational work saying it's bad for the economy. You actually have to raise the question that radical working class and social movements of the 1930s did, which is how do we shift the balance of social forces in our society? How do we build a counter-power from below that is actually capable of winning victories against the agenda and begins to build an actual social force that is capable of articulating and shaping an alternative? Believe me, I don't think that can be done over night. But I do think that this is the kind of strategic understanding that follows from the analysis that I'm making. As you say, it's not just an academic analysis.

When I talk in these terms, I don't think I'm being just hopelessly abstractly utopian. If we look at the 1930s in the United States, what we see is that really the first half of the Great Depression was just a carnival for capital, it was austerity on steroids. They hammered labor into the ground. It took really significant grassroots organizing among different lines, particularly the great tactic of the sit-down strike where rather than going out you occupy the place of work. That was a transformative moment in the history of the left, when a radically different strategic and political conception of how you do labor organizing and activism began

to sink in. Once the first few victories were won it became infectious. As a result, it always remains possible to push that kind of direction forward.

Having said that, it can't happen unless you soberly ask yourself where are we in history, what is the nature of this economy, why everywhere are governments that can get away with austerity doing it, and what does that mean strategically for developing a ten year and twenty year vision for radical politics and organizing.

**AS: The reason I ask this question in part is because a few years ago Richard Seymour posed a question [18], saying, "Why are we not able to explain this crisis?" Part of the problem with popularizing a movement was that austerity had become very naturalized, and the crisis was seen as something that just happened to people, not something that was systematic or designed. Asking that question, I was hoping to get to how we create a common sense based off of what you're describing?**

DM: I think that is a key part of it, because you're right of course that the neoliberal offensive was not just an offensive against labor and social movements. It was those things, but it was also an ideological and cultural

transformation. It created a primacy for the market in our own minds and it created a kind of fatalism about the economy. It's the idea that the economy is like a weather system and it has these patterns entirely outside of our control. When it starts to rain, you simply go for your umbrella. These economic policies have deep-rooted dynamics in the nature of the capitalist system but the way in which they're translated into social and political policy is not nature-given. There's nothing meteorological about it. It overwhelmingly has to do with balances of social forces and what our rulers can or cannot get away with.

There's no question that what you say is correct: there is a key task of popular education. Having said that, I also think that there is out there a deep and abiding cynicism about Wall Street, banks, and corporate power. We saw that not only reflected in the Occupy movement, whose message I think really did have a popular resonance that surprised many commentators, but also I think we're even seeing it increasingly in popular culture at the moment. Even in mainstream film and television!

The irony is that it's not as simple as there being a deep ideological conviction about the market and about market-based ideas and solutions, but I think there is a historic collapse of any sense of alternatives, which I

suspect is what you were getting and as was Richard Seymour. There is that sense out there that we have got this historical moment where the sense that this direction could be reversed is at an incredible low point. The cumulative effect of social retreat and social defeat over the last thirty years has really pulverized the radical imagination and the sense of possibility that was so different when I came into the left in the 1970s. That left had a sense that it had won major battles around civil rights; was winning major battles around gender rights; it could feel that it was having an effect on public opinion over the war in Vietnam. Taking the streets, occupying state legislative buildings, occupying workplaces and striking, occupying schools that are going to close—the sense that that can actually win is intoxicating, but feeling that it makes no difference, that it doesn't matter what you do, is massively deflating.

We need to figure out ways of rebuilding the radical imagination practically, by way of identifying those small victories that are tangible and can build a new sense of self-confidence. That's part of the story for the great shift that happened in the United States in the second half of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

[New Politics](#)

## Four months after our establishment

### 24 July 2014

Comrades

We therefore defended and defend our people in the areas in which we are present, regardless of their religious and ethnic affiliation. We particularly condemn in this regard the reactionary attacks on Kurdish villages and towns and sectarian attacks. Just as we also did not bow in front the advance of the reactionary counter-revolution forces, whether in front the advance of the regime forces

on one hand or of Daesh forces and its sister organisations on the other hand. Despite the harsh conditions in which we live and the decline of the remarkable popular and the revolutionary movement, we are, however, working and struggling among our popular masses who are still struggling for their emancipation. The flames of the popular revolution are still burning and are still not extinguished. On the opposite we bet

on the advancement and progress of a larger and of a nearby popular movement.

Comrades

We have learned the experience that the revolutions taking place in the countries of the region have a mutual influence on each other, and we have seen that our popular revolution in this process requires regional and international solidarity and

cooperation between the revolutionary forces, just as we have stated before that the liberation of Palestine, the Golan and all the occupied Arab territories are at the heart of the objectives and tasks of the current revolutions. The Zionist State allied to the authoritarian and corrupt Arab leaders are the sworn enemy of the liberation of the peoples of our countries.

We, within Syrian popular revolution that is facing the Assad authoritarian regime, which is killing its own people

as it has killed the Palestinian people in Syria and Lebanon. express our full solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people in the face of this new aggression of the Zionist killing and destructing machine. This Zionist aggression, which enjoys, as usual, the miserable support and shameful collaboration of the Arab regimes. is the reasons we once more confirm the fact and truth that the Liberation of Palestine also passes through the liberation of Damascus and of all the other Arab capitals throughout the

whole region.

Our struggle is common, and our enemies are complicit partners

Viva the struggle of the Palestinian people. Viva an eternal free Palestine

Viva the Syrian popular revolution

We are always with the struggle of the masses for their freedom and emancipation

*July 20, 2014*

## Presidential Election: Tensions rise as Indonesia awaits official election result

24 July 2014, by **Max Lane**

Later that day, Prabowo Subianto made a similar declaration based on "quick counts" that put him in front and other data that he claimed he had from the regions.

Quick count tallies are based on a sample of between 2,000 and 4,000 voting booths out of more than 400,000 across the country. The Indonesian Election Commission (KPU) will announce the result of its official count on 22 July.

Since 9 July, there has been no let-up in the number of aggressive statements by Prabowo and his supporters claiming victory. On 11 July, his spokesperson announced that party scrutineers had concluded the count at all polling booths and confirmed a Prabowo win. The former general continues to claim that the quick counts that did not favour him are mistaken or are the result of corruption and bias. Labour union supporters of Prabowo are planning a rally, prior to the official election result being announced, in Jakarta's largest stadium to "celebrate his victory".

There are fears, both among Widodo supporters and among democratic and

human rights organisations, that this ongoing campaign is aimed at sowing uncertainty and buying time while the Prabowo machine finds ways to pressure and bribe election commission personnel to increase his vote. He has huge financial resources and in some regions the support of incumbent provincial and district governments. President Yudhoyono also has come out in support - raising fears that the police, army and intelligence services may find ways to assist.

Based on the quick count estimates that have given the win to Widodo, Prabowo would need to "gain" at least 4 million votes to give him 50-52 percent.

Whoever the KPU announces as the loser on 22 July is likely to appeal to the Constitutional Court either to overturn the result or order fresh elections.

### The old in the new

The election campaign has confirmed the widespread alienation of the population from the existing political elites and parties. The support for

both candidates was won primarily by rhetoric and tactics that tried to portray them as new and different.

Widodo's slogan is "Simple, honest and close to the people". His folksy style, which contrasts with the 40-year tradition of elitist arrogance by politicians, and the fact that he became a politician after the fall of Suharto, have been key for him.

Prabowo has railed against poverty, foreign domination of the economy, elite corruption and the degeneracy of politicians. On one hand he states that he would make former dictator general Suharto a national hero, indicating his authoritarian political tastes. On the other, he adopts some of the presentational techniques of former leftist president Sukarno.

The people have divided almost equally over whom they trust, although, in my view, there is a slight but clear majority in support of Widodo.

There have been reports of intimidatory mobilisations of military posts at the village level in some areas in support of Prabowo. There also has been a ruthless smear campaign

against Widodo, which questions his Muslim credentials and hints that he is Chinese.

## The left

No other forces have been able to intervene with a progressive response to the general alienation. The emerging trade union movement has been drawn into the Widodo versus Prabowo polarisation, sowing confusion and division among the ranks of even the more active unions.

The several small left wing organisations have taken different positions. Some have advocated a boycott of the elections on the grounds that both candidates are equally bad. The People's Liberation Party (PPR), acting with democratic rights groups, played a leading role in organising anti-militarist actions and propaganda, primarily aimed at Prabowo. Prior to the vote its

spokesperson, Surya Anta, called on people not to vote for Prabowo.

The Working People's Party (PRP), the NGO "left" and most of the social democratic intelligentsia and progressive artists actively campaigned for Widodo. They provided the core of volunteers outside of formal party structures. In practice these were divided between those who concentrated on selling Widodo as a reformer, and those who avoided propagating such illusions and emphasised the threat Prabowo poses to democracy.

Widodo has given an undertaking to president Yudhoyono to stop victory mobilisations. However, Widodo is calling on his supporters to keep the closest possible eye on the KPU's counting of votes from the district to national level. It is likely that Prabowo will continue to mobilise. Prabowo has substantial militias, including some in the unions, if he wants to cause

trouble on the streets.

Megawati's PDIP could also call on its core of traditional supporters to mobilise, at least in some regions. They have hardly been used so far in the campaign.

Tensions are heightening as 22 July approaches. There remains a threat to the democratic space won in 1998. Even if Widodo is declared winner, and even if Prabowo accepts the results, that threat will remain. Prabowo's coalition retains a majority of the seats in parliament. If Prabowo is declared winner, the threat will immediately be greater. Progressive people in Australia should prepare for active solidarity with all those defending the democratic space won since the overthrow of the Suharto dictatorship.

14 July 2014

[Red Flag](#)

# Legitimate support of the Palestinians has no common ground with anti-semitism

23 July 2014, by **NPA - Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste**

The NPA condemns, as it has always done, all anti-Semitic acts and ideas, whether they come from the far right Front National, people like Soral and Dieudonné, or any other dangerous and irresponsible people who would make a mockery of legitimate solidarity with the Palestinians.

Neither the NPA, nor the movement in solidarity with the Palestinian people, confuse the Jewish population, here or in Israel, believers and non-believers, with the defence of the colonial policy of the Israeli state. This is in contrast to those who claim that all Jews in France support Israel, such as Conseil

Représentatif des Institutions juives de France (Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions) or the Ligue de Défense Juive (Jewish Defence League) which is calling for pro-Israel demonstrations in front of synagogues. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a religious one, it's an entirely political one.

Given the bloody balance sheet of recent days (with more than 500 Palestinians killed, mostly civilians and large numbers of women and children) it is urgent that we demand that the Israeli state end its land

offensive and bombardment of the Gaza Strip. We also demand that it end the blockade of Gaza; respect United Nations resolutions and the rights of the Palestinian people.

The NPA calls on all political, trade union and community organisations to support these demands by demonstrating next Wednesday at 6.30pm at Denfert-Rochereau and to join other such events across the whole of France.

Montreuil, 21/07/2014

[Translation by Socialist Resistance](#)



# The downing of MH17 Boeing 777: Between “Yes” and “No” - Can Putin back down?

23 July 2014, by **Ilya Budraitskis**

Over the past several months, as a constant stream of people and weapons passed across the gaping hole of the Russo-Ukrainian border, the nerve centre of the diplomatic struggle between Russia and the West was the question of whether Russia had a sway over the rebels or whether this was an intra-Ukrainian conflict.

By giving a different answer to the question, each side could then propose a dramatically different solution: Russia needed a consensus around the idea that Ukraine was undergoing a “civil war,” which could be only ended through the dialogue of the outside parties, who would agree to a division of Ukraine into spheres of influence.

The U.S., on the other hand, insisted that the conflict needs to be seen precisely as a form of undeclared but very real intervention by Russia on Ukrainian territory, that is, a variation of good old military operations, of which U.S. itself has a long and established record. A direct consequence of such a conclusion was the not-so-successful strategy of “containing” Russia, the gradual imposition of sanctions and other activities, which could force Putin to “end the war,” which he could end as easily as he began it. Compromises in this struggle to define what is taking place would mean a direct path to defeat for each of the sides.

By the logic of this cynical and cruel diplomatic game, if the tragedy of Boeing 777 had not taken place it would have been necessary to invent it. Evidence of the role of the rebels from the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR), which will probably be found very soon by the so called “international community”, will probably lead to its designation as a “terrorist organization.” Justifications for the most brutal and destructive measures against “international terrorism” were, as we know, one of trademarks of Putin’s rule. The downing of MH17 will now confront him with the question over support for the DNR, which he can only answer in the affirmative or the negative (in reality, a “yes” should no longer be possible). The point of this message, addressed to a single person, is most clearly expressed in the editorial of yesterday’s issue of The New York Times: “Vladimir Putin can stop this war.”

Can Putin do this in reality? Does he have such a direct control not only over the rebel leaders but also over the regular rank-and-filers? Such questions have now been put in brackets, possibly forever. The space for maneuver Russian foreign policy enjoyed came to a sudden end somewhere over the Donbass region, at a height of 10,000 m.

The question that has remained is as

follows: can Putin back down? It is well known that many, both in Russia and abroad, doubt the strength of the reigning regime’s “home front.” Liberals console themselves with the thought that the mirages of propaganda will fade away once the population comes to feel the direct consequences of economic sanctions. Nationalists and some former leftists prophesy a Moscow “anti-Maidan,” that is, a patriotic mobilization, which may turn on Putin if he “betrays Donbass.”

It seems that both underrate the scope of the destructive work conducted since this spring by the Russian state over Russian society. “The New Putin Majority,” cheerfully announced by Kremlin sociologists, seems in the immediate future ready to accept any actions proposed by its rulers. A combination between abstract aggression and fear before the ghosts of instability—these are the impulses governing the majority of our countrymen, who are ready to accept anything as long as the images of war and destruction from their TV screens do not move into their own apartments. It will take a lot of time and patience before the feelings of dignity, the ability for independent thinking, and most importantly, the capacity to fight for their own rights come back to Russia.

[LeftEast](#) [19]

## Chinese ambitions - An imperialism in formation

22 July 2014, by **Pierre Rousset**

The new "emerging powers" are often grouped together under the acronym BRICS; namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. [20]

These states are in fact trying to form a bloc in the international arena, organizing "summits"; the Fifth of them took place in Durban (South Africa) in 2013 and the next one is due to take place shortly in Fortaleza (Brazil). They have announced the creation of an international development bank under their control, an alternative to the World Bank. They are engaged in competition with the traditional imperialisms for access to resources, especially on the African continent. The results of this venture have proved for the moment to be mediocre, but there remains the temptation to formulate a "common critical analysis" of the BRICS in order, in particular, to strengthen the capacity of popular "South-South resistance and solidarity", counterposing the "brics-from-below" to the "BRICS-from-above" [23]. Although for the "more radical proponents" supporters of the BRICSs bloc, there is an "anti-imperialist potential", there are "far greater dangers": to see these countries playing "a 'sub-imperialist' role' in contributing to neoliberal regime maintenance". Bond's analysis is nuanced and he takes into account the different situations in the various countries concerned, even raising the possibility of seeing some of them being part of "inter-imperialist" conflicts, as Russia is attempting to do in Ukraine/Crimea. But he still comes back to the use of the concept of sub-imperialism for all of the components of the "bloc" - China included.

As noted by Bond, the notion of sub-imperialist countries has a long history: it was invoked by Ruy Mauro Marini in 1965 to describe the role of the Brazilian dictatorship in the Western Hemisphere and "then repeatedly applied during the 1970s." This is where things become problematic. "Sub-imperialisms" really do exist today, but the conditions for

the emergence of Chinese power are so different from the countries we were talking about then that it is doubtful whether the same term enables us to understand this specificity.

The present Chinese regime has certainly helped to extend (massively!) The sphere of international accumulation of capital; it has been integrated into globalization and economic financialisation; it has legitimized the dominant order by joining the World Trade Organization (WTO), which is opposed by all progressive social movements; it has provided transnational companies with a labour force that has no rights and can be exploited at will (the migrants from the interior of the country) - all things that are part of the role traditionally assigned to sub-imperialisms. In doing so, China could have once again become a dominated country like the others, under the yoke of the traditional imperialist powers. This possibility was perceptible in the early 2000s, but the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the new Chinese bureaucratic capitalism decided otherwise. They had the ability to do so thanks to the legacy of the Maoist revolution: the relationships of dependency with regard to imperialism had been broken, which is not true of any other member of the BRICS except Russia - and unlike the latter, the ruling party has been able to control continuously the process of capitalist transition, profoundly transforming the class structure of the country. [24]

This is not to say that the other countries that are more or less characterized as sub-imperialism (from Brazil to Saudi Arabia, from South Africa to Israel) are only pawns in the hands of Washington. But the logic within which the international policy of Beijing is situated is qualitatively different. When Brazil sent troops to Haiti and India sent troops to Sri Lanka, they were playing the role of regional gendarmes of the world order. In East Asia, China has

engaged in a standoff with Japan - which is not at all the same thing - and by doing so it is launching a challenge to the United States: already a permanent member of the UN Security Council and an official possessor of nuclear weapons, it is postulating the status of a first-rank power.

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## Economy and Strategy

To serve its new ambitions, Beijing has an economic base that is much superior to that of Russia, which depends more exclusively on its military capabilities. China's place in the global economy has grown in a rapid and impressive fashion. How far will this rising power go? For Bruno Jetin, in this area many uncertainties remain [25].

In absolute terms, China has had since 2010 the second biggest gross domestic product (GDP) in the world, behind the United States, but ahead of Japan and Germany. If current trends continue China could on this level take first place in a few years. [26] The important thing here is not the accuracy of the calculations or the prognostics, but the trend.

China also represents the second biggest market, one of the principal lenders and the biggest "workshop" in the world; a position that competition from other Asian countries with very low labour costs cannot easily threaten because the country also possesses a number of non-salary advantages. It is more difficult to measure the extent to which the Chinese economy is moving up market in the field of technological innovation. Because, once again, of its position of independence with regard to the traditional imperialisms, the regime can negotiate significant transfers of technology, but it has not yet made a leap forward in terms of radical indigenous innovations [27]. The CCP leadership has fixed for itself

the objective of overcoming this limit in the future (including through the acquisition of Western companies).

Affirming its weight on a new terrain, China has just for the first time intervened as an "international gendarme" of competition, blocking a multinational rapprochement (in this case European) in which none of its own businesses was directly concerned: the link-up between the world leaders in maritime transport, Maersk (Danish), MSC (Swiss-Italian) and CMA-CGM (French), which had however already been approved by Brussels and Washington. [28] The choice of sector - shipping - for this surprise intervention was no accident: China is the largest exporter in the world.

The question remains: is the "Chinese model" of capitalist development sustainable? It is not sure that it can withstand the bursting of speculative bubbles (as in real estate) and a major social crisis; a new global recession, the outbreak of conflict in East Asia or acute tensions with the transnational Chinese capital. It has given birth to a particularly unequal social formation, similar to those of Latin American countries and far from those of Western countries - even though the United States is also highly unequal and some European countries are on the road to "ThirdWorldization". Corruption is poisoning the country to the point of jeopardizing the implementation of economic policies. More and more very wealthy families - including those belonging to the upper echelons of the regime - engage in speculation and use tax havens to escape official controls. The coherence of "bureaucratic capitalism" is under pressure with the rise of private capitalists and is also undermined from within by the individualism of the "red princes", children of dignitaries. However, it is this core of the present ruling class which controls the strategic project of creation of the new imperialism, which gives it its strength; if it breaks up, how will the conversion be carried through?

That having been said, for the moment Chinese international economic policy does not only aim to make profits: it also aims to lay the foundations of a superpower. In terms of raw

materials, China lacks or will lack almost everything; it is buying on a massive scale agricultural and mining land (oil, gas, rare metals ...) all over the world and is taking control of multinationals [29]. It guarantees direct control over production by monopolizing the management of its businesses, but also by exporting Chinese labour (Africa ...) or by recruiting by preference citizens of other countries who speak Chinese (Vietnam ...). Correlatively, it seeks to ensure secure channels of intercontinental communication by buying ports [30] and airports, investing in merchant shipping and gradually deploying its military fleet on the occasion, particularly, of operations against piracy on the high seas.

Purchases of sovereign debt or banking institutions, diversification of its foreign exchange reserves, creating renminbi clearing banks in London and Frankfurt following on Singapore - and soon Paris ... China is strengthening its position in international finance, having made very good use of Hong Kong for this purpose. In October 2013, the Chinese renminbi supplanted the euro as the second currency in the financing of international trade, even though it is not yet fully convertible. [31]

Admittedly, for international financial transactions as a whole, the renminbi is still the seventh currency in the world (far behind the euro) and the supremacy of the dollar is not about to be challenged; but Beijing can take advantage of the concern caused by the way the United States demands a right to inspect accounts in dollars all over the world and to impose its laws outside its own borders on all commercial transactions denominated in its currency, as shown in the case of BNP Paribas, literally placed under U.S. supervision. [32]. In these conditions, the search for an alternative currency will gain strength.

China is also becoming more influential in another sector dominated by the traditional imperialisms. According to the latest report from SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) for the first time since the

end of the Cold War, China ranks among the five largest arms exporters, a "top five" that had up till then only comprised the United States and Europeans. [33] With 6 per cent of sales, it ranks in fourth place just behind Germany (7 per cent), ahead of France (5 per cent) and the United Kingdom (4 per cent) which slips back to sixth place. [34]

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## The maritime conflict in East Asia

It is in East Asia that tensions between China, its neighbouring states and the USA are the sharpest. This is not something new. Washington deployed enormous resources to stem the tide of revolution that began in the region around the Second World War. After the conquest of power by the Maoist forces in 1949, a network of military bases was formed in an arc from South Korea to Thailand via Japan (Okinawa) and the Philippines. The outbreak of the Sino-Soviet conflict, when Moscow made a nuclear deal with Washington and placed China before a fait accompli, reinforced the encirclement syndrome in Beijing. What has changed, however, is the social nature of the Chinese state and, correspondingly, the policies that it implements in order to break the threat of physical isolation of which it fears it is the object [35].

This policy has today an economic dimension related to the massive export of capital that is one of the marks of the emergence of a new and very conquering Chinese capitalism, and to the explosive growth of trade relations. Beijing is creating a double dependency in countries of the region: through the importance of the Chinese market to their economies and through the growth of its investments in many of its neighbours. Thus, the CCP no longer hesitates to bypass the North Korean regime in order to strengthen directly its relations with South Korea.

Beijing is dangling the offer of a pax sinica that would consolidate these relations of economic dependency -

but this policy also provokes growing social and national resistance where populations are victims of commercial dumping and unequal cross-border trade (Thailand ...), are threatened by huge infrastructure projects such as giant dams (a project aborted in Vietnam, another in Myanmar suspended ...), suffer too harsh working conditions in Chinese companies (Vietnam ...) or are driven from their lands which have been acquired by China (Philippines ...).

The implosion of the USSR and the end of the period known as the Cold War between blocs has made ??the geopolitics of East Asia very unstable, with multiple "hot spots" - festering crises that have been unresolved for decades. In this context, Beijing seeks to establish itself as a key player in the international diplomatic manoeuvres. This was obviously the case for the Korean peninsula, but China is now also present in Afghanistan.

This all-out regional policy has also a very aggressive military and territorial component that highlights how far this pax sinica would be unequal. To pander to the great-power nationalism that is filling the ideological vacuum left by the collapse of Maoism, to give legitimacy to the regime, to appropriate marine wealth, but also to ensure access for its fleet to the Pacific Ocean and the straits of Southeast Asia, Beijing has claimed sovereignty over nearly all of the South China Sea (a claim that is obviously rejected by the other countries that border these waters). It grants itself rights that apply in principle to an inland sea, not to an international shipping route. It in fact

imposes its demands by building various military structures on uninhabited archipelagos, islets, rocks and reefs which are claimed or possessed by other countries in the region - it invites its citizens to fish everywhere under the protection of its coastguards and to engage in prospecting for oil, with the installation on May 2 of a drilling platform off the coast of Vietnam.

Against Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines, Taiwan and Japan, Beijing takes possession of or demands the entirety of the Paracel and Spratly Islands, the Scarborough Reef, the Senkaku /Diaoyu Islands; and it is extending its own territorial waters to point of leaving virtually nothing for the other countries of Southeast Asia. Points of military friction have emerged to the west with Vietnam and to the east with Japan. Although in the first case very violent incidents have taken place, it is in the second that a "controlled" escalation has raised the stakes very high since Tokyo "nationalized" in September 2012 the Senkaku / Diaoyu Islands [36] - to such an extent that last November, China declared an air defence identification zone (ADIZ) including this small archipelago.

No power today wants to start a war in East Asia, but from provocation to counter-provocation, dangerous slippages cannot be excluded. And we are in the most nuclearized region of the planet where - as shown by the Korean crisis - China, Russia, the United States and Japan find themselves face to face. In a region that is also marked by the rise of xenophobic nationalisms and maritime

militarization (where the biggest and the third and fourth biggest fleets in the world manoeuvre). The United States has been constantly announcing its grand return to Asia and the Japanese right wants to free itself from the pacifist clauses of its Constitution: despite the opposition of a majority of the population, the Japanese parliament has adopted a new "interpretation" of this Constitution, which should facilitate the participation of its army in military operations abroad ... [37]

The end of blocs as a result of the implosion of the USSR and capitalist globalization has created a situation of great instability, and not just interdependence (the United States dependent on Chinese capital and China dependent on the U.S. market). Washington cannot police the world alone and some regional "sub-imperialisms" are not enough to help it: it would need imperialist allies, even if they were "secondary"; but the European Union is conspicuous by its impotence and Japan cannot yet stand on its own two feet. For the moment, Beijing is taking advantage of this situation, on both the economic and military levels. But if (if!) the constitution of the new Chinese imperialism continues without major regime crisis, it will be accompanied by rising geopolitical tensions.

East Asia is certainly not the only region of the world marked by instability and by a rise in armed conflicts - the Middle East remains from this point of view by far the "hottest" region! But it is in Asia that the confrontation between all the major powers takes the most direct form.

## **Statement of solidarity with the Kurdish masses against the attacks of the reactionary counter revolutionary forces**

**22 July 2014, by The Revolutionary Left Current in**



# Syria

These continuous attacks on the popular revolutionary forces and masses that carry the original program of the popular revolution, demonstrated that these latter were facing a double threat : on one side the reactionary counter revolutionary forces and on the other hand the forces of the ruling authoritarian bourgeois regime Daech and the rest of the reactionary forces as well did not stop to practice the ugliest forms of attacks on various Kurdish towns and regions, especially against the region of Kobani - Ain al Arab, for nearly two years, characterized by the bombing, killing, destruction, abduction and displacement of the Kurdish people.

These actions are rooted in racist hatred in the most ugliest way. These actions remind us of the actions practiced by the regime against our people for more than the past three years now. These actions constitute a threat to the areas in which the popular and civil movement are still alive and active and secular.

The suspicious silence of some sections of the opposition forces regarding the continuous barbaric attacks against the Kurdish masses, rather than referring to these interventions, is the result of national chauvinism and therefore of miserable complicity with these actions, which

must be condemned and denounced without hesitation. In both cases, we have to remember, for anyone who needs a reminder, that the Kurdish masses in our country, which has suffered from discrimination, injustice and oppression, have carried very early on the banner of rebellion against the ruling authoritarian regime. Their sons have participated, since long decades, in all the Syrian leftist and secular parties and in all their struggles. The Kurdish masses were the ones to lead the uprising of March 2004, in an atmosphere of inaction and silence of the majority of the political forces of the Syrian opposition

Just as we witnessed in the Kurdish cities of Afrin, Amouda, Qamishli and others great popular mobilisations. In addition they were one of the first cities to protest and participate in the popular revolt since March 2011

Therefore we do not only declare our full and firm solidarity with the Kurdish masses against the attacks of Daech and others in the areas in which they are present, but we would like to reaffirm our known position calling for the recognition of the national, cultural and political rights of the Kurdish people, not only in the Syrian region of "Rojava" but in all parts of Kurdistan

Our support for the above mentioned rights of the Kurdish people do not prevent us to wish and to invite the Kurdish people to be, as it is the case today to a large extent in Syria, to be a full partner with us and the rest of the Syrian revolutionary masses in our united struggle against the ruling bourgeois regime, because our victory depends on the unity and independence of all the popular class far from religious and ethnic divisions. We also want the Kurdish people to be a partner in building a free and democratic Syria that is based on social justice and secularism and full equality for all its citizens regardless of their ethnic or religious or confessional origins

For freedom, equality, and the triumph of the revolution and the current and upcoming popular struggles, Viva the unity of the popular masses in Syria

Viva the unity of struggle of our popular masses without the slightest discrimination based on ethnicity, religion or confession

Viva the revolution of the toilers and the oppressed

Viva the People's Revolution

All power and wealth to the people

*Damascus July 13, 2014*

## "We are all Palestinians"

**20 July 2014, by Liam Mac Uaid**

It was at least as large as the July 10th demonstration called by striking public sector trade unions, but it was completely different in its make up and its mood. It was perhaps one of the most ethnically mixed major political events the city has ever seen. The usual range of socialist

organisations was there, along with a smattering of trade union banners. What made it different was the loud, angry presence of thousands of predominantly young Muslims including large numbers of young women. They were not at all reluctant to carry the placards distributed by

left groups with messages like "stop Israeli state terror" and "freedom for Palestine".

The event had been called at very short notice, something that makes the turnout all the more remarkable. Nominally the organisers were a



coalition of organisations including the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, the Friends of Al Aqsa Mosque and the Islamic Forum of Europe. But this was one of those events to which people were drawn by their own revulsion at the apartheid Israeli state's ongoing massacre of Palestinians. It was an opportunity to convert into political action the rage people feel when they watch four children being deliberately murdered on a beach and the solidarity they feel with the people of Gaza as they endure a medieval siege conducted with modern weapons in 2014.

It was the desire to express solidarity and take political action which made this such a powerful demonstration. There were no placards or slogans expressing support for the reactionary Islamists of Hamas. Disappointingly for those who like to elide support for a Palestinian state with anti-semitism, there were no chants or posters to give them comfort. Instead there was a highly visible presence of anti-Zionist Jewish organisations.

All we can say for sure is that over the next few weeks the Israeli army will destroy more homes, hospitals and

lives. We also know they will do it again within three or four years. We saw today that there is a groundswell of passionate fury against the denial of the rights of the Palestinian people. The best way to direct that energy is into the boycott and divestment campaign supported by a large number of Palestinian organisations. This is something which terrifies the Israeli state, not only because it punishes it financially but, just as importantly, it draws the parallel between Israeli apartheid and its South African role model.

From ***Socialist Resistance***.

## French government bans solidarity with people of Gaza

20 July 2014, by **Penelope Duggan**

Despite the ban, the NPA and some other associations in the initial appeal maintained their call. Thousands of demonstrators, including many moved to come because of the ban, joined the demonstration in northern Paris but found their way rapidly blocked by the police who did not hesitate to use tear gas to disperse the demonstration. Demonstrations in solidarity with the people of Gaza – some banned, some not – also took place in cities around France: Marseilles, Toulouse, Nantes, Le Havre... Thousands also turned out in London, Dublin and Brussels.

### The government lost, solidarity with the Palestinian people

**won!**

*Statement by the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA)*

By banning demonstrations in solidarity with Palestine, Hollande and the Valls [38] government provoked a show of strength that they in the end lost. Throughout France today thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets to demand an end to the Israeli military intervention in Gaza and to proclaim their horror at the deaths of more than three hundred Palestinians.

In particular in Paris, several thousand demonstrators, despite the impressive police presence, defied the government's ban. This is a success given the many threats by the police authorities and the government. At the end of the demonstration there were some skirmishes between demonstrators and the police. How

could it have been otherwise given the police presence and the desire of the government to muzzle all opposition to the its support for war waged by the Israeli state.

The NPA condemns the police violence that took place this evening in Barbès [39] and pledges that today's success will be followed up. On Wednesday another demonstration will take place on the call of the national collective for a just and lasting peace. The struggle for the rights of the Palestinian people continues.

The NPA calls on all the left and democratic trade-union, campaign and political forces to proclaim the rejection of repression and their active solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people

**Montreuil  
19 July 2014**

# Women against the First World War (1914-1918) - A time to remember

20 July 2014

Bertha von Suttner worked to avoid another war, any war. Her novel *Lay Down Your Arms* is an appeal for peace and describes the horrors of armed confrontation. She founded the Austrian Society for Peace in 1891 and worked tirelessly for the international pacifist movement. She denounced rearmament in peacetime, which would ruin the nations, and warned about the preparation of various countries for a great conflict. She confronted the virulent opposition of nationalists, the clergy and anti-Semites. The First World War began a month after her death. She was the first woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

Rosa Luxemburg was arrested in February 1914 for inciting soldiers to rebel and declared: "If they expect us to assassinate the French or any other foreign brother, let's tell them: 'No, under no circumstance.'" A couple of weeks after the outbreak of the war, she declared her disappointment that the European workers' movement had not avoided the catastrophe. She opposed the directives of the International Socialist Movement and thought that once the war came to an end, the "traitors" could be brought to justice. She was executed in January of 1919 by paramilitaries recently demobilized from the war front.

Clara Zetkin was a leader of the Social Democratic Party of Germany and organized the women's section of the

party. In her struggle against war, she sent out a call to the women socialists to energetically oppose an armed conflict, which would benefit only the clerical and profiteering patriarchal bourgeoisie, and convened an International Conference of Women Socialists that took place in Berne (Switzerland). At the conference, the imperialistic conflict was censured with the slogan "War on war". On account of that, she was jailed and expelled from the party.

In the context of the First World War, two Women's Pacifist Congresses took place in Europe in 1915: The Conference of International Socialist Women mentioned before and the International Congress of Women in The Hague under the leadership of the Dutch suffragist and pacifist Aletta Jacobs and Jane Addams (Nobel Peace Prize). Participating in this meeting were 1,136 women, although many of them were refused passports by their respective countries or were stopped at the border. Upon returning to their home countries, they were accused of "anti-patriotism" and many of them were arrested or closely watched by the police. The International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was born at this Congress through important suffragists who defended the idea that peace and equal rights for women were closely related and, in the midst of the First World War, proclaimed that war was not

inevitable. These symbolic and historic Congresses adopted resolutions that established the basis for an International Movement of Women for Peace.

The "International Congress of Women for understanding among nations" took place in 1917.

There were massive demonstrations by women and various actions against war in Berlin, as well as in cities of Austria, Russia and other countries. Pacifist women who lived in the warring countries were pursued, imprisoned and subjected to police surveillance. Hélène Brion, a French pacifist teacher, was accused of treason and denied her teaching position because of distributing pacifist pamphlets in 1918. During her trial, she declared: "I am an enemy of war because I am a feminist...Between war and feminism there is total contradiction."

Women in Black of Madrid make manifest our recognition and support for all the Cassandras who currently are working for social demilitarization, human rights, solidarity and a world without wars.

We also pay homage to our companions of Women in Black who have passed on, Ana San Emeterio from Cantabria and Conchi Chaus from Valencia. Their commitment and solidarity will be with us always.

## An update on the government-MILF peace process

# 19 July 2014, by **Richard Solis**

In October 27, 2013, the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) was signed by the GPH and the MILF panels inclusive of the 4 annexes which they have yet to finish but already considered as approved by the above-mentioned parties. These are the annexes on power sharing, wealth sharing, transition modalities, and normalization.

The Aquino administration had stubbornly ignored criticisms that one cannot sign those annexes without seeing the finished product. Some critics even pointed out the necessity to be watchful because the "devil is in the details." One cannot simply approve something which is still not there

The four annexes will be the primary bases for the drafting of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). For this act to be done, the President created the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) through Executive Order 120 which is composed of 15 Commissioners - seven (7) from the GPH and seven (7) from the MILF and chaired by the MILF - all appointed by the President. Aside from the drafting of the BBL, the BTC is tasked to study and submit proposed amendments to the 1987 Philippine Constitution, specifically Article X and to work on the development framework for the Bangsamoro Entity.

On March 28, 2014, a Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) was signed by the President of the Republic of the Philippines, President Benigno S. Aquino and the Chair of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Hadji Murad Ebrahim as witnessed by the International Community headed by the Prime Minister of Malaysia in Malacañang Palace, Manila Philippines.

Just like in September 1996 when the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) signed the Final Peace Agreement (FPA), everybody was jubilant and hilariously happy seemingly forgetting

the difficulties that really lie ahead, specifically in the implementation stage.

The BBL draft was finished and submitted by the BTC to the Office of the President (OP) on April 22, 2014 and it took the OP until June 22, 2014 or exactly 2 months to finish its comments on the submitted draft.

Both panels agreed on the timetable for the road map of the peace process. As set in the timetable, the President will sign and endorse the finished product of the BBL as an urgent bill to be submitted immediately for Congressional legislation. Following such is the plebiscite in the first quarter of 2015 for the people in designated areas so that starting on the second quarter of the same year (2015), a Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) will take over the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to adequately prepare the MILF political structure in May 2016 elections.

## **Congress can only Support a Bourgeois Peace**

Political analysts could hardly believe that both panels have not seen the political warning signs hovering ahead. Principal among these would be the terms of reference. It has been cleared from the very start that GPH will always use the Philippine Constitution as its framework for negotiation and the MILF has shown that they have accepted this framework from the time they have signed FAB and CAB. The act of signifying BBL as an urgent bill is not just administrative, but is making sure that the contents of BBL is simply and basically constitutional. After all, the bill will pass through both houses of Congress and everybody knows that 80-90% of its members belong to the ruling bourgeoisie class whose prime concern is to protect and promote their interest. The Bangsamoro entity

is expected to accommodate this capitalist interest. Peace for both houses means new a business opportunity which should be grabbed. One should not go further to see and realize such economic motives. RA 9054 (Organic Act for the ARMM) still exists to prove this fact. And the President as belonging or representing the bourgeois class can only be consistent of such interest.

As the developments have shown, the MILF leadership has manifested that the terms of reference of the peace talks should be beyond the Philippine Constitution which they positively equated to the openness and sincerity which President Benigno Aquino has shown to them. If this is so, then we have a problem and a very basic one; that is, the two peace panels should have agreed on the written framework for the talks.

## **BBL for all or only for MILF?**

The MILF has complained that the comments for revisions of the BBL by the Office of the President diluted the draft submitted by the BTC rendering it less autonomous than the present ARMM. Such development would bring us to the following questions: How did the BTC perform its task and based on what framework? If it says from the FAB, one should remember that the FAB was signed without the annexes. And if it will be the annexes as drafted by the BTC, one should remember that the BTC is primarily an MILF controlled and dominated commission. This brings us to another development that the BBL was not signed by all the GPH Commissioners (two did not sign and the other two signed with reservations) which show that only three of seven GPH Commissioners fully agreed with the draft submitted to the OP. This can be the basis for the OP to seriously review the submitted draft of the BBL in the guise of fine tuning it so that both panels can defend it in Congress.

One of the most contested content in the BBL is the non-inclusion of the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) within the claimed Bangsamoro territory. This is basically denying the historical fact that the IPs have distinct history and have their own Indigenous Political Structure from the Bangsamoro. One of the main principles of building the Bangsamoro entity is to correct the historical wrong and injustice done to the Bangsamoro. But what does the BBL say about the case of the IPs? The OP tries to incorporate RA 8371 or the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) to the BBL which even the present ARMM would not have done for several years now. And everybody knows the reason behind, that is, to lay claim to the IPs ancestral domain where rich deposits of minerals as well as where the very rich natural resources are found. That is why the MNLF (RA 9054) and the MILF will never incorporate the IPRA or similar IP concerns into the Bangsamoro. By not considering the IP concerns, the BBL as drafted by the MILF is neglecting the IP rights on resource generation and sharing.

Another contested provision of the BBL is on power sharing. The exclusive power of the Bangsamoro in relation to the other stakeholders is the territorial claim has definitely and directly affected other peoples in the claimed territory. Again, the powers refer only to the MILF and not the other existing power structures in the claimed territories especially referring to the IPs and the Migrant Christians. One should always remember that in building an exclusive peace one can never expect an inclusive growth and development.

There are still basic points which the OP has tried to correct and make its inputs and in reaction the MILF said since these points are basically found in the FAB and the CAB, it is nonsensical to review them further. Indicating the submitted BBL draft is as good as approved from the MILF point of view. This brings us to the point of what was in the mind of the GPH or the Peace Panel when they created the BTC. What was the level of preparation of the GPH Commissioners in engaging with the drafting of the BBL with MILF? Were the GPH-BTC members left on their

own in dealing with the MILF in which the Chair of the BTC is also the Chair of the MILF Peace Panel? The importance given by the MILF in drafting the BBL was not simply matched by the GPH efforts because, anyway, it will still have time to revise it when it reached them. Time and money were spent uselessly only to be doing the same thing all over again or back to square one as the MILF would say.

## Building Peace by Popularity

When the GPH and the MILF have tried to fast track the peace process, the target is to have the Peace Agreement signed and implemented during the term of President Benigno Aquino. The main consideration of which has been his popularity among the people and its strong influence in the other branches of the government. A lesson learned from the previous administration which was about to sign with the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) when the Supreme Court, the Judiciary and co-equal with the government, declared the agreement as unconstitutional. In the early years of the Aquino Administration one could say that he was indeed popular compared to the very unpopular regime he replaced. At that period one could say that the Congress and the Judiciary will definitely support the Aquino Administration. Today, less than two years left with the present administration there is a consistent downtrend with regard to its performance and popularity ratings. Lately, the Supreme Court has strongly decided (unanimously) that the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) and the Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP) are unconstitutional. The stubbornly manner in which the President Aquino stood by these unconstitutional acts will cost him more damage. In fact, Aquino already received his lowest popularity rating dropping 11-14 points in June compared to a recent survey in March 2014 [40]. This is his lowest score since he assumed the presidency in 2010. The administration's supporters in Congress will have to double think

before they will offer their support to the becoming unpopular President because giving him their support might cause them their defeat in the 2016 elections. As of today, nobody from the ruling party (Liberal Party) has the capacity and potentiality to replace the President. This simply means that a big possibility of a President coming from the opposition will most likely be the next President in 2016 and whose hands will the peace agreement be handed over and tasked to implement the most important part of the agreement.

The presentation of the BBL and its approval in Congress will have this kind of consideration in terms of the political and economic interests of the politicians. And the President who will deliver his second to the last State of the Nation Address (SONA) will definitely not be as popular as in the early stage of his presidency. Dirtying his hands in the PDAF and DAP issues are fast erasing the moral ascendancy of his "daang matuwid" program.

Another possibility is that the MILF will not support the diluted BBL putting the blame on the GPH side. It will be back to square one as what MILF Peace Panel Chair said earlier. Or they will support the BBL after the Aquino Administration withdraw its revisions so that the peace agreement will be saved and President Aquino can once again have the GPH-MILF Peace Agreement as the main attraction for his second to the last SONA. Maybe he will have some boosting of his popularity when he will get nominated and with the Nobel Peace Prize as being worked out by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP). This kind of road in continuing with the peace process and maintaining its momentum will have another road block. This is making constitutional amendments in the 1987 Constitution but which means calling for a nationwide plebiscite for it to be approved. This process will definitely affect the timeline of the peace roadmap both panels have drawn.

But as regards to the status of the peace process today, the four day meeting between the GPH and MILF panels with the presence of eleven out of fifteen BTC members and the



International Contact Group (ICG) in Kuala Lumpur last July 8-10, 2014 has not been substantially addressed the concerns raised by the MILF leadership to President Aquino in

Tokyo last June 22, 2014. And that is the revised BBL draft which is less autonomous than the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) which the GPH and MILF referred to

as failed political project is still the existing draft discussed by both panels. But what is positive is that both panels have agreed to meet again in the coming days.

# Freedom, a common destiny for Gaza, Yarmouk and the Golan

## 18 July 2014

The Israeli regime launched its military aggression against the Gaza Strip, which is still living under an illegal and inhumane siege transforming it in a big open air prison, under the pretext of avenging the murder of three young Israeli settlers by two young Palestinians who acted on their own behalf and punishing collectively the Palestinians and also particularly Hamas, which despite accusations of the Israeli regime against it have denied any involvement in the assassination. Israel's propaganda to present itself as a victim does not work and cannot hide that the Israeli State has pursued and intensified its policy of colonization, apartheid, expulsion and occupation against the Palestinian population, and that since the beginning of the year, previous to the Israeli military aggression on Gaza, a total of 22 Palestinian civilians were killed by Israeli security forces, while 1,226 Palestinians were injured, and 629 have been displaced forcefully.

In the West Bank, following the announcement of the death of the 3 settlers, Israel launched military operations in the territories killing more than 10 Palestinians in couple of weeks and several others were injured, while more than 500 Palestinians were arrested, of whom more than 80 were held under the label of "administrative detention", a form of detention without charge or trial. The number of children detained in Israeli prisons increased to 250. The Israeli occupation forces also imposed severe restrictions on

movement in the West Bank, while searching over 1,000 houses and universities, vandalizing several of them.

In the Palestinian territories of 1948 (Israel), a massive racist media campaign was launched, which falls into a deep institutional racism promoted by the State of Israel for decades now, and increased considerably through the weeks, following the announcement of the death of the three young settlers, calling for the killings of Arabs and Palestinians. Demonstrations were held in various Israeli cities calling for the killings of Palestinians while several of these latter were lynched in public by groups of young Israelis. These scenes reminded us of the gatherings of lynching in the southern states of the United States against black people every time a white person was found dead. This pogrom atmosphere also led to the murder of 16 year old Palestinian boy, Mohammed Abu Khdeir, who lived in a neighborhood of East Jerusalem annexed and occupied by Israel, who was kidnapped and burned alive by a group of Israeli youth. The boy "was burned from the inside and from the outside, because he was probably forced to drink the fuel," said Palestinian Minister for Jerusalem, Adnan al-Husseini. Israeli media tried to cover the story through false propaganda declaring that the boy had been murdered because of his "sexual orientation" or due to clan feuds. The police only admitted after several days that the assassination of the young Palestinian was due to political

reasons, without disclosing any information because of the censorship on the investigation.

Israeli police also arrested the cousin of martyr Mohammed Abu Khdeir, Tareq Abu Khdeir, 15 years old and a U.S. citizen, after beating him.

Following this, many demonstrations of Palestinians of 1948, inside Israel, were held to protest and denounce Israeli policies. Since the murder of Mohammad Abu Khdeir, several rallies were also organized by anti-racist organizations in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa. Demonstrations are now held also in support of the Gaza Strip.

We reiterate our total support and solidarity with the Palestinian people and the Palestinian resistance against Israeli military aggressions and policies, but these events should also remind us of two important strategic questions when it comes to the Palestinian Liberation.

Firstly, the nature of Israel's State, as explained above, and its policies must lead us to the (re)confirmation that the only real solution for the Palestinian issue and the Jewish question is 1) the destruction of the colonial, occupation and Apartheid State of Israel, which has brought only suffering to the Palestinian People and has never brought security in Israel and elsewhere to the Jewish people as its propaganda promotes it, quite on the contrary, and 2) the establishment of a democratic, social and secular state in historic 1948 Palestine for all (Palestinians and Israelis) without any



form of discrimination and in which any Palestinian, whether internal refugee or refugee in a foreign country, has the right to return to its land and original house which they were forcibly displaced in 1948, 1967 and after.

Secondly, it is also necessary to remind everyone that the liberation of Palestine goes through the overthrowing of all the authoritarian regimes in the region, which are complicit in the suffering of the Palestinian people. All the ruling class in the region, without any exception, benefits directly or indirectly from the presence of the Zionist State. The different regimes in the region may have political differences that leads to competition and tensions, but they all agree on the necessity of defeating the popular classes of the region in their will of freedom and emancipation. All these regimes have in addition opposed the Palestinian Liberation movement and / or tried to suppress it through different ways, notably harsh repression, expulsion and killing, and / or tried to co-opt it through funding and push it into submission to its own political interests that are in opposition to the interests of the Palestinian popular classes.

This is why opposing any popular revolution in the region is not only betraying the cause of the people of Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain and elsewhere, but also betraying the Palestinian cause and its people. One cannot decently support the Palestinian cause and in the same time support or take a centrist position regarding the Assad criminal regime responsible of the death of hundreds of Palestinians in the past three years in Syria and of the siege and bombing of Yarmouk refugee camp and other Palestinian refugee camps throughout Syria, while without forgetting the history of the Assad regime in trying to suppress any form of independant Palestinian resistance, wether during the civil war in Lebanon in repressing and trying to suppress the Palestinian Liberation movement, or in refusing to intervene in Jordan in September 1970 to stop the bloodshed against the

Palestinians by the Hashemite Kingdom, or by preventing any form of resistance, both Syrian and Palestinian, in Syria to struggle for the liberation of the Golan and Palestine.

No difference exists between a Palestinian dead in Gaza or in Yarmouk, they are one, they are both struggling for liberation and emancipation.

This logic goes for all authoritarian regimes, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Iran, etc... The road for the liberation of Palestine goes through all these capitals.

A similar logic can be applied to political groups such as Hezbollah that claims to support the liberation of Palestine but has been cooperating for the past few years with the Lebanese state and security forces to prevent any popular or military mobilizations against Israel from South Lebanon, but above all that is participating alongside the Assad regime in the military fights against the Syrian revolutionaries. We can see that it's political interests, linked to the ones of Iran, to defend a corrupt and authoritarian regime that has killed Syrians, Palestinians and Lebanese, attacked resistant movements in the past and prevented any form of resistance from Syria against Israel are more important than the liberation of Palestine.

This includes Palestinian groups, which we reiterate our total support in their fundamentrall right to resistance against Israel and against Arab reactionary and authoritarian regimes and condemn the attacks on them all from Israel and other actors, which for their far majority have had a selected support to popular revolutions. Our support to Palestinian groups in their resistance against Israeli military aggression do not prevent us from having criticisms in their political views and programs. We for example condemn the support of Mahmoud Abbas to Sissi's authoritarian rule in Egypt, the support of the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine for the Assad regime and non condemnation of the siege imposed by

the Assad regime on the Yarmouk camp, the support of Hamas to the Bahraini regime, visit of Prime Minister Hanieh to the Bahraini King and other ruling kings of various monarchies of the Gulf in addition to Iran in February/ March 2012 in which he saluted the King's policies and "reforms", against the Bahraini popular revolution and which was characterized by some Hamas leaders as a sectarian coup by Shias.

We need revolutionary political parties and activists that see the link between the liberation of the popular classes of the region and of Palestine, and that struggle for it. The liberation of Palestine and its popular classes is linked to the liberation and emancipation of the popular classes in the region against their ruling classes and the various imperialist, particularly the USA and Russia, and sub imperialist forces, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar . In this similar logic we have to fight against all attempts by regimes and islamic reactionary forces to divide the popular classes according to their gender, religious sects, nationalities, etc... in an attempt to rule them and therefore prevent their liberation and emancipation and therefore of the Palestinian popular classes as well. The need to build these revolutionary parties is very important to understand.

In this perspective, the Syrian revolutionary people have expressed this feeling in demonstrations of support for the Palestinian people and showed their understanding, and that since the beginning of the revolution, that their liberation is linked to the liberation of the people of the region and more particularly of the Palestinian people. As written on a placard of a demonstrator during a protest in the occupied Golan on July 14 against the Israeli invasion: Freedom, a common destiny for Gaza, Yarmouk and the Golan. In conclusion, our path to freedom is linked.

Palestine and Syria are one! Our freedom is one!

[Syria Freedom for ever](#)

# Brazil: Death of Plínio de Arruda Sampaio

17 July 2014, by João Machado

From a wealthy background, Plinio started his militancy with the Catholic University Youth (JUC). A lawyer by profession, before the military coup d'état of 1964 he was elected federal deputy for the Christian Democrat Party (PDC); he was one of the principal leaders of its left wing. Immediately after the military coup, his mandate was revoked and his political rights suspended. He went into exile, initially in Chile, then in the United States.

He returned to Brazil in 1976, before the end of the military dictatorship. He then started to articulate the organization of a socialist party. The attempt failed, but shortly afterwards Plinio took part in the formation of the PT (Workers' Party), founded in 1980. He became a PT federal deputy in 1986 and candidate for the post of governor of São Paulo in 1990.

In the first years of the PT Plínio was regarded as a leader of its more moderate sector. However, when the PT began its process of integration in the bourgeois order, Plínio gradually became one of the leaders of the left

wing of the party. An expert on land questions, he was one of the party leaders closest to the MST (Movement of Landless Workers).

At the beginning of the Lula government in 2003, although already critical of the course followed by the party, Plínio still collaborated with it, in particular in the formulation of a programme of land reform. The fact that this reform was not implemented was one [of the decisive factors which convinced him that the integration into the existing order of the PT was irreversible.

In September 2005, Plínio was one of leaders of approximately 2,000 left activists who broke with the PT to form the PSOL (Party of Socialism and Freedom). Then 75 years old, he was not frightened to say that "we need to start again". His health was already fragile, but his role in the construction of PSOL was decisive. In 2006, he was candidate for the post of governor of São Paulo, and from the discussions of the first Congress of the PSOL, in 2007, he became a leader of the left of the party. He defined himself as "a

Communist who believes in God".

It is as a representative of the left of the party which that he won the nomination as PSOL candidate for the Brazilian presidency in 2010. Although his election campaign was not a success in terms of votes (886,800 votes, 0.87% of the total) it had a very positive impact at the political level. Then already 80 years old, he had a campaign directed towards young people and future, and received a reception well beyond that reflected in the vote (many voters who identified with his ideas opted for the "useful vote").

In June 2013, he took part in the demonstrations. At the Congress of the PSOL in that year, he participated in the Left Bloc of the party.

His funeral was attended by Christians, PSOL activists, left activists from the pre-dictatorship period, old PT comrades, representatives of other left parties (PSTU and PCB), militants of the MST, and trade unionists. And many young people.

# Bureaucracy, Ernest Mandel legacy and the Danish Red-Green Alliance

17 July 2014, by Michael Voss

With the success of Enhedslisten (Red Green Alliance - RGA) have come a growing professional apparatus. It benefits the party in many ways, but along follows the risk that the apparatus is defining politics and that a really party bureaucracy develops.

These are the introducing words of an

article written by Mikael Hertoft, a member of the National Leadership of the RGA. Hertoft recently reread a booklet published in neighbouring Sweden in the late 60's. Its title is "On bureaucracy - an analysis of the ever threatening danger of the labour movement", and it is written by the late Fourth International leader and

Marxist economist, Ernest Mandel.

After reading it he decided to translate parts of it and to have a look at its relevance for the RGA. Both the translation and his own article have been published in the Danish web magazine "Socialistisk Information".

Hertoft has counted around 60 members that earn their living from working one way or the other for the party. The bulk of these are the 12 MP's and their secretariat in parliament, about 25 persons. Additionally a group of members is employed by the national party office, and a few are working full time as elected representatives in municipalities. Both these groups will increase further in numbers if RGA gets the the number of votes and the MP's at the next election that present opinion polls indicate.

Most of these positions are funded by the state. All parties receive a sum of money according to the number of votes they received in the last elections. Most of this is used for full timers at the national office.

The state also allocates a larger sum of money to party groups in parliament. This money is earmarked secretarial assistance for the MP's. The party can only to a very limited extend use it for the support of party activity outside parliament.

"The state funding rules systematically increases the weight of the parliamentary work of the RGA vis-a-vis militant grass root activity," Hertoft writes in his article.

Referring to Ernest Mandel, Hertoft stresses that of course the RGA must make the most of this professional workforce by building strong centres of activity in parliament, at the national office and in provincial centres. "The only alternative would be to insist on amateur work which would never gain influence and would never be able to head a socialist revolution," Hertoft writes.

At the same time he argues that we must learn from Mandel's analysis. A functional bureaucracy will turn into a social layer with its own interests if measures are not taken to counter this tendency.

As Hertoft explains the RGA already from its birth 25 years ago implemented two of the basic principles which Mandel recommends on the basis of the Karl Marx and the experiences of the Paris Commune.

One of these concerns income. Employees of the party and elected members earn what equals the wage of a skilled worker in metal industry in the Copenhagen area. This is at the upper end of a workers' wage in Denmark. Of course state salary for MP's is much higher, so RGA MP's pay the difference as a party tax.

The other principle concerns rotation. The details differ, but basically a member is only allowed to earn his or her living from working for the party in 10 years. The party employee must leave the job, and the MP cannot stand the next election. After a two year break they can apply for a job again and they can stand another election. The same principle goes for members of the National Leadership, even though they are not employed by the party.

These are principles that are worth defending. The wage rule means that for the most people there are not material benefits attached to working professionally for the party, and the rotation rule prevent people from making a lifelong living out of politics and from defending this position at all costs.

But Hertoft points to the fact that there are other privileges than the material ones. Very important for engaged socialists is the fact that as a party professional you can work full time for "the cause" instead of wasting your working hours on some meaningless job.

Secondly he points to the problems that arise from having a huge group of party professionals working in parliament. They primarily discuss with each other, with other MP's and with journalists from big capital media. This exerts a daily pressure on them coming only from people to the political right of themselves. "They tend to be sucked into the Danish establishment," Hertoft writes.

Hertoft also fears that the party apparatus develop a state of mind and a consciousness of themselves being "the real party". They may end up seeing party members as something only to be mobilised for occasional elections.

"Critical members that don't phrase there criticism as smooth as politicians, may be considered annoying to the apparatus," Hertoft writes, and he warns against a development where the apparatus starts defending its own special interests, its own existence. Making a priority of increasing number of votes at the cost of defending important socialist principles is one of the ways that such a "special interest" based on their daily political environment could quickly manifest itself, Hertoft argues.

I think that the warnings of Ernest Mandel and Mikael Hertoft are important. Already today there is a situation in the party where most political views and statements are developed by the MP's and their secretariat.

Basically the RGA is very democratic. Party statutes leave no doubt : The annual national convention, the National Leadership and the Executive Bureau (composed of elected NL-members, meeting on a weekly basis) have the final say in important political decisions. But formalities and realities are not always the same.

The MP-group is forced to decide on many political issues on a daily basis which no elected leadership body has the resources to discuss or vote on. Maybe more problematic : MP's and the MP-secretariat have so much resources for developing the politics of the RGA in new areas or suggesting changes to already decided politics that neither party members nor elected leaderships with ordinary full time jobs can match. If the MP/secretariat group adapt their views to each other - which is of course not certain, but likely - they are able to analyse, document and argue on much more qualified level than the rest of the party and in the way impose their views on the party - within the formal democratic framework.

The preconditions for a special layer with its own priorities exist. It has not developed and there is time to counter it.

To do this, Hertoft suggests some tightening up of wage and rotation rules. He points to party members as

the force to counter the development of a bureaucracy in the RGA. He suggests new and better channels for democratic discussions, more political education and new fora for social and cultural party life. He also argues that the party must consciously educate party members with a background in the working class and experiences from popular layers and movements – educate them both for the tasks of

party leaders and for elected representatives.

Finally he argues that the party must find ways to counter the financial tendency to focus on parliamentary politics and instead build party activities in social movements and other grass root activities.

By raising the debate and by

introducing the Marxist analyses of bureaucracy, Mikael Hertoft has already contributed to solving the problem. Especially by pointing to the social and material foundation of bureaucracy he has minimised the risk that the debate turns into finger pointing and personal blaming. Hopefully other party members, including the full timers, will contribute to the debate.

## Saving the PSOE

16 July 2014, by **Josep María Antentas**

After the European parliamentary elections of May 25 bipartisanship has been shaken by a veritable electoral fracking, whose cutting edge is Podemos, announcing an earthquake that is yet to come, a movement of electoral tectonic plates that threatens to devour a PSOE that, nevertheless, still has hydraulic engineers to cushion its fall.

The electoral fracking will be increased, and the tremors will cause vertigo for those who watch the world from the peaks. Each new electoral poll threatens a true nightmare for a PSOE torn by a continuous electoral draining. “At certain moments of their historical life, social groups separate from their traditional parties. This means that the traditional parties, with the form of organization they present, with the specific men who constitute, represent and lead them, are no longer recognized as a specific expression of their class or a fraction of it”, wrote Antonio Gramsci in his “Notes on Machiavelli”. Does that sound familiar? To see the ground open under one’s feet is not a pleasant sensation. And still less for the customary masters of the world. The field of the possible has been opened of pair to pair. For good or bad. Of what is possible for us, but also what is possible for them. Of what we can do. Of what they can do to us.

The new Secretary General of the PSOE, Pedro Sanchez, has a mission:

to save the party. An essential task for those who seek to keep Spain afloat. The PSOE is one of the two legs of the party of the Ibex 35. Without PSOE there is no bipartisanship. Without bipartisanship there is no regime. And today it is its weakest link. They will need a good deal of makeup and a facelift in order to obtain a credible new look (and not only towards the outside: the 15% vote for the candidate of Izquierda Socialista, Perez Tapias, shows an unexpected level of internal discontent in a party that has for a long time been anesthetized in relation to its rank and file). Primaries always go down well. A young candidate, also. But it will be enough? “Tore down a la Rimbaud, you know it’s hard sometimes”, sang Van Morrison. A phrase that must perfectly summarize the mood of the PSOE leaders behind the stony cardboard smiles, if they had not stopped reading Rimbaud years ago (and frankly the idea of “changing life” had always been very distant for them) to satisfy the *Financial Times* and the manuals of company management and very little else.

### Walk the line

To save the PSOE is paradoxically as difficult as to sink it. Both tasks are herculean. Mission Impossible? Agreed, but which of the two? Who strives to refloat it faces an unknown reality. They have never suffered as

much discredit as is presently the case. They had never faced an adversary as disconcerting and dangerous as Podemos, a true torpedo to its waterline. And whoever wishes to relegate the PSOE to the history books also faces an unprecedented task. A chance to see the eternal impossible dream realized.

To see the PSOE stagger is simultaneously beautiful and fascinating. Something you do not see every day. But the spectacle will not last eternally. Either it will end up straightening itself or it will fall. Yes, the PSOE can be restored. It is never necessary to underestimate it. Then our greatest dream would finish in the cruellest of the nightmares. It would evaporate as quickly as it arrived. To see the breach opened close, to see the existing possibilities vanish would be cruel. Yes, the PSOE can fall. Then the impossible would be feasible, the unimaginable would be real. A vertiginous and exciting future would be opened.

There are two strategic errors to avoid faced with the crisis of the PSOE. First, not to realize its historical magnitude and the opportunity that it provides. To thus resign, without so much as fighting. Or to be stuck in a combative but harmless minority. The goal of articulating an alternative with the intention of winning a majority must be precisely considered. Without generating false illusions, without

promising rapid victories, but with the will to dare, to try, to set goals inconceivable until recently.

Second, it is necessary not to make the opposite mistake and declare it dead prematurely. The PSOE is holed, but it is not sunk. It has institutional resources, anchorages, clientelist networks, media abilities, links with the apparatus of the state and economic power. It has a long historical experience in reinventing itself and endless tentacles that allow it to continue. Saving the PSOE is the great challenge for reasons of state. The services provided to the country, from the Transition to austerity, via NATO and industrial reconversions, merit it. One does not easily abandon such a valiant soldier. And there are no rapid reliable replacements for such loyal servants. Better to conserve what exists than improvise.

## Marching towards the dark side

The PSOE is a zombie, truly the walking dead, without soul or illusion, its heart both black and empty. But to kill a zombie, as we know, is not easy. They rise time and time again. Although the label of living dead quite suits the PSOE, in the end it is bad taste to compare it to a zombie. The poor zombies have not done anything. They are not guilty of labour reforms, privatizations, wholesale ideological renunciations, support for LOAPA, corruptions, GAL, Corcuera's laws, imperialist wars and innumerable other greatest hits of ignominious memory. The retrospective listing of the dark deeds of the PSOE makes an impression on anyone. One reason more for not giving it up for dead more. Its last gesture could be to resurge as a sinister phoenix of austerity.

Social democracy has taken a long march towards the dark side. Its savage pro-capitalist management of the crisis is thus the culmination of a long trajectory, sprinkled with discontinuities and points of inflexion, of integration in the capitalist political

and economic structures. Founded at the end of the 19th century on bases whose statist nature Marx had already criticised in 1875 in his analysis of the program of the German Social Democratic party newly created in Gotha, social democracy would soon enter a linear gradualist drift, in a passive accumulation of forces towards an imaginary triumphal march towards socialism. Then would come the strategic and moral bankruptcy of the First World War, the subsequent crushing of the German revolution and the strategic inconsistencies faced with the ascent of fascism in the inter-war period.

After the Second World War it would have an important role in the consolidation of the welfare state alongside Christian Democracy. The congress of the German SPD in Bad Godesberg in 1959 symbolized the formal abandonment of the reformist perspective towards socialism in favour of the "mixed market economy". The passage was interrupted half way. If the congress of the French PS in Epinay in 1971 represented the opportunistic attempt of social democracy to capitalize on the spirit of 1968 and the hopes for social change engendered by that period, the 1980s were the years of progressive adaptation to the new neoliberal winds. After the failure of the brief Keynesian attempt of the first Mitterrand government in 1981, the social democratic governments of the south of Europe, in the hands of the Mediterranean Jackson Five of Papandreou, Gonzalez, Soares, Mitterrand and Craxi, had a decisive role in this turn. The Third Way of Tony Blair and Anthony Giddens or the "New Centre" of Gerhard Schröder in the 1990s marked another key point in this trajectory. Partly theoretical rationalization of what had already been done and partly a new leap forward in the assumption of capitalist values, the Third Way accelerated still more the open integration of neoliberal postulates. From there to permanent austerity was only one step further. Into another abyss.

## Uncertainties

The future of the PSOE, and our chances of bringing it down, will depend on the outcome of the Catalan self-determination referendum this autumn, the municipal and regional elections of May 2015 and the general elections of November of that year. But this route has many possible outcomes. There are many crossroads and bifurcations along the way. Nothing is evident. Neither the sequence of the events nor its mutual relation. There are abundant possible combinations, many imaginable calendars. In Catalonia neither the outcome of the 9-N referendum, nor the reaction to its possible disavowal, nor the following steps are evident.

Rajoy, on the other hand, might be expected to bring the general elections forward to take advantage of the weakness of the PSOE and gamble everything on one card, to avoid the erosion of a loss of fortresses like Madrid or Valencia in the autonomous and municipal elections. But while advancing the elections could be good for the PP, it would be bad for bipartisanship and the regime if the PSOE does not recover. Reasons of state and the partisan interests of the PP would thus enter into collision. The results of early elections could be a blow to bipartisanship and place both parties in a situation where only a grand coalition guaranteed governability. A true suicide for the PSOE. A true suicide for even such a disciplined and loyal soldier and servant of financial power. Could we see the PP and PSOE agree to the survival of the bipartisanship by means of electoral reforms that guarantee majorities? It is always a possibility. But to do violence to the rules of the game so as to prolong it would only increase the loss of legitimacy of both parties. Such a measure would smack of desperation.

The political scene is unforeseeable. It is a very volatile situation. Only the present difficulty in reviving social struggles gives a breathing space to the forces of an exhausted regime. This is the crucial weakness from our point of view. We should not forget it.



# Descent Into Butchery: Israel's Latest Assault on Gaza

15 July 2014, by **David Finkel**

As it happened, the kidnap-murder of three Israeli settler teenagers was the trigger. But even for those of us who find almost nothing too shocking anymore, the Israeli government's behavior touched new depths of cynicism. The entire three-week "search" for the missing kids was fraudulent: the government knew right away that they'd been killed. It pretended to be searching for them as a pretext to smash up Hamas in the West Bank, re-arrest former prisoners released in the exchange for Gilad Shalit, and cripple the new Palestinian unity government.

The story is reported by J.J. Goldberg in the US Jewish newspaper Forward [41]- a significant event in itself, since this paper was once essentially a neoconservative house organ, where now increasingly open criticism of Israel appears. The piece is important reading both in its own right and for the vitriolic racism of many reader comments that follow it.

The political advantage that the Netanyahu regime gained from the murders of the Israeli teenagers "as horrible as it is to put it in such terms" was negated by the torture-murder of the young Palestinian Mohammed Abu Kheidr in Jerusalem by a gang of six Israelis, and the video of the savage police beating of his American cousin Tareq who was

visiting at the time.

The former Israeli intelligence chief Yuval Diskin described the context of the unfolding disaster in a lengthy Facebook post, quoted by J.J. Goldberg:

"The deterioration is first and foremost a result of the illusion that the government's inaction on every front can actually freeze the situation in place, the illusion that 'price tag' [a reference to marauding Israeli settler gangs -DF] is simply a few slogans on the wall and not pure racism, the illusion that everything can be solved with a little more force, the illusion that the Palestinians will accept everything that's done in the West Bank and won't respond despite the rage and frustration and the worsening economic situation, the illusion that the international community won't impose sanctions on us, that the Arab citizens of Israel won't take to the streets at the end of the day because of the lack of care for their problems, and that the Israeli public will continue submissively to accept the government's helplessness in dealing with the social gaps that its policies have created and are worsening, while corruption continues to poison everything good, and so on and so on." [42]

In the guise of suppressing rocket fire from Hamas, which so far has not killed a single Israeli citizen and is not likely to do so "and perhaps responding to a growing sector of the Israeli public which is showing openly genocidal attitudes [43]" Netanyahu has ordered an air offensive that's claiming civilian lives, entirely predictably, on a daily basis. [44] Should that prove insufficiently bloody, a ground offensive is pending [45].

The Obama administration, which understands perfectly well that the last pathetic negotiations collapsed over Israel's settlement expansion and Netanyahu's demand that Israel be "recognized as the state of the Jewish people," now blathers about Israel's right to defend itself [46]. About Palestine's right of self-defense, silence.

Given that the current descent into butchery is neither the first time nor the last, what's essential now is to tell the truth about the Israeli assault and to raise its political costs, especially through the powerful grassroots global BDS (Boycott/Divestment/Sanctions) movement [47].

10 July 2014

[Against the Current](#)

## Magnificent success of the PTB-Left Opening lists

## Liège and Hainaut

The PTB-GO! lists won about 133 000 votes for the federal Chamber, 118,000 for the Walloon Parliament (5.76 per cent) and 15,800 for the Brussels Parliament (3.86 per cent) [48]. The highest scores were achieved in the region of Liège: 50,600 votes, or 8.08 per cent, for the Chamber. Spectacular peaks were seen in the cantons of Herstal (20.67%, second party after the Socialist Party), Seraing (15.66%, the third party after the PS and MR), Liège (11.49 per cent), Grace-Hollogne (11.7 per cent) and Saint-Nicolas (10.3 per cent).

The second seat in the Chamber was won in Hainaut with 38,000 electors representing 5.17 per cent of the votes cast. The Hainaut cantons cannot compete with Herstal or Seraing, but some of the results are far from negligible: 8.7 per cent in Charleroi, 8.63 per cent in La Louvière, 6.67 per cent in Châtelet and scores between 5 and 6 per cent in Mons, Binche, Boussu and Fontaine-Bishop.

The province of Namur caused a surprise with a score of 4.86 per cent. Pulled upward by the results of the working-class cantons of the industrial zone (5.06 per cent in Fosses-la-Ville), it was not very far from the threshold of electability (5 per cent). In other districts, the results were more modest. This was the case in Walloon Brabant and Luxembourg, but also in Brussels. In the capital, the list for the Chamber received 19,000 votes (3.84 per cent); the 5 per cent threshold was crossed in the canton of Saint-Gilles (7.96 per cent).

## Reasons for progress

The progress of the PTB-GO! Lists compared to the PTB + lists in the 2010 elections [49] is clear and considerable. In the federal election of 2010, the PTB + won 39,000 votes in

the Walloon constituencies, to which should be added some 9,000 votes for the list PTB-PVDA + in Brussels. Overall, the gains are more than 270 per cent! They are strongest in the province of Namur and in Brussels, two regions where the PTB-GO! scored more than three times the result of the PTB in 2010.

This leap was the result of several factors. The most important was undoubtedly the dissatisfaction provoked by the austerity policies imposed by the government of Elio Di Rupo. During the campaign, on the ground, activists could see for themselves: a part of the traditional social base of the PS wanted to punish it and to express its desire for a social alternative.

The second factor was the general tone of the PTB-GO! campaign, particularly the way it was expressed during the interventions in the media by its spokesperson, Raoul Hedebouw. The discourse that was developed, the arguments, the demands that were put forward on these occasions, the way of speaking to the mass of the people; it was all pretty well adapted to the present level of radicalization.

The third factor was the image that was created by bringing together the "left for an opening" (the LCR, the Communist Party of Wallonia-Brussels, PCWB, and various personalities) and accentuated by the declaration of the Charleroi FGTB: "We welcome this first step in the direction our appeal of May 1, 2012 " [50]. Thanks to the "Left Opening" voters were left feeling that the old quarrels were being overcome, so that the vote for the PTB-GO! lists would enable them to simply express their support for the slogans, the principles and the fundamental values of the whole (real) left, such as social justice, tax justice and solidarity.

It is obviously impossible to give an exact weight to these different elements. Given the score achieved in the province of Liège, it is likely that Raoul Hedebouw would have been elected even on a PTB + list without

the additional support concretized in the "Left Opening." But he would certainly not have been joined in the Chamber by Marco Van Hees. In fact, the PTB-GO! list for the Chamber in Hainaut exceeded the electability threshold by about 1,300 votes. However, the two LCR candidates added 2,500 votes to the list, and the CPWB nearly a thousand more. [51]. In addition, it was in this province that the trade union left committed itself the most explicitly, and it would not have done that for PTB or PTB + lists.

## Failure of other left lists

The success of the PTB-Left Opening lists left no chance for other formations who were seeking the votes of electors looking for an alternative to the left of the PS and Ecolo.

Headed up by Vincent Decroly, the Green Left VEGA list for the European Parliament obtained just over 15,000 votes (0.68 per cent), despite the fact that the head of the list was very well-known. The list for the Walloon Parliament in the constituency of Liège - the bastion of VEGA - obtained 3,500 votes (1.02 per cent) and the list for the Brussels parliament got 2,500 (0.57 per cent). Although VEGA has received significant media coverage for what is a very new formation, we are very far from the expectations expressed by Decroly in his interview in *Le Soir* last autumn, and still farther from the perspective of "three elected representatives" formulated by another spokesperson for the movement.

The situation is even more cruel for the Movement of the Left (MG): present at all levels, it won only 4,700 votes in the European elections, 4,500 at federal level and 4,900 in the Walloon region. Results that were more than modest...

To complete the picture, we should also mention the attempts of the lists

of the Common Lefts: 839 votes for the Brussels Parliament, 1,445 for the Chamber in the capital (0.29 per cent). Despite a big propaganda effort, in some municipalities of Brussels in particular, the front between the Socialist Party of Struggle (PSL) and the Humanist Party did not convince the electors.

## Responding to the appeal of Charleroi

It is clear that the voters did not see the point of these lists. Having misunderstood the situation, the leaders of VEGA and the MG believed that a denunciation of the "Stalinism" of the PTB would be enough to justify their existence and that the reference to ecosocialism in the manner of the French Left Party would bring them more electoral credibility. But it was not around this kind of very ideological demarcations that the outcome of the elections could be decided.

As for the PSL, after contributing at the local elections to establishing "left fronts" and trying subsequently to coordinate them, it seems that it wanted to take part in the PTB-GO! Alliance but failed to approach the question in a credible way. Its "open letter" for "PTB-unity" lists appeared as an ultimatum. It was regrettable that it then tried to hide its disappointment by launching ill-judged attacks against the PCWB and the LCR.

In general, success for the radical left

in this election could only go to formations that were capable of situating themselves in the rising wave created by the appeal of the Charleroi FGTB. From the moment that the PTB had opened up to some extent to the principle of an alliance, the LCR considered that it was around this organization that it was necessary to regroup, because it was the only way to have a chance of being successful, and that to have a success was decisive for the pursuit of the anti-capitalist polarization of the trade-union left. The facts have proved us right.

## In Flanders

In Flanders, there was no regroupment comparable to the PTB-Left Opening. The PTB stood under the name PVDA +, as in previous elections, and welcomed on its lists candidates of opening - in particular, members of the LCR-SAP. There was no other list to the left of social democracy (Socialistische Partij Anders, SPA) and the Greens (Groen).

Getting its president Peter Mertens elected to the Chamber was a priority for the PTB-PVDA. It failed narrowly: 52,000 electors voted PVDA + in the province of Antwerp. A very good result (4.52 per cent), but, alas, less than the electability threshold. This was a disappointment, especially sharp because the activists had given so much and because the PVDA won 8.85 per cent of the vote in the canton of Antwerp (becoming the fourth party, ahead of the fascist Vlaams Belang).

In the other constituencies in the North of the country, the results of the PVDA+, though registering progress compared to 2010, remained more modest: 2.67 per cent in East Flanders, 2.57 per cent in Limburg, 1.86 per cent in Flemish Brabant, 1.66 per cent in West Flanders.

It goes without saying that the difference in level between the results of the PTB-GO! and those of the PVDA + can be explained primarily by the difference in the political and social context between the two regions. Faced with an ultra-right majority, many left-wing voters preferred to vote for social democracy and, above all, for the Greens, who progressed. It is even possible that some people, on the basis of opinion polls, believed that the seat of Mertens was in the bag and that therefore they could give their vote to the government left, so that it would not lose too badly.

Nevertheless, we can ask ourselves whether the question of the opening does not arise also in Flanders. The PvdA was not capable of affirming openly and publicly the presence on its lists of candidates of opening, and it even made some blunders. Who knows whether a little more culture of regroupment would not have put Peter Mertens in the same situation as Marco Van Hees in Hainault?

This article was written for *La Gauche*, French-language bimonthly of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, Belgian section of the Fourth International, which is called Socialistische Arbeidrespartij or SAP in Flanders).

# Declaration of the Central Committee of OKDE-Spartakos on the electoral result and the political situation

11 July 2014, by **OKDE-Spartakos**

## Social and political polarization

In spite of the inevitably distorted way social formations and phenomena are reflected in the elections, those of May show clearly the constantly increasing polarization between capital and labor. At the same time, we can see the stabilization of a political geography characterized by two elevated wings close to approximately 40% each, the Left and the Right, and a weak and unstable centre.

Social polarization is not directly reflected on politics. The Left, of course, is clearly registering its best results among employees, small business owners and the unemployed, whilst the governmental block, especially Nea Dimokratia (New Democracy, from now on ND) is mainly supported by the bourgeois class and the employers, as well as an important part of the middle and higher rural social strata. The popular and working class districts that traditionally used to vote for PASOK have passed to SYRIZA. The middle strata are in conflict with the governmental block, so SYRIZA has taken the (borderline) lead there as well. The youth and longterm unemployed vote for the Left, while the older layers, who still have important material relationships with the old-time political system and their favor, vote for the Right. On the other side, there is political polarization even inside working class and popular districts: the highest percentages for the Left come together with the highest ones for Golden Dawn (GD) and sometimes of the Independent Greeks. [52] GD is recording its lowest percentages among employees and organized workers spaces (civil servants) and its peak is among employers and businessmen. Apart from these strata, GD also gathers young unemployed people and individualistic lower classes, showing that they can convert the anger and the disappointment of a part of the popular layers towards the reactionary direction of hatred against immigrants, the Left and the different or weakest ones, from a class point of view.

The continuous crisis of the bourgeois political system is a dominant characteristic of the political scene, with its highlight to be the decomposition of the governmental block. Within two years, the government (including Democratic Left-DL [53]) has lost more than 15% of the overall voters. The crisis has to do mainly with PASOK, who are celebrating that they lost only the 1/3 of their 2012 votes with their decision to participate in the European Parliament Elections as ELIA. [54] PASOK collapsed for 40 to 8% within 5 years, due to the fact that the social compromise (always under the dominance of the capitalist class interests) on which they based their power for decades. The working class abandoned it massively, as it became obvious that PASOK is no more willing to do any sort of allowances towards the workers, even compared to ND. The biggest part of the voters and ex-members of PASOK turn to the Left, even in an unstable way with unclear intentions, although another part of it, which is mostly socially and politically ruined, turn to the far right.

ND is mainly losing votes towards GD, although there are parts of their voters turning to the left, but obviously in a slower and more hesitant way in comparison to the ones of PASOK. ND continues to be the first choice of the national bourgeois class and their European allies. They have a more clear class functionality in comparison to PASOK and is bound to remain the basic bourgeois political point of reference in the future. This is the reason why, in spite of their 7% overall decrease, ND does not collapse. However, their mid-term perspective is not so favourable and the ruling class has to find alternatives.

The hybrid formations that cannot enter the two political poles in a clear way are vanishing. DL's crash was the result of their opportunism. Their leadership is interpreting the electoral result as a sign for a right turn and firm integration of their majority to the centre-left. The IG are surviving, but with severe losses, as the part of the bourgeois class that used to support them has turned back to ND, while their popular base is attracted by GD. Potami [55] recorded an

important percentage, however did not achieve its declaration goal, which was for them to be the third party of the political scene and participate in the political life in the next period. The future of this newborn liberal centre-left formation is more than uncertain.

An important aspect of the political crisis, of the crisis of the bourgeois parties and the social polarization is the victory of the minoritarian Party of Equity, Peace and Friendship in Thrace (Northern-Eastern Greece), as well as the fact that their candidates in a series of municipalities. The attachment of the Thrace minority on the ruling parties, especially PASOK, is no more, and the minority issue is returning in explosive terms on the political map. The historical and systemic oppression of the Greek State on the national groups of Turks, Pomacs and Thrace Rom can no longer stay in the shadows, although the media are doing their best to silence their yelling and given the indifference of the parliamentary left. The anticapitalist left cannot allow for nationalist propaganda on the issue, such as the rumors on the financial support of the Turkish embassy and government on the minority party, as this conceals the political essence, which is the oppression of the minority. It is not possible to organize real political work in Thrace while ignoring the vote of Muslim people and without clear positions for their rights.

As a result, it is clear that the system is not stabilizing itself at all, in spite of any governmental or EU declarations for the opposite. The rupture opened by the crisis and the big class confrontations is not closed at all, despite the relative stagnation of workers' and social struggles during the last two years. The political situation of the days cannot be solved without important political and social confrontations, without confrontation between the block of the bourgeois power and the organized labor and popular movement. So, the political guidelines of offensive strategy chosen by the anticapitalist and revolutionary left during the period that followed the imposition of the memoranda are still valid.



First of all, the need for the development of an overthrowing movement, a labor and popular uprising that will overthrow the government of Samaras-Venizelos, thus casting aside the illusions of SYRIZA's motto "we vote on the 25th, they leave on the 26th".

## Forces and limits of the Left

The victory of SYRIZA in the elections for the European Parliament as well as a series of municipalities of Athens has a big symbolic importance, as it discourages the bourgeois class and intensifies the crisis of their political hegemony. At the same time, the rapid social-democratization of SYRIZA, their often and warm meetings with the Association of Greek Industry Owners, the statements of R. Dourou on the EU grants, the agreement with ship-owner and alleged oil smuggler Mellissanidis of the construction of (his team) AEK stadium may show that under some conditions a part of the bourgeois class could trust SYRIZA, but these are not yet enough for the capitalists. Contrary to PASOK of the 80's, SYRIZA is not in the position to control the unions in a political and organizational way, which makes them less attractive in the eyes of the bourgeois class as a tool for class control. And of course, the bourgeois class has no reason to accept them so long as the pressure of the movement remains minor. So, the Greek capital did not welcome the victory of SYRIZA and they definitely did not welcome the decline of the electoral power of the government.

However, neither the immediate political results nor the overthrowing potential of SYRIZA's victory should be overestimated. First of all, the government does not face an immediate stability problem, as they have enough members of the parliament and under some terms they can even add to them some of the many "independent" members of the parliament. [56] Although it is notable for a government to elect only one third of the European Parliament representatives, the election results, especially those of the regional elections, have not created an

immediate problem of survival for them. We voted against them on the 25th, but they didn't leave on the 26th: the main motto of SYRIZA's campaign was more of electoral blackmail for gathering the vast majority of the anti-governmental votes than an actual plan.

ND's boast that SYRIZA surpassed them without achieving more votes or percentage is comical. However, it is a fact that a massive left current was not formed and the greatest part of the increase in left votes was directed to KKE and ANTARSYA. The middle layers have not abandoned the governmental parties in an organized way and in a generally left-oriented direction, but show a tendency to disperse themselves in all directions, integrating into the far-right as well and allowing for the efforts to regroup the centre to survive. Thus, the general result of the elections cannot be described as a "turn to the Left".

The political responsibility of the leaderships of KKE and SYRIZA for decelerating the social movement towards the Left is huge. During the previous summer, the workers' movement had the chance to overthrow the government through the climax of their struggles. The decision of secondary education professors to strike during the exams of May 2013, despite the government's Acts who forced them to work on legal terms and under the threat of massive layoffs, the workers' uprising after the closing down of the public TV broadcast that forced DL to exit the government in June 2013, the second strike of the professors in September, the mobilization against public-sector layoffs during September and October and of course the antifascist explosion that followed the murder of Pavlos Fyssas, which offered the chance to link antifascism with the workers' uprising, had created an explosive social concoction for Samaras and Venizelos. SYRIZA's leadership kept a stance of expectation for the elections, while the KKE leadership's tactic of avoiding a climax of the movement so that does not benefit SYRIZA, thus allowing for the federation bureaucracy to declimax the struggle. The barrage of general strikes that the public TV workers needed never happened. The

antifascist movement's need for a nation-wide antifascist strike was never posed by the unions.

This is why the political polarization may be intense, but is increasing in a moderate tempo in the last months. This shows the limits of the enthusiasm caused to the workers and the oppressed the main part of the Left, SYRIZA, and their plan. SYRIZA was voted for in the European Parliament elections and in the Athens district county, that is in the elections that were seemingly more directly linked to the central political scene, but did not manage to mobilize people under the motto "three elections - one vote". [57] Although they won the biggest county, they lost 11 out of 13 overall and managed to enter the second round of the elections only in two of them. Respectively, although they won in a series of municipalities in the different districts of Athens, in a series of other local elections their participation was a mediocre one. This phenomenon is not irrelevant with the survival of material relationships and reconciliations with local authorities, which re-increased after the allowance of the distribution of EU grants by the counties. In local levels the political system is seemingly much steadier than in a central level. But that is not enough to explain the inconsistency of SYRIZA's electoral results. It is obvious that the vote to SYRIZA is considered by an important part of the popular layers as the least bad vote, no more than a tool to overthrow the government. The demands for SYRIZA are relatively low and the vote to them is not linked to an active orientation in the movement, as was clear in the pre-electoral period. The same person who votes for SYRIZA in the central elections may support or even mobilize for KKE or the anticapitalist left in the counties, the municipality, their workers' or student union. This means that the support of the working class and the oppressed to SYRIZA is not definitive, class conscience is still fluid and constantly changing and the potential for the anticapitalist left still remains big - but this has to do with the policy they will follow.

KKE is apparently satisfied with their partial regaining of the lost votes of June 2012 [58], as well as the victory of their municipal candidates in 4 big



municipalities. [59]KKE seems to resist the pressure, despite their sectarian and defeatist policy of their leadership, showing that the party still has important popular roots. Given the poor results in a series of peripheral elections, without the pressure of SYRIZA, the optimism of KKE's leadership is not justified at all.

In any case, the Left is in control of two counties and some important municipalities. This will definitely lead to important pressure for political adjustment to the level of the bourgeois parties through the need for managing the local authorities. The anticapitalist left has to keep the right to support any progressive act of the left municipal and county authorities and although they did offer a critical support in favor of the reformists in the second round of the elections, should not undertake the political responsibility of the administration of bourgeois institutions, or bind to support a priori any left mayor. In this point of view, the case of Chalandri [60] needs special attention.

## Golden Dawn

GD's rise as the third party of the political scene, although expected by the polls, is a phenomenon which demands immediate and radical treatment. The nazi current has gained depth in the society, giving expression to petit-bourgeois rage and will for revenge, as they see their financial power declining and their links to the power and their traditional political representation to be cut violently, while their conservative traditions and individual situation does not allow for them to turn left. Sociologically, GD represents a league of businessmen and employers of all levels, as well as unemployed people and impoverished self-employed. Their emphasis is shown in the middle ages and the part of the youth that abandons education and does not enter the university, that is found more in the popular than the richer districts. In this point of view, GD is the agent of capital in the petit-bourgeois and lower classes.

It is obvious that the legal accusations the government was forced to adopt against the Nazis, did give an

important blow to the mechanisms of GD, but are not enough by themselves to cast the fascist danger aside. The strategy of "constitutional" or "democratic alliance" against the Nazis, that is the alliance with the government, the State and the police, who fostered the Nazis in a systematic way, is not only an illusion, not only binds the Left on bourgeois legality and renders it politically neutralized by making it a follower of the Right and Social-Democracy, but also tends to aid the Nazis show that they are truly the only political power that is against the political system.

The rise of GD underlines the urgency for brining antifascist activity to a climax. After all, it is the victories of the antifascist movement that did not allow for the fascist threat to thrive. GD was forced to an electoral campaign without offensive mottos and relatively less racist rhetoric, in relation to the past. They were incapable of making public appearances, or take their squads on the street. Their offensive activity was diminished to a few attacks, mainly against ANTARSYA. It is logical to assume that without the great antifascist movement of the autumn of 2013 that their electoral result would be even higher and they would achieve their basic electoral objectives, which were an overall percentage higher than 10% in the European Parliament elections and their candidate to enter the second round in the elections for the Municipality of Athens.

Fascism cannot be treated with calls for the government and "justice", or with positive statements for the voters of GD, who can no longer call upon their unawareness of the murderous nature of the organization. What we need is a united front of all workers' organizations and left parties in action, with combative wide antifascist committees in every workspace and neighborhood, massive mobilization along with systematic antifascist propaganda in all levels. The anticapitalist left, which has shown very good reflexes at times, continues to carry the Stalinist tradition of undermining the duty of antifascist struggle, needs to lead a new round of assemblies, interventions and mobilizations that has to begin as soon

as possible.

## European Elections in the rest of Europe

On a European level, the elections were marked by a similar, but not of the same size, decomposition of the bourgeois coalitions which imposed and managed austerity as a class offensive of capital against labor. Again the social-democrats are the parties under the highest pressure, however the European Popular Party has important losses, although they remain the first party of the European Parliament. The most impressive and dangerous issue is of course the rise of the far-right, who prove to be the first parties in France, Denmark and Austria and has neonazis elected in Greece and Germany. At the same time, the right-orientated euroscepticism of N. Farage wins the election in Great Britain. These currents manage to get anti-governmental votes, but also reflect a sharpening of national contrasts inside the EU framework.

The left has benefited in few countries. In some cases (Spanish State, Portugal, Ireland, Czech Republic) the reformist left has managed to achieve important results. On the left of reformism we note the case of PODEMOS in the Spanish State (where the section of the Fourth International has one member elected in the European Parliament), the coalition against the EU in Denmark, with the participation of the Red-Green Alliance [61], as well as the election of a CWI section member in Ireland. In general however, the vague character of these formations, the very bad result for the NPA and LO in France and the crisis of the British SWP reveal a crisis of the anticapitalist left, despite the important chances offered by the period. In this harsh environment, the discussion started between ANTARSYA and NPA is important, as these two collectivities carry the burden of regrouping the anticapitalist left in a European level.

It is a fact that the position towards

the EU was one of the most crucial political questions of the elections. The Left, a part of which is trapped in a pro-EU old-time shake eurocommunist strategy, tends to undermine the question. The explanation of a rise of the far-right as a consequence of the negligence of the Left to pose anti-EU questions and demands is too shallow and ignores the class basis for their political rise. The different examples of each country are, after all, quite contradictory: GD rose without anti-EU positions, while the long-lasting anti-EU tradition of the Danish Left did not prove to block the rise of the far-right. It would be even more arbitrary and biased to suggest that what the anticapitalist left actually lacks, in Greece and in other countries, is a direction towards national independence, especially at the point it has become clear that the Left has failed (willingly or not) to highlight the social, class source of crisis and austerity.

## ANTARSYA and the anti-capitalist formations

ANTARSYA took part in the elections being in a difficult position. First, because of an extraneous factor: the workers' tendency to vote for 'the lesser of two evils', which in this case is SYRIZA, in order to cause the collapse of the government, a choice made not only in parliamentary elections, the second reason being on the inside of ANTARSYA, having to do with the bad mood and the political division within the coalition. Actually, the gap from the process of joining with Plan B 12, a strategic debate, had not narrowed neither before nor after the elections. Regardless of this situation, ANTARSYA's participation in the elections was independent, while a significant part of the coalition along with member -organisations disagreed, a fact that could have nothing but consequences.

Additionally, in the previous period, ANTARSYA posed insufficiently and unsuccessfully at times the transitional programme that is necessary in the crisis. The one-sided

manifestation of the EU and the euro currency issue, regardless of the political importance included in the inconsistency with these international capitalist and imperialist mechanisms, not only is programmatically vague, but proved to be unattractive as well. Overemphasis on leaving the euro and the EU doesn't counterbalance the lack of slogans, on the one hand, such as pay rise and prohibition of dismissal that should be immediate and of demands that bring out the issue of power on the other. The slogan 'power and wealth to workers' was only in the last poster and that not before the complaints of OKDE-SPARTAKOS. The workers' control which was the centre point in the previous campaigns was now overshadowed. The anti-capitalist left cannot hope that a magical slogan will make people come close. On the contrary, it must promote all the axes of the transitional programme and the revolutionary plan with clarity and perseverance, particularly in a period that the working class is seeking overall answers.

Nevertheless, in the elections for the regions and in some municipalities as well, the forces ANTARSYA, collaborating in some cases with other revolutionary and anti-capitalist organizations, had a very positive result.

12: a small organization set up by Alekos Alavanos in 2012, the former leader of SYRIZA that our comrades in ANTARSYA wanted to co-operate with.

The 2,4% and the about 130.000 votes (30.000 more than in 2010) in the regional elections, show clearly that an anti-capitalist current is for the first time recognizable and of a wide range all around Greece. In spite of SYRIZA supporters' opinion, it seemed that the working class is not frustrated with ANTARSYA because of not voting for SYRIZA in June 2012. Moreover, despite the disunion of the forces, the unwillingness of an ANTARSYA's part to mobilize themselves and the delay of the election campaign, the experience we had was positive if we take into account our communication with the workers, the unemployed and the lower classes, the political discussions we had with them and the spread of the anti-capitalist Marxist

views. The opinion that ANTARSYA is a sincerely militant and anti-systemic force which broad parts of these classes share, is favourable and the political attempt is more widely known than before.

In municipal elections the picture was more complicated. In general, the point of view claiming that the formations characterized by grounding in local fights and a consistent participation in the movement are rewarded in the elections, is correct. In these particular circumstances, this was reaffirmed in some cases (Peristeri, Dafni). [62] However, in some other cases, electoral pressure was exercised on formations with important fights in the past, although they managed to elect delegates for the local councils again (Vironas, N. Smirni, Zografou). On the other hand, several formations emerging for the first time, got very good results, although they had various different characteristics depending on the case. Actually, the factors defining each formation's progress were even more complicated: not only the actual involvement in the movements, but the opponents' ballot papers in the area, the situation in the inside, whether it had the support by the whole of ANTARSYA or not, whether they responded to existing local needs, regardless of the problems during their creation (e.g. Nikaia) etc. Unfortunately, the battle for the municipal elections, although in some cases it had very good results, was not united. Every organization issued their own list of the formations to be supported, and sometimes these formations had absolutely no connection with ANTARSYA; just the title was unilaterally and unfairly used.

In Giannena [63] and Patra [64], the forces of ANTARSYA not only voted for but also were on the opponents' ballot papers. The battle for the heads of the formations, apart from having as an outcome the vast majority of the elected to belong to one particular organization, in several occasions ended up in a situation where half of ANTARSYA didn't practically support its local formation. The most problematic phenomenon, however, was that in various cases, comrades

and whole constituent organizations of ANTARSYA took part in SYRIZA's ballot papers or officially co-operated SYRIZA (Mytilene, Halandri). Even so, however, the result of the municipal elections, especially in the region of Attiki [65] is favourable.

Nonetheless, in the European Parliament Election, ANTARSYA, couldn't hold but a small percentage of votes compared to those of the regional election, which is not interpreted only from the fact that there were a great deal of ballot papers. The result of 0.74% is not good, even if it is improved in comparison with the previous European elections and Parliamentary elections as well in June 2012. The way in which the anti-capitalist left will persuade the militants who join it in the movement to support its proposal in the elections too, when they choose the "useful vote" for SYRIZA to a great extent, is in question. The stabilization of ANTARSYA's political influence in all levels is a real problem to be solved. However, it wasn't such a negative result so as to bring the future and the use of an independent front of the anti-capitalist left into question.

## **Joining (with Plan B) and perspectives of the anti-capitalist left**

Despite the several desires or scenarios over the plan of joining, which dominated the political debate of ANTARSYA during the last year, this plan is emphatically disproved. Plan B's election campaign does not allow approaches. Alavanos chose a personalized campaign, with slogans that fall short not only of the necessary anti-capitalist transitional programme in a period of financial crisis, but of the negotiations during the previous time with ANTARSYA. Furthermore, this campaign could not have a chance in the elections. The unsuccessful negotiations concerning the joining had some cost for ANTARSYA.

However, the cost ANTARSYA would

have to bear, if the negotiations succeeded leading the coalition to take the political responsibility for Plan B, would be bigger. A possible reintroduction of the proposal for a new round of negotiations about the joining would be disastrous and disruptive. The political and programme prerequisites posed by the conference of ANTARSYA about the joining were examined and proved to be unreal. It is taken for granted that the unsatisfactory electoral result in the European elections will reintroduce points of view according to which the anti-capitalism is limited and requires a wider left front.

The discussion about the programme and the pursuit of a proper revolutionary strategy today is not only rightful but essential too. The idea, though, that we need a moderate adaptation, a front intervening between the present ANTRASYA and SYRIZA or a political orientation not "closely anti-capitalist" any more would be absolutely wrong. The conclusion of the political advances is totally different: in the environment of a financial and political crisis which cannot be healed, in a situation of unstable and unsettled conscience and in a political correlation where the left realism and every reformative and managerial proposal is dominated by SYRIZA's attempt, the duty of the revolutionary Marxists is to develop an alternative and distinctly anti-capitalist means. A means that will not refuse the militant unity in the streets, but it will preserve its political and organizational independence on the basis of an anti-capitalist programme and the revolutionary methodology and will prepare a minor but existing part of the workers and the repressed for the next stages, building the fights and the social resistance.

ANTARSYA's report on the elections must not be based on the criteria of "parliamentary cretinism" (this does not mean, of course, that the electoral results do not play any role at all), but mainly on the criterion of the political efficiency concerning the participation during the election campaign, the spread of the anti-capitalist ideas, the picture that the workers have about the front, the political bonds that were forged during this political experience, the

possibilities for political initiatives that arose regarding the period after the elections. In the next period, ANTARSYA should immediately take political initiatives for the movement as well and fight practically against the parliamentary illusions which immobilize the workers' movement in anticipation of the governmental change through the elections and paralyze its action today. In order to manage this, ANTARSYA must get rid of its own illusions too.

Above all, ANTARSYA must build political relations with the militants who voted for it in the elections. The answer to the way in which ANTARSYA's electoral influence will be stabilized lies in the transformation of its relation with the people from electoral to political, in people's acquisition of the sense that ANTARSYA is the tool that they will use to take political action themselves.

## **OKDE-SPARTAKOS and the elections**

OKDE-SPARTAKOS took part in the political process of the elections actively, participating in the ballot for the European parliamentary election, for 8 regional and several municipal anti-capitalist slates as well. It did not intend to fill in the lists with candidates to boost its status as if there was a runaway. On the contrary, it proposed particular comrades who were politically related to the elections and could be actively occupied with them. The picture of the candidates' participation was positive.

Although OKDE-SPARTAKOS stated its opinion about the content, the slogans and the heads of the slates wherever it had forces to interfere, and in some cases this opinion was strongly supported, OKDE-SPARTAKOS did not selectively support the slates of ANTARSYA. Whether its opinion outvoted or not, whether it had its own candidates or not and whether the heads of the slates were of OKDE-SPARTAKOS' choice or not, the organization invested its forces, taking into consideration the limits of its



potential, in the success of these lists. So, this enables us to criticize strongly the organizations and the members that did not have such an attitude.

Finally, OKDE-SPARTAKOS, in accordance with ANTARSYA's decisions, tried at the same time to propagandise its own particular views. These views about the progress of the

class struggle, the duties of the anti-capitalist left and the perspectives of ANTARSYA will be stated in all the processes of the front as well during the next period.

# Statement of Syrian, Iraqi and Lebanese Intellectuals Against Religious Tyranny

## 8 July 2014

The expansion of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Syria and Iraq raises big questions about the future of the Levant, and risks becoming a global exhibition for the failure of states and societies in the region.

The advancement of the forces, clans and tribes bearing the banner of "Islamic State" backed by "travelling jihadists" came from all over the world. It does not only threaten to dismantle national entities, which were formed after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, but undermines all civilization, and faith itself, in our country.

Whatever has been said about the regional and international beneficiaries of this movement in Iraq and Syria, and regardless of the attempts to exploit this phenomenon to serve a strategy to build a new West - Iranian consensus at the expense of the peoples of the region, we see in the growing numbers of jihad supporters efforts to build an authority based on religious legitimacy - under a very narrow vision of religion itself - and a serious threat to the peoples of the Levant and their right to freedom, justice and peace.

This religious provision is in essence a mill for humans; an enslavement machine separated from the world of work and production. It establishes an ultra-elitist racist rule, fascist in its treatment to the public, that will soon accumulate power and wealth in the hands of a handful of leaders protected by the sacred.

This entity is explicit in its initial hostility towards the freedom of women, beauty, modern education, it is a parasite economically, and aggressive at home and abroad. It is an establishment of a system of enslavement that owns the population, the land and wealth. It will impose by force an example foreign to the local population, and it will kill them if they don't support it.

The wide areas of Iraq and Syria wouldn't have formed an area for the spread of this slavery system if these two countries had not been exposed to a long-term social and cultural leveling. Their Baathist regimes have created a political and power vacuum that transformed them in the worst way possible. They practiced extreme forms of discrimination and aggression towards their citizens. Syria, in particular, has an enslavement regime that owns the country and the population, a regime that inherited power and then continued killing and destroying the rebels for 40 months, before the eyes of the whole world. In Iraq, the regime tries to follow the exclusive and possessive instinct of the Syrian regime.

This is more than a major setback to civilization. What we are facing today is a continuation of the aggression against populations in our countries and a denial of their freedom and justice. Those who spread their power now on the areas stretching from Anbar to Aleppo countryside, through Mosul and Badiat ash-Sham, and threaten to invade more areas to raise

their black banner, are a renewal of the tyrannical regimes, and they participate with these regimes in crushing all forces of renaissance, renewal and freedom in our societies.

In addition to ISIS, the Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda and their sisters, come the hordes of the League of the Righteous, the brigades of Abu al Fadl al Abbas, the battalions of Hezbollah and others to participate in the massacre and to give a historical and mythological depth to it, which makes it our companion for generations to come. In this way, they complete the scene of pouncing on the popular revolutions demanding freedom, justice and equality, as well as on the smaller groups that lack protection, on the principle of the state and the public interest, in an endless and normless war of clans, sects and ethnicities.

ISIS, in this sense, is a shining victory for the so-called "Resistance Countries", for their implied sense that these communities do not deserve neither liberty, justice, equality nor even pity. Furthermore, they provide excuses for the Iranian regime to expand in the region and rivet its walls of protection beyond the borders of Iran, working to launch a sectarian war that may destroy this region and kill all the promises of the Arab revolutions.

They then provide an additional legitimacy to Israel (more than what the Baathist enslavement regimes provided) and put the Palestinian struggle in the most isolated locations and the lowest level of legitimacy.

This dangerous play with religion and employing it in a project to establish an authority of enslavement that has no horizon but for nothingness and darkness, where there is no economy nor education nor culture nor art nor society nor happiness nor dignity of human being nor respect among people, not to mention the lack of public and individual freedom. This play is a serious threat to everything some enlightened Arabs tried to build

in the last century and a half, in their quest for advancement in freedom and participation in the making of today's world.

We, the writers, journalists, academics, artists and intellectuals, as we hold all the human values ??approved by the modern human conscience, we warn of the depth of the gap which these religious and political movements drive our

societies and peoples to. We first call on our citizens, and the believers in human freedom and equality among people everywhere, to join us to fight against the old and new killers, and to work for freedom and justice in our countries, in our region, and in the whole world.

July 3

[Syrian Observer](#)

# For a Revolutionary Secular Democratic Sovereign and Independent Iraq

## 7 July 2014

Once again, Iraq is undergoing serious political and security developments. Whole sectors of the Iraqi army have withdrawn from confrontations with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria/Levant (ISIS) and other militias. The cities of Mosul and Tikrit were captured, in addition to several provinces and regions in the western and northern governorates – home to the Sunni majority and the militias are currently advancing towards the capital, Baghdad.

A large-scale security void was created and war, chaos, and terror began to spread. Hundreds of thousands of families fled to safer areas, especially to Erbil and Dohuk in the Kurdistan Region.

The battles continue, in spite of the resistance of some armed clans, the Iraqi army, and the Peshmerga forces of Kurdistan Region, especially in Kirkuk, Diyala, and nearby suburbs and regions. Hit and run operations continue between ISIS and its adversaries. In Sunni-majority western governorates, security and military institutions have all but collapsed.

However, ISIS could not have launched this dangerous advance or taken on this influential size if not for two main factors, among others. The US occupation, on one hand, and the

sectarian-confessional state it contributed to producing, on the other, had been critical in giving rise to ISIS.

Yet the most flagrant transgressions in the context of this campaign were the sectarian massacres committed by ISIS. There are stories about mass executions, with unparalleled brutality, of hundreds of prisoners, out of the thousands who had surrendered. This is in addition to all sorts of acts of repression, deportation, and persecution for religious and ethnic reasons, not to mention the use of rape against women and girls or forcing them to marry fighters from the armed group.

ISIS control culminated in the imposition of strict Sharia rules after the announcement of the "city paper" in Mosul – a 16-article document dictating the lives of citizens. One of the articles indicate that the Islamic State will be the sole authority in control of the city's resources, and that it will punish anyone who steal from public funds.

On the other hand, ISIS seized the equivalent of hundreds of millions of US dollars from banks, government facilities, and municipalities, and confiscated countless quantities of weapons left behind by fleeing

soldiers and officers.

The document advises all men to participate in collective prayers and prohibits the sale and consumption of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, among other Sharia restrictions. It also bans all councils, assemblies, and banners, under any name, in addition to carrying weapons, considering these acts as divisive and deserving of the death sentence.

The document reveals the position adopted by ISIS concerning statues and shrines, which it threatens to demolish, in addition to destroying the graves of saints. It calls on women to remain at home except in emergency situations. In summary, ISIS' rule has left people fearful for their lives, including the armed militias "allied" to them (information indicates around 23 groups who joined the campaign).

The reaction of [Iraqi prime minister Nouri] al-Maliki's government to the security and military developments was no less hazardous. It called for the adoption of a comprehensive military response, imposing a state of emergency, and declaring a state of high alert. Maliki's government also asked the US, Iran, and other powers to intervene in Iraq and assist in defeating the ISIS invasion.



However, as this situation unravels, the country could be pushed into the throes of a confessional war, destroying everything in its path, with deadly consequences to the Arab region as a whole. This impending threat is backed by the Shia authority in Iraq represented by al-Sistani, who issued a fatwa declaring jihad against ISIS and calling people to join the army.

Expectedly, these events took on an unmistakable regional and global dimension. Iraq is one of the world's largest crude oil producers and has been the center of more than a decade of political, sectarian, confessional, and ethnic conflicts. The country's situation is tightly linked to Syria and the events in that country, as well as to sectarian and confessional balances in the region as a whole.

The blatant interference of neighboring countries – Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and others – will produce more complications and add impetus to confessional and sectarian strife like in Syria today. This interference will hinder (and even threaten to abort) the efforts and aspirations of Iraqis, from all over the spectrum, to revive a revolutionary process aiming to establish a democratic, free, and prosperous society.

Such aspirations were apparent in massive demonstrations held in the past and throughout 2013, which were violently and bloodily repressed by Maliki. Furthermore, the growth of ISIS influence in Iraq will have particularly direct and dangerous repercussions on the conflict in Syria, undermining attempts against the Syrian regime.

As usual, the US will exploit the events on multiple levels, in an effort to compensate for losses incurred during its occupation of Iraq. The security agreement signed between the two countries three years ago did not permit the US to keep a permanent military base in Iraq. Today, however, the US seeks to exploit this opportunity to intervene in the situation militarily, on multiple fronts, through sending troops to protect its monstrous embassy and hundreds of consultants, as well as

warplanes to conduct sustained flights in Iraqi airspace and positioning warships in the Gulf.

It is also likely that the US will conduct airstrikes to save the regime headed by Maliki from collapse, even if at the expense of asking for the prime minister's resignation and favoring the inclusion of confessional forces in decision-making positions. Ultimately, these steps merely aim to protect US interests, which have always been and still remain inconsistent with the interest of Iraqis of all sorts and types.

There is no doubt that these are serious outcomes of "the political process" whose roadmap was set by the US occupation. After the fall of the Baathist dictatorship, the Iraqi state was rebuilt according to sectarian and ethnic power-sharing, in the context of the shift in decades-old power balances and the sharp decline in the capacity of the old army, which was disbanded by the occupation. The US administration, which occupied the country, and neighboring Iran, which benefited the most from the occupation, had both contributed to deep transformations in social, political, and economic balances in Iraq.

The most blatant example of this transformation underlies the military campaign spearheaded by ISIS, which aims to become the actual leader of a fragile coalition of several nationalist forces and clans, including remnants of the Baath party and officers and soldiers from the old disbanded army. But this convergence is temporary in essence and risks disintegration, due to ISIS' relentless pursuit for the monopolization of power and control over spoils. Within the "coalition" itself, serious signs are beginning to appear on several fronts about the likelihood of bloody confrontations.

There are those who pretend that an important section of these forces are involved in a real uprising against Maliki's repressive, subservient, and profoundly corrupt authority, and that they are attempting to dismiss the confessional and sectarian mobilization, calling for a truly national struggle against Maliki and confessional forces linked to Iranian

aims.

However, those who claim this fail to see that even this section of forces suffers from blatant flaws in its behaviour and political positions, the risks of which must be exposed. These flaws appear in these factions' commitment to the alliance headed by ISIS, and their constant push towards silencing criticism and condemnations of the heinous crimes committed by ISIS, and its suspect plans, and also in their flagrant lack of opposition, by force of arms, against the crimes of ISIS, in order to avoid breaking the "unity" of the forces fighting the regime and Maliki's forces.

Everyday, Iraqis pay the price of the former US war and occupation, in blood and tragedy. They also bear the burden of sectarian divisions and unbridled, extremist Islamist movements, which coincide with imperialist interventions and the regressive rule of sectarian and confessional regimes in the area. Iraqis are hostages of reactionary, traditional forces, which have built the state in their image. In the event of its failure, Iraq might break up into various mini-states and sectarian and confessional emirates. The country's fate is open to all possible and frightening scenarios.

A radical popular leftist movement in Iraq must be created. It could benefit from the actual resentment felt by the majority of people living in areas facing marginalization, exclusion, and deprivation of the majority of social and economic rights. This is in addition to the discontent of the great majority of Iraqis, regardless of their sect or confession, in every corner of the country.

This movement should strive to organize this discontent and orient the resentment and readiness to rise up in a truly revolutionary direction, against the sectarian, capitalist, and corrupt regime established by the US occupation. It should carry the responsibility to defeat obscurantist and terrorist plans prepared by ISIS and similar groups, regressive and imperialist nations, the government of Maliki, and the rabid sectarian forces on which it leans.

The situation in Syria and the assault on the revolutionary mobilization, attempting to crush it by all means, must be avoided. This should be based on severing links with movements and forces that are sectarian/confessional, nationalist/chauvinist, or that seek to prevail and control.

Based on the conviction that the sectarian and confessional calamity looming over Iraq must be avoided and the unity of its people must be regained on democratic, secular, and revolutionary foundations, the following points should be emphasized:

1. All types of intervention in Iraqi affairs by the US, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, and others must be rejected, as they are not only completely incompatible with the interests of the people of Iraq, but also fuel the fire of a terrible confessional war. We call on the UN General Assembly, in particular, to hold all countries accountable for their intervention in this situation and subject them to sanctions, according to the Uniting for Peace mechanism.

2. All political disputes in Iraq must be solved by appealing to the opinion, will, and interests of Iraqis themselves. This should be through an advanced non-sectarian democratic system, and that ensures active political participation of all citizens, without any type of discrimination, whether in building their new state structure or through local government

in all the cities and governorates.

3. The Iraqi people and emancipatory factions must be at the forefront of confronting the bloody terrorism of ISIS and the counter-terrorism against it. This necessitates the self-organization of people in cities, slums, and villages in armed popular committees and councils, to counter the attacks of obscurantist terrorist organizations and all the opposing confessional militias. These groups should be incapacitated, defeated, and their presence eliminated from Iraq. However, this contains also an international task, a mobilization for the widest global campaign to support Iraqis in their efforts to confront the hostile forces and militias, on one hand, and the existing dictatorial sectarian capitalist regime, on the other, aiming for its overthrow. This would advance the aspirations of Iraqis for a future based on justice, freedom, and human dignity, and prevent the disintegration of the country or its partition.

4. In the above context, the revolutionary left and democratic, feminist, and progressive groups in the Arab region should work together to confront the sectarian and confessional setup and policies of Arab regimes, on one hand, and obscurantist and reactionary right-wing groups, on the other. This is in order to defeat the sectarian/confessional threat, which is the main weapon used by the counter-revolution to attack the revolutionary

space that could unite the peoples of the region.

5. Finally, there is urgent need to provide the necessary aid to refugees and the displaced, through all sorts of international organizations, to reduce and control the impact of the current humanitarian crisis.

The regional and international conspiracy against the Iraqi people must be defeated.

Down with all imperialist interventions in Iraq.

Defeat the obscurantist assault by ISIS and its brethren.

Victory to the Iraqi people against their internal and external enemies.

For a democratic, secular, revolutionary, sovereign, and independent Iraq.

Long live international people's solidarity.

#### **Signatories:**

Revolutionary Socialists (Egypt)

Union of Iraqi Communists (Iraq)

al-Munadhil-a (Morocco)

Revolutionary Left Current (Syria)

Leftist Workers League (Tunisia)

Socialist Forum (Lebanon)

Source [Al Manshour](#).

## **European Election in Germany: Right wing success, stagnation of the left**

**7 July 2014, by Manuel Kellner**

These are in no way progressive attitudes. But this time, the participation in the European elections went from 43% in 2009 to 47.6%. One explanation for that is, that this time in 2014 the European election was in many regions

(Bundesländer) combined with local elections. Another explanation was the existence of two main candidates aiming to become president of the EU-Commission: the conservative Jean-Claude Juncker and the social democrat Martin Schulz, whose

campaign both promised more democratic EU-institutions and more social European politics. And the third explanation is the success of the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD, Alternative for Germany) with its reactionary nationalist criticisms of

the EU and the Troika-politics.

The Christian Conservatives (CDU/CSU) of Angela Merkel got only 35.3% compared to 37.9% five years ago. This is less than the roughly 40% given to this party in the opinion polls for federal German elections. It is to be noted that Merkel said "the EU is not a social union" shortly before the elections, and that she - and this is the mainstream politics for the capitalist class in Germany - defends the building of the EU and at the same time the Troika-austerity politics against the interests of working people, unemployed and youth in the economically weaker countries of the EU. The liberals of the FDP, recently failing to enter the Bundestag because of the 5% barrier, got only 3.4% compared to 11% 2009! But the AfD - which got 4.8% when it stood for the first time in the last federal elections in 2013 - got 7%. And the AfD is not only ultra-neoliberal, but also chauvinistic, nationalist and elitist. It campaigned strongly against "giving money to the Greeks" and other European losers and for keeping a maximum of autonomy of the German state and leaving the common euro-zone. Their leading personnel traditionally argues in favour of an elitist reform of the political system, systematically reducing the rights of the "unproductive people" like the unemployed and organising plebiscites and direct elections of MPs, chancellor and/or the president, to get an authoritarian regime capable of combatting effectively the unions and the social movements.

The political and cultural values defended by this party are ultra-conservative and right-wing-populistic; they campaigned against the "migration in our social protecting systems" (and the Merkel government is preparing severe restrictions on inner-EU-migration to Germany), and they claim "normality" against gays,

lesbians, transgender and "clear speaking" against political correctness. The AfD is supported by the lower layer of the bourgeoisie - not the big bosses, but for example entrepreneurs of family-run businesses, university professors, managers etc.

The social democrat SPD performed well with 27.3% (2009: 20.8%) and succeeded in articulating a more social course, even if it is the junior partner of the great coalition under Merkel and co-responsible for the brutal Troika politics.

The Greens, opposition party in the Bundestag, got 10.7% (2009: 12.1%).

The Left Party (Die Linke) got 7.4% compared to 7.5% in the year 2009. Because of the higher participation to the elections, it had to collect more votes than five years before to get more or less the same result. But it is clear, that this result is not a victory, but expresses more or less a stagnation of the electoral influence of The Left. In opinion polls for federal elections, the Left Party turns around 10%, and in the federal elections 2009 it got 11.9%.

The AfD succeeded in expressing a reactionary protest against the EU and its mainstream politics, but Die Linke failed to articulate a radical alternative not only to the Troika-politics, but also to the non-democratic nature of the EU institutions, an alternative based on international class-solidarity and seeking to realize international mass action from below in order to generate at least embryonal forms of self-organization of the masses, which could evolve to an alternative, democratic way of ruling the society. Linked to that would be the demand for an elected constitutional assembly and a new constitution submitted to a

general vote to create a new political federal European union based on the values of solidarity, participation in decision-making, ecological sustainability, social justice and quality. But Die Linke, even if it criticised the pseudo-constitutional Lisbon-bases of the actual EU, in its electoral campaign only argued for some reforms of the existing EU-institutions (first of all: more rights for the EU Parliament), and this was not far away from the position articulated by the SPD.

If we see the desperate situation of millions of people for instance in Greece, precipitated in misery by the Troika-politics, Die Linke failed also to put this in the center of its electoral campaign and to point out systematically its scandalous nature, in close cooperation with the Greek left.

In the generally deepened polarization, the populist and extremely right-wing forces got in general much stronger than the forces of the radical left. But there are important exceptions, and the Greek one is the most important with Syriza getting the electoral strength to beat all other parties. A government led by Syriza is now the hope of broad masses in Greece, but it also would be the most important instrument to bring together in action the radical left forces, the social movements and the class-struggle currents of the unions to counter not only the Troika-politics and the undemocratic EU, but also the emerged or strengthened right-wing currents which are the forces of counter-revolutionary despair.

In Germany our most important tasks are to win majorities in the Left Party for a clearly internationalist orientation and to bring together all anticapitalist forces inside and outside of the party.

## **The electoral victory of SYRIZA should open**

# the road for a political victory of the Left

7 July 2014

The result of the European elections, 26,6% and 1,5 million votes for SYRIZA, is a clear electoral victory for the radical Left.

The coalition government of New Democracy and PASOK is now demonstrated as a minority government - for the first time after an official ballot, and not just in the opinion polls.

It no longer has the democratic legitimacy to apply the harsh austerity measures that are included in the "middle-term program", that is the new agreement between the local ruling class and the international "creditors".

The success of SYRIZA becomes clearer if we also keep in mind the tough test of a triple election -municipal, provincial and European. When it comes to local elections, the difficulties are way bigger, because the "local" established politicians are more resilient. The wave of huge political upheavals, which was unleashed by the financial crisis and the mass struggles of 2010-12, reaches these places with delay and with a distorted way -as was proven by the oversupply of "independent" candidates.

Even in this difficult field, SYRIZA had important conquests, like the victory in the Province of Attiki [66], the Province of the Islands of Ionian Sea and many large working-class municipalities.

Between the first and the second round of the local elections, SYRIZA proved that it is not arrogant towards the "other" Left. Immediately and unilaterally, it called for massive support to the candidates of the Communist Party, wherever they were facing candidates of New Democracy or PASOK in the second round (the municipalities of Patra, Chaidari, Petroupoli, Ikaria). The comfortable

victory of the Communist Party candidates in all these municipalities, proves that the people of SYRIZA, "trained" to the principle of left-wing unity, applied this political line massively and without hesitations.

Fortunately, the comrades of ANTARSYA took a similar approach, calling for a vote for the SYRIZA candidate in the Municipality of Athens in the second round.

Unfortunately, the comrades of the Communist Party chose the tactic of "keeping equal distances" from SYRIZA and the candidates of the coalition government, calling their supporters to stay neutral.

In the Municipality of Athens, G. Sakellaris, representing SYRIZA, achieved an important result. He was narrowly defeated from G. Kaminis, who was backed by the coalition of all the pro-austerity forces, with the score being 51,4% - 48,6%. Thus, it was proven that "equal distances" are never equal in the end.

Of particular importance are the left-wing victories in a series of municipalities (for example Chalandri, Philadelphia, Keratsini) that were based on a radical program and clear, "movement-oriented" alliances. Thus it was proven once again that radical left politics don't lead to marginalization. On the contrary, in the conjuncture of crisis, it is a precondition for difficult or even unexpected victories.

In the European elections, SYRIZA is the first party, 3,8% ahead from New Democracy. This proves that the political and electoral successes of May and June 2012 were not a coincidence, they were not just a "firecracker" in the context of the anti-austerity revolt of that time.

Despite the ruthless attack of the ruling class and the Mass Media,

SYRIZA preserves its forces on a very high level, raising the Left to the first place and enhancing the prospect of a left-wing government. It is important to note that this success happened as the mass movement is facing a low tide, at least in comparison to the generalized revolt of 2010-12.

The Communist Party, helped by its organizational strength and capacities, succeeded a limited regroup of its support in comparison to June 2012, but is still behind its support on May 2012: It won 6,09% and 341.748 votes now, in comparison with 4,5% and 277.227 votes in June 2012 and with 8,48% and 536.072 votes in May 2012.

In a similar fashion, ANTARSYA won 0,72% and 40.396 votes now, in comparison with 0,33% and 20.396 votes in June 2012 and 1,19% and 75.416 votes in May 2012.

But the relative retreat of the mass movement -despite the heroic struggles of the cleaning ladies, the teachers, the nurses etc- is providing the government some free space to manoeuvre and the ability to regroup its forces.

Its main pillar in this effort is the percentage of the center-left. The combined vote of the various center-left parties shows that the political space of social-liberalism has some potential to survive. The starting point of this effort is the 8,03% of the "Olive Tree" [67] with 450.000 votes, the 6,6% of the "River" (translators note: newly formed media-sponsored, "antipolitical", "hipster" party) with 370.000 votes, and the 1,2% of the Democratic Left, with 67.000 votes. Of course even this combined support is way below the force of the once almighty PASOK. And of course the prospects of a center-left regroup will depend on the question of its position towards the government of Samaras. Whether it will regroup to support it,

or it will try to take its own independent course.

For now this political “space” -that demagogues about having some “social sensitivity”- is the pillar that supports the far-right leadership of New Democracy, in the implementation of the most merciless austerity policy in contemporary history. It is the pillar that allows Samaras to dream about holding in the government until 2016.

The dark stain of the electoral results is the 9,39% and the 527.000 votes of Golden Dawn. DEA insists on the view that to crush the neo-Nazis, we need to fight to reverse austerity, we need to wage the battle of ideas like

antiracism, we need a generalized mobilization of the antifascist movement that will exclude the Nazis from the public spaces. We finally need to insist on our efforts to cut the umbilical cord that connects Golden Dawn with the state and its various “agencies”.

With all these in mind, there are valuable lessons for the militants of the resistance movement and the Left. The electoral success of SYRIZA is real and it does create a new political environment. But the overthrow of the coalition government, the rupture with the agreements with the troika and the EU, the reversal of austerity are tasks way more complex and difficult than a “narrow” electoral battle.

We need a massive movement, organized from below, in the streets and in strike actions. We need an escalation of the political struggle with initiatives of the Left. We need an alliance based on SYRIZA, the Communist Party and ANTARSYA that will be able to organize more firmly the bulk of “unaffiliated” activists.

We finally need a clear radical left program, with an anti-capitalist, socialist direction.

**DEA**

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## The Danish Red-Green Alliance turns 25; celebration and challenges

7 July 2014, by **Alex de Jong**

Over 300 delegates plus various guests participated in the three-day congress. In her opening speech, spokesperson Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen emphasized the growth of the party; the RGA - or Enhedslisten (Unity List) as it's known in Denmark - now has almost 10.000 members, twice as many as five years ago. In 2011, it won 12 seats in the parliament (out of 179). Some polls now give it 10 per cent. As Schmidt-Nielsen said, clearly the years in which the RGA election results were discussed in the same breath as the 2 per cent election threshold are now in the past. At the same time, she insisted the party is not moving closer to the center of Danish politics, a center that has moved dramatically to the right in recent years.

The RGA was founded in 1989 as an alliance of several smaller left wing parties, including the communist party and the Danish section of the Fourth

International. Its recent rapid growth is partly thanks to the moving rightward of Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF, Socialist People's Party) that used to occupy a space between the Social-Democrats (SD) and the radical left RGA.

The 2011 elections resulted in the formation of a government coalition of social-democrats with SF and a social-liberal party, Radikale Venstre (RV). The RGA tripped its election results. After ten years of right-wing governments, many hoped the new coalition would bring change. The RGA took a position of critical support to the coalition government. It gave support to the formation of the government and tried to pressure it to fulfil the promises and expectations. The RGA has been open to negotiations in order to be part of agreements with the government whenever these would only include progressive measures. This lead to

some agreements, including the budgets in 2011 and 2012. The 2011 budget included progressive measures like the improvement of unemployment benefits, higher taxes for multinationals operating in Denmark and more money to protect the environment.

But the coalition has proven a disappointment and has mostly made agreements with the Conservative and Liberal parties from the former government. The RV, although the smallest party in the coalition, exerted a strong influence on its policies. Especially SF, which claims to be green and red, made a sharp turn to the right once in government and became more and more undistinguishable from the social-democrats. Contradicting election promises, Thor Möger Pedersen, SF minister of finances, came out against an increase of unemployment benefits and for lowering the top tax rate. The



final straw was the government's plan to sell 19 percent of the state-owned energy company DONG to US investment bank Goldman Sachs. SF, already facing a strong decline in the polls, was unable to reach unity on this proposal. The social-democrats declared they would exclude the party from the government if any of its parliamentarians voted against or blank regarding the proposal. The result was that SF, marked by bitter internal fights, left the coalition and its six ministerial positions - but it still supported the sale. Four SF MPs (out of 16) left the party in the aftermath of the DONG discussions: three to the social-democrats and one to RV. Their sole MEP, their vice-president and Thor Möger Pedersen also left to the social-democrats.

The growth of the RGA is partly because it managed to attract disappointed SF supporters, both as voters and as members. But the sudden growth also brings new challenges. For example, how to integrate all these new people in the party? Adopting a new party platform (principiprogram) was part of this. A new platform wasn't needed because the old one had become outdated - several speakers at the congress commented the politics remained the same. But there was a need for a new document, concise and clear, that a new generation could relate to. In her speech, Schmidt-Nielsen remarked that after the congress, the major newspapers and the political opponents of the party would have to accept their disappointment that the RGA remains anti-capitalist. The process of discussing and finally adapting the new platform was also a good way to familiarize new supporters with the RGA's principles. Anyway, of the old document, only 5000 copies had been printed.

But this hasn't solved all the problems of integrating new members or taking away all worries about the evolution of the RGA. Several speakers for example remarked that only a minority of the members had voted to elect delegates for the congress. For a long

time, the RGA was mainly based in the Danish capital of Copenhagen, and still a disproportionately large share of its members live there. The RGA has now become a nation-wide party but especially in the countryside there is a need to develop the party's organization. The congress adopted proposals to invest more means in strengthening the party organization outside the major cities.

The recent growth creates other challenges as well. It was remarked throughout the congress that the RGA is now the only socialist party in the Danish parliament and naturally it attracts people that are disappointed in SF. But does this mean the RGA needs to become a rallying point for everybody who rejects neoliberalism, like those nostalgic for the 'old' SF, or should it try to pull such people further to the left, to its own anti-capitalist positions? A majority seemed convinced the party is strong enough to do the latter and the RGA remains a socialist party.

The RGA now has tasks that go beyond its own ranks. SF still supports the government while the trade-union leaderships remain linked to a declining social-democracy. This gives the RGA a heavy responsibility to organize opposition to such neoliberal policies as selling public goods to private banks. There's dissatisfaction with the governments' policies; SD and SF are down in the polls, and an online petition against the Goldman Sachs deal reached over 190,000 signatures. But the party wasn't able to build a sustained movements around it, nor could it do so during a four week lock-out of teachers a year ago that resulted in a deal that puts more pressure on teachers. Party-members expressed frustration that the potential to build social movements or rebuild a combative trade-union movement has not been fully exploited. The still relatively weak structure of the party is certainly part of the explanation for this weakness but there were also criticisms the RGA has focused too much on elections.

Although it was repeatedly emphasized in the discussion during the congress that the new platform is essentially the same as the old one, other party-members expressed fears that the party is being pulled to the right and that the new platform is focused too much on parliamentary work. After making such big jumps in terms of representatives in parliament and city councils, the RGA runs the risk of putting too much weight on the electoral side of politics. The crisis of SF leaves a big political vacuum between the radical left and social-democracy and this vacuum exerts a rightward pull on the RGA. 'We don't want to become another SF', as one speaker put it. Others expressed disappointment that proposed amendments to the draft that would have emphasized the importance of feminism in the party did not receive a majority.

In a statement after the congress, the Danish section of the Fourth International assessed the new platform as a solid, anti-capitalist manifesto, with a clear orientation towards class struggle and fundamental social changes. They evaluated the new platform as a step forward, since the RGA now has a platform that has clear majority support that can be used to further build the RGA as an anti-capitalist party. Many discussions, on socialist strategy, the role of the state and relationship between parliament' and social movements in the fight for socialism, are sure to continue.

The new platform of the RGA that was adopted is an essential political compass for the party as it grapples with these challenges. It's a compass that points towards socialism, not just as a an abstract utopia but as a concrete task that has implications for the here and now. Many of the problems the RGA is having are those of a small, radical party that has made a national breakthrough and tries to balance its new tasks with preserving its principles. It's the kind of problems many leftists would be happy to have.

# Tea Garden Workers starve to death

7 July 2014, by **Radical Socialist**

The matter is a straightforward one. For at least one decade, tea plantations in West Bengal have been closing, workers have been paid terribly low wages, not paid in the name of crisis of the industry, and have suffered from malnutrition and starvation. According to the 51st Annual Report 2004-05 of Tea Board of India, a total of 118 tea gardens were reportedly closed between the years 2000-2005 that had affected 68,442 workers.

In many of the tea gardens, owners do not declare the tea garden as closed but 'conveniently' abandon them. The company has to apply for closure in order to close a garden. These companies owe huge dues not just to the workers in terms of Provident Fund and Gratuity dues but also to the respective state governments and concerned banks.

An important feature/nature of such closures and abandonment was that the tea gardens would reopen during the peak season and again close during the lean period as in the case

of one tea garden in West Bengal that was closed five times during 2001-2006 and on 13 January 2006 it was closed permanently. In Raipur Tea Estate, there had been previous cases of starvation deaths, recorded as far back as 2005. In all, a few thousand workers and their family members have died out of starvation and malnutrition in the last one decade.

As a result of ill payment, plantation workers have been caught in a viscous circle of poverty, poor literacy and ill health, with children of tea workers ending up in the same ill paid work as their parents and grandparents before them.

Radical Socialist condemns the collusion of owners and governments that have made possible repeated deaths of workers and the systematic super-exploitation of the laboring force for the profit of the owners. While the Minister for labour, purnendu Bose, acknowledged the possibility of malnutrition, his colleague, Jyotipriya Mallick has

blamed the tea labourers, saying they do not take government medical aid and that is the cause of their deaths. We condemn this policy of civering up for owners and blaming the victims.

Neither the previous, nor the current state government of West Bengal has done anything concrete for the workers. Yet there are obvious remedies that need to be taken up.

? In the first place, the Tea Act should be invoked and any plantation that is not being run properly should be taken over by the government.

? In the second place, factory and plantation books should be inspected with full participation by workers representatives elected by them, so that action can be taken against managers and owners who have not paid PF, etc to workers.

? The right to life is higher than the right to profit. Take over the wealth of the owners who flout laws and push workers to death, to ensure the survival of the workers

## The continuous suffering

6 July 2014

It must be remembered that the country was under the bloody dictatorship of Saddam Hussein's clan that caused the death, exile and imprisonment of tens of thousands of people, not to mention the gassing of Kurds in Halabja in 1988. This regime was built on a totalitarian repressive apparatus that accepted no political opposition and independent trade unions, and on a clientelist tribal and sectarian basis. In now way was it

nationalist as some authors have characterized it.

The main reason, however, for the current and disastrous situation in the country is the American and British military invasion of 2003 and the coalition's subsequent policies in the country. The interventions of regional countries, particularly Iran and Saudi Arabia, played a role as well and exacerbated sectarianism by supporting sectarian and reactionary

groups as a means to advance their own interests. Finally, the sectarian and repressive policies of the Maliki government added a strain on an already volatile situation.

Contrary to what has been suggested by some medias and so called "analysts", the current events in Iraq are not the result of an ancestral hatred between Sunnis and Shiites that goes back to more than 1000 years, but truly are the result of

current and contemporary policies.

In addition to the military invasion that came after more than 10 years of inhumane sanctions, killed a million Iraqis and incurred the forced displacement of 4 millions, the U.S. occupation policies are at the origin of the current debacle: fierce repression of any political opposition to the U.S. occupation, implementation of neoliberal policies and repression of independent trade union movement, destruction of state institutions (military, public administration, university system, etc ...), establishment of a political system based on political sectarianism as in Lebanon and as a basis of construction of the new state administrations etc ... the latter element was one of the main reason of the terrible sectarian war between Sunnis and Shia extremist groups between 2005 and 2008, resulting in a monthly average of 3000 dead.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia and Iran supported extremist and reactionary religious groups to promote their own interests, like in other countries elsewhere in the region, especially in Lebanon and Syria.

The spectacular rise of ISIS and its allies in recent months has nevertheless to be understood in the framework and as a result as well of the authoritarian and sectarian policies of Maliki's regime in recent years.

Popular protests shook the country in early 2011, in the wake of the popular uprisings in the region. They started on February 25, 2011 by a "Day of Wrath", which then launched a weekly cycle of protest on Fridays in most major cities. Demands were diverse, ranging from the fight against unemployment, which is still very high, condemnation of the lack or absence of services such as electricity, the release of political prisoners, opposition to the whole sectarian political system established by the occupation of the USA. The movement was made up of members of civil society, women's groups, trade unionists, etc. ...

Popular gatherings exceeded

sometimes the tens of thousands, while for example in the city of Mosul, the protesters called for a general strike pushing the local governor Atheel al-Nujaifi to support the popular protests and support the violation of the curfew imposed by the government.

Popular demonstrations represented a serious challenge to Maliki's government, with many local politicians resigning, including two in the city of Basra. Above all, public squares of protests became politicized poetry sites and areas of cultural performances, drawing on the rich Iraqi cultural heritage.

The government was quick to react with systematic repression, using tear gas and live ammunition, the establishment of numerous checkpoints, including forcing people to walk for hours in the scorching heat to join public squares generally easily accessible. Security forces also forbade all pens, markers, poster board, and bottles of water to people going to public squares to protest.

Political consolidation within the ruling elite of Iraq has nevertheless allowed the Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to co-opt local dissident politicians such as in Basra while continuing the repression of the popular movement.

At the same time, Maliki's government continued an increasingly sectarian policy against the Sunni population. He refused for example the integration of the "Sunni awakening" councils, which had fought Al Qaeda, in the army; he maintained the anti-Baathist law established after the U.S. invasion against former leaders close to Saddam Hussein, but mainly used by the Iraqi Prime Minister to suppress all Sunni political forces, while accusing leading Sunni politicians of supporting terrorism, usual tool of repressive regimes in the region to suppress any opposition as we can see in Egypt and in Syria today. The Maliki government has also systematically discriminated Sunnis in the State public administration.

In 2013, a popular movement in the Sunni-majority areas led a mass campaign of non-violent resistance

against Maliki's government, and particularly its sectarian and authoritarian policies. Popular mass demonstrations and sit-ins were held in this period demanding the release of political prisoners, especially thousands of women prisoners, more jobs and better public services, and the removal of the Iraqi constitution. The protesters especially opposed the "anti terrorist laws" used by the Iraqi government to suppress opposition members with accusations of links with Al-Qaeda or the Baath Party of Saddam Hussein. At that time, leaders of the Iraqi Shiite group of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq and of Moqtada al-Sadr's movement, who had their own grievances against the Maliki regime, expressed their solidarity with the protests made almost in its entirety by Iraqi Sunnis and threatened to organize their own demonstrations. Unfortunately, no trans-confessional solidarity materialized, neither inter-ethnic, despite criticism and opposition of Kurdish groups against the Maliki government.

The Maliki regime bloodily suppressed the popular protests, as it did against the movement of February 25, 2011 when Iraq witnessed popular protests across the country. The government also used tactics taken directly from the U.S. occupation - districts wholly or partially destroyed, mass arrests and torture. The intensification of the repression of the Maliki government pushed some of the protesters and groups to join ISIS, which opposes the Iraqi regime for sectarian reasons, and it gained increasing importance in Sunni-majority areas. The Iraqi army, rebuilt on sectarian foundations by the Maliki government and undermined by corruption, was increasingly perceived as an army of occupation by people in areas with a Sunni majority and it is for this reason that some saw in their departure a liberation, but without considering necessarily the newcomers as liberators. The Practices of ISIS (imposition of reactionary religious laws on the population, particularly affecting women, sectarian assassinations, authoritarianism, destruction of pre-Islamic archaeological objects and other, etc ...) will most likely be resisted very quickly by local populations, as it has been the case in

Syria.

On his side, Maliki has used the sectarian threat of ISIS to push Moqtada Sadr to organize demonstrations in support of the Iraqi state and has asked for the support of the Ayatollah Sistani, the highest Shiite religious authority of Iraq.

Maliki has also mobilized Shiite sectarian militias to oppose ISIS.

The solution is of course to oppose the jihadist reactionary forces of ISIS, allied with former Baathists, but also to oppose the Maliki government with its sectarian and authoritarian policies and reactionary forces that support it.

These two actors feed each other and have to be overthrown and defeated in order of hoping to build a social and progressive popular movement opposing sectarianism enabling Iraq to end a nightmare that has lasted too long.

[Syria Freedom Forever](#)

## Here in Brazil we're in a dictatorship!

5 July 2014, by **Givanildo Manoel da Silva**

I've been a militant for 32 years and started my activism during the re-democratization. I lived through many atrocities that period, primarily as a result of police violence, when the terrible ROTA (a group of the Military Police - an abbreviation for "Rondas Ostensivas Tobias de Aguiar") started years of mass murder in São Paulo and frightened all the youth.

I thought those years were the worst, but I was wrong. Then came the "democracy", things got worse and there was much more evidence that democracy wouldn't be as we wished. The New Constitution (1988) left the militarized police untouched and authorized the action of the Armed Forces to maintain the domestic order.

In 1994, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Brazilian Social Democracy Party) was elected president and started to persecute the unions and attack recurrently workers' organizations. The Army occupied Petrobras (the State oil company) and other factories. These were the first and most serious signs that something was very wrong. After the actions of FHC, we found that we would not experience the so-called liberal democracy, or bourgeois democracy conquered by the French Revolution.

We knew it for the simple fact that the basic democratic freedom wasn't assured in the re-democratization process. In recent years, it came clear that in a class society even this democracy excludes us.

Every day we watched more violations, such as murders committed by State agents or mass incarceration. Brazil is the country with the third highest number of prisoners more imprisons (right after the U.S. and China) and the country with highest numbers of violent murders, 57,000 people die every year in Brazil (according to the official statistics, which are notoriously underestimated). According to the UN, in countries at war there are around 20,000 deaths per year.

But in a country that moves quickly towards the closure of its political system, murders, imprisonment and criminalization are not enough. The goal is to silence the voices that rise up against the impossibility of a life with so much oppression. In a State like this, it is necessary to silence consciousness; thus, is imperative to criminalize. That is what is happening in Brazil, especially after the uprisings in June and October 2013 by the Brazilian people, and mainly in the youth, the desire to fight for another world and not to be silent faced with so many atrocities.

Given this new scenario, the Brazilian State has armed itself and deepened its strategy to abolish civil rights, persecute our freedom and criminalize our consciousness, committing even more crimes against humanity.

In recent days, more protesters were arrested, increasing the number of political prisoners in our country, because each prisoner is really a political prisoner. The social

movements in Brazil have reacted by organizing peaceful activity demanding the immediate release of those imprisoned for disagreeing with the brutal state in which we live.

On 1 July 2014 there was a debate at Roosevelt Square in São Paulo, with intellectuals, trade unionists, students, activists and supporters of autonomous movements, bringing together about 500 people. The Military Police of São Paulo sent a contingent of 1,000 police. They threatened, illegally searched, provoked, arrested and brutally repressed the people who were there to think and report on the incarceration of two comrades.

The stupidity of the military police wearing medieval armor, who were filming and humiliating us, reached the maximum of arrogance when they threw tear gas near the debate - which dispersed people - and arrested some of us.

At that moment I started to imagine and feel what the South Africans felt during apartheid, how the Colombians live a militarized life, I imagined the Palestinians of Gaza, the massacres in China, I thought of my and our powerlessness in the face of the atrocities that were committed there, we could not react as we wanted because, after all, we wanted to circulate our ideas so that the stupidity of the Brazilian government particularly, at that time, the governor of São Paulo, the fascist Alckmin, cease!

Right now in Brazil we live in a state of misrule for the people and a policy of public insecurity, as well as a sinister offensive against those who disturb the system, black people, LGBT, women, indigenous peoples, children and adolescents who are socially vulnerable, among others, which makes us today those who bear the worst marks of violation of Human Rights on the world!

Therefore it is not sensationalism to assert, we are in a dictatorship, today it came clear! We are living a militarized life in a militarized country, which draws us all our rights and curtail our freedom!

Here in Brazil we live in a dictatorship.

Militant and hopeful for humanity, but

not with capitalism!

P.S.: My feeling of powerlessness just increased when I got home. What I wanted the most was to write about what I lived through that night, but I received the sad news that in the state of Bahia, one more indigenous Tupinambá was murdered in a land kept by the State, which should protect them but, instead, protects only the interests of farmers.

## Russian White Guards in the Donbass

4 July 2014, by **Zbigniew Marcin Kowalewski**

On April 22, Boris Kagarlitsky affirmed that "the successful uprising of hundreds of thousands (and perhaps millions) of people in eastern Ukraine is not to be explained on the basis of Russian interference" [68]. An uprising of hundreds of thousands, even millions? Even the propaganda of the Russian regime aimed at people abroad, with the channel Russia Today in the forefront, is a thousand times more measured.

On the international left, almost nobody knows Russian, and even less Ukrainian; so when the left wants to know what is happening in Ukraine, it finds itself in a catastrophic situation. So as not to depend on the Western media, it is condemned to have recourse to the English-language propaganda of the Putin regime and to that of the so-called "anti-imperialist networks" which are pro-Russian (often "red-brown" or downright brown) as well as what is translated into English by *Links - International Journal of Social Renewal*. A site, precisely, which has provided publicity for Kagarlitsky's writings concerning this great mass uprising, which does not exist.

Much of the left has let itself be taken in by these writings; just as it had believed, previously, in the existence of a "fascist putsch," a "fascist junta" and a "fascist terror" in Ukraine. Part of the left has done this from disorientation, for which, besides, it is

itself responsible. For another part, quite considerable, the "uprising" in eastern Ukraine has served as a fig leaf to hide its passage with arms and baggage - neo-campists or simply post-Stalinists - to the side of Russian imperialism.

### Social-imperialism and imaginary revolution

In the eyes of much of the Western left, Kagarlitsky is considered as an eminent Russian Marxist thinker. This is despite the fact that in his version of the history of Russia [69], there is no place for the colonial subjugation of other peoples, for imperialist domination and Great Russian national oppression, for the "prison of peoples" at the time of the Tsars or in the Stalinist and post-Stalinist era, for the struggles of oppressed peoples for their national liberation. Consequently, in this version of history there is also no Ukrainian national question, no historical struggle of the Ukrainian people for its unification and independence.

That is why, for a quarter century, the author of these lines has considered Kagarlitsky as belonging to a particular species of Russian socialists, namely those who in the eyes of a Bolshevik known to

everyone, deserved the not very sophisticated and inelegant adjectives "social nationalists" and "social-imperialists" [70]. It is therefore not surprising that Kagarlitsky - following in this the Russian nationalist far right and the separatist movement that it is leading - has recently begun to designate southeast Ukraine by the name New Russia (Novorossia) used at the time of the Tsars; and that to adorn his *rabkor.ru* site, he has chosen a "new Russian" imperialist emblem [71].

During the Crimean crisis Kagarlitsky distinguished himself by a thesis that was as original as it was clownish. Namely that "there were no insidious schemes or imperial ambitions involved." It was the Crimea itself, by force of the will of the local Russian people and the wisdom of its leaders, that imposed on Vladimir Putin, who resisted, the annexation of Crimea to Russia; or rather "it is Crimea that has annexed Russia". [72]. *Links* reproduced these words under the heading "Crimea annexes Russia" [73].

Later, when the Russian separatist movement started in the east of Ukraine, Kagarlitsky considered that "in Ukraine, a genuine revolution is unfolding." "A genuine revolutionary transformation is taking place in the consciousness of the masses," who "not only have emerged suddenly onto the streets, but also begun acting independently, organising themselves



and making history" [74].

They began to create it in the manner in which people create real history - said Kagarlitsky - namely "in Russian, in their mother tongue (which in the space of the former empire, was and remains precisely the language of the working class)." As we can see, the legacy of centuries of Russification in the postcolonial peripheries of the empire represents for Kagarlitsky a class conquest of the proletariat. "For the first time in many years, the working class is beginning to act within the space of the former Soviet Union," Kagarlitsky assures us again. "It is perhaps too early to talk about class consciousness, but on the other hand class confrontation has become a reality." [75]

The revolution having broken out, there is an urgent need for a strategy - announced Kagarlitsky. Without it there is no salvation. However, "today's Russian elites are fundamentally incapable of thinking strategically". [76]. This is so because "the people who make up the Russian leadership are not politicians but bureaucrats and public relations specialists, people who simply do not have either the experience or the inclination to make risky decisions that radically alter the situation. None of these people can even imagine how they would need to act under the conditions of massive crises and revolutions." [77].

Moreover, the way the "revolutionary" movement in eastern Ukraine is behaving "does not create the conditions for a strategic breakthrough." Its "actions, however, are based on a particular view of the situation, a view that is organically present not only in the movement's leaders, but above all in a substantial section of the masses in the Ukrainian south-east. The insurgents are convinced that all they need to do is to hold out for a certain time, and Russia will then come to their aid; if this does not take the form of direct military intervention, some other mechanism will be found. Unfortunately, every passing day since the beginning of the uprising has shown how illusory these hopes are." [78].

Kagarlitsky tried therefore to correct

this double weakness: instruct the separatist movement on how to create the necessary conditions for a "strategic breakthrough" which will open up for the "revolution" the path to victory. "As they try to manoeuvre and win time, the Russian authorities risk missing the crucial strategic moment." That is why, "as the rebels try to ensure that the strategic initiative finishes up in their hands, they cannot afford simply to wait for decisions by the Kremlin. To the contrary, they need to create a new situation through their own actions, determining in advance what these decisions will be. A breakthrough in the development of the struggle in south-eastern Ukraine will only occur when the largest regional centres, above all Kharkov and Odessa, join in the movement." [79]

## The "people's republics" of oligarchic inspiration

However, the problem is that "a broadening of the social base of the uprising" - which, let us remember, has in any case drawn in "hundreds of thousands, even millions of people" - "will depend on its programme". It should be "an anti-oligarchic social programme", but - warns Kagarlitsky - "such a programme does not even have to be exclusively left-wing or socialist. It is enough to call for nationalization of the property of those Ukrainian oligarchs who have openly associated themselves with the Kiev regime" [80]. In other words, it should be a programme adapted to the nationalist character of the "new-Russian" separatist movement about which Kagarlitsky stays silent in his writings, but of which he was - as we see - perfectly aware.

But the idea of such a programme did not last long: it was explicitly rejected by Aleksandr Borodai, the "Prime Minister of the Donetsk People's Republic." In an interview with RIA Novosti on May 31, he explained what the authorities of the "republic" mean by nationalization. "What will be nationalized are those enterprises

which were considered up to now as the property of Ukraine. They simply pass from hand to hand. What was state property will be state property in the Donetsk People's Republic. It is natural and logical." And the enterprises of Rinat Akhmetov? "There is no question of nationalizing them. We have nothing in common with the communists, who get their hands on something and nationalize it. We respect the right of private property." [81]

It is therefore not at all surprising that Kagarlitsky has also kept silent about another extremely important fact, related to the previous one: that from the beginning, this movement not only had the support of the biggest Donbass oligarch, Rinat Akhmetov, but was also inspired by him.

This was known at the time when Kagarlitsky was writing about the outbreak of an alleged revolution in eastern Ukraine. In any case, those who wanted to know, knew; for example, thanks to Aleksandr Kosvintsev, an independent Russian journalist, who had sought political asylum in Ukraine seven years ago because of the persecutions of the Putin regime (he seriously feared for his life), and been granted citizenship. On April 10, he placed Akhmetov on his list of the "Top 10 contemporary Ukrainian traitors." Kosvintsev wrote: "In the homeland of Mr. Akhmetov, the separatists not only have not calmed down, but since recently are working hard to implement the secessionist plan of the Kremlin. Who can believe that the "overlord" of the region is not taking part?" [82]

Later, on May 10, this was fully confirmed by Pavel Gubarev, the ephemeral "popular governor" of Donetsk (for five days, from March 1). He had just come out of a Ukrainian prison, and, in an interview with the Russian press, he talked about the beginnings of this "revolution" and the role played by the Party of Regions, the oligarchic party of ousted President Viktor Yanukovich. Thus, he candidly admitted that: "We saw appearing in every town leaders of a so-called volunteer popular militia. And then our party in power, our ruling oligarchs of the Southeast, began working with the militants of

the volunteer popular militia. It turned out that two thirds of these activists were paid by the oligarch Akhmetov. A very small group of people remained faithful to the ideal; however they continued to take the money. Everyone took the money! (...) Under these conditions, everyone was bought off. Those who were not bought off were either marginalized, discredited, or terrorized". [83] Some were even handed over to the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU); this was the fate of Gubarev.

The leaders of the "Donetsk People's Republic" did not even lift a finger to get him released. Only Strelkov, commander of the separatists in Sloviansk, did so, by exchanging him for a Ukrainian officer who had been taken prisoner. That is why Gubarev, to avenge the betrayal of which he had been a victim, revealed the key role of Akhmetov in the birth of the separatist movement. Today, many militants of the this movement talk about it, as well as observers and commentators, such as Anatoli Nesmiyan, "El Murid", a pro-separatist political analyst in St. Petersburg, known for his Libyan and Syrian connections (which are, besides, not so difficult to decrypt). On the semi-official site of the separatists, *Russkaya Vesna* (Russian Spring), he wrote, speaking of Akhmetov, that "the Donetsk People's Republic was his project," and that now, from the moment that he had (supposedly) turned his back on it, "it should show that it is able to survive without Akhmetov, and even against him if necessary." [84]

## What the "Minister of Defence" Strelkov revealed

On May 17, 2014, Colonel Igor Strelkov launched a dramatic appeal "to the population of the Donetsk People's Republic." A few days earlier, he had become "commander-in-chief of the armed forces" (which the separatists generally call *opolcheniye*, that is to say volunteer militia) and "Minister of Defense of the Donetsk People's Republic." His real name is Igor Girkin, he is a Russian citizen, and his unofficial vocation is the

exercise of the profession of arms on the borders of the "Russian World" and the Orthodox world. Behind him he has four wars: in Moldova, on the side of the Russian nationalists of Transnistria; in Bosnia, on the side of the Serb nationalists, and in Chechnya, where he participated in two wars in the ranks of the Russian army.

The Centre for the Defence of Human Rights, Memorial, in Moscow, accuse him of having committed crimes against humanity during the Second Chechen War. [85] He also participated in the annexation of Crimea. He arrived in the Donbass from Russia. According to the Security Service of Ukraine, he crossed the border on April 12. His appeal created a sensation among all those who were following the Russian separatist movement in eastern Ukraine. In just 48 hours, a million Russian-speaking people viewed it on YouTube. [86] Nevertheless, the rest of the world - that is to say non-Russian-speaking - has not heard about it up to now.

"I must tell you the truth. Straight in the eyes!" declared Strelkov. "A month has passed since we, a tiny group of volunteers from Russia and Ukraine, after hearing the cry for help which burst from the lips of the leaders that you have placed at the head of your movement, arrived here and are confronting, in an armed struggle, the entire Ukrainian army". "In the last month" - he continued - "we have heard many times these desperate appeals: Give us arms! Give us weapons so that we can fight for our freedom!" The weapons - continued Strelkov - are already there. "They are at the forefront of the battle - in the besieged city of Sloviansk. They are here! Here, where they are most needed. Here, where the volunteers are protecting with their bodies the rest of the Donbass, including Donetsk and Luhansk."

However... "What do we see? The abundance of all things, except the crowds - who are not there - of volunteers at the gates of our general staffs. Sloviansk has 120,000 inhabitants. Kramatorsk twice as many. In total, in the Donetsk region, there are 4.5 million inhabitants. (...). I can honestly say that I did not expect

at all that we could not find in the whole region, not even a thousand men willing to risk their lives - not in their city, on a barricade near their home, from where it would take a half-day drive to meet a soldier of the [Ukrainian] National Guard - but on the front line, where they fire with real bullets every day."

"When I was still in Crimea, I heard the militants of the popular movement say that "when the miners rise up, they will tear everyone apart with their bare hands". For the moment we see nothing coming. Tens and hundreds have joined our ranks, and they are fighting. Tens and hundreds of thousands are watching all that sitting quietly in front of their TV sets with a mug of beer. Obviously, they are waiting for an army to come from Russia, their sister, able to do everything for them; or for a sufficient number of intrepid volunteers to come, willing to die for their right to a more dignified life than the one they have led for 23 years under the power of the Kievan nationalists. Where are these 27,000 volunteers that the journalists are talking about? I do not see them."

"In our ranks of volunteers, there are more and more men â€˜well over 40', who grew up and were educated when it was still at the time of the USSR. But there are very few young men. Where are they - all these boys from here, young and robust? Maybe in these "brigades" of bandits, who, taking advantage of the prevailing anarchy, have rushed to "plunder what was plundered" and to spread lawlessness in the towns and villages throughout the Donetsk region? Yes, every day we receive information about their new "victories". Many dissatisfied "volunteer militia members" demand weapons, mainly to defend their homes from bandits and criminals. Well, their desire is legitimate. Nevertheless, a question arises: how can the commanders of the volunteer militia know who the person is who comes to see them to get weapons? An honest citizen or another bandit disguised as a "Donbass patriot"?

"The answer that we give is simply this: we will consider as "volunteer militia member" only someone who,

belonging to a combat unit, will take part directly in the battles against the troops of the junta, and who will do so at the time and place which is deemed necessary by his leaders! Because without discipline there will be nothing! Not only will there be no victory, but no order either! If everyone wants to "make war" wherever they like and whenever they wants to, then the volunteer militia of Donbass will be transformed into something between a horde of rampaging deserters and a band of the Ataman Anhel [87].

"But it will not happen like that! Only those who distinguish themselves in combat against the enemy and who carry out other military duties, will earn the right to put their own house in order, in the ranks of the volunteer militia! And we will establish order in it - be in no doubt about that! All those who, today, pillage stores and businesses, sell drugs or simply plunder the defenseless population, should not count on "the game continuing under the present rules," and on "the war effacing everything ". The end of banditry in the Donbass has arrived! The new government will provide every opportunity to give up criminal activities, but those who do not want to benefit from it will suffer real punishment. A punishment from which no one will manage to buy their way out! In conformity with the laws of war!"

"I come back to the main theme. The Donetsk region needs defenders, and the volunteer militia needs disciplined soldier-volunteers. If men do not meet requirements, then it will have to recruit women. I ordered today that they should be enrolled in the voluntary militia. Too bad that there are no officers among women. Neither on active service, nor in the reserve. But what difference does it make, if the male officers do not even come to see us! Up to now, we have not even found a few dozen military professionals who are ready to command combat units! How shameful! For two weeks, I have been asking them to send me someone who could become Chief of Staff, and at least five people who could command squads and platoons. Silence! Not one!" [88]

## "The inertia of an amorphous mass" and White Guards along with Black Hundreds [89]

Aleksandr Zhilin, an ultranationalist Russian journalist, who is head of the department in charge of security issues in the weekly *Moskovskiy Novosti* (Moscow News) and military commentator of Radio Svoboda, recently made an effort to "explain why the entry of [Russian] armies into Ukraine was useless and quite simply stupid." He wrote: "Fortunately, Igor Strelkov, the leader of the resistance movement, has done better than me: in his proclamation, he has described very precisely the inertia of the local population of Luhansk and Donetsk, refusing to act to defend its interests." [90]

Another Russian observer, also a supporter of the separatists, expresses himself in the same spirit. "In south-eastern Ukraine there are weapons in huge quantities; perhaps only aviation is lacking. In the warehouses, there are even tanks; you simply need to ensure adequate maintenance. But there is no one to do it. The truth is simple and mundane: the local population does not want to wage war. It does not want to help even a little, because it is afraid that it may later be used against it. The Russian volunteers don't get much either. There is no "insurgent Donbass." There is a handful of diehards, ready to hold out to the end, and ... an amorphous mass, at most capable of putting a cross on a ballot paper." [91] To be precise: on the ballot paper in the "referendum" organized by the separatists.

So that's what we can say about this "successful insurrection of hundreds of thousands or even millions of people in eastern Ukraine", invented by Kagarlitsky and propagated by *Links*.

Who is this Strelkov? "I consider myself a supporter of the autocratic monarchy in Russia" [92], he explains. "I am firmly convinced that to this day

the Bolshevik power continues to exist in Russia. Yes, it has changed, become unrecognizable, but in its essence it remains unchanged: from the point of view of its anti-Russian, anti-patriotic and anti-religious orientation. In its ranks can be found the direct descendants of the people who "made" the revolution of 1917. Quite simply, they have been disguised, but their substance has not changed. They have remained in power, having thrown away the ideology that prevented them from enriching themselves and enjoying material goods. But the process of direct destruction of the Russian nation (and of other aboriginal peoples of the Russian Empire) continues by other means; with a "success" such as makes one dizzy. In 1991 there was a putsch; but the counter-revolution has not been completed." [93]

"To save the situation, we need in Russia a **fundamentally new** White ideal" [94]. New -. Strelkov explains - because "a large part of the population meets the ideology of the White movement with hostility. To take it to the masses "in its pure form" would mean to condemn ourselves in advance to failure." [95]

"Probably, with the present government we can only build a Great Honduras, where before there was Great Russia. I have the impression that this has already been fully successful." [96] This "government is the enemy of Great Russia, just as is "the opposition". They came to power with the help of the West, and they do not want to give it up to the new "chosen ones" of the West. " [97] "All the "explosions" of discontent in Moscow and Petersburg are funded secretly from abroad. Of course, "the money for the revolution" is not directly given by the West to its puppets. It is the local oligarchs-sponsors ("of democratic orientation") who give it... because their interests are inextricably linked to international Judeo-Anglo-Saxon capital, of which they are a subsidiary." [98]

This political orientation is shared by Aleksandr Borodai, whom Strelkov recalled from Russia to make him the "Prime Minister of the Donetsk People's Republic." The separatist movement in Ukraine, which they



lead, is - according to their strategy - the armed base of the Russian monarchical counter-revolution, indissolubly linked to the reconstruction of the empire, as well as to "the politico-religious revolution that can save humanity from degradation and extinction, with as the objective of its development: the transcendental values of the spirit and the aspiration to divinity." [99] Borodai - son of a philosopher, supporter of the ideas of Lev Gumilev [100] and nationalist militant - is also a militant ideologue of the far right.

"It seems that only we - the Russians - are suited to play this role of initiators of the religious revolution," affirms Borodai. "For if we believe Gumilev, our superethnos is still very young; although it has used, in a few centuries, enormous resources to create super-states (Third Rome - Russian Empire - USSR), it is still capable of finding within itself the strength necessary to undertake a crusade in the name of the higher values of the spirit. (...) The religious revolution is an inevitable war against evil; it is also a bitter, ruthless war. Is the Russian nation capable of such a feat? What will be the contours of the future religious revolution? Will its banners and flags carry Orthodox crosses and other Christian symbols?" [101]

In the "Constitution of the Donetsk People's Republic" Borodai and Strelkov inserted a formula copied verbatim from the Fundamental Laws of the Russian Empire in 1906, which states that "the supreme and ruling faith" in this "republic" is the Orthodox faith. They also wrote there that this faith "is the matrix of matrices of the Russian World." They added that it is the faith "professed by the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)" [102]. In Ukraine, there are also other churches, including the Ukrainian Orthodox Churches.

From the Ukrainian periphery, the counter-revolution must extend to the whole "Russian World" and lead to the restoration of "historical Russia" - the Russia of the Tsars. In their "constitution" Borodai and Strelkov have proclaimed "the creation of a sovereign and independent state, oriented towards the restoration of a single cultural and civilizational space of the Russian World, on the basis of its traditional religious, social, cultural and moral values, in the perspective of accession to Great Russia, halo [sic] of the territories of the Russian World" [103]. What will become of the rest of Ukraine, when it also falls, after "Novorossia"? All of Ukraine - affirm Borodai and Strelkov - must, along with Russia and Belarus, "be reunited in a single viable state, provided with a Slavic national core" [104].

In appearance only, the Muscovite socialist Kagarlitsky seems more sympathetic to Ukraine than the Russian far right. He affirms that "it may be that after a time we shall again see a Ukrainian state that is not divided by the fronts of a civil war," but he immediately adds, "the road to founding such a state lies through civil war. Ukraine will again be united only if the forces of the insurgent south-east raise their banner over Kiev". [105] Now we know what flags they would be.

In Russia, in the eyes of the nationalist, fascist and neo-Stalinist right, Strelkov has now become a national hero. "Strelkov resembles the legends of the Civil War: General Kornilov and Admiral Kolchak." That is how they write in the ultra-reactionary weekly *Zavtra* (Tomorrow), to which he and Borodai have been linked for a long time. "With such a commander, not only will the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk be Russian, but the whole Southeast, Kharkiv, Odessa, Kiev and the whole of Ukraine." [106]

However, Strelkov is not at all

preparing the means to conquer Kiev and the whole of Ukraine, but acknowledges publicly that he will lose without a Russian military intervention, which he demands despairingly in his public statements. "Where can we find a source of optimism? In our small successes? They are purely tactical; from the strategic point of view we started to lose a long time ago. The way top Russian civil servants consider the question of support for the New Russia is outright sabotage." Strelkov wrote that on June 16. "If there is no military support, the military debacle of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics is inevitable." [107]

During this time, the TV channels subject to the Russian regime keep silent about Strelkov. Why? Because Putin is afraid of his return to Russia after the military campaign in Ukraine. So says Boris Nemtsov, one of the most prominent leaders of the opposition to Putin. Nemtsov has no doubt that Strelkov and his "volunteer militia" will lose.

"Sooner or later, this war will end, and Strelkov with his comrades-in-arms will be obliged to return to Russia. Of course, the fighters of his "militia" are aware that Putin has betrayed them, and it is quite understandable that they will return to Russia very angry. Because not only did the Kremlin not annex Donbass to Russia, but it did not even send its army there." "Putin is a traitor, a rascal and a scoundrel"- in Nemtsov's opinion, "this is exactly how Putin is seen by the people fighting in the Donbass". Upon their return, "the people could precisely support these "heroic militiamen" about whom the Russian media have spoken so much". Meanwhile, "they will certainly not take kid gloves to the Muscovite traitors". [108]

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June 29, 2014

This article appeared in the French electronic journal, *Mediapart*.

# **“We will not really change things in the European Parliament”**

**3 July 2014, by Teresa Rodriguez**

## **How do you explain such a strong eruption of Podemos onto the Spanish political scene?**

This has probably to do with the need to consider alternatives which are not exactly those of the traditional parties, that are closed spaces, difficult to penetrate for citizens, subject to an identity-based framework, but at the same time in permanent conflict due to the policy of budget cuts and which have lost contact with reality inside governments of “possibility” and “continuity”. It is also due to the fact that we had put forward a coherent practice since the beginning, arguing that we must not depend on bank loans but, on the contrary, forge loyalties only with the victims of financial power. In fact to say that we are the majority, to propose the “deprofessionalization” of politics, the daily control of political representatives, the right to recall. The requirement that public representatives resemble, in their daily living conditions, those who they represent. We were able to build this candidacy by gathering 50,000 signatures in less than 48 hours, by organising open primaries with a record participation, a participatory programme and creating more than 300 popular and citizens’ circles. This was a very well used 4 months of existence and a very good campaign.

## **For the municipal elections of 2015, is a coalition with IU possible?**

This, we should decide in the circles of participation, in the areas of decision making that we have built. It will be the circles that, in all cases, will need to determine what kinds of alliances will be made and in what form we will work from now on. We are arguing for a radical democracy in society, it would not therefore be acceptable to

not put it into practice “at home”. From the beginning we decided that we did not want to negotiate the lists in offices. We want to open spaces of egalitarian participation with all those who are involved in the initiative, within each municipality. This will be the only space of decision making on everything: on the nominations, on the program and so on. We want to form a popular and citizens’ front which constitutes itself into a political majority in order to defend, with clarity, the interests of the majority, and not an arithmetic sum of acronyms. In all cases, I believe that it is necessary to be coherent, not to accept any budget cuts justified by an illegitimate debt that arises from the banking rescue and an unfair taxation, to defend the need to overthrow bipartisanship without coming to the rescue of any of its components. It is important to continue to maintain alliances, to try to form a broad front against austerity with other political forces and, of course, with Izquierda Unida.

## **What is the first initiative that Podemos will take in the European Parliament?**

The initiative that we were already in the process of drafting is a proposal against corruption which is called the Villarejo directive [109]. It argues that corruption is a form of government and proposes the best way to break with the corruption and to vaccinate against it. And this vaccine is collective control. Among other issues, there are measures such as the limitation of the salaries of public representatives, the possibility of their revocation by the rank and file, the limitation of terms and so on. All of this, we are going to do ourselves, and we decided not to collect the 8,000 euros that is assigned by the European Parliament to each parliamentarian. In

one way or another, it seems to us that the fact of having living conditions qualitatively different from those represented autonomises public representatives. In my particular case, I will continue to receive exactly the same salary as a teacher: 1 700 euros.

We have also begun to create alliances with other European forces which are in the process of considering the need not to pay the public debt, to disobey the obligation to repay the illegitimate debt. In addition, we also want to highlight the need to build European institutions completely different from those that exist. Because it is not possible to exercise any citizen control over the European institutions who really take the decisions. The European Commission is mainly composed of technocrats, it is here the decisions are taken which affect us on a daily basis, and it is entirely controlled by the financial authorities. We are also supporting proposals to democratize the European Central Bank, which is the obscurantist agency headed by technocrats over which we cannot exercise any kind of control, whereas it is in the process of managing the funds of all countries.

## **Do you think that we can change anything from the European Parliament, which has no decision-making power?**

It is not from the European Parliament that we really will change things. What it brings to us is, in the first place, an opportunity to make a discourse audible and a different practical politics visible. This will have a bearing on the next elections at the state, regional and municipal levels. It also gives us the opportunity to launch proposals with other countries, because the path of disobedience faced with the Troika is difficult and we want to create links with other



political forces, which are in the process of considering similar alternatives, in order to create a common front. And on the other hand, it is also a good space to denounce a political caste which escapes any citizen control and which deploys itself with total impunity, particularly in the European institutions.

**Since Podemos, the term “political caste” is widespread, but now you have all the benefits enjoyed by a European parliamentarian. Do you fear becoming a part of the caste?**

We have already injected a few vaccines to avoid being transformed, for example collecting a normal salary. We decided a maximum which is equivalent to three times the Spanish minimum wage. In a certain way, this will prevent us growing accustomed to institutional statuses. Also the limitation of mandates, because we believe that accumulating more than two offices professionalises public representation. We also have the possibility to revoke at any time any public representative of the initiative, and this in any institution. These are the commitments that all candidates have signed prior to standing for elections and to which we are already committed.

**And what will you do with the surplus money which is due to you as salary?**

We will have to decide collectively, because I consider that this money is not for us. I have plenty of ideas, among others, supporting the social struggles which, for seven years, are in the process of responding to the problems of citizens more than any institution has done: the fight against redundancies, expulsions, the cuts in the health system, education, social services and so on. This could be a good way to reinvest what the European Parliament assigned to each representative.

**Do you see yourself taking flights in first class?**

No, because we cannot take business flights, that is one of the commitments that we have made in writing. This is something rather symbolic, I do not make a fetish of not travelling first class in aircraft. But it is true that in a certain way, that is also a vaccine against the danger of becoming detached from the community that one purports to represent. A person must live like those they represent, collect more or less the same salary and travel as they do. No public representative of Podemos should change neighborhood, or means of transport, or change their conditions of life, because in a way, existence determines consciousness.

**What accounts for the electoral**

**success of Podemos? Some analyses attribute it to the continual presence of Pablo Iglesias on television.**

It is actually due to visibility, in the means of mass communication, a certain speech of clear confrontation with what exists, with the policy of the Troika and with the aggressive measures which are in the process of being applied since the beginning of the crisis. This has to do with us, but it also has to do with the existence of a kind of “we can” moment. A time where the living conditions of people are hyper degraded, where the violence of social conditions is ever harsher, combined with a lack of confidence in professional politics and of its legitimacy. The “we can” moment was exactly that and the answer at the time was to create emergency programmatic measures to stop what is happening to us: non-payment of the illegitimate debt, an end to tax havens, the persecution of fraud and evasion, reform of the taxation system to make it progressive, intervention in strategic enterprises and so on. All this combined with a practice which vaccinates us against corruption and the autonomisation of public representatives, strengthens the mechanisms of collective control, strengthens participation in decision-making within organizations aiming to represent citizens.

## **Decline of bipartisanship, rise of Podemos and strengthening of the Catalan sovereignist movement**

**3 July 2014, by Jaime Pastor**

The most important note to be made is the beginning of the end of bipartisanship (PP-PSOE), as has been recognized by almost all of the media. The decline of the two major parties is beyond doubt, although the PSOE was the primary “victim”. The PP went

from 42.12 per cent of the votes and 24 seats in 2009 to 26.05% and 16 seats today. The PSOE went from 38.78% of the votes and 23 seats to 23 per cent and 14 seats. Never before has the combined result of the two parties been below 50% of the vote.

Therefore, it seems that we can predict that this trend will be difficult to reverse at the level of the state, although it is likely that it will be expressed unevenly (as in the case of Andalusia, where the PSOE held up relatively well) during the autonomous

community and municipal elections in May 2015.

## **Decline of the PSOE**

The PSOE is without a doubt the most affected by the election results, which confirmed the prolonged crisis of the party since the last general election. The latter is compounded by the decomposition of the Partido Socialista de Catalunya (PSC) due to its subordination to the growing Spanish centralist discourse of the secretary general of the PSOE, Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba, who has now announced his resignation. The decrease in the number of votes in the Catalan autonomous community, from 36% in 2009 to 14.28%, has corroborated the growing loss of social support in an area which, in the past, was one of the main strongholds of the PSOE.

The reaction of the PSOE leadership direction to the electoral disaster was to convene an extraordinary Congress in July of this year, in parallel with the announcement of "open primary" elections for the purpose of electing Rubalcaba's replacement as leader. A process of internal debate has thus opened which will discuss not only who will assume the leadership, but also the search for a project to make us forget the responsibility of this party in the "austericide" and connect it to a social base. Although a part of the latter is sheltering in abstention, it seems that a fraction has this time expressed its rejection of the PP by voting in favor of other formations (Podemos, Izquierda Unida) or, in the case of Catalonia, in favor of ERC-Catalan Republican Left (with the ex-president of the Generalitat - as the executive of the autonomous community is called - Pasqual Maragall) and Ciutadans (the "Party of Citizens", which is opposed to Catalan independence).

## **Breakthrough for Podemos**

The great surprise of these elections has been, without a doubt - as

recognized by the majority of the mass media who ignored it during the campaign - the electoral success achieved by Podemos ("We can"): 1,239,133 votes, 7.96% of votes cast and 5 seats. It has proved to be the third political force in some autonomous communities such as Madrid (with 11.27% of the votes), Asturias, Cantabria and Aragon as well as in many cities and villages. It is something new in our electoral history. In just five months, this list has managed to elicit a hope among many different social sectors affected by the crisis, seeking to be the main catalyst for the popular outrage expressed in recent years in the face of the corrupt "political caste" in the service of the Troika and Merkel.

This initiative - born in January 2014, with Pablo Iglesias Turrión as leader and a large number of circles which were created and formed in more than 400 cities, neighborhoods and villages - has developed a campaign based on self-financing (its campaign budget amounted to a little over 130,000 euros) and a participatory method, active in particular in social networks. It was manifested also through primaries to decide the candidates on the list, in which 33,165 persons participated. A "method" which has demonstrated that other ways of doing politics are possible and which has been underpinned by a discourse in which the denunciation of the "political caste" has been accompanied by separate proposals, such as the firm defence of social rights, the denunciation of the "rescue" of the banks and of the illegitimate debt as well as the claim to sovereignty and the right to decide, i.e. to carry out a consultation in favor of independence, in particular in Catalonia.

Its entry into the European Parliament with five representatives has caused concern among the parties of the regime and the right wing media. But this entry also gives Podemos an enormous responsibility in faced with the hope for change caused in so little time on the theme: "Yes, we can" not only resist, but put an end to the dictatorship of the 1%. With its eruption as the fourth biggest political force at the level of the Spanish State, it is forced to convert itself into a

reference for new groupings and convergences with other social and political forces in the perspective of a mobilization in the street and preparation for the next autonomous and municipal elections.

## **Progress of the United Left**

Izquierda Unida (IU, United Left, in alliance with other similar forces within the candidacy of the Izquierda Plural) rose from 3.71% in 2009 to 9.99% of the vote, with a total of 1,555,275 votes and 6 seats. The United Left has therefore tripled its results, but has not been able to hide its inability to connect with significant social sectors which, on this occasion, have opted for Podemos, in particular in places as symbolic as Madrid. It is therefore likely that also within this party a process of reflection will take place on the need for a convergence with Podemos which, to be credible, should involve a reassessment of the question of its participation in governments, as in Andalusia, alongside the PSOE, an internal de-bureaucratization and more sensitivity to the claims of new forms of practising politics which have for a long time come from the various social actors (15M, Platform against evictions, the Mareas, Marches for Dignity and so on ) that have emerged over the past three years.

## **Rise of the sovereignist movement**

The third new given, although expected, lies in the transformation of the ERC (Catalan Republican Left) into the biggest electoral force in Catalonia, with 23.67% of the vote against 9.2% in 2009, surpassing the right wing nationalist party CiU, which fell from 22.44% to 21.86%. It is necessary to add to these two parties the rise of ICV-EUiA (Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds-Esquerra Unida i Alternativa) which has increased from 6.08% to 10.30%; this formation is also in favor of the right to self-determination of Catalonia. The total

vote of these forces was high, at 55%, while those opposed to independence (PSC, PP and Ciutadans) won a little more than 30% of the vote. Thus the rise of the sovereignist and pro-independence movement was confirmed, as well as the progress of a firm desire to call for a consultation - a referendum - on November 9, 2014.

In the Basque Country, EH Bildu - with 2.08% of the votes, becoming the biggest political force in Navarre - won a seat, reaffirming its pro-independence project. Primavera Europea - an alliance between Compromís (a coalition of a formation originating from IU and another of Valencian nationalist origins), Equo (linked to the European Greens) and Chunta Aragonesista - won a seat, with 1.91% of the vote.

Faced with this set of forces, others

like Unión Progreso y Democracia (UPyD) (with 6.49% of the vote and 4 seats) and Ciudadanos (with 3.16% and 2 seats) have obtained a parliamentary presence, whose specific characteristics are based on the claim to lie at the margin of the left-right axis and in favor of the defense of a Spanish nationalism which is secular, but bellicose faced with "peripheral" nationalisms, while affirming a radical rejection of corruption.

## New political phase

Thus, we are entering a new political phase in which the weakening of the fundamental pillars of the regime and the rise of new forces which identify with "the spirit of 15M" can help to renew and intensify social mobilization

on the path already initiated during the Marches of Dignity of March 22 last, with the aim of forcing this government and the Troika to end their policies of "austericide".

In summary, as indicated by Josep Maria Antentas of Izquierda Anticapitalista (in the daily *Publico*) : "This is the time to work to articulate an anti-austerity social-political majority favorable to the opening of democratic constituent processes which break the chains forged by fear in 1978" (the year of adoption of the post-Francoist constitution). A necessary horizon which passes by the understanding, as Antentas also says, that the Catalan consultation of November 9 is far from being the business of Catalans only, since "if Rajoy is defeated in Catalonia, he will be mortally wounded as will be the regime of which he is the guarantor".

# The rise of Podemos

2 July 2014, by Guillem Murcia

On May 25, the leaders of the two dominant parties in Spain - the center-right Partido Popular (People's Party, or PP) and the center-left Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Worker Party, or PSOE) - couldn't believe what they saw on the plasma screens in their campaign headquarters.

Both parties had expected to take some electoral punishment from disgruntled voters for the way they had managed the current economic crisis in Spain. But they weren't prepared for the hemorrhage of votes they suffered. PP lost 2.6 million votes, 16 percentage points and eight members in the European Parliament - PSOE lost 2.5 million votes, 15.7 percentage points and 9 MEPs.

Why did both parties, which once dominated the political landscape in Spain, suffer such bad results in the European Parliament elections? One

reason lies in their approach to the global financial crisis.

PSOE had ruled Spain from 2004 to 2011, right when the crisis hit. During the first years of the recession, it attempted a classic Keynesian response, increasing public investment to try to stimulate demand - before switching to deeper cuts in social services and welfare, as well as modifying Spanish labor laws, supposedly so the economy could become more competitive.

The PP won the elections in 2011 by promising to introduce measures to bring Spain out of the recession, but two years later, it has only accelerated the program that PSOE had introduced more tentatively: deeper cuts and yet another new labor law to curtail workers' rights and conditions. The PP has fully embraced austerity policies austerity being dictated by the European Union and foreign financial markets.

Six years after the global financial

crisis began, Spain's unemployment rate stands at 25.1 percent [110], while for young people under the age of 25 years, it is 53.3 percent - and this is in the context of a constant flux of young Spaniards migrating abroad in search of a job and the fact that many employed people struggle with precarious or part-time jobs (often, as a result of the labor law reforms that both PSOE and PP introduced).

While all of Spain's minor parties improved their results over previous European elections, left-wing parties did the best. Izquierda Unida (United Left, or IU), a coalition that includes the Spanish Communist Party, gained six members of European Parliament. Several other left-wing coalitions from different nationalities within Spain, such as the Basque Country, Catalonia or Valencia, improved their results or sent representatives to European Parliament for the first time.

But the biggest surprise of all came

from a new party that sent shock waves through the Spanish establishment: Podemos ("We can" in Spanish). Born just a few months ago, with little to no coverage by mainstream media and spending a tiny fraction of what other parties did, Podemos won 1.2 million votes, 7.96 percentage points and 5 members of European Parliament. This surpassed many other minor parties which, though they improved their results, had hoped to make bigger gains.

As with many success stories, however, Podemos' success is the visible result of years of hard work. There are many influences that went into the project, including Izquierda Anticapitalista (IA, a Spanish Trotskyist party), as well as both experienced and new political and social activists—the latter having been awakened to activism through the "indignados" protests that began in Spain in May 2011.

But the nucleus of the project came primarily from a group of academics from the Complutense University in Madrid—people experienced in the Bolivarianist process in Latin America and with varying degrees of left-wing involvement: Juan Carlos Monedero, Álvaro Errejón and, above all, the public face of the project: political science professor Pablo Iglesias. The success of Podemos is based around two key factors—first, putting forward "common sense" ideas and values that are viewed as non-political and held generally, and engaging in debates with political opponents to expose why they don't embody those values. Although the strategy was collectively developed among several of the key thinkers in Podemos, it is interesting to look at how Pablo Iglesias has represented it, since he is the public face of the project and the person who has talked and written most extensively about the theoretical approach behind this strategy.

The first factor involves wrestling away from the dominant parties (PP and PSOE) certain commonly held ideas that are seen as "pre-political" and not representative of either the left or right by the Spanish population. Iglesias claims to use "common sense," not left-wing politics. He says

he does not necessarily represent the left or the right, but the people from below against those who are on top—the corrupt elites.

He identifies himself as a "patriot," but immediately follows such a statement with the idea that being patriotic means defending public services and the democratic right of the people to decide above all [11]—a contrast with the classic Spanish conception of patriotism as restricted to waving flags and denying the right to self-determination to the different nationalities within Spain.

Iglesias has also declared himself an atheist, but expresses deep respect and admiration for left-wing religious figures such as the radical nun Teresa Forcades or Javier Baeza, the leftist priest from the working-class neighborhood of Vallecas.

This has meant less stress, if any at all, on traditional left-wing symbols. Iglesias' speeches do not use political jargon characteristic of the left—no hammer and sickle adorns the speakers' platform, and no red flag is hung behind him.

Yet no one should be fooled into thinking that Iglesias believes that ideologies have been made obsolete. In interviews and articles, he has revealed how he is influenced by Marxist thinkers such as Lenin, Salvador Allende, David Harvey and Ernest Mandel. If anything, his approach reveals a mixed take on politics—part Gramsci, part George Lakoff—Iglesias has dropped old symbols that he believes could become liabilities because of negative historical associations with potential voters, and framed the debate around the question of the deprivations suffered by the majority of people in society, while the tiny elite becomes richer.

Iglesias wouldn't dispute that most of these negative historical associations are the product of distortions or deceit. Instead, his point would be that politics is about having a real effect on the lives of real people, not engaging in historical debates. In short: if one is constantly on the defensive when trying to pull out a certain flag or use a specific term,

why do so?

Instead, he has tried to challenge the dominant parties where they are weakest: how their policies and their management of the crisis have made the suffering of the majority of people living in Spain worse, but have been beneficial for the wealthy elite.

The emphasis on this message has made it possible for Iglesias to engage in public debates with representatives of the main parties and win over disgruntled ex-voters from both to his side.

Back before Podemos was born, Iglesias was mostly known in left-wing circles as the host of the political debate program La Tuerka, which aired on a local television channel, but reached a wider audience through the Internet.

Although the program had its share of episodes focused on narrow issues where leftists tried to one-up each other with quotes from various theorists, one recurring feature was the ideological diversity of its guests: from social-democratic to libertarian or conservative politicians, anarchist or Marxist activists, Catalan or Basque independence activists, Keynesian or Austrian School economists, trade unionists or any other kind of social activist or thinker. This forced guests to drop the infighting so common in many debates on the left, and try to oppose the views people coming from a totally different political direction.

The next step for Iglesias was as a guest on mainstream TV shows on Friday or Saturday night, with large audiences and pundits from the mainstream political parties or media. He was able to put the rhetorical message described above to use before a television audience of thousands—talking about how a tiny elite was dictating the policies of both dominant parties, while the majority in society suffered the consequences.

This earned him the criticism from some on the left—some sectors of the Spanish Communist Party and certain independent communist groups—who prefer to stay away from mainstream media. Iglesias was accused of "selling out" or "dumbing



down” his politics. He rejected these criticisms, on the grounds that participating in these shows meant he exposed people to his ideas who would not have otherwise read a Marxist book or watched a video on a radical Youtube channel.

What was striking was Iglesias’ success in disarming his enemies on those shows with the arguments he focused on. He was able to expose the hypocrisy of PSOE representatives who said that they agreed with him on fundamental issues, but couldn’t do anything because their hands were tied by the European Commission—and just as easily made PP-leaning pundits lose their temper by pointing out they were supporting the dismantling of the welfare state, while they could afford private health care or education for themselves and their families.

After announcing his intentions to run in elections as the leader of Podemos, Iglesias didn’t decrease his public appearances on TV. On the contrary, he increased his efforts to draw a sharp distinction between Podemos and what he called the “caste” of professional politicians, who were out of touch with the grim reality for the majority of the unemployed and working poor in the population.

Of course, this caste existed primarily among the leaders of the PSOE and PP—the two parties that have taken turns ruling the country, but agree on measures that take away democratic power from the citizenship: the reform of an article of the Spanish Constitution to allow a cap on the country’s structural deficit, necessitating deep spending cuts. The PSOE and PP capitulated to European Union pressure and agreed to this reform, with no intention of ever asking the people how they felt about it.

The election results seem to have confirmed the effectiveness of this approach. Several public opinion surveys [112] show that a large number of Podemos’ voters were disappointed ex-PSOE supporters [113], which backs up the idea that Podemos’ strategy managed to win over a significant section of the party’s base.

Other factors in the Podemos vote are a matter of debate, depending on who you ask or how you analyze available data. A survey by Metroscopia portrays a typical voter as between 35 and 54 years old, male, employed (no details are available on whether the jobs are stable or not, however) and mostly college educated.

Meanwhile, political scientist José Fernández-Albertos compared the percentage of votes and other variables by voting district in Madrid [114] and found that the strongest correlation with Podemos surge was the change in voter turnout between the 2009 and 2014 European Parliament elections—which leads him to conclude that the party activated people who had abstained from voting in previous elections.

Fernández-Albertos also found a strong correlation between areas that went for Podemos—and also those won by the United Left and the PSOE—and the prevalence of poverty in a district and how its population suffered the worst effects of the crisis.

What does the success of Podemos mean for the labor movement in Spain? It is difficult to say, since the main union federations in Spain, Comisiones Obreras (Workers’ Commissions, or CCOO) and Unión General de Trabajadores (General Workers’ Union, or UGT) are acting cautiously. Both are in the process of reconnecting with a working-class in which precariousness and labor flexibility have eroded traditional support for labor, especially among the youngest workers. Still, a representative of CCOO welcomed the success of Podemos and commented that it is a response to the neoliberal policies of the PP and PSOE alike [115].

Podemos’ success has been cited as a major factor in the current talk in Spain about the crisis of the two-party system, which has only been overshadowed by the recent abdication of King Juan Carlos I [116]. Podemos’ rise has also definitely shaken some other parties out of their stupor and into a process of renewal. IU, for example, has already started to increase the prominence of its young deputy, Alberto Garzón, a Marxist-influenced economist who is seen as the great hope of that coalition.

The mainstream media have alternated between trying to explain the sudden emergence of Podemos and using every opportunity to smear it, depending on their political orientation.

El PaAs, the biggest daily newspaper, went from reporting almost nothing about Podemos to publishing a news article about one of the party’s internal assemblies, claiming alleged internal conflicts without having interviewed any members of Podemos who attended the meeting.

Think-tank commentators and political analysts who before the elections failed to foresee a good result for Podemos or even a substantial setback for the main two parties found solace in the El PaAs article by suggesting that the party was facing its first real problems as a political structure—they may have hoped to recover from the blow to their prestige as election analysts by hoping that Podemos was a flash in the pan and would soon die off.

One should be very careful about trusting information from El PaAs, however. A one-time progressive newspaper traditionally associated with PSOE, it has gradually adopted a hard stance against any leftist Latin American government—it even published the picture of a patient in an operating theater that it claimed was Hugo Chávez at the time when the late Venezuelan president was being treated in Cuba.

The picture was later found to be a screen capture from an unrelated surgery video available on YouTube [117], and the newspaper had to apologize to its readers. But left critics pointed out that this was a symptom of the lengths it would go to spread negative propaganda about any leftist project.

For their part, the two dominant parties are dealing with their election setbacks in confused, contradictory ways. PSOE leader Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba announced after the European election results came out that he was resigning, triggering a power struggle within the party, with some of the top figures expressing a certain degree of sympathy for Podemos’ message, while others condemned it as “populist.”



PP has opted for the latter strategy of attacking the new party, while also attempting to give more media prominence to some of their young membersâ€”perhaps in the hopes that the crisis of the two-party system is a matter of image and marketing, and that younger faces could bring back lost voters.

If that is PP's or PSOE's thinking, it shows that the leaders of the two main parties don't understand the reasons for Podemos' success. A disgruntled and alienated pool of voters that perceives both parties as part of the status quo, defending their own interests and those of an elite standing above the population, won't be won over by new faces exposing the same old politics. Specific initiatives to address their real, material grievances are necessary, and those will only happen if political leaders listen to what the people have to say.

It doesn't seem like the two main parties are receptive to this approach, however. Following the abdication of

Juan Carlos I, both parties rushed to support the monarchic system [18]â€”just as they did to comply with orders from the European Union to impose the cap on structural deficits.

The PP and PSOE are proving that they are more than willing to perpetuate the kind of politics that caused their setback in the European elections. Their unconscious homage to Karl Marxâ€”in repeating history, first as tragedy and second as farceâ€”has provoked a political challenge by voters who are tired of the old, undemocratic ways of mainstream politics, and that has only grown, like an overflowing stream.

The success of Podemos is good news for socialists and workers. Although there is still debate about how strong the class basis of its vote was, Podemos' program has a clear focus on both labor issues and social issues that affect the working classâ€”for example, opposition to the latest labor law reforms imposed by the PP and PSOE, support for a ban on workers

being fired from profitable companies, and a proposal to suspend all foreclosures and create a public housing program for evicted families. These measures would mean a great improvement in the lives of workers if implemented.

Podemos is showing workers in Spain and around the world that there is an alternative to the politics of austerityâ€”that politics isn't public relations spectacles, beyond their influence, managed by experts in a neutral and antiseptic fashion, but the product of the class and social interests all around them.

Only if they are organized and aware of their potential as a class can workers influence or determine what takes place in politics. Time will tell if the two dominant parties can reinforce the leaking structures of the old systemâ€”or if the flood will break through.

*18 June 2014*

[Socialist Worker](#)

# The current situation in Egypt

## 1 July 2014

### The combat of the Revolutionary Socialists

The history of the Marxist left in Egypt has still to be written. One of its features seems to be discontinuity: over the last hundred years, organizations have been born, suffered repression and then splintered.

The Revolutionary Socialists (RS) were formed in the early 1990s without any real link with the currents of Marxism that had gone before them. This organization was founded by students of the American University in Cairo who had come into contact with the

British SWP through a teacher. Since then, the RS have established links with the Trotskyist current International Socialist Tendency (IST).

A second characteristic of the Egyptian Marxist left is its relatively small size. The militant strength of the RS is estimated at several hundred activists and they regularly mobilize more than a thousand sympathizers.

In order to define their politics, the RS were led to delineate themselves:

- on the one hand from the older communist currents, who do not seem to have been very big;
- and on the other hand from the left currents in the Nasserite tradition, which are much more entrenched.

Since we would like to continue a fraternal debate with the RS that was started several years ago, it seemed to be a good idea to reproduce extracts from discussions that were held in late April 2014, before the presidential election, between, on the one hand, three representatives of the RS and, on the other independent journalist Egyptian Hany Hanna and French trade unionist Alain Baron. The first document, reproducing the contribution of Hisham Fouad, presents a political and social balance sheet of the last twelve months. The two interviews that follow focus on the controversial issue of the attitude of the RS towards the Muslim Brotherhood.

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## Spotlight on an eventful year

Hisham Fouad

### The political and social crisis (first six months of 2013)

After six months in power, the Muslim Brotherhood had revealed its inability to respond to popular demands. This caused social anger, with a big wave of strikes, sit-ins, social protests, demonstrations and protests in poor neighbourhoods against the run-down state of public services. The popular mobilization was massive. People had the hope of changing their lives, and the class struggle reached a level that had not been seen since the 1970s.

In parallel, there was also a political crisis, because the Brotherhood proceeded to exclude all other political currents. Liberal forces as well as those of the former regime felt themselves marginalized in the political landscape. And these forces had control of the media, which enabled them, especially through private satellite channels, to conduct an ongoing campaign against President Mohamed Morsi, although they had pretty much the same economic and social project.

Simultaneously, from January 2013, tensions were visible between the deep state [119] and Morsi. This was seen principally in the police. Morsi had not reformed and increased police salaries. He thought he could attract them to his political project. But the police and intelligence services began to work for his downfall.

In the end, it was these different forces, with different backgrounds and goals, that allied around the objective of bringing him down.

### The emergence of Tamarrod and the role of the NSF

It was in this context that there appeared the Tamarrod movement. At first, the links between Tamarrod and the intelligence services were not obvious, especially for us. But subsequently these links appeared clearly.

The main demand of the petition calling for the overthrow of Morsi was the holding of early presidential elections. This demand was very popular before the call to demonstrate on June 30.

Established at the end of 2012, the National Salvation Front (NSF) was a broad coalition of liberals, democrats, social democrats, socialists, Stalinists, etc. It was the NSF that began to appeal to the *fellouls* [120] of Mubarak in order to get rid of the Brotherhood. It relied on them for financing, logistics, printing leaflets, etc. This was a big blow for the revolutionary forces, since with the *fellouls* the revolutionaries found themselves faced with another obstacle. The NSF was one of the main forces to have appealed to the army. It issued statements asking why the army did not intervene. The NSF paved the way for the coup d'état.

### Intervention of the army

On June 30, 2013, the mobilization was enormous and looked like increasing even more. The role of the army began to appear clearly at the end of June. Sissi issued an ultimatum. On July 3, he made a second declaration announcing the dismissal of Morsi and the appointment of a new President of the Republic. From that moment, it was the army that took control of the country. The message was: "Go home! We will take care of everything! ".

Sissi also called for demonstrations on July 26 to give him a mandate to combat terrorism, and the mobilization was very great. July 26

marked the end of an episode. From that date, the main policy that was implemented was repression. The main political forces supported the army. The Islamists were the main target: the main slogan was "Crush them, Sissi!" The bloody dispersal of the Islamist sit-ins in Rabaa and Nahda was accompanied by thousands of deaths.

But the repression was also directed against the right to demonstrate and to organize sit-ins, rights that were earned after January 25, 2011.

### Situation after 3 July 2013

In the course of the two or three months following July 3, there were not many protests because the situation was not very clear. But then, the social movement began to recover.

The main demands concerned bad living conditions and the absence of concretization of the main goals of the revolution. During the first three months of 2014, there were approximately 1,200 strikes and sit-ins.

The government used several methods to deal with the social movement.

In the first period, the main policy of the government of Hazem el-Beblawi was either to make promises or to ignore it completely. As the wave of social protest intensified and there was a change of government, the media said that it was the workers who had brought down the government.

But in fact, the purpose of the change of government was not to satisfy the social demands of the workers, but to strengthen the repression against the Islamists: the Beblawi government had been criticized for having had a "trembling hand". People demanded that the new government should have an iron fist.

The other objective was to strengthen the repression against the social movement.

# The end of the Beblawi government (February 27, 2014)

In the Beblawi government, there coexisted alongside the military component a current that can be classified as "democratic left" with Beblawi and Ziad Bahaeddine of the Social Democratic party, the Nasserist current with the former independent trade unionist Kamal Abu Aita, the liberals with Hossam Issa of the Destour Party; Mohamed El Baradei, of the same Destour Party, was Vice-president of the Republic until August 15, 2013. [121].

They were not opposed to the policy of Sissi, but they tried to put the brakes on a little. The Deputy Prime Minister Ziad Bahaeddine, for example, wanted a reconciliation with those members of the Muslim Brotherhood who had not committed acts of violence. Kamal Abu Aita talked about the minimum wage and the law on trade union freedoms, etc. But they ended up by accepting the policies of the government to which they belonged. They accepted the freezing of the bill on trade union freedoms and the repression of sit-ins. However, at the end February 2014, even a slightly discordant voice was no longer acceptable for the regime. As if by removing the government, things would work better.

## The policy of the government of Ibrahim Mahleb

The two major changes with the new government were:

- \* An escalation of the repression against the Islamists;
- \* increased repression against the social movement.

The government therefore had two adversaries: the Islamists and the workers.

In the first communiqué of the Mahleb

government, it was moreover stated clearly: "The state must confront two dangers, the Islamists and strikes by workers".

As regards the Islamists, there have been repression and show trials, with collective convictions. As regards the workers, the army began to intervene, as for example in Suez. It also came to arrest workers in their homes in Alexandria and Port Said, as well as in other places. And that had not been seen in Egypt since the 1970s.

The government has also adopted laws hostile to workers.

- \* The new draft Labour Code weakens workers' rights, particularly with regard to wages;

- \* A draft document forbids employees to file appeals against even fraudulent privatization of their companies;

- \* A law of 19 November 2013 prohibits strikes and sit-ins;

- \* The law on trade union freedoms fell by the wayside.

Attacks take place against independent unions. The ETUF, the official trade union federation before 2011, is once again the sole interlocutor recognized by the government.

We hear less about the minimum wage.

Prices have begun to rise again, and the expected increase in the price of petrol will cause a general increase in prices.

## The presidential election

The climate in which the next presidential election will take place is completely different from that of the elections of June 2012.

Within the population, there is great disillusion, and even hostility to the revolution. Attacks have taken place against the revolutionary movement, including the Revolutionary Socialists. The April 6 Movement, which was at the origin of the events leading to the

January 2011 revolution, was banned three days before the 1st of May.

Approximately 90 per cent of political forces are at present behind Sissi. The only other candidate for the presidential election is the Nasserist Hamdine Sabahi.

These developments have had an impact within the parties that emerged after the beginning of the revolution. These parties, and in particular their young people, began to discover that they had been deceived, that Sissi had stolen June 30, and that his objective was to restore the Mubarak regime.

There is a revanchist tendency in relation to the revolution. The security apparatus of the state has regained its control over the street, so that many young people who mobilized on June 30 are now opposed to Sissi. This is particularly the case of the April 6 Movement.

If we categorize the population by the type of attitude it has, there are three categories:

- \* disappointed, even desperate;

- \* fence-sitters waiting to see what Sissi will do;

- \* and a minority which sees Sissi as a prolongation of Mubarak.

It is these divisions within the coalition of June 30 that encouraged Sabahi to stand in the presidential election. That is one of the reasons why, despite the criticism that we have of him, we are supporting him in the coming election [122].

*Hisham Fouad is an Egyptian journalist and longtime activist of the Revolutionary Socialists. He was interviewed by Hany Hanna and Alain Baron, at the end of April 2014.*

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## "The question is:

# "Who is leading the counter-revolution? "

*An interview by Hany Hanna and Alain Baron with Hatem Tallima*

**Question:** What is the basis of the Front of the Path of the Revolution in which the Revolutionary Socialists participate?

**Hatem Tallima:** The Front of the Path of the Revolution was created on June 27, 2013, three days before the gigantic demonstrations of June 30. Its objective was to provide the most pertinent strategy in opposition to the Islamist President Morsi. There existed among the forces that were mobilized two points of view on how to "kick out" the Muslim Brotherhood: either rely on the army and the police, or avoid finding yourself with them and with other residues from the Mubarak era (*fellouls*). This resulted in two types of slogans: "The people, the army and the police, hand in hand" and "Down with all those who have betrayed: the *fellouls*, the army and the Brotherhood."

The RS organized mobilizations in common with the second group, which was not the most numerous.

What was done by the Muslim Brotherhood in the year they were in power was horrible. They demonstrated a sectarian and sexist vision. They opposed freedoms. They, in close collaboration with the business community, adopted neoliberal policies in line with those of Mubarak. Among the population, hatred of the Brotherhood had become such that many were ready to ally with the devil to get rid of it. We understand that.

But at the same time, we thought that this attitude was dangerous, that it gave an opportunity to the pillars of the Mubarak regime to regain power: these pillars are the police, the military and business. We thought that getting rid of the Muslim Brotherhood without doing it under the sign of the relaunching of the revolution, by attacking simultaneously the pillars of the Mubarak regime, would be used

by them to regain power. And this is what, in our view, is happening now. The crowning of this process was the arrival in power of Sissi on July 3: he was a general appointed head of Military Intelligence by Mubarak himself and he will, of course, become President of the Republic at the end of May.

It is in this context that the Front of the Path of the Revolution was created. We participated in the mass demonstrations on June 30 demanding the departure of Morsi. At the same time we said no to police brutality, no to a military regime, not to the *fellouls* of Mubarak!

The Front of the Path of the Revolution matured after the coup of July 3. Things became clearer after the announcement of the roadmap designed by Military Intelligence and published on July 8. This paved the way for August 14, the date of the greatest massacre committed by the Egyptian government against its population (in Cairo, during the dispersal of the sit-ins in Rabaa and Nahda) and into which there has been no proper investigation. From there, we developed the platform of the Front of the Path of the Revolution, and we made it public on September 14, 2013. The Front regroups revolutionary movements like the Revolutionary Socialists, the April 6 Movement, independent activists, human rights activists, the collective against civilians being judged by military courts, collectives against torture and various other small collectives. Participation in the Front of the Path of the Revolution is now one of the activities of the Revolutionary Socialists.

**Question:** Some people say that the orientation affirmed by the RS is to oppose both the military and the Muslim Brotherhood, but in fact, nine out of ten of your slogans are against the military and one against the Muslim Brotherhood. They accuse you for this reason of being de facto allies of the Brotherhood...

**Hatem Tallima:** Regarding the slogans, a year ago it was the opposite: nine out of ten were against the Muslim Brotherhood and one against the military.

For us, the question is "who is leading the counter-revolution?" We, the Revolutionary Socialists, were the first to take to the streets on August 30, 2012 against Morsi, only two months after his election. And we issued a press release entitled "The Muslim Brotherhood is leading the counter-revolution." They also physically assaulted me in Tahrir Square on October 12, 2012.

One of the two most popular slogans of the revolution is "Down with the power of the Guide [of the Muslim Brotherhood]!" The other is "Down with the military!"

Two days ago we took part in a demonstration of about two thousand people against the law banning demonstrations. Our slogan was "Down with the military! "When someone asked me why we do not also say "Down with the power of the Guide!" I told him it was because he was no longer in power but in prison!

We are not for self-flagellation. We voted for Morsi in 2012 against General Ahmed Shafiq (the last Prime Minister of Mubarak) and we are proud to have done so. If we had to do it again, we would. But the day after his election, we were against him. This is the Leninist tactic "one step backward, two steps forward."

In Egypt, there exists an "Islamophobia", which divides society into Islamists and non-Islamists and which promotes inter-class alliances against the Islamists. Thus the left party Tagammu did not hesitate to ally with the Party of Free Egyptians of the billionaire Naguib Sawiris in the parliamentary elections of 2012. Its leaders met Sissi yesterday and are at present discussing with Sawiris about how they can coordinate for the next parliamentary elections. Their logic is "let us put aside for the moment our social proposals" in order to deal with the common threat, acting along with the police, businessmen and those who exploit Egyptian society.

On the other side, we have Islamists ranging from the Deputy Guide of the Brotherhood, the billionaire Khairat El Chater, to the poorest Islamists of the most remote villages. We are for the class struggle. We see no difference

between Khairat El Chater and Naguib Sawiris, except as regards some particularly reactionary positions of El Chater.

**Question:** Why did the RS call for a vote for Morsi in the second round of the presidential election of 2012?

**Hatem Tallima:** We called for a vote for Morsi in order to beat General Ahmed Shafiq, Mubarak's right-hand man. If he had been elected, that would have announced the defeat of the revolution. It was simply a tactical vote. We did not ally with them. We did not sit around a table with them to discuss anything. We know it is a sectarian, sexist, reactionary and neoliberal movement. We had no illusions about them. But the great mass of the people did. It was necessary for the Muslim Brotherhood to exercise power for their illusions about them to dissipate.

**Question:** Why did revolutionaries not all call for a vote for the left Nasserist Hamdine Sabahi in the first round of the presidential elections of 2012?

**Hatem Tallima:** The fact that it he got such a good result was a surprise. In the first round, the RS had pushed Khaled Ali to stand. The RS considered that the dispersion of votes in the first round between several candidates was a mistake.

**Question:** Does the policy of the RS towards the Brotherhood correspond to what revolutionary Marxists call the "united front"?

**Hatem Tallima:** The RS never had a policy of a united front with the Brotherhood. We declined the invitation to take part in their meeting.

There may be some confusion, insofar as a number of activists are sometimes misrepresented as being RS, whereas it is no longer the case: Tamer Wageeh, for example, left in 2010 with Socialist Renewal and then in 2011 joined the Popular Socialist Alliance, which somewhat resembles the German Die Linke. He supported the dissident Muslim Brother Abul Futuh, who can be defined as being on the left of a right-wing movement. The RS are in total disagreement with him.

**Question:** For the SR, what is the nature of the Muslim Brotherhood?

**Hatem Tallima:** The Muslim Brotherhood is a totally bourgeois organization whose base is the bourgeoisie and the "middle class". It is a sexist and sectarian organization. On the economic and social levels, its positions are very right-wing.

But we make a difference with their young people... We want to win away from the Muslim Brotherhood their supporters who have illusions about them and see them as defenders of the poor. Because the Brotherhood has half a million members ...

*Hatem Tallima is a research professor in chemistry. He is a leader of the Front for the Path of the Revolution and a member of the Political Bureau of the Revolutionary Socialists (RS), an organization to which he has belonged since the early 1990s.*

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## The Revolutionary Socialists confronted with the Muslim Brotherhood

*Interview by Hany Hanna and Alain Baron with Mustafa Omar*

**Question:** How does the Muslim Brotherhood function?

**Mustafa Omar:** Many Muslim Brothers were recruited when they were very young, in high school or college. Others are recruited at the beginning of their university studies; they often come from the countryside.

Education is no longer really free now. In theory it is, but in reality, it no longer is because it is necessary to take private lessons, to buy food, etc.

The Brothers provide significant financial support for young people in high school and university who do not come from affluent backgrounds, but

belong to the poorest layers of the "middle classes" and to the working class. They have very little money, and the Brothers give them what the state no longer gives them: books, housing for those who do not find a place in university residences, food, etc.

This is important because some of the most militant demonstrations against Sissi have been organized by the students who support Morsi and the Brotherhood. This is how they earn their loyalty.

There is a real difference between these young people and some of the richest leaders of the Brotherhood.

**Question:** But doesn't obedience to leaders form part of the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood?

**Mustafa Omar:** This is generally true, but it is also true that the leaders listen to the young Brotherhood members. It is not a unilateral relationship. Those who are anti-Brotherhood, such as the Stalinists, often tend to exaggerate. They describe the Brotherhood as a very hierarchical organization from top to bottom, with blind obedience. This is true, but only partly. The young members exert pressure on their leadership. This was true before Morsi became president in June 2012, and it remained so after the coup of July 3, 2013.

Many of these young people are convinced that the present economic system poses serious problems, that capitalism poses serious problems. But they have a reformist vision of the world; they want a reform of capitalism and redistribution of wealth. They want free medical care and free education. Many things that we, revolutionary socialists, also want.

Nevertheless, they genuinely believe that they have to follow the strategy and tactics of the leadership. They trust their leadership to achieve this goal. I have spoken with many young members of the Brotherhood. They have a critique of capitalism, albeit reformist, but a real criticism. They do not all observe blind obedience to the leaders.

Secondly, many of them believe in



general in a democratic society. Not only as a means for the Brotherhood to come to power. Many of them can genuinely live in a pluralistic framework. We worked with them in Egypt before the revolution of 2011. And they generally believed in that. For me, it is not cynicism in order to achieve power, as is sometimes said.

In fact, before and after the revolution, there were many significant splits among young Brotherhood members. They did not involve many people, but these splits were significant.

Among many young members of the Brotherhood, there has been a shift to the left under the pressure of the revolution. They have split from the Brotherhood and joined the "Strong Egypt" party of Abul Futuh.

Some of these ex-Brothers are now founding members of the Front for the Path of the Revolution. And even if they do look like Islamists, they are not as hostile to Marxism as they were a year ago ... We have to take account of the social origin of these ex-Brothers, their class origin. A significant portion of them - not all! - are open to dialogue with forces of the left, socialists. We share with them certain positions on democracy and opposition to imperialism.

**Question:** What about women and sexism?

**Mustafa Omar:** Things are also complicated. Part of the supporters of the Brotherhood are women. They work, and the Brothers agree with that. On this point, they are not as far to the right as the Salafists. They are sexist, but not as much as the Salafists. The sexism of the Salafists is on another level altogether. The Brothers usually have a conception of a very "middle class" urban lifestyle. Their point of view is very different from the totally antiquated, conservative and reactionary views of the Salafists, who say that women should stay at home instead of going to work.

**Question:** How are you able to tell the difference between those who are members of the Muslim Brotherhood and former members? When people

say they are not members do you take their word for it? Doesn't the "taqéÃ`a" (the right to lie to the enemy) form part of their ideology?

**Mustafa Omar:** Many of the people I am talking about have publicly resigned from the Brotherhood. They have a radical critique of the worldview of the Brothers. We have been working with them for years, and we know exactly who is who, who is honest and who is not.

Many of them still have an Islamist bent, but they reject the politics of the Brotherhood.

The pressure of the revolution has produced a small split in the Brotherhood. A significant minority of several thousand members left the Brotherhood to join the left. When they saw the Brotherhood make cynical arrangements with the Mubarak regime and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, thousands of members preferred to leave the Brotherhood and continue to participate in the January 25 revolution. Before, they really believed their leaders when they said that they were against the regime, against the military dictatorship, against corruption, etc. When they saw that this was not the case, they left.

Some activists from the Brotherhood have joined the Front of the Path of the Revolution. We are talking about a small group of people, not many, but of a significant size. The slogan of the Front is: "Neither the military nor the Brotherhood." They campaign along with us on this slogan. They cannot therefore be moles of the Brotherhood.

**Question:** Do you still defend the slogan: "Always against the military, sometimes with the Brotherhood"?

**Mustafa Omar:** It was our general approach before the 2011 revolution. I think this formulation has become partially obsolete during the last year, but the most important part of this slogan is still correct and can be used today. We are indeed trying to defend the right of the Brotherhood to exist as a political force, from the point of view of the defence of democratic rights.

We had a big debate about this in the Revolutionary Socialists. Everyone was not always happy with this position. Our organization had experienced a split in 2009. Many people refused this slogan. Today, all the RS in Egypt agree with this slogan.

**Question:** What is the position of the left towards the Brotherhood?

**Mustafa Omar:** One of the most important issues for the Egyptian left is how to address the Muslim Brotherhood.

Historically, the majority of the currents of the Egyptian left consider that the Brothers are fascists. A minority on the left disagrees with this approach. Among them, there are the Revolutionary Socialists. This is a very important issue because it is now possible to see the ramifications of these different ways of analyzing the Brotherhood.

The entire Stalinist and Nasserist left consider that they are fascists, and now they are reaching out to Sissi. A minority on the left, and not just the RS, considers that the Brothers are not fascists and that for that reason they are capable of having an independent position of opposition to the state, but also independence from the Brotherhood.

We are able to fight for democratic rights, while historically the majority of left currents have considered the authoritarian state as a lesser evil compared to the Brothers.

In the 1990s, the majority of the left supported the repression against the Islamists and it supports today the repression against the Brothers, including the massacres. Some of the icons of the left of the last fifty years now support Sissi. For example, Aberrahman El Abnoudy, poet of the revolution, supports Sissi today because he believes that the Brotherhood is an obscurantist force. It's unbelievable, it's a disaster!

**Question** To refuse the repression against the Brotherhood is one thing, but is it really possible to ally even momentarily with them?

**Mustafa Omar:** The profile of some

Muslim Brotherhood supporters makes it possible to work with them. We can work with some grassroots Brothers on democratic objectives. This is for example at the moment the case on economic and social issues, in particular in the University. At this time, tactically, it is very difficult to work with the Brothers. But in a few months, it will be important to work with them on common goals. Otherwise we will not be able to have an influence on people who belong to the Brotherhood. This is a difference between us and other left forces. It would be crazy to say that we will never demonstrate with the Brothers. If they agree with our demands, they should be welcome.

**Question:** As individuals or as an organization?

**Mustafa Omar:** It is possible to do it with individuals. The issue of working with them as an organization is not at present on the agenda. But I do not know what may happen in the future. This is a tactical problem. We must not forget that they are not only present in the University. They are also implanted in the workplaces, in the factories, in large enterprises ... We cannot ignore them.

**Question:** On January 23 and 25, 2014, didn't your two organizations demonstrate together?

**Mustafa Omar:** No, of course we demonstrated separately. It would be suicidal to work with the Brotherhood at this time. As regards the future, we do not know how the Brothers may change; we do not know how the situation may evolve. You should never say never.

Regarding the possibilities of working together at the moment, we must take into account two aspects:

1. Before coming to power, the Brotherhood said they were for democracy. Once in power, they fought against democracy. Now that they are no longer in power, they can say again that they are for democracy...

2. It depends on the situation and on the mobilization. If they agree to participate in a mobilization, it is

because they agree with the demands of this mobilization. That does not mean that we will forget what they have done in the past or refrain from criticizing them. The problem at present is that they refuse to join any mobilization that does not demand the return of Morsi. For this reason, it is not possible to work with them.

They are persecuted and very angry. It should be understood that thousands of them are in prison, thousands are being tortured. They are very angry, even against the Revolutionary Socialists.

**Question:** You say that you defend their democratic right to have a party. Do you think their claim to speak in the name of God, to hold the absolute truth, is compatible with democracy?

**Mustafa Omar:** I believe in their right to have a party; I am opposed to a government that attacks democracy. I can explain to people around them that their policy is harmful. But the state has no right to decide who should have a party or not.

If it was a fascist organization, it would be a different matter. I would not be opposed to a ban. They are conservative, reactionary, but not fascist.

For me, fascism is wanting to completely destroy democracy, the working class, trade unions ... That is not their intention. They are simply authoritarian. They are both conservatives and reformists. They are centre-right. They are not fascists.

**Question:** You say they are authoritarian. Is authoritarianism compatible with democracy? If they believe they have the absolute truth because it is the word of God, why, once they were in power, would they allow the expression of opinions that were contrary to the divine will? This problem is not confined to the Muslim Brotherhood. It also relates to the Salafist Nour party.

**Mustafa Omar:** My answer is not an absolute answer. At this time, in relation to the state, when the ruling class is carrying out a counter-revolution to completely destroy every kind of democratic achievement of the

revolution of January 25, 2011, I am opposed to the state banning the party of the Muslim Brotherhood or the Nour party. In a different situation if the revolution revived and strengthened, I would not be opposed in principle to the prohibition of such parties. But right now, the main adversary is the state.

**Question:** But a year ago, when they were in power, did they not try to establish a dictatorship?

**Mustafa Omar:** No, what they tried to do was to share power with the ruling class of the Mubarak era. They did not have the opportunity. From a formal point of view, they governed. But in reality, the ruling class of the Mubarak regime did not allow them the possibility.

**Question:** But have they not killed opponents?

**Mustafa Omar:** Of course they have committed crimes and we, the RS, demonstrated ceaselessly against them for a year. We were the first, along with the April 6 Movement, to protest against Morsi; that was on August 31, 2012. We do not want to whitewash their crimes, but they were not really governing Egypt, they were trying to share power with the military and the ruling class in general. They could not do much. Everything they did was sabotaged. They offered their services to the ruling class and the ruling class sent them packing.

The Brotherhood is reactionary; I'm not saying it is progressive. But 90 per cent of those killed under Morsi were killed by the Minister of the Interior who is still in office today. In fact, the Brotherhood did not organize a real mass mobilization of their members before the end of June 2013; they only did it just before the coup of July 3.

During the 12 months they were in power, their offices were all burned down. The police and the army refused to protect their premises. They refused to mobilize their members to engage in a street fight. Not because they were against doing that, or because they do not have the capacity to do so. But because they hoped that the state would continue to trust them. They did not want to destabilize

their power. I'm not trying to take up the defence of the Brotherhood, but trying to explain what happened during the year that Morsi was in power.

**Question:** You say that 90 per cent of those killed were killed by the police, but who killed the remaining 10 per cent?

**Mustafa Omar:** There was a major incident after the Constitutional Decree of November 2012, by which Morsi tried to assume full powers. When confrontations with those who were opposed to the Brotherhood took place on December 4, 2012 in front of the Presidential Palace, the Brothers were defeated and most of those who died during this battle were members of the Brotherhood. But the only victim that people speak about is Husseini Abu Deif, an icon of the revolution who was really killed by the Brothers that day.

However, the Brothers lost this battle; they were thoroughly defeated. And they never tried it again. Their only recourse to violence took place on June 30, 2013, when a crowd came to burn down their headquarters in Cairo. Their members who were inside killed three people. That was in a specific context. It is not as if the Brothers were fascist brutes who took to the streets to kill people. The state was in a certain fashion involved in the burning down of Muslim Brotherhood premises. Dozens of them were burned during the year Morsi was in power. And when Morsi said to the police: "stop it, please," the police answered that they were not interested in their premises.

So this was not a year when they succeeded in imposing an authoritarian order. They had a different project: it was to "sell" the ruling class their ability to control the masses through their grassroots organization. But the ruling class was not interested. It had been at the beginning, but once the situation had stabilized and the Brothers had succeeded in neutralizing the revolution, they had done the job. The ruling class then said to them, "thank you and goodbye." They had done the job: they had betrayed the revolution.

**Question:** But betraying the revolution supposes that they had previously adhered to it. Was that really the case or had they just used it?

**Mustafa Omar:** Of course they used it. At the same time, all their members are not opposed to the revolution. That is why some of them left. The Muslim Brotherhood betrayed the revolution, but they are not the ones who killed it. It is the ruling class that killed the revolution. The Brothers just helped it by betraying the people who had voted for them in five different elections. And the majority of their electors are not members of the Brotherhood. They simply believed that the Brotherhood would bring about social justice and dignity. On January 25, 2011, they committed themselves to achieving the goals of the revolution. Once in power, they changed their discourse ... so they betrayed. Thirteen million people voted for Morsi, whereas the Brotherhood had only five million supporters. Eight million people voted for Morsi because they believed in the revolution and because Morsi said he would accomplish the tasks of the revolution. In the first round of the presidential election, Morsi had only five million votes. In the second, he had about thirteen million. And ten million did not want Mubarak's men to come back.

**Question:** Marxists say that the Stalinists and Social Democrats have betrayed the working class because historically these parties said that they were on the side of the working class and that they were against capitalism. Is it justified to use the same term about the Muslim Brotherhood?

**Mustafa Omar:** The Brotherhood was an integral part of the revolution. On February 2, 2011, when Mubarak's thugs on camels attacked the protesters in Tahrir Square, the Brothers were there to repel them. The revolution would have been defeated if they had not been there and Mubarak would still be in power. They are reactionary rightists, opportunists, but they participated in the revolution.

We believe that Hamdine Sabahi betrayed the revolutionary process by

lining up on the side of the army after the military coup of July 2013. But in the presidential election we gave him critical support. We never allied ourselves with the Brotherhood.

In the United States the Democrats are part of the ruling class, and for this reason, people should not vote for them. The Brotherhood, on the contrary, is not a party of the ruling class. It is "a mixed party." If they belonged to the ruling class, why would tens of thousands of them be in jail or have been killed? Republicans have never killed Democrats. These two parties do not kill each other. The Brotherhood is a party of the middle class which is supported by a significant part of the working class. I have never seen George Bush demanding that Clinton should be sent to the guillotine. The Brotherhood is not a party of the ruling class. They wanted to join the ruling class. They were turned away.

**Question:** And how is the situation of trade unionism today?

**Mustafa Omar:** Terrible. The government has once again imposed Mubarak's trade union confederation. And the new Constitution has more or less outlawed independent unions.

*Omar Mustafa is a journalist in Cairo and an activist of the Revolutionary Socialists.*

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## A badly elected and fragile president

According to the official figures, which are quite clearly rigged, unverifiable and in which nobody believes, 93 per cent of electors voted for Marshal Sissi. But simultaneously, only half of the electorate took part in the vote. The left Nasserist Sabahi, the only candidate against Sissi, supposedly won only three per cent of the votes.

The main concern of the population remains how to survive from day to

day, with rising unemployment due to a disaster-stricken economy, rocketing prices, cuts and frequent cut-offs of water and electricity.

The current regime is likely to be more repressive than its predecessors: Sissi must silence any possibility of social protest in order to try and restore the system as it was before

2011.

The situation can quickly change if strikes, which were suspended during the presidential campaign, start up again.

Equally decisive will be the structuring of the revolutionary forces (April 6 Movement, Revolutionary Socialists, Bread and Freedom ...) in a

front, like the one that was established during the mobilizations against the law restricting the right to protest last January. Only then will it be possible to create an alternative to both the Army and the Muslim Brotherhood.

*Excerpts from an article published on June 5 in ***l'Anticapitaliste***, weekly paper of the NPA in France.*

# Queering Anti-Capitalist Organizing

1 July 2014, by **Alan Sears**

Many anti-capitalists have responded to this strain by trying to do more of the same with fewer resources. In activist organizations and radical political groupings there is tremendous pressure to intensify our efforts to resist changes that will be devastating for so many. I want to argue here that sheer effort will not reverse the increasing marginalization of the left. Instead, this is a moment where we need to be learning, from our activist experiments and from a shared analysis of the character of these times.

There have been very real changes in work, life, and politics over the last 30 years as a result of neoliberal restructuring that mean we cannot simply use our old maps to develop strategy. Further, the older maps of the left had definite limits and exclusions that meant they did not provide an integrated picture of capitalist society as it is organized around gender, racialization, colonialism, sexuality, or ecological devastation. One dimension of this process of remapping is queering anti-capitalist politics, examining them from the perspective of those who have tended to be marginalized within the dominant perspectives on the left. The accomplishment of a genuine queering of anti-capitalist organizing will require ongoing decolonization of our theories and methods of organizing.

## From gay to queer

I am drawing a parallel here between anti-capitalist organizing and my own experiences in queer activism. In my own lifetime, queers have gone from being Cold War outsiders to symbols of Western values in the so called "war on terror." Where once the Canadian state invested resources in the development of a "fruit machine" capable of identifying homosexuals so they could be fired, now right-wing cabinet ministers present themselves as friends of lesbians and gays in Iran and Uganda.

It requires a dynamic politics, transformed by genuine learning, to sustain a liberation perspective through these changes. It is easy to end up on the wrong side of history, as we see from the prominent lesbians and gays who actively support islamophobia and the pink-washing of Israel, hiding its record of occupation and oppression behind a claim of modernity based on a liberal approach to gay rights.

The development of a genuine liberation perspective on gender and sexuality has required serious and often painful rethinking along the way. The first time I personally encountered this was around the exclusion of lesbians. In the 1970s, the term "gay" proclaimed a politically-charged identity, in contrast to the official 'homosexual' used in the media

and by medical authorities. But lesbians pointed out that "gay" was not inclusive, even though it was often used as if it were.

Genuine inclusion meant not only adding the word "lesbian" to organizational names, but also a serious engagement with the experiences and political projects of lesbians. It is perhaps too easy as a gay man to feel you are the opposite of masculinity, having been bullied and beaten up for failing at it. But male dominance can take many forms, even among men who might not be thought of as traditionally masculine.

Gay liberation politics were dominated by a kind of sexual libertarianism deeply committed to a freedom struggle against the various forms of repression from the medical professions, the cops, religion, the media, and the family. In contrast, lesbian feminism engaged far more with the politics and experiences of caregiving, including child-rearing. It also insisted on understanding the ways power was expressed in sexual activity, while gay male libertarianism often cast sexual activity itself as an almost utopian realm of freedom. A deeper politics of emancipation required a genuine engagement with both sexual libertarianism and lesbian feminism, recognizing that while neither was adequate in itself, it would not do to casually dismiss either of these perspectives.

In the later 1980s, the term "queer" was widely adopted in the more radical wing of sex/gender liberation movements in response to the inadequate political response to the AIDS epidemic among mainstream lesbian and gay organizations. Queer politics identified the exclusions in lesbian and gay institutions, as transpeople, most women, people of colour and working class or poor people found themselves shunted to the margins of spaces increasingly defined by professionals and business people.

The post-9/11 "war on terror" showed the need to take this process of queering further, as it made evident the problematic character of lesbian and gay politics that are not also anti-racist and anti-imperialist. Western governments were suddenly using the defense of women's rights as well as those of lesbians and gays to justify imperialist invasions abroad and islamophobia at home.

To address these issues, queer movements needed to learn from anti-racist and anti-imperialist sexual politics. Racialized queers and many in the Global South had long criticized the false inclusiveness of gay and lesbian rights, which used the experience of specific layers of white gay men in the imperialist nations as the supposedly universal standard for sexual freedom, ignoring the wide range of same-gender sexual practices and sex/gender freedom struggles in different cultures and classes around the world. Activist queers needed to confront the limits of the movement, learning from experiences and perspectives of queers of colour.

For a long time, I thought my goal in the politics of gender and sexual liberation was to get it right. Now, I think this is an ongoing process of learning as important changes in the world in combination with the voices of those outside the frame of our limited perspectives demand that we move beyond the limits of our established politics.

## Learning through

## engagement

This ongoing work of crafting and remaking an integrated liberation politics by learning through genuine engagement with perspectives generated outside our frame has not necessarily been the dominant model of anti-capitalist organizing through the 20th century. Anti-capitalists of many stripes often act as if the major lessons are behind us, learned in the early 20th century and refined through the subsequent evolution of whichever political lineage it is that you identify with. As a result we have lost the ability to even understand the working class as it actually is, as opposed to the hypothetical class conjured up in our theories, whose capacities sit intact but latent waiting for us to construct the ideal organizational form.

The resistance capacities of the working class have atrophied and the political agenda has been remapped through the last 35 years of employer's offensive. This is not simply a failure of specific organizations, but the result of a broad erosion of the infrastructure of dissent, the array of networks and organizations through which working class people develop and sustain capacities for effective resistance.

Collective capacities for critical analysis, communication, memory, and practical solidarity do not emerge automatically, nor are they produced simply by conscious anti-capitalist organizations. Rather, working class people develop these capacities through informal networks in workplaces, communities, and schools; through cultural institutions, shared leisure activities, and educational programmes; and through more formal organizations such as political currents and union oppositions.

Anti-capitalist political organizing plays an important role in the development of the infrastructure of dissent. Specifically, anti-capitalist organizing provides the means to develop a strategic vision and activist agenda that reflects the divergent viewpoints and perspectives of activists in different social locations who share a common political

commitment.

However, political organizing does not by itself create an infrastructure of dissent. The infrastructure of dissent is grounded in particular conditions of life and work. The restructuring of work, reorganization of everyday life in communities, and the reorientation of politics undercut existing forms of infrastructure and create the potential for new forms. Many of the communities and workplaces that generated remarkable resistance capacities in Europe and North America over much of the 20th century have been eliminated, transformed, or relocated. A new left is needed that will be oriented around the emerging resistance capacities of the working class as it is now.

## A new left

Developing a new left requires a process of queering. For an individual, "coming out" involves a re-envisioning through engaging with a new political community. We are raised to be straight, but begin to recognize we are something else. Over time, this means developing capacities to see the world in new ways. Rather than seeing ourselves as a flawed version of the straight person we thought we were supposed to be, we begin to see and live new possibilities. As our vision is queered, we actually see more, as the oppressive character of heterosexual dominance is relatively invisible to those who participate in it and take it for granted.

Socialist-feminist perspectives on standpoint remind us that our view of the world depends in part on where we stand in it. This does not mean reducing politics to a set of fragmented and mutually incomprehensible identities, but rather understanding that those who experience oppression and exploitation see those relations from below with special clarity. Anti-capitalist organizations rightly aspire to a big picture view of the overall terrain of struggle, but this does not come through a single all-seeing perspective. Recognizing the limits and partiality of the politics we have developed does not mean simply tossing them out, but recognizing that



like all human knowledge they are products of particular times and places.

The development of anti-capitalist politics has necessarily involved generalizing from specific experiences of sections of the working class under particular conditions. This can lead to a situation in which radicals mistake the experience of sections of the working class in specific circumstances for that of the class as a whole over time. When this happens, the politics are even more likely to unknowingly be shaped by the dominant power relations of imperialism, colonialism, racism, sexism, and heterosexism as well as hierarchies of pay and status among happens. For example, this has often happened simply as the result of generalizing from the experiences of a disproportionately white male unionized workforce in the Global North in particular moments.

Part of getting a broader view, then, is liberating our analytical tools, learning through engagement with

queer, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-colonialist perspectives. Queering also means developing deliberate strategies to counter the dominant power relations as they get echoed within our organizations. If we don't work consciously against the dominant power relations within our organizations, they are all the more likely to re-emerge, since activists are people within this society.. This can include a wide range of oppressive practices, up to and including sexual assault and abuse. In his memoir *When Skateboards Will Be Free*, Said Sayrafiezadeh reflects on what it was to be raised in the household of members of the Socialist Workers Party in the US. Among other things, he discusses his abuse at the hands of a trusted comrade who was left to babysit.

The complex relations of comradeship can often nurture sexism, racism, heterosexism, transphobia, and settler colonial perspectives if organizations don't work deliberately against reproducing them. Comradeship is a crucial dimension of anti-capitalist

organizing, marked by shared experiences, passions, dreams, trust, and pain. It can be an incubator for beautiful and supportive human relationships that sustain us through the struggle, but also for relations of assault and abuse that reflect dominant power structures. It requires work to keep different forms of oppression from distorting relations of comradeship, as people will draw upon the ways of behaving and attitudes they developed in their everyday lives in capitalist society.

Queering is not a one-time action, but an ongoing process of learning from the world and challenging what we thought we knew. It does not mean simply rejecting the experience anti-capitalists have amassed over the past 150 years as it is crystallized in theory. Nor does it mean confining ourselves within the limits of historical frames without acknowledging their limitations. Queering offers the joy of discovery as well as the challenge of recognizing we still have a lot to learn.

*June 1, 2014*