



# INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

News and analysis from the Fourth International

IV389 - May 2007



Environment - The challenge ahead

**Brazil debate -**  
What  
internationalist  
policies



**Pakistan -** Fighting the dictatorship



## IV389 - May 2007

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## Environment

# Technological myths and realities, social challenges

Daniel Tanuro

From time to time, the media report sophisticated projects like the placing into orbit of giant mirrors to reflect a part of solar radiation into space, or the manipulation of the genetic heritage of bacteria of the first stomachs of cows to reduce methane emissions in the farming sector - this, and better... In the face of climate change, the image is created of an extremely complex challenge, to which techno-science would not yet be in a position to respond.

This image is completely erroneous:

1) the fight against waste and for energy efficiency would allow the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions rapidly, in a very significant proportion and at through the use of perfectly well known techniques (that goes also, *mutatis mutandis*, for the reduction of emissions originating from the agricultural sector); 2) Technologies exist which would allow the complete or quasi-complete replacement of fossil fuels by solar energy (and geothermal energy as an accessory), in a few decades. It is about implementing them and perfecting them, not inventing new ones.

### A wasteful and inefficient system

The term "waste" in fact has three distinct aspects: waste properly so-called (pointless use), lack of efficiency of equipment (the technical optimum possible at a given time is not realised everywhere), and that of the energy system as such (its more or less rational or irrational character). The political decision-makers often point to the individual dimension of the first aspect: consumers should use cars less, lower the thermostat by a degree, turn off the lights, cover pans when they cook and so on. The other manifestations of energy waste - the waste of resources in enterprises, because of blind market competition - and, above all, the fact that whole sectors of the productive apparatus are totally useless or damaging (the manufacture of arms, advertising and so on) - are generally passed over in silence (including by most of the environmentalist NGOs). The third aspect - the irrationality of the global energy system - is one we will return to later.

The discussion on the possibilities of diminishing energy consumption focuses then most often on individual waste at the level of consumption, on the one hand, and on the improvement of the efficiency of equipments, buildings and so on, on the other. The messages which derive from this oscillation between the ethical and the technical, leaving the overall political and social reflection in the shadows. Yet, even when reduced in that way, the waste of capitalist society remains impressive. It is believed that a combined policy of economy

and efficiency would allow energy consumption - and thus greenhouse emissions - to be halved in developed countries.

In the United States, for example, 75% of the electricity produced could be economised at a cost lower than the cost of production of the kWh in the current power stations, and the energy demand in the sector of building could be reduced by 40% at a cost lower than the price of sale of electricity. [1] The Europeans are not (yet) "energyvores" like the Americans (for a GDP/inhabitant lower by a quarter, they use an average 4 tonnes of equivalent oil/person/year, or two times less than in the USA), but energy waste is far from being a US monopoly: more than thirty years after the first oil shock, 60% of buildings in the EU are not equipped with double glazing; by itself, the thermal isolation of existing edifices would reduce by 42% greenhouse emissions in this sector. [2]

In his interesting analysis of the energy challenge of the 21st century, Benjamin Dessus [3] recalls that the efficiency of equipment tends to grow spontaneously in the course of technological progress, in such a way that, beyond a phase of take-off, the energy intensity (the quantity of energy necessary to the production of a unit of GDP) of the capitalist economy falls regularly. It is true, except that this relative reduction is more than compensated for by the accumulation of capital in the new sectors and on the new markets, so that the overall dynamic remains oriented to the absolute increase of demand. Moreover, structurally, the energy system remains quite inefficient because it is based on the centralised production of high quality thermodynamic energy which is then transported long distances (leading to losses) and used in functions where it would be more rational to use lesser quality energy, produced on site. Written more than twenty-five years ago, this denunciation of the structural irrationality of the system by the US ecologist Barry Commoner remains fully relevant. [4] Commoner pleads that energy efficiency is judged at the level of the networks, not only at the level of equipment. Example: it is absurd that oil and coal are transported thousands of miles to produce electricity which, after transport, will serve to heat



domestic hot water. [5] For such a use, it would be better to use solar energy, either directly (with the aid of thermal panels), or indirectly (by burning the biomass gathered locally, or through the intermediary of a heat pump exploiting thermal energy accumulated in the soil, or in water).

A flagrant example of inefficiency linked to energy centralisation and the competitive economy is the under-utilisation of the technique of cogeneration, or combined production of heat and electricity. The principle of this technique is very simple: it consists of recuperating and using the heat released during the production of current (without that, this heat is dissipated in the atmosphere). The systems of cogeneration allow a fuel saving of 30% to 40% in relation to separate production, thus a corresponding reduction of CO2 emissions. Cogeneration implies the decentralisation of electric production, which leads to numerous other advantages such as the reduction of losses through transmission, or the reduction of emissions of substances thinning the ozone layer (caused by leakage of cooling devices in the CFCs). We distinguish large-scale cogeneration (with industrial use of heat), medium scale cogeneration (with urban heating at the level of a neighbourhood, for example) and mini or micro cogeneration (at the level of a household).

In the European Union, on average, barely 11% of electricity production is done with combined heat production. [6] The main reasons for this low diffusion of cogeneration are:

- 1) the hostility of electricity producing companies in relation to decentralisation;
- 2) the lack of an integrated vision of urban development;
- 3) in cases of large scale cogeneration, the absence of coordination and long term economic planning between the energy sector and manufacturing industries which are users of moderate heat (the agro-alimentary industry, for example).

These capitalist rigidities are truly important in that the European Commission only envisages that the share of cogeneration rises from 11% to 18% in the course of the coming years (which would allow avoiding the rejection of 127 million tonnes of CO2 in 2010 and of 258 million tonnes in 2020) [7],

whereas much more ambitious objectives could be adopted.

### The solar revolution is possible

As to the replacement of sources of fossil energy by renewable sources, it does not depend above all on revolutionary scientific discoveries, but on a political will to develop what already exists. The technical potential of renewable sources (that is the quantity of renewable energy usable in the current state of development of knowledge and processes), is equivalent to six to seven times world energy consumption [8]. A number of studies concretise the possibilities for specific regions or technologies (see box). However partial, their conclusions are impressive. Indeed, it should here be stressed: this technical potential could double or triple in about 15 years if the absolute priority in the area of energy research was at last given to the development of renewable sources.

This is not the case, very much the contrary: in spite of the two oil shocks, the share of renewable sources in the budgets for energy research and development of the member countries of the International Energy Agency (IEA) were only 8.1% on average between 1974 and 2002, or less than during the period 1974-1986, when it was 8.4%. Nuclear fission takes the lion's share of the budgets (47.3 %), followed in second position by technologies of fossil fuel conversion!

In these conditions, we can understand why the rate of growth of renewable sources (all sources together) - far from increasing in recent years as the media would have us believe - has slowed down (table 2) to the point that their share in the primary supply of energy has stagnated for more than thirty years - in 2001, it was barely 5.3% of the primary supply of energy (fig.1) [9]. The trend has begun to change - slowly - following the decisions of various governments to increase the share of renewable sources in energy production in general, electricity in particular [10]. But a lag of more than thirty years has accumulated. If the climate pays the price for it, the oil lobbies finger their profits.

Globally, between now and 2050, it is technically possible to satisfy the growing energy needs of the developing countries while mastering the greenhouse effect. In the longer term, whether or not the productivist frenzy is reined in and energy research is rapidly and radically reoriented towards renewable energies, the progress of knowledge should allow the exploitation of a bigger share of solar radiation [11]. The political decision is decisive. There is then no scientific basis to the neo-Malthusian

discourse which rest on the so-called exhaustion of available energy resources to justify a regulation of the climate by the authoritarian limitation of births, for example. [12]

Not is there any scientific basis to the chorus of the nuclear energy lobby, which claims that only the atom could satisfy the energy needs of humanity without mortgaging the well-being of the North, or the development of the South, and without destabilising the climate. Currently, the nuclear sector covers barely 2% of the world's final consumption of energy and 16% of the production of electricity. To increase this share significantly would demand such truly gigantic investment that it would become unrealistic. We come up notably against the limits of the fuel stock : in the current state of the stock, the known reserves of uranium do not ensure more than 60 years of functioning of power stations [13]. The so-called power stations of the third and fourth generation would offer, ultimately, guarantees of energy supply in the very much more long term... but at the price of higher risks of dissemination from the use of plutonium.

The nucleocrats attempt to surmount social reticence by arguing that their technology fetish does not produce CO<sub>2</sub>. But some studies show that if one takes into consideration the whole chain of nuclear production - from the manufacture of fuel to the dismantling of the power stations and the management of waste - this system emits more CO<sub>2</sub> per kWh product than a gas cogeneration power station, and around a third of the emissions of a performing gas power station [14]. Moreover, these emissions can only increase in the future, with the exploitation of ores less and less rich in uranium, which leads to an increase of the energy necessary for extraction and processing of the fuel. In any case, whatever the technology, the question of waste remains unresolved and the risk of radioactive leakage can never be totally excluded. Nuclear energy remains fundamentally a sorcerer's apprentice solution.

### An example of a scenario for Europe

For Europe, an example with figures of and overall proposal combining energy economy, transition to renewable sources and abandonment of nuclear energy has been advanced by the researchers of the Institute of Thermodynamics in Stuttgart [15]. The proposition has been baptised "Energy Revolution" by Greenpeace, which commissioned the study. It is compared to a baseline scenario in which greenhouse

emissions increase by 50% in 2050 in relation to 1990. With "Energy Revolution", on the other hand, emissions in the EU (25 states) are divided by nearly three: they go from 7.9 tCO<sub>2</sub>/person to 2.7 tCO<sub>2</sub>/pers (around 0.74t of carbon) in 2050.

The main hypotheses are the following :

- ❖ investment of 4.5 cents/kWh intended to increase the efficiency of installations of electric current production and to thus reduce the primary demand by 37%. According to the study, this reduction is indispensable in order to be able to do without nuclear energy;

- ❖ 30% of the heat produced by cogeneration with development of urban heating networks;

- ❖ multiplication by fifteen of the capacity installed in renewable energies (big hydraulic not included), in such a way that renewable sources ensure 50% of needs in heat and 70% of electricity needs in 2050;

- ❖ reduction by 50% of final demand in heat (by the renovation of existing buildings, on the one hand, and standards in favour of the "passive solar house" for new constructions, on the other);

- ❖ reduction by 40% of final demand in the transport sector (by the passage to more efficient vehicles, a shift from road to rail and a change of behaviour in the area of mobility);

- ❖ progressive abandonment of oil and coal, natural gas remaining temporarily the sole fossil fuel still used.

Beyond the 4.5 cents/kWh of investment to increase the energy efficiency of electric current production installations, "Energy Revolution" generates a slight lowering of cost in the event - logical - that the price of carbon encumbers the baseline scenario [16]. Given this investment, "Energy Revolution" would represent an overall annual extra cost which would climb to 6 billion euros in 2020 and would subsequently fall, because of the increase in oil prices and fall in the price of renewable sources [17]. Towards 2040, "Energy Revolution" will become less dear than the baseline scenario.

The extra cost of six billion deriving from investment in efficiency of electricity current production installations is "the price that the collectivity" must pay to save the climate while moving away from nuclear energy, write the authors of the study. This price is in fact derisory in comparison with the means of which society disposes. The aggregated GDP of the 25 countries of the European

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Union is currently around 9,230 billion euros. The sum which should be invested so as to make a great step in Europe towards the objective of 0.5 tonnes of carbon/person/year represents then hardly 0.065 % of the wealth produced. A sum all the more derisory in that this 0.065 % would be more than compensated for subsequently by the fall in the energy bill...

"Energy revolution" has the merit of showing concretely that the developed countries can reduce their greenhouse emissions in a Draconian fashion, in some decades, by domestic measures (without purchasing of emission rights), and that the necessary investment is far from outlandish. But that is only a scenario to debate, not the panacea. One can note for example - and it is typical - that this study essentially confines itself to seeking the technical means to continue to make the whole of the existing social structure function, without ever questioning the rationality of this latter or its mode of management. Indeed this questioning is unavoidable. We can see it clearly in the field of transport. The shift from road transport to rail transport, for example, is not primarily a technical question : it is a social challenge, which implies challenging the neoliberal mode of organisation of labour and lean production - not to mention the question of reclassification of road drivers. It is certainly not by chance that the thermo-dynamicists of Stuttgart have chosen not to enter into the detail of the conditions to be fulfilled to reduce by 40% between now and 2050 final energy demand in the transport sector. But, the feasibility of their scenario is therefore clearly diminished. The struggle against climate change will not be purely technological : to revolutionise production and consumption of energy requires also revolutionising social relations and the behaviour which derives from them.

## APPENDIX

### Energy efficiency and renewable sources : facts and figures

❖ Equipping all the south-facing roofs in the European Union with photovoltaic solar panels would cover all European needs in electricity (European Commission, "A Vision for PV Technology for 2030 and Beyond", Preliminary Report by the PV Technology Advisory Group, 2004).

❖ The overall technical potential of small and very small hydraulic power stations (three types of installations of less than 10MW, less than 500 kW and less than 100 kW) is not

known with precision but the indications by country show very significant possibilities. The Department of the Environment of the Philippines, for example, estimates the potential of the country at nearly 1300 MW, of which less than 90 are exploited. [18] The economic potential would vary between 210 and 310 TWh, according to the AIE. Very important for the development of the third world, this technology is completely under-utilised: the effective demand is insufficient and the system does not enter in the schema of centralisation of power and energy.

❖ Converted into electricity by means of tidal power (a kind of underwater wind generator), turbines and special buoys, notably, the marine energy potential of the coast of Scotland (waves, currents and tides), estimated at nearly 80TWh/an, would cover the electricity needs of the whole region (School of Energy and Electronics, University of Edinburgh).

❖ In the tropical regions, the difference in temperature between the hot water at the surface and the deeper waters allows the production of electricity according to the well-known principle of heat pumps, but on a very large scale (Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion: OTEC). OTEC would allow production of all the necessary electric current to an island like Hawaii (Pacific International Center for High Technology Research).

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## NOTES

[1] John J. Berger, "Renewable Energy Sources as a Response to Climate Concern", in "Climate Change Policy, a Survey", Stephen H. Schneider et al (ed), Island Press, 2002

[2] ECOFYS "Mitigation CO2. Emissions from the Building Stock. Beyond the EU-Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings". Carsten Petersdorff et al. Report established for EURIMA

[3] Benjamin Dessus, "Energie, un défi planétaire", Belin 1996

[4] Barry Commoner, "The Poverty of Power", Bantam 1980

[5] Oil and coal constitute 38% of maritime transport of goods

[6] More than 30% in Luxembourg, Holland and Denmark

[7] Office of Science and Technology, Chief Scientific Adviser's Energy Research Group, Report of the Group, 2002, European Commission

[8] See for example Wolfram Krevitt, Uwe Klann, Stefan Kronshage, Energy Revolution. A Sustainable Pathway to

a Clean Energy Future for Europe, Institute of Technical Thermodynamics (Stuttgart) & Greenpeace, September. 2005. The renewable sources taken into account in this estimate are solar energy in its different forms (thermal, photovoltaic, thermo-electric, hydroelectric, wind, marine) as well as geothermal.

[9] Rick Sellers, International Conference for Renewable Energies 2004, IEA Side Event

[10] The 11th five-year plan of the People's Republic of China fixes as objective 15% of energy of renewable origin within ten years. The European Union has decided that 20% of electricity will be produced from renewable sources in 2010.

[11] The rate of conversion of solar energy into electricity by silicon-based photovoltaic panels has gone from 5% some decades ago to 15%-20% today and could yet be increased. There is no reason to think that similar progress is not possible in the as yet experimental area of organic material based photovoltaic panels

[12] Estimating that their demography makes developing countries mainly responsible for greenhouse emissions, and noting that some of these countries present volumes of emissions per head higher than the developed countries, F. Meyerson, for example, concludes that an agreement on the climate "should integrate the concepts of growth or of decline of the population, of international migration, and of relative changes of levels of emission per capita.(...) The emissions of the developing countries will be the main factor in the 21st century, and a future treaty should respond to this emerging demographic reality (sic)" (Population Dynamics and Global Climate Change, Population Resource Center, 1999). Combined with the proposal for a market of rights of exchangeable individual procreation, this approach could have serious consequences (proposed for the first time in 1964, rights of procreation have been taken up by several authors since then See for example "Procreation, migration and tradable quotas", David de la Croix & Axel Gosseries, CORE discussion Paper 2006/98)

[13] Christian Ngo, "L'énergie", Dunod, 2004

[14] Storm Van Leeuwen, "Nuclear Power and Global Warming", presentation at seminar on "Nuclear energy in the 21st century", Brussels, October 19, 2006

[15] Energy Revolution, op. cit.

[16] The price of carbon will go from 15 to 50 euros/tCO2 between 2010 and 2050. It is logical to consider that this price will encumber the baseline scenario given that the EU has adopted a system of sanctions (40 euros/tCO2) against member states which do not respect their quota

[17] The increased cost of 6 billion is established on the basis of a price per barrel of oil clearly lower than the current price : a rather optimistic point of departure for the evolution of oil prices in the 20-30 years to come

[18] See [www.aseanenergy.org/pressea/philippines/hydro/current](http://www.aseanenergy.org/pressea/philippines/hydro/current)

## Environment

# A major social and political challenge

Combating climate change

Daniel Tanuro

In the worst case scenario 150 million people could be obliged to relocate between now and 2050 following the rise in ocean levels due to planetary warming. [1] At the same time, deaths due to lack of water, malaria and famine could increase respectively by three billion, 300 million and 50-100 million .

Although this picture of climate change effects is already more than worrying, three other elements should be added, whose importance should be clear to everyone:

- ❖ the agricultural repercussions. Beyond a 3°C increase in average surface temperature, it is very probable that the overall productivity of cultivated ecosystems will be affected. Below this limit, negative impacts will be felt (are already felt) in vast tropical and subtropical regions, in Africa and in South America mainly;

- ❖ the effects on ecosystems. Warming now has clear observable consequences, some of which will have serious implications for certain populations : an accelerated decline in biodiversity (-25% according to a study published in the magazine "Nature"), loss of coral reefs, increased fragility of mangrove forests and big forest groupings like that of the Amazon.

How will the capitalist system manage such situations? The question continues to be of concern if we consider the policies already implemented in certain concrete cases, like the Pacific islands, or New Orleans after hurricane Katrina, or we examine the strategic scenarios of certain "experts".

### Pacific islands

In certain small Pacific island states, the threat of warming is already experienced as a painful everyday problem. In early December 2005, the population of Lateu, a small village of around 100 inhabitants on the island of Tegua, in the Polynesian state of Vanuatu, was displaced to escape increasing frequent floods [2]: the coral barrier no longer provides sufficient protection from hurricanes, with the coast being eroded by 2 to 3 metres per year. Lateu is the first case of collective relocation following the rise in ocean levels. But Tuvalu, another Pacific state, already has three thousand climate refugees. Situated 3,400 km to the northeast of



Australia, this country (26 km<sup>2</sup> of more or less firm land) is made up of eight atolls rising to 4.5 metres above sea level. It could well go down in history as the first country which has had to be completely evacuated because of climate change.

Conscious of the situation, in 2000 the government of Tuvalu asked Australia and New Zealand to undertake to take in its 11,636 residents if need be. Canberra refused, on the pretext that a collective agreement would be "discriminatory" in relation to other refugee candidates. As for New Zealand, it only agreed to accept 74 people a year, on condition that they were aged between 18 and 45, had a "suitable" employment offer in New Zealand (paid work, full time, open ended), can prove their knowledge of English, are in good health and possess sufficient resources if they have a dependant. [3] To get a full picture of this policy, remember that Australia, for example, has three inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>, that its GDP per inhabitant is 29,632 dollars/year, [4] that it has refused to ratify Kyoto and that it is one of the biggest carbon users on the planet.

### Katrina, New Orleans

"The poor will be the main victims of climate change", warns the IPCC. The Katrina affair shows that this warning is also true for the developed countries. There is no basis for saying that the hurricane which devastated New Orleans in August 2005 was due to the increase in atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases. But the violence of hurricanes in the North Atlantic has doubled over the last thirty years, probably following warming. [5] Above all, the crisis management has been very revealing. Before, during and after.

Before? Whereas the threat weighing on the capital of jazz had been known about for a long time, the federal state, to finance its bellicose adventures, had from 2001 slashed the budgets of the body charged with flood

prevention, the SELA (Southeast Louisiana Urban Flood Control Project), whose management was responsible to the Army Engineering Corps. In early 2004, the administration granted barely 20% of what had been requested for the strengthening of the Lake Pontchartrain levees. At the end of the year, in spite of unprecedented cyclonic activity, the SELA received a sixth of what it had requested: 10 million dollars.

Meanwhile, in July, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had drawn up an emergency plan based on the cynical hypothesis that the poor (30% of the population, 67% of them black), would stay in the city in case of flooding - since they did not have the financial resources to pay for their evacuation. "The residents need to know they'll be on their own for several days", said Michael Brown, head of the FEMA. In July 2005, the city authorities warned the inhabitants that they would be "largely responsible for their own safety". [6]

During? 138,000 of the 480,000 inhabitants without aid for five days, more than 1,000 dead, brutal repression of initiatives aimed at survival (characterised systematically as "pillage")... These facts have been widely reported by the media. It is clear that they are not explained solely by negligence or disorder, but by a logic which was anti-poor, class-based, racist and arrogant, in which sordid real estate speculations seem to have played a not inconsiderable role. The statements of George W. Bush and his entourage provide numerous confirmations of it. [7]

After? Less known to the public, certain measures taken in the context of reconstruction are also very significant: minimum wage suppressed, public contracts granted to crony companies (Halliburton!) without tenders, hindrance of the return of poor populations to enable a remodelling of the city and so on. [8] In short: a good example of the manner in which capital can

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use the ecological crisis to improve the conditions of its valorisation...

### Threat of barbarism

The Pacific islands and Katrina shed light on what the neoliberals mean by "managing the consequences of warming". If we project these examples to the global scale, there is no escaping the conclusion: in a few decades, climate change could serve as a prop to barbaric scenarios of a breadth as unprecedented as the disturbance of the climate by human activity.

Certain conservative "think tanks" make no secret of their projects in the area. In a study on the implications of serious climate change for the national security of the USA, two "experts" write coldly that "nations with the resources to do so" like the US and Australia "may build virtual fortresses around their countries, preserving resources for themselves". All around these fortresses, "deaths from war as well as starvation and disease [due to warming] will decrease population size which, over time, will re-balance with carrying capacity". [9] Too few commentators have drawn attention to the fact that the scientific value of this so-called "study" is non-existent (notably because, inspired by the disaster film "The Day After" it posits the dual threat of a new glaciation and that of a rise in ocean levels, which is nonsense). But of most concern is the absence of protest in scientific circles faced with the fact that the ecological concept of "carrying capacity" of ecosystems is used in support of an abject socio-political project: the massive extermination of the poor.

Unhappily, this report does not constitute an exception. The list of reactionary outpourings aroused by warming is in fact very long. Thus other "experts" envisage completing the market in greenhouse gas emission rights by a market in "rights to procreate" pm the pretext that the "galloping demography" of developing countries is a major cause of climate destabilisation. Serious ideological and social battles take place on these questions. We have seen it with the attempt - aborted - at infiltration of the most important US nature protection association, the Sierra Club, by far right moles, so that the halting of immigration should become the priority "ecological" demand. [10] The neoliberal management of climate change could be still more dangerous than this change itself.

### Necessity of a mobilisation, need of an alternative

Numerous signs indicate that the struggle for the climate will increasingly constitute a

major social and political issue. Beyond the Kyoto protocol (a first very insufficient step) the response of the capitalist system is in the process of being sketched out and refined under our eyes. It will consist notably in using the serious threat of warming to push an accentuation of neoliberal policies generating exclusion, domination, inequality and degradation of the environment. Another climate policy is then necessary. A policy which can save the climate in social justice, democracy and respect for ecosystems, on the world scale. A policy which redistributes wealth radically and puts an end to productivism. The imposition of this policy necessitates the broadest mobilisation, on a world scale.

In this perspective, information plays a role which is all the more important in that it concerns areas with which activists in the social movements are still not sufficiently familiar. In February 2005, the International Committee of the Fourth International decided to "devote growing attention to the climate question and climate policy, notably through the press of the sections and of the International". this number of International Viewpoint is intended as a contribution to the necessary effort of consciousness raising, inside our movement and beyond. Although it was drawn up before the publication (on February 1st, 2007) of the fourth evaluation report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and it has not integrated certain recent proposals (like the proposal for a new energy policy for Europe formulated by the European Commission in January of the same year) we hope that it will supply to the anti-capitalist and anti-neoliberal left a first battery of tools allowing it to take its place in the great battle which has begun.

## Appendix

### Climate and food self-sufficiency

According to a report by the FAO, "In some 40 poor, developing countries, with a combined population of two billion, including 450 million undernourished people, production losses due to climate change may drastically increase the number of undernourished people, severely hindering progress in combating poverty and food insecurity". The countries of sub-Saharan Africa would pay the heaviest price. There are an estimated 1.1 billion hectares of arid land where the period of growth of cultures is lower than 120 days. Between now and 2080, this surface could increase from 5% to 8%. Beyond Africa, all the tropical and sub-tropical regions would be affected. The cereal production of 65 countries containing more than half of the population of the developing world could fall by some 280 million tonnes (or 16% of the agricultural GDP of these countries).

Source: <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/FR/news/2005/102623/index.html>

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### NOTES

[1] 30 million in China, 30 million in India, 15-20 million in Bangladesh, 14 million in Egypt (Myers 1994, cited by Friends of the Earth Australia, "A Citizen's Guide to Climate Refugees", 2005

[2] Environment News Service, January 12, 2006

[3] Friends of the Earth Australia, 2005, op. cit.

[4] GDP/inhabitant corrected by variations in purchasing power

[5] "Nature", July 31, 2005

[6] Jessica Azulay, "FEMA planned to Leave New Orleans Poor Behind", <http://newstandardnews.net>

[7] Questioned on the extremely precarious conditions in which the refugees were left in Texas, Bush's mother stated: "so many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so this - this is working very well for them.", "Editor & Publisher", September 5, 2005

[8] Patrick Le Tréhondat and Patrick Silberstein, "L'ouragan Katrina, le désastre annoncé", Syllepse, 2005

[9] "An abrupt Climate Change Scenario and its Implications for US National Security", P. Schwartz and D. Randall, Oct. 2003. The text has been published on numerous sites, notably that of Greenpeace

[10] "Bitter Division for Sierra Club on Immigration", The New York Times, March 16, 2004

## Brazil debate

# An internationalist policy for the 21st century

### *Democracia Socialista*

Socialist Democracy, a tendency within the PT, is a current that has characterised itself as internationalist from its beginnings. The aim of this document is to update the meaning of this characterisation, considering the new regional and world situation and the state of the left internationally and in Latin America.

#### A new political period

The crisis of legitimacy of the neo-liberal project in Latin America, as a result of this programme's own impasses and the popular resistance to its application, has opened up a new political period in the region. The rise in social struggles and the advance, at an institutional level, of left and progressive parties, are an expression of this new situation. The traditional hegemony of North-American imperialism in our region, which it sees as its "back-yard", is being questioned.

#### A new situation for the left

The crisis of "existing socialism" at the high point of neo-liberal hegemony, between the end of the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, deeply affected the international left.

The idea, which was promoted even among ourselves, in Brazil, that this was just a crisis for Stalinism and its heirs, does not stand up. That crisis meant, in large measure, a reshaping of the left in the whole world. There were significant losses when sizeable sectors went over to the neo-liberal camp or abandoned political activity. But it was also the case that the old ideological frontiers built up during the XXth century, especially those relating to the debate over the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, were gradually eroded in the face of the new realities and new challenges thrown up by the XXIst century. In some cases this process gave rise to

fusions between previously opposing groups.

The re-emergence of social struggles at the end of the 1990s and in the current decade was to unfold over a new political landscape. Contrary to the history of the left in the last century, there are no longer any established hegemonies nor are there any political forces capable of leading this process on their own.

There are, however, new strategic questions, new theoretical and political challenges. And in the face of these, areas of socialist and internationalist political construction begin to emerge, along with new polarisations. At our Extraordinary Conference (April 2005), we emphasised one of these central questions, on the basis of the reality we experience in Brazil and in Latin America:

"While we need to understand the crisis of legitimacy affecting neo-liberalism, we also need to take account of a historical perspective in which revolutions of an anti-capitalist nature, capable of providing a reference point and a pole of attraction for a new epoch of socialist revolutions, are not foreseeable in the short or medium term. In such a period we must resist the risks of pragmatism, of making utopian perspectives conform to a supposedly reformable capitalism, of sterilizing the forces of emancipation by integrating them into the order of the bourgeois state and the



market. These risks are key for socialist parties that have come to government in their countries, like the PT. Fighting adaptation or integration into the bourgeois order demands a historic response, one based on the revolutionary socialist tradition, that takes up the challenge of advancing the ability to lead a democratic transition to socialism, in the framework of pluralism, participatory democracy, and the progressive overcoming of the privatising logic of the market, and in dialectical relation with a process of transforming the dominant world order."m (Resolutions of the DS Extraordinary National Conference, April 2005)

#### Premises of an Internationalism for the 21st century

The debate over an "internationalism for the 21st century" should recover the values and the positive legacy of the four previous internationals, but should also make a balance sheet of their errors. It should identify the new actors that exist today, as well as those that have remained (after the general crisis of the left at the beginning of the last decade). And it should, above all, be capable of promoting an open and plural internationalism, closely linked to the struggles taking place.

We belong to a tradition in the socialist movement that has in internationalism one of its constitutive, strategic values. Our struggle should have

common objectives throughout the world.

The universal fraternity of peoples is a value to be pursued and, just as capital has globalised its domination, so there can be no isolated development of socialism in one country or another. A post neo-liberal project, to be coherent, must be socialist and internationalist. Anti-imperialism, the defence of our peoples' national sovereignty, denouncing and confronting the underdeveloped condition of our countries and the ruling class's alliance with international capital, theoretical and ideological elaboration in the struggle for socialism, ethics and morality in politics, the continual struggle for a participatory democracy and the necessary development of political forces with class independence and the capacity to carry all this out - these are the fundamental conditions for the transition and for overcoming neo-liberalism.

#### The internationalism of the 29th century

The last century was marked by a series of confrontations between international projects of the left: social democracy (of the II<sup>nd</sup> International) vs communism (of the III<sup>rd</sup> International); stalinism (of the PCs) vs trotskyism (of the IV<sup>th</sup> International); Moscow line vs, Peking line; in Latin America, organizations identified with the Cuban revolution vs communist parties. These dividing lines

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have lost much of their relevance, even if strategic debates of the left in the 20th century continue to be of fundamental importance. But new polarities are also emerging in a situation where there are big challenges and the answers are still fermenting.

The old dividing lines also meant that the class struggle was often subordinated to the logic of a dispute between the apparatuses of different left currents. This sometimes blocked the class struggle itself.

The experience of the IVth International in the 20th century was unusual, since unlike the other currents, as a rule it did not become a part of mass parties nor did it lead mass organisations, and it never became the policy of any state. Founded in 1938 as a result of the struggle of the left oppositions against stalinism, it was seen by Trotsky, at the time of its creation, as an instrument for defending the revolutionary programme (against the degeneration operated by Stalinism on the one hand, and by social democracy on the other). At the time, the working class of the central countries was under the political leadership of Stalinist communism or social democracy, or directly subjected to nazi-fascism, and the world was on the eve of the 2nd World War. This founding framework (the "defence of the programme"), together with the persistence, for a long period, of a marginal situation in relation to the working class, and of sectarian and doctrinaire habits encouraged by the smallness of their organisations, served as a justification for the course followed by many fourth international organisations as they degenerated into political sects (inward-looking, outside the political situation and mainly dedicated to fighting each other, etc).

### Trotskyism or revolutionary Marxism?

The convergence between DS and the Fourth International (USEC) came about as a result of several factors. Firstly, it was

fundamental that the FI approved at its XIth World Congress, in 1979, the document "Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", recovering a radically democratic vision of the struggle to build socialism.

Secondly, at that time, the IVth International ceased to consider itself the "world party of revolution" or to try to have an international leadership that centralized its national sections.

Thirdly, it said it was no longer possible to work with the idea that a mass revolutionary international would form "around" or "under the leadership" of the IVth International, but that the FI would be one of its components, with the perspective of a shared vanguard, not one hegemonized by this or that current. This perspective was fundamental for opening a dialogue with other revolutionary currents, especially in Central America in the 1980s.

Fourthly, various thinkers linked to the IVth International were already working with a view of revolutionary marxism that went beyond exclusive reference to Trotsky and included all the influences of critical and revolutionary thought (many of them contradictory with the trotskyist legacy).

The fifth and most important point is that, as it drew closer to the IVth International, DS was accepted for what it was, a unique experience. Unlike most trotskyism, DS did not see its participation in the PT as an "entryist" tactic. To understand this particularity, it is enough to compare the trajectory of DS within the PT with that of Socialist Convergence, the 'morenoite' predecessor of the current PSTU.

In this period, the relationship of debate and exchange with the IV International contributed to our strategic formulations on the democratic, national and transitional questions.

## Internationalism and national roots

Jose Carlos Mariategui, the great Peruvian marxist thinker, stated in 1928:

"We certainly do not want socialism in America to be a copy or reproduction. It must be a heroic creation. We have to give life, with our own reality, in our own idiom, to indo-american socialism. This is a task worthy of a new generation." (from the article 'Anniversary and Balance Sheet', *Amauta* magazine, Year III, No 17, Lima, September 1928)

This was the period when Mariategui was struggling inside the IIIrd International against the mechanical application, in Peru, of its decisions - something that Stalinism only managed to achieve after his death in 1930. The IIIrd International claimed to be the "world party of revolution" and, a little later (1943), closed down its activities as part of an agreement between the USSR and the imperialist states.

Marxism arrived in our continent as an 'out-of-place' ideology. There have now been 150 years of mutual exchange between our peoples, who have sought in marxism a tool for their liberation, and marxism, which, to be a universal school of thought, needs to de-europeanise itself. Trotskyism also suffered from the same problem.

Not only did DS not position itself as an 'implant' in the PT, it also sought, from the beginning, to take part in collective processes of synthesis within it, both with the PT left and with the party as a whole. The whole debate on revolutionary strategy, on socialism and on building the revolutionary party carried out by DS throughout the 1980s and 1990s is steeped in this vision. When DS decided to express its identity with the FI in the middle of the 1980s, the latter decided to respect this trajectory and this perspective. Thus internationalism never meant, for us, negating national roots or

the need to re-appropriate and recreate revolutionary marxism.

## The new stage and its actors

The convergence between neo-liberal crisis and popular upsurge in our region is leading to a new situation. With the revival of popular struggles after the crisis of the left, new actors are emerging and old ones are regenerating themselves. For good or for ill, the world is different now. The broad spaces that have opened up for united struggles against the various expressions of neo-liberal globalisation, are only possible because of this new situation in which the various forces of the left find themselves internationally, and especially in our continent.

Members of DS have played a prominent part in building international spaces and links like the World Social Forum, the Assembly of Social Movements, the Continental Campaign Against the FTAA, the Continental Social Alliance, the World Women's March, the Southern Cone Co-ordination of Trade Union Confederations, the forums of workers in the social economy, among other initiatives that have represented important advances for the struggle against neo-liberal globalisation, imperialism, war and patriarchy in our continent.

The big impact of recent actions against Bush and the FTAA at the Peoples' Summit (promoted by the Continental Social Alliance), at Mar del Plata, was a concrete demonstration of the correctness of this internationalist policy. The significant political advances made at the World Social Forum in Caracas, this January, indicate the same thing.

These achievements are neither foreign to nor contradictory with our national orientation. On the contrary, they are the international extension of the same thing. And this orientation is based on a vision of the situation and the tasks in our continent as expressed in the

resolutions of our last two conferences.

Although it first arose fifteen years ago in a different political context, the São Paulo Forum has managed to survive as a meeting space for a wide range of left and progressive parties in Latin America. We argue that the Forum should play a more active role in debating the balance sheet of the experiences of government in our region, in making links between different party initiatives and in building a strategic partnership with the campaigns developed by the social movements of Latin America.

### Narrow internationalism vs internationalism for the 21st century

The crisis suffered by the Brazilian left in the debate over the course of the Lula government has been a pretext for the comrades of the FI to change profoundly the behaviour of mutual collaboration that existed for years with DS. The majority of its International Executive Committee (IEC) assumed powers it does not have. It tried to intervene in DS, deciding who should represent it at the IEC, who should be regarded as members of DS and what DS is. In the same way, in relation to the political situation in Brazil, it tried to decide in Europe what DS should do in Brazil - ignoring that DS has its own decision-making structure based on internal democracy.

For two years the factional and anti-democratic behaviour of some sectors then in DS were supported by manoeuvres operated out of bodies of the FI. Thus came an interruption, initiated by the leadership bodies of the Fourth International, in the history of joint work and mutual respect.

On the other hand, in our region, in the last period, the majority of the IEC has decided to distance itself from the processes of recomposition underway in the Latin American left and to give priority to dialogue and joint work with small "trotskyist"

groups that have survived in our continent.

There is a rich process of recomposition on the left internationally and in Latin America, of which DS is an active part. It is on this, and within this, that we should develop our reflection and contribution.

A new internationalism is necessary and it is being built in the struggles, in the campaigns and in the unitary regional and international spaces. The sectors that have not become contaminated with the spirit of factionalism and the sect - where some, anachronistically, seek refuge - will be our natural allies in this undertaking. DS will continue its internationalist work with those sectors of the IV International with which it already has a relation of mutual collaboration and with all sectors of the international, regional and Brazilian left that are ready to renew internationalism and make it capable of confronting the challenge of building socialism in the XXIst century.

Democracia Socialista, Socialist Democracy is the tendency of the PT, which groups Brazilian activists sympathetic to the Fourth International. It publishes the newspaper Em Tempo and the monthly Jornal Democracia Socialista.

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# The new internationalism and the Fourth International

A first response to the document of DS, "An internationalist politics for the 21st century"

### *International Bureau of the Fourth International*

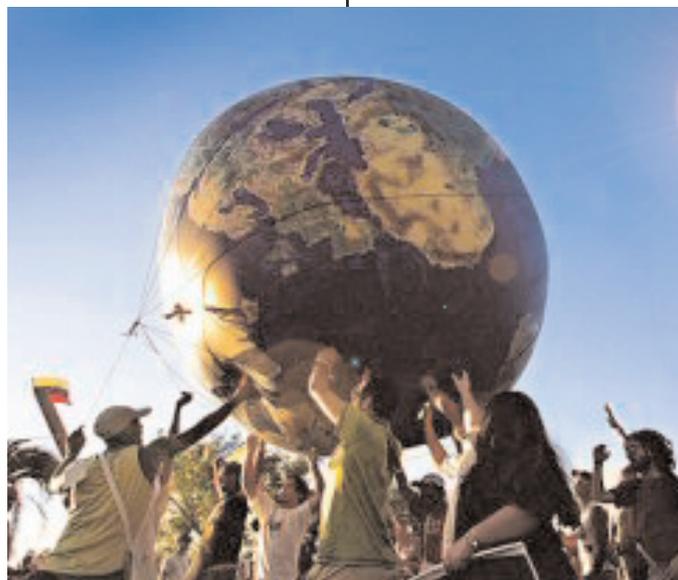
The document by the comrades of the DS and this reply were both written some months ago, before the presidential elections in Brazil and further developments in the situation. We hope that the comrades will be at the next International Committee meeting in order to take forward the discussion. This reply is some first considerations to prepare such a discussion.

The DS document comes after almost two years in which the comrades of the National Coordination of the DS have absented themselves from the meetings of the IC of the Fourth International, and in a period in which there has been almost no discussion with them. Therefore, we hope sincerely that this document can mark the resumption of a frank and open debate with these comrades with whom we have covered so much history together. So we do not wish that this document serve to justify the present freezing of our mutual relations.

We understand that the DS document has two axes. The main one calls for a discussion on the nature and place of internationalism in the new conjuncture of the 21st century.

We think that this subject is of great importance and the invitation to discuss it extremely opportune. On this question we think that most of what is written in the DS document are reflections that would be shared by most of the militants of the Fourth International in their respective countries. Also we think that there are aspects of this subject whose treatment in the document seems insufficient or incorrect - in particular on the role of some Latin American governments today in the new internationalism it includes a series of characterizations of and accusations about the behaviour of the Fourth International and its leadership. We think that these are based on mistaken or badly interpreted information, and need a clear and categorical answer. We will take it in parts.

2) Perhaps it is not surprising that we agree on many of the outstanding subjects with the DS. They are positions --- on the new world situation and the crisis of legitimacy of neoliberalism, the important role of the social movements, the construction of the Social Forums and the movement for global justice, the at least partial erosion of the old ideological divisions that marked the workers' and popular movement over the last century and so on --- that for about fifteen years we have been constructing together as the central part of the analysis and practices of the Fourth International, a process in which



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the DS comrades have played an indispensable role. So the central resolutions of the 15th World Congress - which we understand were debated among the militants of the DS, and in favour of which all the delegates of the present DS voted, along with the great majority of the delegates of other countries - try to systematize this set of reflections. They are the essential content of the document, "Resistance to capitalist globalisation: the opportunity for a new internationalism", and some of the main parts of the document, "Role and tasks of the Fourth International".

Similar concepts have been elaborated in individual debates, documents, and publications of our movement, including, for example, writings by comrades like Michael Löwy, Daniel Bensaïd and Pierre Rousset. Also, we share the preoccupations expressed in the document on the necessity for revolutionary Marxism to put down national and regional roots, to acquire or to fortify a Latin American identity (and Asian, also African, and so on). In the Latin American case, for example, for many years we have identified with the reference to the Indo-American Marxism of Maria'tegui.

The comrades make a connection between this necessity of "an endogenous" Marxism and their own history in the PT. Agreed! Indeed the positions elaborated by the DS on this question, at the beginning of the 1980s, were elaborated in close collaboration with other comrades of the Fourth International. An example would be the original document, "PT and 'Revolutionary Party'", which sought to explain that the participation of revolutionaries in the PT could not take the form of "entryism". This elaboration and this practice of the DS had a Brazilian characteristic specifically. But for the Fourth International it also had a broader resonance. It made a re-connection with previous experiences of the international workers' movement in the construction of mass parties.

And it served as a departure point so that other comrades in other countries began to reframe, in diverse circumstances, the challenge of constructing broad anti-capitalist mass parties. So what is "new" in the internationalist exposition of the DS that allows comrade Joaquim to finish his text with the following challenge to the leadership of the Fourth International: "The revolutionary lefts, including the Fourth International, are called on to respond to this challenge. It is to that task that the militancy of the DS is devoted. (But, careful! to repeat an eroded and "bad internationalism" will irremediably remove from this road those who insist on errors of the past)"?

Here we enter the land of ambiguity and insufficiency that we mentioned above, because the present document of the DS, like the text of Joaquim, speaks of "identifying the new actors" and of "the errors of the past". But they do not say precisely what they are referring to. To seek greater clarity, we will return to the schema already raised in the previous discussions on the Fourth International, and try to compare this with "the new" expositions of the DS. Often we have spoken in the FI of 3 levels at which the possibilities of a new internationalism operate. In simplified form, these are a) the social and civil movements - many of which come together in the WSF; b) the new parties and broad political, anti-capitalist and/or anti-imperialist spaces; c) the regroupments between revolutionary socialists. Chapter 8 of the Tasks document of the 15th World Congress synthesizes it thus:

*"8. TOWARDS A NEW MASS REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONAL*

*1. ...This "new internationalism" has been appearing in force since Seattle. ...*

*2. ...We cannot imagine the qualitative step towards the creation of a new International without an important contribution from these new*

*forces. These important but diverse forces cannot be formed into a new international political organisation at this stage but they can be strengthened politically through a process of experience and clarification and by the intervention in these debates of the revolutionary forces, in particular the FI.*

*3. ...Pluralistic left-wing, anti-capitalist/ anti-imperialist regroupments are still weak ...Only direct clashes between the ruling class and the proletariat... will be capable of shaking up the relationship of forces, putting down social roots and producing the activists who can build, at the national level, a new political force - anti-capitalist, internationalist, feminist - in the perspective of building a new International.*

*4. ...Third, there has been a major development within and among some of the currents that originated or identify with "Trotskyism". ...This is even truer of ex-'Maoist' organizations... Rapprochement between organizations identifying with Marxism and the socialist revolution can make sense only in relation to the battles, the real movement and the tasks of today and the future.*

*We note that there are these three internationalist politico-organizational developments that exist alongside each other: the real movement against globalisation and its socio-political currents; the convergence of anti-capitalist and pluralist political currents; currents of the revolutionary left. This situation can continue for a whole period. However, where agreements and rapprochements are possible, we will take unitary initiatives to advance towards serious regroupments."*

So, how does this compare to the outline of the internationalism of the 21st century that the DS raises now?

On the first level, as already we said, there do not seem to be great differences. The DS document of the DS puts a special emphasis on this level - in collaboration between the social movements of Latin

America and the world, and indicates the important role played by militants of the DS in these convergences. Without a doubt, this is the most evident aspect of the "new" internationalism that is being born. The Fourth International as a whole feels it participates in this process.

We have been together, and we hope to be able to continue together, both in the construction of specific movements, like the World March of Women, and the campaigns you specify, like those relating to the debt or the Tobin Tax, and also strengthening broad spaces like the WSF, not only in Latin America but also in Europe, Africa and Asia (see, for example, the exemplary work just done by the comrades of the LPP of Pakistan - permanent observers at the IC of the Fourth International - in the Karachi WSF).

On the second level the DS document says little, but it seems that here also there is agreement although there can exist different appreciations as to the details. It would be necessary to discuss, for example, to what extent the São Paulo Forum can or cannot serve as a useful space in the articulation of broad political forces, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. It would be necessary to discuss to what extent organizations like the Mexican PRD or the Uruguayan Frente Amplio can be identified as "new actors" of the internationalism of the 21st century. But the basic idea of the DS - of broad political spaces - apparently fits in with the positions elaborated previously in many spaces of the Fourth International.

3) But on the third level an important difference seems to exist. Rather, in the present document of the DS, the third level does not exist. In the discussions of the Fourth International, the participation of Marxist, revolutionary, organized forces national and internationally, has been always outstanding as an indispensable component (not an exclusive feature of the Fourth

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International or 'Trotskyism') in the successful development of the new internationalism at both first levels.

Now, it is not clear what importance, if any, the new expositions of the DS attribute to the organization of revolutionaries at the international level. It is very important that the comrades clarify this. It is necessary to know that the very existence of the Fourth International - this is the necessity of Marxist revolutionaries organizing at an international level around a shared vision of socialist democracy and the struggle to attain it - has not now become, for the comrades, another one of the "errors of the past".

Let us hope that the comrades of the DS do not think that an informal and informed relation between the frameworks of the PT, the Frente Amplio, the MVR, and so on can substitute for democratic spaces for elaboration, decision and action between organized revolutionaries. There is another aspect of this third level that deserves to be discussed. As we say, in the present document it is absent. But in the first part of the Political Resolution of the Extraordinary Conference of the DS, from April of last year - from where many of the formulations of the present document come - as also in some of the interventions of leaders of the DS at the Caracas WSF, there seems to be another type of third level. This is the idea that new left governments, at least in Latin America, would form another link in the internationalism of the 21st century.

The formulations are not very precise. A new internationalism "working together" with the new governments is spoken of. The strengthening of Mercosur, or the formation of blocks like the G20 in the ambit of the WTO, are mentioned as expressions of resistance to neoliberalism. Now, we do not deny the significance of such phenomena, nor the necessity for revolutionaries of incorporating a 'relation' of these things to the

tasks of impelling a new internationalism. But what type of relation, and with which of these governments? And this takes us to the heart of the matter.

Because there is also a contradictory and increasingly conservative character of the Brazilian government's international policy within the WTO as for example when it signed the Hong Kong agreements at the end of 2005 concerning in particular cotton, which harm the interests of the millions of Africa producers. We should also not forget Brazilian participation in sending troops to Haiti.

Because behind all the new formulations and documents of the DS on the internationalism of the 21st century lies the question of the participation of most of the leadership of the DS in a Lula government, whose policy is globally social-liberal. The same comrades who indicate the problem with perfect clarity in this same document: "In this period, the risks must be fought of pragmatism, of the conforming of utopian horizons to a supposedly reformable capitalism, of the sterilization of emancipator forces by integration into the bourgeois state order or the market. These risks are central for parties of socialism that have taken on the central government of its country, like the PT" But it was exactly this preoccupation that the IC expressed in the past. The results of the 13th National Meeting of the PT confirm this prognosis. No matter how much the comrades of the DS fight to incorporate in the resolutions of the PT more advanced positions on the necessity of changing the economic model or extending participatory democracy, Lula has made it very clear that the political and economic foundations of his second government are not going to change.

It is to us obvious that, at the international level, the Venezuelan government, and so far also the Bolivian, have a character different from the other Latin American

governments. To the extent that they rest on the struggle and interests of the social movements (and in variable degrees they give a political leadership to those struggles), yes they can be 'identified' as "new actors" in this emergent internationalism of the 21st century. The increasingly iconic figure of Hugo Chavez for the popular forces and left at a worldwide level is clear in this sense. Also it seems legitimate to us, indeed necessary sometimes, to look for precise and limited alliances around limited objectives with some of the other Latin American governments. But this does not mean the governments of Argentina, Uruguay or Brazil can become strategic allies for the construction of a new internationalism.

The events of May 2006 seem to demonstrate with clarity that these governments are not safe allies for Venezuela or Bolivia, far from being actors of the new internationalism. This cannot be constructed in defence of the investments of Petrobras against the Bolivian people, or in favour of the Brazilian agro-exporters in the WTO, or of the paper joint-ventures stationers of the Uruguayan state against Argentine environmentalists. We are not in agreement with the affirmation of the DS that the Lula government is a strategic ally of the Bolivarian revolution. To the extent that Brazil opposes a direct aggression against Venezuela, or has joined the latter in blocking the reopening of negotiations on the FTAA, it is necessary to support it. But also it is obvious that the clearest heads in Washington have subtler proposals - see the declarations of Senator Richard Lugar, Tom Shannon or indeed Condoleezza Rice - which see the Lula government as their best option to contain the radicalism of the Venezuelan process. (If it is true that some in the Chavez government have illusions in Lula, there are others who are perfectly clear on his limitations.)

4) We turn, more briefly, to the second axis of the DS document. This leads us to understand that

the foundation of the problems between the National Coordination of the DS and the IC of the Fourth International is located in a regression of the latter, from an open and plural position of the Eighties - document on Socialist Democracy, support for the construction of the PT and so on - to a dogmatic and narrow pragmatism that reproduces the 'errors of the past'. We already indicated the general direction of the Fourth International concerning the new expressions of internationalism.

Therefore it is hard for us to understand to what comrades refer when they write that "most of the IEC (sic) chose to move away from the processes of recomposition underway of the Latin American left and to privilege a dialogue and joint action with small "Trotskyist" groups that abound in our continent".

They cannot be speaking of the participation of the comrades of the Mexican PRT or LUS in the Other Campaign of the Zapatistas or in the Frente de la Izquierda Socialista. They cannot be referring either to the participation of the Ecuadorians in Pachakutik, or the Puerto Ricans in the Frente Socialista, or to the central role played by the Colombians in supporting the Alternative Democratic Pole and the presidential campaign of Carlos Gaviria.

And as we indicated above, such a narrow and sectarian approach in Latin America, if it existed (and in fact it does not exist) would make minimum sense when one sees the efforts of almost all the other sections and supporters of the Fourth International to construct broad anti-capitalist regroupments in very varied national or regional conditions. The examples of the Left Bloc in Portugal, the Red Green Alliance in Denmark, the WASG in Germany, the SSP in Scotland or Respect in England, all with parliamentary representation, certainly are not reduced to 'small Trotskyist groups'. And in the case of Italy, the comrades have participated from its birth in the Party of

Communist Refoundation - they were part of the majority when the general orientation of the party allowed it, and constructed an opposition when the orientation of the majority current towards a social-liberal government imposed such an option, as is the case at the moment.

As part of this orientation, certainly we are agreed "to engage in a dialogue and joint action with Trotskyist groups that abound", where it is possible and useful, as we are with many other revolutionary forces. There have been several of diverse origins participating at our side in some of those national initiatives, as also in the various meetings of the anti-capitalist left at European, Asian, international and Latin American levels. For sure, we are not in agreement with all their priorities or analyses of the situation in certain countries or regions - Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Latin America and so on. But to deny such exchange or collaboration would be in our view sectarian - and equivalent to denying the necessity of the third level of the new internationalism of which we spoke above.

5) On the other hand, the accusation that the leadership of the Fourth International has tried to "intervene" in the DS (a concept with an especially negative charge for the Brazilian left), we think stems from a misunderstanding. At the least it would be based on a deeply mistaken interpretation as much on the facts as the statutes of the Fourth International. (NB. The new simpler version of these statutes were also approved at the 15th World Congress with quasi-unanimity, including the vote of the delegates from Brazil).

1. The International Committee has not decided who would represent the DS in the IC. The comrades must know that the members of the IC are elected on an individual basis by the World Congress and that only a World Congress can change the composition of the IC.

2. The International Committee has not determined who the members of the DS are. It resolved to recognize as

militants of the Fourth International all those who were members of the DS, whether inside or outside the PT. This is a procedure absolutely within the powers of the IC, that it lamentably has had to apply several times in recent years, including with the participation of the leaders of the DS, as in the cases of Mexico and Uruguay.

3. The IC has not tried "to define in Europe what the DS would have to do in Brazil". What the IC did was, after a long delay and many discussions, to express its opinion on an aspect of the policy in Brazil that affected the interests of all the sections and also the political identity of the International. It has been the tradition of the Fourth International - a tradition that we continue to defend with pride - that only the comrades in a certain country can decide the tactics to be applied in their national reality. Now the comrades of the DS knows that the question of the participation of revolutionary Marxists in bourgeois governments, or coalition, or pro-capitalist, or neoliberal, or social-liberal governments and so on including nationalist, reformist or social democratic forces, has a long and very controversial history for the international workers' and popular movement. (And not only in Europe, but in Asia and Latin America also.) It amounts to much more than a tactical question.

It relates to fundamental subjects of the programmatic identity of our movement, like class independence, permanent revolution. Therefore it is not surprising that the Brazilian situation not only provoked a wave of discussions and questions in the ranks of our own Fourth International but in many other sectors of the international left. Therefore it is not necessarily fetishism of defence of the program to understand that the leadership of our International had, and still has, an absolute obligation to discuss and to arrive at a collective evaluation of this situation. It was what it did. Let us hope sincerely that the comrades of the leadership of the DS return to share these discussions and these evaluations with the rest of the International.

## Brazil debate

# Four years of debates in the Fourth International, a summary

Jan Malewski

The Brazilian organization Socialist Democracy (DS), which took part from the very start in the building of the Workers' Party (PT) and was organised as a tendency within it, was from the 12th World Congress in 1985 an important component of the Fourth International. It took a large part in the political and theoretical development of our organization. However, since the constitution of the Lula government in January 2003, the political positions of the immense majority of the Fourth International and those of the National Coordination (leadership) of the DS have diverged, and increasingly so.

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dangers of such a choice for the DS itself, as on the one hand the economic guidelines announced by the Lula government left very few means for carrying out a land reform that corresponded to the needs of the Brazilian people, and on the other hand the integration of very many comrades into positions within the state institutions could not but exert a strong material pressure on the DS. But the argument that the left wing of the PT would not be understood and would risk being marginalised if it refused to enter a government that was formed following the victory of their candidate for the presidency and which "bore great hopes, which were clearly expressed during the celebrations when it took office" [2], was also taken into account.

The World Congress confined itself to this oral debate and had confidence in the Brazilian section. But at the end of this debate, as well as during the meetings of the executive of the International in which the leaders of the DS took part, there seemed to be agreement that, when the first confrontation arose between the government and sectors of the masses opposed to its policies, i.e. as soon as the rupture could be understood by even one sector of the masses, the governmental participation of the comrades of the DS would be called into question, because a real left tendency of the PT could only be opposed to political measures that went

While considering from the start that there was at least "a doubt about the capacity of the new [Lula] government to fulfil its fundamental commitment, which consists of transforming the country in favour of the interests of the mass of the people" and stressing that "threats to the process of democratic discussion" [1] had appeared within the Workers' Party, the comrades of the DS judged that they could not refuse to take part in this government and that Miguel Rossetto should accept the post of Minister for Land Reform, all the more so as the Movement of the Landless (MST) and the agrarian sector of the CUT supported his nomination.

In February 2003, this orientation was discussed during the 15th World Congress. Many speakers insisted then on the



against the interests of the masses.

### Heloísa Helena saves our honour

That is, moreover, what Senator Heloísa Helena, member of the leadership of the DS and of the International Committee of the Fourth International, did from January 2003, by opposing the nomination as head of the Central Bank of Henrique Mireilles, former international president of the Bank of Boston, who was the candidate of the IMF and of international finance. That is what Heloísa Helena did again, in July 2003, by joining the demonstrators opposed to the counter-reform of pensions and by voting against this law in the Senate.

But whereas the attitude of Heloísa was approved by the majority of the leadership of the DS in January, in July, that is after six months of the government, that was no longer the case, some of the DS members of Parliament going so far as to vote in favour of the law on pensions... Within the Brazilian section of the Fourth International, a division, which was to become ever greater, appeared. Whereas the comrades of the DS had analyzed the Lula government as being "in conflict" between the interests of the workers and those of the bourgeoisie, it clearly appeared after six months that this conflict did not divide the government, but on the other hand was starting to divide the Brazilian section.

In December 2003 the national leadership of the Workers' Party took the decision to expel from

the party Heloísa Helena and other members of Parliament who had voted against the law on pensions. Socialist Democracy was opposed to this internal trial, and was supported in that by the whole of the International. However, we were extremely surprised when, after the expulsion of Heloísa, and when she announced the need for a new party to defend the workers, for "a socialist rebuilding of the PT" [3], the majority of DS informed her in January 2004 that she could no longer claim to belong to... "an internal tendency within the Workers' Party", in other words that she was no longer a member of Socialist Democracy! On the other hand, Miguel Rossetto, although he did not have the means of carrying out the announced land reform, remained a minister and a leading member of the DS. And this despite the fact that the 7th National Conference of DS in November 2003 had adopted a resolution stipulating that: "the first eight months of the Lula government have been marked by the building of a set of alliances including broad bourgeois sectors, by a thoroughly conservative economic policy and moreover by limited progress in promoting change" [4].

In February 2004, the International Committee of the Fourth International discussed the Brazilian situation at the end of the first year of the Lula government - characterized in the international report as "having confirmed the continuity of the commitments of the Brazilian state to the IMF" and "even being considered as one of its best pupils" [5] - and after the

repression of the opponents within the PT. Comrades Joaquim Soriano (representing the majority of the direction of the DS) and Heloísa Helena took part in this meeting, which quite naturally confirmed the status as members of International of the comrades who had been expelled from the PT by its bureaucratic and right-wing leadership and of those who had followed them out of solidarity.

However the leading body of the Fourth International refrained from voting on an orientation for Brazil, considering that that was the task of the Brazilian comrades, even though during the oral debate the idea that predominated was that it had for several months become essential to assert the distance of the Brazilian Left from the policies of the Lula government, and thus to no longer take part in this government. A written discussion on the political situation in Brazil was opened within the International and throughout the next year documents amounting to several hundred thousand characters, translated into four languages - English, Spanish, French and, exceptionally, so that all the Brazilian members take part in the debate, Portuguese - were placed at the disposal of the sections.

In January 2005, before the Social Forum in Porto Alegre [6] three of the leaders of the Fourth International who had been, since the creation of Socialist Democracy, engaged in its policy debates - Daniel Bensaïd, Francisco Louça and Michael Löwy - addressed a letter to the members of Socialist Democracy [7] in it they analyzed the evolution of the PT, noted that the bureaucratic measures taken illustrated the transformation of the party into a conveyor belt for transmitting governmental decisions to society and that the constitution of the Party of Socialism and Freedom (PSoL) should be considered as an "act of self-defence". They suggested organising the left of the PT around a clear alternative

programme, that those who wished to should contribute to building the PSoL, and especially that a dialogue should be established between the Left within the PT and the small independent forces like the PSoL. Finally, they insisted: "the electoral calendar will oblige us to make, as from 2006, clear choices", 2006 being an electoral year.

### In contradiction with our principles

In February 2005, the members of the majority of the direction of the DS did not take part in the meeting of the International Committee, for the first time since the DS was recognized as a section (whereas the comrades of the minority of the DS had for their part come to the meeting). In spite of this absence, the IC continued the discussion on the Brazilian situation, adopted the general line of the letter addressed to the members of the DS by the three above-mentioned comrades, and adopted a resolution.

It affirmed: "Since the formation of the Lula government there have been in the International reservations, doubts and disagreements concerning the participation of the Socialist Democracy tendency in the government and the modalities of this participation (...). Nevertheless, once the decision had been taken by the DS, and taking account of the arguments put forward by the majority of the Brazilian comrades, the International had decided, at the beginning of the process, not to adopt a resolution and to accompany the experience (...). The International thus avoided posing the question of participation in the Lula government in dogmatic terms, without taking account of the characteristics of the country, of the history of the Workers' Party and of its links with the social and trade-union movements. After the experience of these last two years (...) there is no longer any doubt that occupying positions in the Lula

## Brazil debate

government, either at ministerial level, or through other politically responsible functions, is contradictory with the building of an alternative in Brazil that is coherent with our programmatic positions" [8] .

Concerning the divisions that had emerged within the DS, the IC took a position "for the maintenance of relations with all the components of the Fourth International in Brazil - all of these components remaining members of the International, with full rights - with the objective of encouraging dialogue, relations and the unity of action of all these components, with the perspective of building a political alternative to the Lula government" [9]. After a period of silence, the majority of DS reacted in December 2005, by publishing on the web site Inprecor, publicación de la IV Internacional para América Latina y el Caribe [10] a polemic by Joaquim Soriano [11] along with an article by François Sabado [12] on the evolution of the Brazilian Left, accusing the majority of the International of "bad internationalism", infested with the vices of the 20th century".

In February 2006 the International Committee once again held its meeting in the absence of those of its members who were part of the leadership of the DS, whereas the comrades who were taking part in building the PSoL were present. A discussion led to the adoption (by 25 votes against 2) of a resolution "On the political situation in Brazil and the division of our forces" [13]. This resolution reiterated that the Lula government "is indeed a social-liberal government" and that its policies "contrary to the interests of the masses, have been accompanied, over the last year, by revelations about political methods and corrupt practices which are in no way different from those of traditional bourgeois governments". It noted that "the major part of the left of the PT, including the comrades of the

DS-PT, did not defend, at the time of the last internal elections in the party, a policy of rupture with this government" and that the DS "is continuing to be active in this party, by confirming its participation in the government and by reinforcing its integration into the leadership of the party - a leading member of the DS occupying the post of general secretary of the PT".

### Support for Heloísa Helena, not for Lula

After having indicated a year earlier than "the year 2006 will oblige us to make clear choices", the IC noted that "the candidacy of Lula for the presidency represents the reaffirmation of his social-liberal policies" whereas the candidacy of our comrade Heloísa Helena, presented by the PSoL, "can make it possible for millions of Brazilians to express their readiness to resist the attacks of liberal capitalism and to change things", to "to rally a radical Left, an anti-capitalist Left" and "to take up again the programme and the original fundamental values of the PT, which have since been abandoned by the Lula leadership". The leadership of the International thus clearly chose its camp, on the side of the PSoL.

However, "to encourage the pursuit of the discussion and the possibilities of convergence of all the anti-capitalist sectors" the International Committee reaffirmed "the maintenance of relations with all the components of the Fourth International in Brazil, all its components continuing to be members, with full rights, of the International". Within this framework, it mandated the Bureau to continue the discussion with the comrades of the DS.

Meeting in March 2006, the National Coordination of Socialist Democracy adopted for its part a resolution entitled "An internationalist policy for the 21st century", which reiterated the argumentation of the article by Joaquim Soriano and

refrained from any in-depth discussion on Brazil. This document considered that "on the initiative of the leading bodies of the Fourth International, a trajectory of common work and mutual respect was thus interrupted", which could be interpreted as a rupture with the Fourth International, even though the resolution stated in addition that "the DS will continue its internationalist work with those sectors of the Fourth International with which it already has relations of mutual collaboration". Since for more than twenty years the DS had had a relation of mutual collaboration with the whole of the Fourth International, all of its "sectors" - which we call "national sections" - have the right to feel concerned.

The executive of the International decided to let time pass - since the election campaign in Brazil did not constitute a favourable moment for a relaxed discussion on internationalism, and since other more important tasks took up our forces. A reply to the document of the National Coordination of the DS was addressed to it at the beginning of 2007, in preparation for the meeting of the International Committee in February, which was to discuss, among other things, this subject. The members of the CI from the leadership of the DS once again did not consider it useful to take part in this debate. We hope, however, that among the hundreds of comrades of the DS who have not yet joined the PSoL and who want to build a left within the PT, there are many who do not want to break with the International, of whose discussions they have not been informed by the present leadership of the DS. It is above all to them that the answer published here is addressed.

Jan Malewski is the editor of International Viewpoint's French language sister publication, Inprecor, and a member of the Executive Committee of the Fourth International.

## NOTES

[1] Article, "The two souls of Lula's government", written by João Machado Borges Neto on January 17, 2003, representing a collective point of view of the leadership of Socialist Democracy, published in International Viewpoint n° 348, March 2003.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Resolution of the 7th National Conference of Socialist Democracy, November 2003.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Cf. International Viewpoint n° 357, March 2004.

[6] For the first time since the beginning of the Social Forums, the city of Porto Alegre was no longer governed by the PT, Raul Pont, historic leader of the DS and the PT, having been defeated by a candidate of the bourgeoisie, thus illustrating the disappointment of a part of the left electorate with the policies of the Lula government.

[7] Documents of the FI, February 2005

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] This web site has been, since March 2003, run by the comrades of the DS within the framework of the sharing of tasks within the International. It should be noted that the comrades have not reproduced on this site the resolutions of the Fourth International over the last two years and that the last publication of a position coming from the majority of the International (my comments on the polemic by Joaquim Soriano against François Sabado) dates from March 2006...

[11] Cf. Joaquim Soriano, "A 'bad internationalism' and unenlightened ideas about the Brazilian PT", International Viewpoint n° 374, January 2006. My comments on the argumentation of Joaquim Soriano were published in issue n° 375, February 2006.

[12] François Sabado, "Brazil: Crisis and rebirth of the Left", International Viewpoint, n° 371, October 2005.

[13] Documents of the FI, "Resolution on Brazil", February 2006.

## Pakistan

### In the footsteps of advocates, till the end of dictatorship

From nowhere to everywhere - The mass movement in Pakistan

*Farooq Tariq*

On 8th March 2007, no-one in Pakistan would have thought of a mass movement erupting in the near future with the potential to overthrow General Musharraf's regime. A day later on 9th March, he suspended the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. He had the illusion that nothing would happen and business as usual would go on. He had done it in the past successfully.

But it was different this time. Immediately after the suspension, the 80,000 strong advocates' community started agitation against the decision.

The peak of this agitation was on 14th May 2007. For the first time since General Musharraf took over the power in October 1999, whole of Pakistan shut down. It was the first political strike in seven years. It was also the first political action that was not initiated by the religious fundamentalist forces.

On 14 May, Pakistan was united against military dictatorship and gangsters of MQM, (United National Movement) a linguistic party sharing power along with General Musharraf. From Karachi to Peshawar, all the shops were closed and there was very thin traffic on the streets. In Lahore, the largest ever demonstration since 9th March took place from Lahore High Court to Governor House on the main Mall Road. Over 15,000 participated.

The strike was a solid one and even traders associated with the military regime went on strike. A great anger was expressed against the killing of over 40 political activists who went to the reception of chief justice Ifikhar Mohammed Choudry on 12 May in Karachi. Over 200 were injured by the direct fire from the thugs of MQM, who had announced that they would not tolerate the reception in Karachi.

"Karachi is ours and we would not like the political parties to politicize the issue of chief justice" declared Farooq Sattar, the parliamentary head of MQM a day earlier. Karachi is in the control of this neofascist organization that bases itself on the immigrants of 1947 who speak Urdu. They control the local bodies and almost all the provincial and national seats from the largest city of Pakistan.



The 12 May saw some of the worst incidents of direct killings of innocent citizens and political activists from different opposition parties in Karachi. All the roads linked to Shahr-i Faisal, the main road to airport were blocked by massive containers and trucks. The purpose was to stop people coming to the main road.

Although there were hundreds of Labour Party Pakistan activists present in different routes to the airport, fortunately none of them were injured or killed. They were bringing the injured ones to hospitals. Several busloads of LPP activists were snatched by the gangsters of MQM who dragged the activists inside with their guns at their heads.

"I am at Awami Markaz hiding behind a pillar of the bridge. Firing is going on from different sides. Next to me are lying five people, covered with blood. They have been hit by bullets. There is no ambulance to take them to hospital. I am crying all the time. I can not help the injured one, and I may be hit as well" Azra Perveen, a Labour Party Pakistan activist told me on telephone on 12th May at 2pm. We tried to send the media and some ambulances, but no-one was ready to go that place. It was only after two hours that the injured were rushed to hospital.

Sadly, three of them died later. Azra has been in a state of shock for the last three days. She has seen the blood everywhere.

A private TV channel, Aaj, tried to show live the firing by the gangsters. So the semi-fascist groups when there and fired at the TV channel building for over six hours.

The local police and rangers had given a free hand to "deal" with the opposition. The chief justice was blocked at the Karachi airport alongside with 25 advocates. They were held for nine hours at the airport. The state authorities wanted him to go by helicopter to Sind High Court building to address the Sind High Court Bar Association. This was to

avoid the reception of the people outside on the main roads. He refused to go by helicopter.

While they stopped the chief justice at the airport, the private army of the MQM opened fire on all those who came in processions to receive and welcome him. Thus a firing drama lasted for over 14 hours, resulting in the deaths of over 40 by midnight.

After the incidents of 12th May, the MQM is neither united nor national. They are many resigning from MQM in Punjab, and Karachi is not united anymore for MQM after nearly two decades.

The same night on 12th May, the conservative Muslim League Q had planned a "mass" rally in Islamabad in support of the sacking of chief justice. The Muslim League is in power with General Musharraf. This was a rally planned weeks earlier to counter the growing sympathy for the chief justice and a growing demand for an end of the military regime.

All state employees were asked to attend the rally. All sanitary workers were forced to attend. The Muslim League had promised to give two to five hundred Rupees (\$3.50 to \$8.50) to everyone who attended this "historic" rally, along with free mineral water and food. They have been regular complaints printed for the last two days in the national media about ignoring promises of such a kind. Despite all the efforts, not more than 20,000 were in the rally. It was not a rally but a festival opportunity for many to see Islamabad.

Addressing this rally General Musharraf praised the MQM by saying that the people of Karachi has come out today. Yes, they came out to be hit by bullets of the supporters of General Musharraf.

It all went against the regime. Their rally in Islamabad was a failure. Their strategy to

## Pakistan

stop the reception of chief justice resulted in bloodshed. They lost their support among the middle class, the traditional support for the military regime and MQM. The representatives of over 480 markets of Lahore announced, and acted upon, the call for a shut-down strike on 12th May. It was mainly announced by former supporters of the Musharraf regime.

The movement of the advocates had been started by the bar associations across Pakistan after 9th March 2007. The advocates historically have been in the forefront of every democratic struggle in Pakistan. They were the main force behind the movement against General Ayyub Khan's dictatorship in the sixties: they were also responsible for keeping the movement alive during General Zia's dictatorship in the eighties. Some of them have been cooperating with the military regime of general Musharraf. Some of them had illusions of the nature of the regime. They thought it might be a progressive military regime. But all that is gone with the wind.

The movement has developed from nowhere to everywhere. It is everywhere. People are talking about it. They are very angry about the bloodshed. They have all seen it on the TV by the live coverage of competing private TV channels. Mostly they have mobile phones that have helped them to get immediate information.

There have been numerous hunger strike camps, protest camps, and small and big demonstrations mainly by the advocates during the first sixty days of the movement. The movement was built up slowly but steadily. The consistency in the protests by the advocates convinced many ordinary Pakistanis to give attention to the movement.

The movement to end the military regime in Pakistan is facing its second phase of repression. The first phase of repression was to suppress the advocates in the first week of the movement just after 9th March. Many advocates were beaten up by police and many were arrested. That did not work.

Then regime strategy was to exhaust the movement by opening up. They allowed the demonstrations to take place freely. That brought more people in the movement including the activists of political parties mainly Muslim League (Nawaz), Peoples Party, parties associated with Awami jamhoori Tehreek, the left alliance including

Labour Party Pakistan, Awami National Party, National Party, Baluchistan National Party, MMA, the religious alliance and so on.

The second phase of repression has started from 4th May. This time it is mainly against the political activists. I was also detained for three days by Lahore police from 4th May to 7th May. This was to prevent political activists arranging the reception of chief justice while he was due in Lahore on 5th May to address the Lahore High Court Bar Association. He reached Lahore from Islamabad in 25 hours instead of normal five hours. This was due to the massive turnout on the main GT road to welcome the chief justice.

Labour Party Pakistan saw the potential of the movement just after 9th March. It became part of the movement from the very beginning. Its poster "on the footsteps of the advocates till the end of dictatorship" was the hit poster among the advocates. It has printed leaflets in thousands to distribute among the communities appealing to them to join the movement. It has organized public meetings and rallies to make people part of the movement.

Who is this chief justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan who has initiated the movement? The chief justice Iftikhar Choudry was no exception to the other judges who helped to sustain this regime. But in his two years of office, he took many 'sue motto' notices regarding ordinary Pakistanis who were subject to human rights violations. He particularly helped women victims of rape, and conservative reactionary customary practices, that make women half of man.

He also took notices of the irregularities of the privatization process of Pakistan Steel Mills in Karachi. He in fact stopped the privatization of this massive industrial unit of Pakistan. On the other hand, he has also given decisions against trade union rights and so on and he has banned some strikes of the public sector.

So he was not a hero worthy of the ordinary people of Pakistan, but someone who helps sometimes. He earned respect when he refused to resign on 9th March, when he was called to the Army House by General Musharraf in the presence of five military generals. The military generals immediately removed him from the post and put him under house arrest. This resulted in an

absolute anger among the advocates who termed this act as an attack on the judiciary.

The movement is gaining momentum among the masses day by day. This is because of the implementation of neoliberal agenda at a faster speed. The privatization, the deregulation, the so-called free market policies meant an upsurge of prices of every day things at a level never seen before. People were fed up of the regime but had no trust in the main political parties. So they were angry, but not part of the movement.

The religious fundamentalist MMA, who had street power, used this to gain more and more concessions from the regime including power in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and power sharing in another province, Baluchistan. But they had come out to save the regime whenever it was in trouble.

Now the religious fundamentalists are trailing behind the advocate's movement, in the hope of hijacking the movement. They have lent their support to the advocates but they are not trustworthy. They can go along with the military regime any time.

Neither is the Pakistan People Party trustworthy. Benazir Bhutto admitted last month that it is in contact with the military regime and is ready to share power with General Musharraf as president. This sparked a great anger among the advocates who are mainly led by supporters of PPP. But the deal with the PPP melts away in the heat of the movement. Benazir does not say anymore that she is willing to share power with General Musharraf.

The movement of the advocates is mainly led by a young generation. It is their first experience and they are up to the mark. They do not act upon the advice of their seniors to go slow. That is the strength of the movement.

How and when Musharraf will step down, who will take over, will it be another general to hold general elections or a transitional government of some alliances, these are some of the questions discussed in the movement. One thing is absolutely sure that Musharraf is weaker to an extent never seen before. He can not last long as he had planned. Many have started counting the days. He is a General on his last leg.

Farooq Tariq is the general secretary of Labour Party Pakistan.

## Pakistan

### Farooq Tariq arrested

Letter from Labour Party Pakistan

*Labour Party Pakistan*



The General Secretary of the Labour Party Pakistan, comrade Farooq Tariq was arrested from his Lahore office by a heavy contingent of Punjab Police at 1:30 p.m on Friday 4 May. He has been taken to Garhi Shahu police station, Lahore, where he is being detained.

It may be mentioned that Farooq Tariq and Labour Party Pakistan has been in the forefront in the ongoing movement for restoration of Chief Justice of Pakistan, Iftekhhar Mohammed Chaudhry. Farooq Tariq is among the leading activists organizing tomorrow's reception in the honour of the Chief Justice.

Farooq Tariq was aware about his possible arrest as a news item has already been published about a list of persons may be arrested in Daily Jang. When he contacted the police station about the mention of his name in list of persons who might be arrested, the police officers denied this news item was true. So Farooq was relaxed and was doing his work as usual at party office. But suddenly a police van reached at 1.30 pm before his office and men in uniform rushed to his office to arrest him.

Labour Party Pakistan thinks the purpose of the arrest is to stop the LPP from exercising its democratic right to protest. We condemn his illegal arrest and demands immediate release.

We will keep you update regarding arrest of Farooq Tariq.

Regards

Khaliq Shah on behalf of LPP

(Farooq was released - and then re-arrested on 5 June - and remains in detention - see IV online for international appeal for his release - Ed.)

## Pakistan

### A press conference that went ahead

*Farooq Tariq*

There were three attempts to stop a press conference that went ahead finally on 22nd May at Lahore Press Club. The press conference was organized by Anjuman Mozareen Punjab AMP Lahore unit (Punjab Tenants Association), the peasant movement that has fought against the Military Farms administration in Okara and other districts of Punjab.

But this time it was against Mr. Aleem Khan, a provincial minister in Punjab and one of the richest people person in Lahore. Mr. Aleem Khan was to be exposed by the villagers of Dher Pindi who wanted to tell the stories of the land occupation and that now the Punjab government has a plan to build a road in the middle of the village. That means after land grabbing, the village will be demolished.

The first attempt to stop the press conference was by some journalists from Lahore Press Club. We had booked the press conference for Sunday 20th May at 6pm. It was all ok until the evening of Saturday 19th May.

As I was one of the speakers of the press conference, I got a call from the manager of Lahore Press Club. He told me that the press conference will not go ahead and we had to cancel it because there was mismanagement and we had a "meet the press" appointment with the president of Azad Kashmir. I immediately realized that the "meet the press" with Raja Zulqernain, the president was in the afternoon and not at 6pm. I protested and said that we knew that it was not mismanagement but Mr. Aleem Khan who had pressurized the press club to cancel this press conference. He was confused and started protesting.

I then called the general secretary of Lahore Press Club Mr. Shoiab ul Din. He knew nothing about cancellation and was surprised. He called me after half an hour and requested me to postpone the conference until Monday or Tuesday while he sorted out the mess. I agreed, he is from the Progressive Panel of journalist and is much respected.

We had planned over 100 peasants to be in the press conference. All preparations had been finalized. It was a difficult decision but we agreed to postpone it till Tuesday and informed the Press Club Management.

On Sunday, I was in the Press Club building for another press conference organized by Joint Action Committee For Peoples Rights

with Hina Jilani and I A Rehmn, the leaders of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. This was to show solidarity with the advocate's movement. It was a packed press conference with dozens of journalists.

I was told that the attempt by some journalists to postponement of the press conference was heatedly debated by the journalists and many were against this action.

Mr. Aleem Khan, the minister, apart from his property business, is also an owner of a daily newspaper called Sahafat (Journalism). He has also a plan to bring out a new paper called Waqt (Time) and a private channel called Waqt as well. He has employed some of the best journalists for these institutions. At the beginning of May 2007, he donated nearly a million Rupees (\$15000) to Press Club for buying a new air conditioning system and new carpets. It was under pressure from these journalists that our press conference was initially cancelled and then postponed.

Second attempt was by Fraz Choudry, a town mayor in Lahore Gulberg. He is brother in law of Aleem Khan, the minister. Two journalists came to Labour Party Pakistan office on Tuesday afternoon, four hours before the press conference was due. They asked me to speak to Fraz Choudry on telephone. After initial hesitation, I agreed to speak. We had nearly half an hour talk. His talk was a mixture of requests, threats and bribes. He asked me to cancel the press conference and see him afterwards. It was like offering a "Dehari" (a day's labour reward). I said I would see him but after holding the press conference. The press conference will not be cancelled I told him as my last word.

Final attempt was by some 30 gangsters sent by Aleem Khan to stop the press conference. They were armed. As five of us arrived at Lahore Press Club around 5.30pm, we saw some doubtful faces inside the Press Club compound. I thought they might be people from the village that I had not met earlier.

As we entered the main hall of Press Club, they all came inside the Hall. I had checked in the meantime and found out that they were not from us. We realized the danger and went out immediately to the room of the secretary of Press Club. Shoaib Ul Din was there. I asked him to get these people outside the premises of the Press Club. Some journalists were sitting there. They got very angry on hearing this and told me that how these gangsters dare come in the Press Club. "It means even press club is not safe for the working class to hold their views," one commented. The three security guards were called in and they went along with some journalist to clear the hall.

We were asked to come inside the hall. One big bus load of our supporters also arrived with over 30 peasant women. They came with their banners and they started chanting slogans. The gangsters were standing outside the Press Club.

Initially there was some panic among the newly elected leadership of the AMP. They were terrified and told me that these gangsters will kill them and will not allow them to go back. "Why cannot we cancel the press conference to save our skins," one told me. I flatly refused to cancel and said "if you do not hold the press conference now, that is what they wanted and the whole movement will die down, your village will be demolished."

Press Club management did not allow our all supporters to get in saying, "It is not a public meeting but a press conference." But after our intervention, they allowed some fifty to get in.

The attempt to stop the press conference made it hot news among the journalists. They were quite a few over there. Around 8 private channels and many journalists were keen to listen our side of the story.

Dher Pindi is a village just opposite the Lahore Air Port. A Park View Housing Society by Aleem Khan was just opposite this airport. The land became very expensive. He then went on rampage to grab the land of the poor peasants of the village. By hook and crook, he took over almost 250 acre of land belonging to the peasants.

This went on till 2006. Aleem Khan became the richest person of Lahore with the help of the police, army and judges. He gave plots to all those influential that could help him to take over the land of the peasants. He contested the general elections of 2002 and was able to win a provincial seat from Lahore. Later he "bought" a ministry of technology in Punjab.

The peasants were not part of any organization. After Lahore peasant conference, they contacted us and I visited the village several times alongside with the leaders of Lahore AMP. We decided in a meeting of over hundred present to form AMP Dher Pindi. We also decided to launch a movement against building the ring road of Lahore in center of the village. We also decided to raise the issue of land grabbing. We knew what could happen but decided to go ahead.

This was all told in the press conference. Several villagers told the press how they were put in jail before their land was taken over. One Safdar told the press that he had 133 canals (17 acres) of land. All occupied by Aleem Khan without paying him a single penny. Another old person showed his hand that is not functioning because of the bullets he had to face from the gangsters of Aleem Khan before he took over his land. It was stories after stories of beatings, bullets, threats and so on.

The gangsters had to retreat for the time being. They said that in seven days, they will demolish the village and the road will be built. But we have no option but to fight.

We do not know what would be printed in the press, if printed at all. But we have decided to hold a rally in the village to tell that we will not bow down any more.

Please send your solidarity message and raise the issue where ever it is possible. Please circulate this information as much as possible. Please help however you can.

Farooq Tariq is the general secretary of Labour Party Pakistan.

Denmark

## Red-Green Alliance conference

*François Duval*

At the beginning of May, the Red-Green Alliance, an organization of 4 000 members which includes practically all the currents of the Danish radical and anti-capitalist left, held its annual national conference.

Its debates are rather similar to those which are taking place throughout the European radical left: organizing resistance to the liberal offensive, the distribution of wealth, the relationship to social democracy, the question of participation in government, the fight against the Europe of Brussels, abolition of prostitution.

And there was even the debate on the Islamic veil, some of the delegates contesting the selection of a member wearing the hidjab as a candidate for the next legislative elections. The slogans concerning European construction gave rise to an animated discussion. New, younger members wanted to contest the demand for the withdrawal of Denmark from the European Union, which the Alliance has put forward throughout its existence. On this point, the conference confirmed the traditional approach.

Concerning the "question of government", with the perspective of the Social Democrats returning to power, the resolution adopted first of all reiterated the programme defended by the Alliance: the fight against the commodification of society, against NATO and American imperialism, for the rights of immigrants, for an egalitarian distribution of wealth, etc. It went on to note that, on these topics, the Social Democratic Party and the "bourgeois" parties defend essentially the same policies.

It thus concluded that the conditions for a government that would represent a break with these policies do not exist and that "the political loyalty of the Alliance must go to the fight for the defence of the interests of working people, not to any government".

It insisted on the need to rely, not on negotiations or agreements based on being present in the institutions of state, but on links with extra-parliamentary movements and mobilizations. Such an orientation is in contradiction with participation in a government led by the Social Democrats, which would lead anti-capitalists to take on "joint responsibility for governmental policies", thus blurring the difference between the Left and the Right. In opposition to this, the Alliance reaffirmed its position of being, "even under a Social Democratic government, an alternative on the left".

François Duval is a leading member of the LCR (French section of the Fourth International).

## Israel

# The Lessons of a War

Michel Warschawski

The Israeli national commission of enquiry into the war in Lebanon has just published an intermediate report. The final document is expected only some months from now. It is already clear that, for the Vinograd commission - so-called from the name of the judge who chairs it - the second Lebanon war - that it is the official name which the Israeli government has just given it - was a fiasco.

Those responsible for it are the Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, the Minister of Defence, Amir Peretz, and the former chief of staff, General Dan Halutz - who did not wait for the recommendations of the commission to resign his post and hurriedly leave the country, on the pretext of pursuing studies at the University of Harvard in the United States.

We did not need to wait nine months in order to demonstrate the extent of the fiasco last summer's war represented for Israel. We were able to do that as of August 2006, without having at our disposal the thousands of documents and dozens of depositions that were available to the Vinograd commission. It should nevertheless be recognized that we underestimated the extent to which the Israeli army is in bad shape, its general staff incompetent, its officers completely unmotivated and its soldiers badly trained.

The Israeli national commission of enquiry into the war in Lebanon has just published an intermediate report. The final document is expected only some months from now. It is already clear that, for the Vinograd commission - so-called from the name of the judge who chairs it - the second Lebanon war - that it is the official name which the Israeli government has just given it - was a fiasco.

That is one of the important lessons of the Vinograd

commission. Admittedly, we had a presentiment of we it and we wrote along those lines throughout the summer, sometimes provoking sceptical reactions on the part of experts who considered that these analyses were seriously exaggerated. The report proves, in fact, that we erred not by exaggeration but quite the contrary, by underestimating the gravity of the crisis of the Israeli military machine.

The Vinograd commission is extremely severe on the way in which the political and military decisions were made and, even more, on the irresponsible way in which these decisions were implemented. It does not have, on the other hand, a word to say about the war crimes that were committed during the Lebanon war: not a word of criticism of the bombardment of civilian populations, of the massacres in Tyre and Bint Jbeil, of the destruction of infrastructures and the criminal pollution of the Mediterranean following the destruction of the refineries in Beirut.

When, one day, the war criminals are judged, we should not forget Judge Vinograd and his two assistants who, by their silence, have become the accomplices of the criminals into whose actions they were mandated to inquire and make recommendations.



### A Fiasco

If General Dan Halutz has resigned, it is not the case of his two accomplices, Olmert and Peretz, who announced that it was up to them to correct what did not function correctly, and that they were the only ones capable of doing it! The fact is that, in the Israeli political world, there is indeed no one ready to take over from them. Benyamin Netanyahu puts himself forward as an alternative, but his party, the Likoud, is reduced to a small group in Parliament. To rebuild its political strength, Likoud needs new elections, which neither Peretz's Labour Party, nor Kadima, the party of Ehud Olmert, want.

There is however one political leader who would willingly take over, the man of all treasons, all defections, all chicaneries: Shimon Peres. At over 80, he says that he is ready to take on his responsibilities to save the fatherland. That says a lot about the state of decay of the Israeli political world and the depth of the political crisis.

However, throughout this crisis, share prices on the Stock Exchange did not fall! Because, contrary to its politicians, who have lost any *raison d'être*, Israel is in fact doing very well: the economy is flourishing, exports are on the increase, the balance of trade is positive and the standard of living of the rich and the middle classes is above the European average. Apart from

the student strike, all is calm on the social front.

As for the "Palestinian problem", it is relegated to page four of the daily newspapers. Olmert prefers by far just to have dinner with President Abbas once a week, rather than proposing measures which would open the way to a resumption of negotiations on the end of the occupation. There remains, nevertheless, the Iranian question, but even on this terrain, it seems that the voices of the warmongers - especially in the army - are increasingly giving way to those who count on Washington to negotiate with Tehran a compromise on the nuclear question.

In any event, in order to undertake a new warlike adventure, whether it is against Iran or Syria, it is first of all necessary to restructure the army and its general staff, so as to limit to the maximum the risks of a second fiasco, which would deal a death blow to the capacity of dissuasion of the Hebrew State. Which will take time.

Michel Warschawski is a journalist and writer and a founder of the Alternative Information Center (AIC) in Israel. His books include *On the Border* (South End Press) and *Towards an Open Tomb - the Crisis of Israeli Society* (Monthly Review Press).

## Scotland

# The day Scotland's rainbow parliament turned grey

Alan McCombes

By any standards this was a massacre for the left. The red-green presence in Holyrood, represented by the Scottish Socialist Party, the Greens and Solidarity was slashed from 15 to two. Of the six-strong group of independents, only Margo MacDonald was left standing. May 3rd 2007 was the day that Scotland's rainbow parliament was turned a drab prison grey.

The wipe out of the socialist left was made all the more bitter by the final electoral arithmetic of the new parliament.

Last Thursday marked the end of Labour's monolithic stranglehold over Scottish politics at national and local level. The emergence of the SNP as the biggest party in Scotland by the narrowest possible margin will not lead to instant independence, the removal of nuclear weapons from the Clyde, or even the demise of the Council Tax.

But it is likely to open up a new, turbulent phase in Scottish politics, a time of strife, which could accelerate the ultimate break-up of the United Kingdom and pave the way for the resurgence of socialism.

After the horrendous internal strife within the left over the past year, and with the socialist movement bitterly divided, the SSP went into this election in a brutally realistic frame of mind. This was a damage limitation exercise. At best, the party hoped to maintain a fragile toehold in Holyrood in preparation for better days to come.

Yet no-one expected the sheer scale of the collapse of the socialist vote, down by 100,000 votes from 2003. The final tally of votes appeared completely out of synch with the attitude of voters on the streets and at polling stations, which was open and receptive to the politics of the SSP.

The Greens too were stunned by the scale of their losses. On the morning after the election, shell-shocked Green MSPs admitted that they had been expecting to win nine seats.

Although Solidarity polled more votes than the SSP, the failure of Tommy Sheridan in Glasgow was the biggest shock result of the night, leaving Solidarity activists visibly traumatised.

At the start of the campaign, the bookmakers William Hill had offered odds of 100-1 on Sheridan being re-elected the kind of odds that might be offered on rain falling in Glasgow sometime in the next six months.

Every media and academic commentator predicted that Tommy Sheridan would retain

his seat in Glasgow, while the SSP would be wiped out.

As the political pundit, Professor Bill Miller, admitted on Scottish Television the day after the election, We all expected the SSP to lose all its seats, but none of us expected Tommy Sheridan to lose.

Sheridan, the most famous celebrity politician in Scotland, even enjoyed the open sympathy of the mass circulation local newspaper in Glasgow, the Evening Times.

As well as forecasting his certain victory - and the defeat of the SSP - the paper even carried a sycophantic double page spread in the final week, headlined the House of Sheridan festooned with photographs of the Sheridan family.

This election has been a serious setback for socialism; it would be futile to pretend otherwise. It is also a tragedy for the thousands of people who had come to rely on Scottish Socialist MSPs to deal with their problems.

In Glasgow, for example, Rosie Kane and her caseworker met with queues of asylum seekers facing deportation. These cases are often a matter, literally, of life and death.

Other MSPs have tended to hide behind the coat-tails of Westminster, refusing to deal with asylum because it is a reserved issue. Sadly one of these MSPs was Tommy Sheridan, who refused to dirty his hands with asylum casework after leaving the SSP to form Solidarity.

Within the parliament too, the SSP has provided a voice for workers in struggle, and for others who were too poor or marginalised to be of any interest to the big mainstream parties. Holyrood will be a poorer place without the Scottish Socialist group of MSPs.

There is no single explanation for the debacle of May 3rd. The incineration of the left was the product of a combination of inflammable ingredients.

In the first place, all of the smaller parties and independents were mangled in a classic



political squeeze, in which two parties were running neck and neck. In this election, the drama was heightened by the fact that one of the two parties stands for dissolution of the United Kingdom, thus polarising Scotland into two camps: pro and anti-union.

These two juggernauts had vast propaganda resources at their disposal. While the SSP was forced to fight this election on a shoestring budget of just £30,000, the SNP had a war chest of £1.5million - ploughed in by big business, including a £500,000 donation from the reactionary Stagecoach tycoon, Brian Souter.

Labour, meanwhile, was gifted literally millions of pounds of free advertising from Scotland's mass circulation tabloid press, notably the Sun and the Daily Record.

Despite the party's cosy rapprochement with elements of Scottish big business, many left wing voters - including it appears most of those who voted SSP in 2003 - swung behind the SNP in this election.

Alf Young of the Herald - one of Scotland's most incisive and experienced pro-Labour analysts - pointed out the irony behind that shift:

The far-left took out its anger over New Labour, Blair and Iraq by backing a party which, while sharing their goal of Scottish independence, has even less interest than Gordon Brown in bringing the pillars of modern capitalism crashing down.

The small print of Alex Salmond's economic policies were drowned out by the headline promises of an independence referendum, the removal of nuclear weapons, Scottish troops out of Iraq and more immediately, the scrapping of the Council Tax.

Labour, the LibDems and the Tories have all been tested in government in recent times, either at Westminster or Holyrood level, while the SNP is as yet untarnished by power.

As we go to press, the LibDems have spurned Alex Salmond's advances to form a coalition. That means that the SNP are likely to form a minority government, possibly with the involvement of the two Green MSPs.

## Scotland

However, with the SNP up against the much larger bloc of unionist MSPs, it is unlikely that an independence referendum can be achieved before 2008.

The other key flagship policy of the SNP replacing the Council Tax with a three pence rise in income tax may also have to be shelved.

The economics of the policy do not add up. It would leave a black hole in council budgets of half a billion pounds, forcing cuts elsewhere. Moreover, although a deal could possibly be reached with the Liberal Democrats over the scrapping of the Council Tax, the Greens have in the past voted against an income-based tax which means that the policy could be scuppered by the narrowest of margins, even with LibDem support.

Paradoxically, a minority SNP government could potentially create a more favourable climate for a future surge towards independence. A stable SNP-led coalition would involve backdoor deals, horse-trading and shoddy compromises with the LibDems, allowing Labour the opportunity to recapture some ground.

In contrast, a minority SNP government could allow Salmond to portray the SNP as a party which is trying to introduce radical changes, but is being blocked and obstructed at every turn by the three unionist parties.

Either way, the sands of Scottish politics are shifting. The socialist left may have been marginalised for the time being, but that can change rapidly and dramatically in the future.

It is not much more than year ago that the political obituaries were being written for the SNP after the Dunfermline West by-election the SNPs worst by-election performance since 1982.

A procession of political pundits pronounced the terminal decline of the SNP and the unstoppable march of the Liberal Democrats

As one commentator, Chris Deerin, expressed it in Scotland on Sunday: Nichol Stephen is youngish, moderate and attractive. Salmond, in contrast, wears a sullen air& the perception that they have failed to develop as an alternative government, makes him, and them, an unattractive prospect. The LibDems are succeeding where the SNP have repeatedly failed& The SNP cannot turn second place into first.

Even within the SSP at the time, some members (who later left to join Solidarity) drew the conclusion that the SNP was finished, the LibDems were now the main opposition force in Scotland, and the idea of independence was all but dead and buried.

Fifteen months later, and the SNP are now Scotlands biggest party and about to form a government.

As sure as the sun rises in the morning, the socialist left will be back with vengeance in the future. And whatever the arithmetical breakdown last Thursday, the only socialist party with the capacity of coming back from this defeat is the Scottish Socialist Party.

The SSP fought this election with dignity and restraint. We also fought a highly political campaign, with a 450-point manifesto, including the boldest and most radical policy of any party in this election free public transport.

In contrast, Solidarity exposed itself as an embittered personality cult around Tommy Sheridan.

The 16-point manifesto of the breakaway party, along with its other election material, prominently featured photographs of Sheridan, his wife and his two year old daughter. His name appeared on every ballot paper, including even for the local council elections.

A large part of the Solidarity vote was an expression of sympathy for Tommy Sheridan based on confusion and misunderstanding of the facts that led to the split in the socialist movement, rather than a conscious socialist vote.

Tommy Sheridan himself, in his manifesto, on TV, and at public meetings repeatedly accused the SSP of lies, dishonesty and backstabbing.

That is the prospectus upon which Solidarity was created: that Tommy Sheridan was the victim of a plot to remove him as party convenor; that the SSP leadership manufactured allegations about Sheridans personal life to justify his removal; that the party leadership forged documents to back up these allegations; that members of the SSP conspired to pervert the course of justice and in order to destroy Sheridan.

The entire Solidarity edifice has been built upon this fairy tale, and will come crashing to the ground as the lies unravel and the truth emerges.

In the meantime, for wide sections of the public, including for many ex-SSP supporters, there is no smoke without fire. The allegations against the SSP have not yet been disproved. At the very least, people are inclined to lay the blame equally on both sides.

The events of the last two years have been complex and labyrinthine. But the stark facts are these.

Like Jeffrey Archer and Jonathan Aitken, two top Tory politicians who served lengthy jail sentences for their actions, Tommy Sheridan took out a libel action based on a fraud: at least some of the material published in the trashy tabloid News of the World was substantially true.

The SSP did everything it could to dissuade Sheridan from this insanely reckless legal case. We predicted that this grotesquely selfish and deceitful course of action could lead to the destruction of everything that had been built over decades by hundreds and thousands of socialist activists.

But Sheridan carried on regardless. He dragged scores of people into a legal toxic waste dump against their will. These included innocent people who had been in the wrong place at the wrong time, and have since had their lives destroyed to protect Sheridans right to hypocrisy.

The SSP was also dragged into the Court of Session. Our response was to defy the courts and face down a jail sentence.

In the weeks that the SSP was under siege, dragged through the courts, having its offices raided, Sheridan effectively went into hiding, failing to turn up to any of the meetings to decide tactics.

The rest of the SSP stood valiantly against the courts.

Finally, Sheridan emerged to argue that the SSP should now buckle under and surrender the partys internal documents to the News of the World and the courts. His capitulation was backed by those who went on to found Solidarity. So far, so dishonourable.

But worse was to come. In an abysmal display of cowardice, Sheridan told the courts and the media that the documents had been forged by the SSP as part of a plot to fit him up.

To salvage his fake reputation, he denounced the SSP leadership as liars, perjurers, forgers and conspirators, before walking out to split the left and wreck the socialist unity project, built up over a decade and more.

The mainstream press, cowed by the courts and the threat of libel action and perhaps also by the fear of jeopardising an ongoing police investigation into perjury and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice have never been prepared to bring out these facts.

As a result, the SSP was fighting this election under a cloud of suspicion. To pretend otherwise would be to run away from reality.

However, two or three years down the road, the events of the past year will have begun to fade into the mists of history. With the removal of Tommy Sheridan from Holyrood, the Solidarity bubble will burst.

That will be a massive step forward for the left, allowing Scottish socialism to be rebuilt under the clean banner of the SSP.

Alan McCombes is a leading member of the Scottish Socialist Party and the ISM, the Marxist platform within it.

## Scotland

## The Scottish elections and the SSP

Murray Smith

From the point of view of the radical Left in Western Europe, and beyond, the most striking thing about the 2007 Scottish parliamentary elections was the wiping out of the parliamentary representation of the anti-capitalist, socialist Left, and in particular the Scottish Socialist Party. This is a very serious defeat, not only for the left in Scotland, but for all those internationally who have seen the SSP as an example and

as one of the pioneering organisations of the European Anti-capitalist Left. We will come back to that, but first of all it is necessary to look at the broader context of these elections, which also explain in part the defeat of the left.

These elections were a triumph for the Scottish National Party (SNP), which won 47 seats out of 129 (20 up on last time) to Labour's 46 (4 down). Any idea that they were essentially a defeat for Labour rather than a victory for the SNP does not resist an examination of the facts and figures. In a rather confused article in this week's *Socialist Worker*, Neil Davidson writes of "a serious desire on the part of voters to punish Labour for its many crimes". But later in the same article he notes that "the great majority of new SNP seats came from the smaller parties, not from Labour", which is much more relevant. In fact the Labour vote fell, in the constituency section, from 659,879 (34.6 per cent) in 2003 to 648,374 (32.2 per cent) in 2007. Hardly a severe punishment.

And in the regional lists it actually went up from 561,379 (29.3 per cent) in 2003 to 595,415 (29.2 per cent) in 2007. In fact the big drop in the Labour vote was between 1999 and 2003, when it lost 250,000 votes in the constituencies and nearly as many in the regions. The SNP on the other hand went up from 449,476 (23.8 per cent) in 2003 to 664,227 (32.9 per cent) in 2007 in the constituencies and from 399,659 (20.9 per cent) in the regional lists in 2003 to 633,401 (31 per cent) in 2007. That brings the SNP in votes to its level of 1999, though its percentage is higher because of an 8 per cent less turnout in 2007 compared to 1999.

So the main reason for the SNP's victory is that a lot more people voted for them in 2007 than in 2003, and those votes did not come from Labour to any significant extent. In fact there was a real polarisation between the nationalist vote and the unionist vote, and specifically between the SNP and the main unionist party, the Labour Party. Where did the SNP's extra votes come from? Well, Labour's coalition partner the LibDems lost 40,000 votes in the constituency section.

Maybe some of those went to the SNP, probably not many. But the combined SSP, Green and Solidarity vote in the regional lists was 150,000 down on the SSP-Green vote in 2003 and since the SSP didn't stand this time in the constituencies, there were 117,000 votes looking for a home. Add in a 2.4 per cent increase in turnout, which perhaps favoured the SNP, and you start to make up the difference in the SNP vote between 2003 and 2007.

There was of course in this election the scandal of, according to the BBC, 142,000 spoiled ballot papers, about 7 per cent of the total. This was due to the extremely complicated voting system and seems definitely to have damaged the smaller parties, probably not unintentionally. In particular it seems to have confused voters who wanted to vote one way in the regional lists and another in the constituencies. Who would those be? To a very large extent, those who voted SSP/Solidarity/Greens in the regions and SNP in the constituencies. Probably it wouldn't have had much effect on the result this time, nevertheless it has to be independently investigated and changed for the next elections.

So you have a situation where the of the three main unionist parties, the Labour vote held pretty steady, the Conservatives went up slightly, the LibDems down slightly. On the other hand the SNP went up to a very large extent thanks to Green and Socialist voters who are pro-independence but well to the left of Alex Salmond. Why did they choose the SNP? Probably partly because of the party's position on issues like council tax, Trident, Iraq. And very probably because they thought an SNP victory would at least bring independence nearer. Because of the three parliamentary elections held since the Parliament was set up in 1999, this was the first one where the national question was well and truly at centre stage. Contrary to those who impressionistically approach the national question from the angle of the last by-election or opinion poll, beyond these ups and downs Scottish national consciousness has been steadily developing over the last 40 years, and its logical conclusion is independence. And not an independence in



the abstract, but the desire of the Scottish to have control over their own affairs, their own national wealth and how it is distributed, issues like war and peace and nuclear bases on the Clyde. From that point of view, the SNP's campaign, concentrating less on independence and more on concrete issues, was quite intelligent. Because if there is not yet a solid majority for independence (the polls go up and down, sometimes there is over 50 per cent for independence) there is now a very solid majority for extending the powers of the Parliament.

So what happens now? It appears at the moment far from certain that the SNP will manage to have a coalition government with the LibDems and the Greens. So we are very possibly heading towards an SNP minority government. As Alan McCombes points out, that may be no bad thing for the SNP. It would avoid the kind of horse trading and shoddy compromises that coalition implies and the SNP could present itself as trying to apply its programme but being blocked by the three big unionist parties.

What might an SNP minority government do? Probably two things at once, as it did in the election campaign. On the one hand, he will give guarantees to the banks and big business that an SNP-run Scotland, or even an independent Scotland, will be good for them. During the election campaign the SNP proudly paraded the bankers and businessmen who supported it and revelled in the fat cheques they gave the party. So on basic economic policy, there is likely to be no significant change, no reversal of privatisations and private-public initiatives. On the other hand, Salmond will seek to consolidate and enlarge his base by engaging in confrontation with London on a series of issues - oil revenues, Trident, Scottish troops in Iraq, council tax - pushing autonomy to the limits, demonstrating that he cannot do this or that because of control from London.

This will open up a very interesting and eventful period in Scottish politics, and it makes the absence of socialist MSPs from Holyrood even more regrettable. For the SSP, to be absent from Parliament in the new political period that is opening is a severe



SSP convenor Colin Fox

defeat. It will also have financial consequences. But there is no other choice but to rebuild its influence. By engaging in extra-parliamentary campaigns and struggles as it has always done, but also by making its voice heard, which will now be more difficult from outside Parliament, on the central political questions that will arise.

So what happened to the SSP? As we have pointed out above, the left electorate got squeezed by the Labour-SNP polarisation. The Greens had no Sheridan affair, no damaging publicity, no split, and they still went down from 6.9 per cent to 4 per cent and from seven seats to two. Even without the Sheridan affair, the SSP would have had a hard fight on its hands, would perhaps have lost some of its six MSPs. But it is reasonable to think that it would have survived at least as well as the Greens.

But of course the SSP it fought these elections in very particular circumstances, less than a year after the Sheridan affair reached its apogee. In order to win a controversial case against a newspaper that had published details of his private life, Sheridan unleashed a public campaign of lies and slander against the leadership of the SSP, which continued before, during and after the case, which against all expectations he won. Having then failed miserably to win the support of a majority of SSP members, he split the party and created Solidarity, supported by the SWP and CWI factions.

The split was especially damaging because there was no way of explaining it by fundamental political differences. There were problems in the SSP, mostly flowing from the difficulty of adjusting to the new situation after 2003 with six MSPs. The only way to avoid such problems is to stay small and marginal. Mistakes were made, there were differences, there was even an incipient left-right divide, with Sheridan and his ally Rosemary Byrne on the right. But that was not what caused the crisis and the split. What caused the split was Sheridan's ill-advised court case and his willingness first of all to lie and then to slander his party colleagues who would not lie for him, in order to win it. That was what was so destructive.

The SSP kept the bulk of the cadres of the party, and recovered from the split better than many people expected. It was much more visible on the streets than Solidarity. The SWP seems to have concentrated, up

until the recent election campaign, on recovering its own public profile after five years in the SSP. Nevertheless, it is clear that the scandal and the split left strong traces on the electorate. That was predictable. What was not so predictable was the scale of the defeat - the SSP lost all its four MSPs and got 0.6 per cent of the vote. What was also not so predictable was that Solidarity would do significantly better, with 1.5 per cent, though it also lost its two MSPs. Clearly, in spite of everything, the name of Sheridan - the name he acquired as a public representative of the SSP and its predecessors, going back to the poll tax campaign - still attracted some of the socialist electorate.

The SSP will survive, it is politically solid enough to weather the storm, though hard times are coming and there will inevitably be some demoralisation. What of Solidarity? It is much less politically homogenous, above all on the national question. Sheridan and his allies still defend more or less the traditional position of the SSP. One is tempted to say that the SWP have no understanding of the national question in Scotland. But they do have one, developed in the writings of their main Scottish theorist, Neil Davidson, on the question. But it leads to them to underestimate the importance of the national question and to consider that the issue of independence is a "tactical question".

The *raison d'être* of this strange coalition was that only with Sheridan could they get elected. They were less wrong about this than many people thought, they were not so far off in Glasgow, but the gamble failed. But Solidarity is unlikely to last long enough to break up under the weight of its political contradictions. Between now and the end of the year Sheridan is likely to face court appearances which will expose the full extent of his lies and slander. Ironically, having used the courts and the bourgeois media to slander the SSP, he is likely to be brought down by those same courts and those same media. It is difficult to see Solidarity surviving that.

But the SSP will survive and though it will be a hard road back, it represents the only way to put socialism back on the agenda of Scottish politics. On the electoral level the chance may come sooner than expected. If the SNP does form a minority government, it is unlikely to last four years before new elections are called. But in the meantime, all those, in England, in Europe and beyond who have supported the SSP and who stood by it in last year's crisis, should more than ever stand by it now.

Murray Smith, formerly international organiser for the Scottish Socialist Party, is an active member of the LCR.

## Britain

# Brown wins without a contest

Where now for the Labour left?

### *Socialist Resistance*

We can all say good riddance to Tony Blair. It was fitting that it was the war that got him in the end. However he tried he could never shake off the lies and bloodshed involved.

Gordon Brown will now be crowned Labour leader and then Prime Minister on June 27. There was never going to be a Blairite challenge to Brown (despite massive media speculation) short of some dramatic and unforeseen development, even if some of the Blairites did keep their options open. There is nothing between them other than personal ambition and Brown was in an unassailable position. It's goodbye Blair, but Blairism continues.

The central issue for the left, however, is the failure of the Labour left to raise a challenge the first time since 1931. Despite campaigning tirelessly up and down the country for months John McDonnell fell well short of the 45 nominations he needed from Labour MPs to stand. Michael Meacher's hopeless 'centre left' candidacy collapsed with even less, and most of those would not transfer to McDonnell.

It is a defeat of historic proportions. Failure to achieve a contest - after ten years of New Labour's policies its war-drive, neo-liberal agenda, and sleaze is a disaster. It means that the most right-wing and treacherous Labour leader since Ramsay MacDonald has been able to replace himself in his own image without a contest. Compare this with the time when Tony Benn missed the deputy leadership by a mere 0.5%. The change is staggering.

Brown won a clunking 318 nominations, including the support of several soft left MPs such as Bob Marshal-Andrews and John Cruddas who nominated Brown. It was not even that MPs had to agree with everything John McDonnell said in order to nominate him. They could have endorsed him to ensure a political debate and a democratic process.

It was a huge vote of confidence from Labour MPs which will strengthen Brown's neo-liberal agenda and undermine potential opposition to his future actions.

Predictably the Labour left are in denial. The Labour Left Briefing editorial says: "Socialists outside the party will be quick to claim that this is the end of the Labour left. We beg to differ". John McDonnell says: "We're now in a stronger position to fight for socialist policies

## Britain

than we have been for years". Geoff Martin says that the campaign has: "dug a solid foundation for a revitalised left that we can build on in the future". This is whistling in the wind.

Geoff Martin argues that the problem was amongst Labour MPs, not party members. Every winnable seat which comes up for selection has a Blairite parachuted in, he says. Alan Simpson argues that the left was robbed of a contest by the threshold of 45 nominating MPs. He describes it as a "coup".

Of course Blair has been promoting Blairite MPs, and, of course, the election rules were not drawn up to help the left. But these things do not explain Brown 318, McDonnell 27. The fact is a strong grass roots left in the party would have resulted in more nominations. The left was not even a factor MPs had to take into account when they decided who to nominate. There was a no price they had to play for nominating Brown rather than McDonnell. On the Labour Party NEC, when a motion was moved to reduce the required number of nominations it got only two votes.

The problem is not just amongst MPs. In fact, after the MPs, it is inside the Labour party, amongst its declining membership, where the victory of new Labour has been most complete. Far more complete that amongst the electoral base of the Labour Party much of which has been well to the left of Labour for a long time.

The fact is, the major radicalisations of the past 10 years from Seattle to the mass anti-war movement have found no detectable echo inside the Labour Party, all the development have been outside.

Of course Brown was lying when he said he would have welcomed a contest. He would have welcomed nothing of the sort. McDonnell could have done well in the unions, where ballots were held, and the last thing he wanted for the next six weeks was a continuous pressure from the left. That is why Brown ensured John McDonnell never got on the ballot paper. His claim that his principles stopped him giving the green light to some McDonnell nominations is nonsense.

McDonnell's defeat throws the Labour left into serious crisis. No spin can hide it. The project of reclaiming the Labour or the idea that the Labour Party is a fruitful arena for the left to work in have been dealt a devastating blow.

The only practical proposal John McDonnell makes as a way forward after all this is a call for people to attend the Labour Representation Committee conference in October. But what is it going to talk about? It

is unlikely to conclude, as the original LRC did at the start of the 20th century that the trade unions and the working class needed independent labour representation in the form of a new political party. It is more likely to say, "carry on regardless".

And what happened to the awkward squad? Many of them have become the Gordon Brown squad! John McDonnell failed to win the support of any major union for his campaign. McDonnell got the support of some smaller unions mostly outside of the Labour Party. But neither Derek Simpson, Tony Woodley, Dave Prentis or any of the general secretaries of the big unions were prepared to back him. They rushed to support Brown - despite the pay freeze, pensions crisis, and job losses he has imposed on them. They would rather seek crumbs from his table than back a left candidate.

Woodley and Simpson managed to get both wings of 'Unite' to support Gordon Brown, having opposed support for John McDonnell. The TGWU section of 'Unite' declared itself "proud" to have nominated Brown saying that it will give him "our full support as Prime Minister in working to tackle social inequality". Meanwhile Brown was getting set to put the boot into the public sector unions.

All this has implication for Respect, which should be taking the initiative to open or re-open a dialogue with those on the left who are currently not in Respect as to how they see the way forward.

The Morning Star and the CPB are a case in point. They are likely to find it increasingly difficult to cling to a policy of reclaiming Labour. Apparently a new discussion has already opened up on this internally in the CPB. The Morning Star had already called a conference in June on "Politics After Blair" at which the issue will now be unavoidable.

This also has implications for the RMT-sponsored shop stewards network founding conference which is taking place on July 7th. The Socialist Party's Campaign for a New Workers party has already been promoting a debate around the crisis of the Labour left.

George Galloway put Respect's role well in his response to the situation in Socialist Worker:

"Over the coming weeks we will be seeking to discuss with key figures in the trade unions, on the left, in the Labour Party and across the progressive spectrum as a whole what initiatives might be taken to rally and unify our forces. Respect has aspirations to advance the whole left as well as our part of it".



He puts it very well. This is exactly the kind of situation Respect was created to address. But it is a pity he did not think of this over the last two years when he has opposed most proposals to make Respect more democratic and accessible to new people. He should have thought about it when he has refused to be accountable to Respect like with his appearance on Celebrity Big Brother where he made Respect look ridiculous in front of the very people he is now quite rightly in favour of approaching.

He has opposed Respect being built as a political party and not a loose coalition dominated by the SWP and himself, which leaves little room for the individual non-aligned activist to function.

The fact is that the obstacles to building a viable left alternative are not all with those who retain illusions in the Labour Party. There are also problems in the failure of the left outside of the Labour Party to build a united and pluralist alternative which can be attractive to them.

Respect must never-the-less rise to this situation. It may not be as well placed as it should be but there is no other organisation which can play this role. Its recent election results show that clearly enough.

But Respect needs to be open and flexible in this situation to any new forces from the Morning Star or the trade union left. It should do whatever is necessary to ensure that new forces have space to make their influence felt. If it can do this it could break it out of its current impasse and open up a new stage of development.

Respect's task in this process is to turn the tide of politics back towards the left. Rebuild ideological and practical opposition to the market. Work with the left in the unions to build an independent pluralist left alternative alongside the struggle to regenerate the unions and rebuild trade union strength and organisation.

Socialist Resistance is a socialist newspaper produced by British supporters of the Fourth International in conjunction with other marxists.

## France

# Statement on the election of Sarkozy

Olivier Besancenot

Nicolas Sarkozy has been just elected president of the republic with approximately 53% of the votes. With him, it is the programme of the MEDEF (the French employers' organisation) which is now in government. New tax gifts to companies and the rich, new privatisations of public services, the hunting out of 'sans papier' children, challenging fundamental social and democratic rights like the right to strike or unlimited job contracts are on the agenda of the new president of the Republic.

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This evening, the UMP state once again has central political power. The populist demagogy used in this campaign will lead to anti-social, repressive and antidemocratic measures, which will undoubtedly provoke very broad resistance and struggles.

The LCR will now concentrate all its strength on building these mobilisations. It proposes a united front of all the social and democratic forces is immediately built to organise a response faced to the extreme neoliberal and repressive programme of Sarkozy. The LCR will take all the initiatives possible in this direction in the next days.

It has also been shown that a social-liberal left, which tried up to the very end to make an alliance with the UDF of Bayrou, is not a very effective

protection against a hard and authoritarian right.

The openings towards the right only confused the message. Parts of the popular classes have lost their sense of direction and were looking for change. Ségolène Royal did not know how to blow on this wind of hope for change. This is why she lost.

More than ever the building of a powerful anti-capitalist force, implanted in the workplaces, the public services and the popular districts, is necessary to make it possible to win against the right and the MEDEF in the struggles and in the ballot boxes.

This was the message of Olivier Besancenot's and how the LCR intends To continue: to bring together the anticapitalist forces on a basis of independence from the Socialist Party leadership.

It is on this base that we are standing in the parliamentary elections, presenting a programme of urgent social and democratic demands.

Montreuil, May 6th 2007.

Olivier Besancenot was candidate for the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR - French section of the Fourth International) at the French presidential elections in 2002 and 2007.

## Estonia

# Conflict in Tallinn after Soviet statue torn down

"Ilya"

**Question:** *Could you describe what you were able to see and experience when you were in Tallinn (Reval in Russian), the capital of the Republic of Estonia, some days ago?*

"Ilya": On 26-27 April I found myself in the centre of the mass protests in Tallinn. After they began to take down the monument to the Soviet soldier, in the evening thousands of people, mostly Russian-speaking teenagers from the Lasnamea area of the city, which is like a Russian-speaking ghetto, spontaneously moved downtown.

There were very few political demands, slogans or any kind of organised groups. Young people (some of them were about 13-14 years old!) just wanted to demonstrate their anger against the state, smashing expensive shops, casinos and banks. During these days the police looked completely unable to control the situation. On the evening of the 26th they began to arrest some of the protesters. One young Russian was killed - it was not clear by whom.

On the morning of April 27 the president of Estonia, Henrick Ilves, made a special statement on TV, where he condemned the youth as "vandals", and called for "peace and order". I was in a café, where Estonian people were watching Ilves's speech - they looked really shocked and disappointed. A few days before, no one could have imagined such a revolt in Tallinn! In the evening of the 27th the revolt continued. I was at that time in the Square of Freedom, the central square in Tallinn. About 3000 young people moved into the square, without any particular target. Some of them were carrying Russian flags, some had home-made banners saying "Ansip Out!" (Andrus Ansip is the Prime Minister). The nature of their feelings was very contradictory - it was like a mix of great Russian chauvinism and social protest.

*I have read that Russians treat the Estonian authorities and the*

*Estonian nationalists as "fascists". Is that so? Is there some element of truth in such insults?*

Of course, that is really just propaganda. The problem is that from the beginning of the present Estonian state, from 1991, it was based on the idea of direct continuity with the Estonian republic which existed from 1919 to 1940. According to this idea, only people whose parents were citizens before 1940 can be full citizens of the new Estonia. That means that the 30% of the population who are non-Estonian need to pass special exams to become citizens. The official version of Estonian history calls the Soviet period "occupation", and presents Estonian participants in SS divisions in World War II as "fighters for freedom". At the same time, it has to be remembered that at the end of the 1940s more than 100,000 Estonians (about 10% of the Estonian population) were deported or shot by the NKVD. That means that now, in every Estonian family, you have somebody who was repressed by the Stalinist state. I think that because of this, the nature of Estonian nationalism is very complicated - on then one hand, it is a typical nationalism of a "small nation", on the other, it has a very strong anti-communist and far-right element.

*What do you think about the question of the monument to the Red Army? Isn't it rightly seen by Estonians as a symbol of their national oppression by the state authorities of the Great Russian dominated USSR?*

I think the question of the monument was put forward by the Estonian government for political reasons, mainly to provoke a strong and sharp reaction from Russia. The

## Estonia

monument was a traditional meeting place for the old Russian-speaking veterans of World War II every 9th of May, and over the last 15 years only a marginal far Right in Estonia came out against it. Only in 2006 did the Reform Party, one of the major parties in the country, begin to speak about the monument. Over the last six months there was growing hysteria about the monument in both the Estonian and Russian media, which to my mind had a very little to do with historical questions and people's real feelings.

*How do you characterise the main parties of the "centre-left" government and the parliamentary opposition in the Estonian Rigikogu (parliament) today?*

Now, after the last elections in March 2007, you have three parties in the government: the Reform Party - right-of-centre, neo-liberal and extremely pro-EU, whose leader Andrus Ansip is head of the government; then the "Pro Patria and Republic" party, a right-wing, conservative and nationalist force, which now controls the Education and Defence ministries; and finally the Social-Democratic Party, official descendant of the historical Estonian Social Democracy, but which really looks more like a liberal pro-EU party. So, in Estonian politics this government is right-of-centre. The main opposition force in parliament is the Centrist Party, which is traditionally more "social" than the Reform party and its partners. Its leader, Edgar Savisaar, who is now mayor of Tallinn, was from the beginning against the idea of moving the monument to the Soviet soldier. The Centrist Party is also more than the others orientated towards seeking "Russian votes" in the elections.

*Could you briefly say something about the labour movement in Estonia (trade unions, working-*

*class political parties, the unemployed movement, etc.)?*

At present there is one union, the Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions (EAKL), which is a little bit active only in the public sector, and which also defends Estonian workers in other countries of the EU (now there are about 100 000 Estonians who live and work in Finland, Sweden, Ireland, etc.). At present there is no working-class party in Estonia. All the left groups are very small and have no influence in the labour movement.

*In Moscow there are people protesting in front of the Estonian Embassy. Who are these people? The Russian state-owned railway company has announced that the delivery of fuel to Estonia might be interrupted "because of repair works". How do you judge the relations between the two states and their governments?*

Over the last few weeks we have seen a growing campaign against Estonia, organised by the pro-government Russian media, the "United Russia" party and some youth organisations linked to it. These youth organisations, which are closely connected to the Presidential Administration, organised a blockade of the Estonian Embassy in Moscow and collected signatures "to drive the Estonian Embassy out of Moscow". I think that this campaign has a mostly internal aim - to focus public opinion on the very abstract question of "fighting Estonian fascism", which has nothing to do with the real political and social problems in Russia, including the problem of growing Russian nationalism, which is supported by the state. The Russian diplomatic offensive against Estonia also plays the role of putting pressure on the EU prior to the Russia-EU summit which will take place in Samara next week. In this conflict the Estonian government is also



trying to play a game with the EU, demonstrating the danger from Russia in order to get more support from the EU.

*What is the social situation of the Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic republics? What is your opinion about the political moods and forces among the Russian-speaking citizens of Estonia?*

According to official figures from 2000, there are a bit less than 1,4 million inhabitants of Estonia. Of these, 65,3 % are Estonians and 28,1 % Russians, and then you have some small minorities of Ukrainians, Belarussians and Finns. 67 % speak Estonian and 30 % Russian. In Latvia, there is nearly the same national balance. In these two countries you have a real situation of communally divided societies - separate Russian schools, Russian-dominated areas in big cities, Russian bars and clubs, a separate Russian political spectrum, from right to left. In Latvia, for example, Russians vote only for "their" parties.

The biggest one of them, the Movement for Civil Rights, now has one member in the European parliament. This situation has its origins in the old Stalinist policies, when in the 1950s and 1960s a lot of Russians moved to Latvia and Estonia to work in the factories, considering these republics just as another part of one big Soviet country, never being interested in learning the Latvian or Estonian language. After 1991, the Latvian and Estonian governments did nothing to integrate these people into the new society. More than that, they did everything to make it

impossible. Now Russian-speaking people are mostly the poor sector of society; A lot of young people feel that they have no perspectives in life. This situation also gives the Russian government an opportunity to use the problem of the Baltic Russians - to put pressure on the EU, for different political manoeuvres, etc.

*Do you know anything about progressive or radical groups in Estonia, both anti-capitalist and anti-Stalinist? Are there cultural and political movements in Estonia that are anti-chauvinist and not pro-Western? Are there currents working together with similar Russian groups?*

Answer: There are just a few left groups in Estonia. There is the Left Party, reformed ex-Communists, which is a full member of the European Left Party. It does not have a strong position in Estonian politics - in the last elections the party won less than 1% of the votes. There is also a new anti-capitalist/anti-globalisation youth group called Red-Black (Punamust in Estonian). It is a mostly Estonian-speaking youth group, which tries to do some anti-capitalist and anti-fascist activities. Unfortunately, there are no real links between them and the Russian Left.

"Ilya" is an activist in the Russian social movement Vpered.

## Mexico

# Atenco leaders sentenced to 67 years imprisonment

Repression growing in Mexico

Phil Hearse

In a vicious act of class reprisal Ignacio del Valle Medina, Felipe Alvarez Hernández and Héctor Galindo Gochicua, leaders of the Peoples Front for the Defense of the Land in Atenco, were sentenced on Saturday 5 May to 67 years 6 months jail each for the events in Atenco in early May 2006. In a timing which is undoubtedly cynical and symbolic, the court chose the first anniversary of a mass meeting in Atenco at which subcommandante Marcos denounced the brutalisation of Atenco's citizens.

That brutalisation- started with clashes on Wednesday May 3 2006, when more than 200 people were arrested and two killed, as police brutally prevented flower sellers from Atenco setting up stalls on the building site which is to become a new Wal- Mart shopping mall.

Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, chair of the Mexican Senate's Human Rights Commission denounced the sentences as a "terrible vengeance, which has the objective of silencing the demand of the people for liberty and justice".

These vicious sentences come in the wake of the fraudulent election last summer when right-wing candidate Felipe Calderon was put into power, on the back of panic in the Mexican ruling class (and the US government) that the election of PRD candidate Manule Lopez Obrador might lead to Mexico linking up with Bolivia and Venezuela, opening a new front of leftwing struggle in Latin America.

It also comes in a climate of growing repression aimed at the popular movements - massive repression against the rebellion in Oaxaca in which dozens appear to have been killed, many are missing and many more are being held as political prisoners. As reported by Narco News the police and military are stepping up their repression of the Zapatistas' Other Campaign. The

provocation in San Salvador Atenco in May 2006 was directly linked to the participation of the town in the Other Campaign and the visit of Marcos; in addition it was an attempt at revenge for the successful local struggle in 2002 that prevented the local peasants' land being seized for a new Mexico City airport.

Repression is growing apace in Mexico. Under previous president Vicente Fox and now Felipe Calderon, both of the neoliberal PAN party, the number of political prisoners has grown to over 400. Deaths in social protests are becoming much more common too - the highest level since the military repression against the Party of the Poor in Guerrero state in the early 1970s. This is the consequence of the neoliberalisation of Mexico since the late 1980s. Social inequality is growing rapidly - Mexico now has some of the richest people in the world and many of the poorest, especially in the countryside. The Mexican bourgeoisie, dripping in narco super-profits and the profits from agribusiness and the maquiladora assembly plants, has responded with extreme violence to the explosion of social struggles.

In 2006 the people of Atenco were viciously attacked by paramilitary police, dozens of women were raped, two people were killed, dozens of houses



wrecked, money stolen and dozens severely wounded. Now it is the victims who suffer what are in effect life sentences. A huge international campaign for the release of all Mexican political prisoners is needed.

*Below is an account of the events of May 3-4 2006 in Atenco.*

### Atenco May 3-4

An eyewitness said, "At 7am this past Wednesday, May 3, state police blocked 60 flower vendors from setting up their stands at the Texcoco local market. The police beat and arrested those who resisted.

"The flower vendors called to the residents of neighbouring San Salvador Atenco for help and the Atenco residents blocked the highway that borders their town and leads to Texcoco.

"The police response was overwhelming: hundreds of state and federal police, most clad in riot gear, arrived to lift the blockade. Atenco resisted, with machetes, clubs, Molotov cocktails and bottle rockets. The police tried to lift the blockade five times throughout the day, and five times they were repelled.

"The violence was extreme. Photographs published in local papers show Atenco protestors beating a fallen policeman, police beating tens of fallen protestors. Severe beatings. Protesters kicking one fallen police officer in the face, groups of police pulverizing tens of protestors with rocks and batons.

"Police also attacked photographers from both the national and the international press. Photographers and television cameramen from Associated Press, Reuters, Milenio, Jornada and Televisa all reported beatings and attempts to confiscate cameras. Photographs and film coverage of the beatings were published on the internet and shown on national television. Local and international news articles however, have not mentioned the systematic police violence against reporters."

Why did this heavy-handed repression take place? It is about much more than stopping local peasants from selling their flowers where Walmart wants to be. This district is an area with a long history of militancy, where local people in 2002 stopped the building of an airport on peasant land around Atenco. This campaign reached near-uprising proportions. Moreover Atenco has symbolically declared itself an 'autonomous municipality', like the Zapatista communities in Chiapas.

Local popular leaders invited Subcommandante Marcos, in nearby Mexico City for 'Other campaign' meetings, to visit Atenco as part of his tour. It was in the wake of his visit that the repression took place. During his visit, Marcos promised to align the Zapatista Army of National Liberation with Atenco's struggle. The Atenco Front, with machetes in hand, was in charge of providing security for Marcos during the May first Labor Day march to Mexico City's main plaza where the Front's leader, Ignacio Del Valle, spoke before

tens of thousands gathered in the plaza.

Upsidedown World reported, "Two days later riot police stormed the house where he (Ignacio del Valle) had been hiding since the attack in Texcoco. At that moment the Televisa cameraman was outside the house filming the police operation when some five police officers approached and repeatedly beat him with clubs. As a result there is no film coverage of the police raid.

"Several newspaper photographers, however, photographed Del Valle's arrival to prison several hours later that night. He was carried in a headlock by a masked police officer, who, in the photographs, is pointing for the photographers to leave the area. Another masked officer walked slightly behind, grabbing Del Valle's back.

"The two masked officers walk Del Valle through a gauntlet of a hundred riot police with helmets and shields. Del Valle's head is covered with a towel in the pictures, but his face, swollen and bloody is partially visible. Also visible is a blood stain the size of a fist on the groin of his jeans, evidence of repeated strikes to his testicles."

Subcommandante Marcos reappeared in Atenco at a rally on Friday 5 May, holding up empty cartridge case which he said police had used live ammunition when 14-year old Javier Cortés was killed on 3 May. Marcos called on the commercial media to stop their 'smear campaign' against the people, who have been accused by TV and newspapers of supporting the EPRI Marcos also announced at a protest rally in Plaza de la Tres Culturas that the Other Campaign was being suspended and that in the light of the situation in the Texcoco valley he would remain in Mexico City 'indefinitely'.

Phil Hearse writes for Socialist Resistance in Britain. He is the editor of Marxsite (www.marxsite.com).

## Venezuela

### The Challenge of Socialism in the 21st Century

Some initial lessons from Venezuela

*Stuart Piper*



There is a tension at the heart of Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution. It's been there for several years. But it has come to the forefront in recent months, since Hugo Chavez' re-election as president in December 2006, his announcement of 'five motors' to drive the country's passage towards 'socialism of the 21st century', and his call for a new united socialist party to organise that transition. It is the tension between the revolution's anti-neoliberal and anti-imperialist achievements - which are undeniable - and its socialist promise - which remains just that, a promise.

It was of course the depth of Venezuela's structural reforms - its often noisy but nonetheless real break with the market-driven priorities of the Washington consensus - that first established the process as a beacon for the global justice movement and the international left. It was this consistent anti-neoliberal stance that lay behind the welcome given to Hugo Chavez at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in January 2005, even before the Venezuelan leader had made any commitment to the 'S' word.

That impact reached well beyond Latin America and the traditional solidarity circles of Europe and North America. A couple of examples are illustrative. One comes from Indonesia, where the new left party PAPERNAS repeatedly refers to the Venezuelan example to explain and justify its platform for re-asserting national sovereignty over the country's natural resources and economic development. Another comes from Egypt, where there is a tradition in the Cairo bazaar of giving the names of public figures to the dates on sale, as a measure of the quality of each batch of these dried fruit. Following last year's war in Lebanon, it was no surprise that the poorest, bitterest varieties were called 'Bush', 'Blair' and 'Olmert'. Nor was it much surprise to find that the very finest, sweetest dates were

called 'Nasrallah', after the leader of Hezbollah. But among the group of other tasty varieties, following up a little way behind, was one called 'Chavez'. The Venezuelan leader had of course withdrawn his ambassador from Israel in protest at the aggression.

All this merely illustrates the extraordinary resonance that Venezuela's bold opposition to Empire has had among tens of millions of those Fanon once called "the wretched of the earth" - a resonance that began to be felt after the defeat of the anti-Chavez coup in April 2002 and the development of the health and literacy 'Missions' from 2003, and which is unlike anything experienced for a couple of decades.

But more recently, something else has emerged to give the Venezuelan process a bigger, more profound impact still. This began with Chavez' invitation in 2005 to begin discussing 'socialism of the 21st century', a discussion which continues even more intensely today after the commitment he made in December 2006 that this is now the main challenge for the next period in Venezuela. Of course this is of critical importance for the struggle inside Venezuela. But it also transforms its international potential.

Firstly for those of us in countries where the word

'socialism' has been erased from most people's political vocabulary for the last 17 years or more, it has suddenly become possible to talk about socialism without appearing to have just flown in from another galaxy. More than that, Venezuela is the first living laboratory - at least since Nicaragua in the 1980s - to test out what exactly socialist democracy might look like in the 21st century, and what strategies are available to get to it. Some of these strategic questions have begun to reappear in theoretical form in recent years. For example there has been an important debate in the pages of the French LCR's Critique Communiste, involving Daniel Bensaid, Antoine Artous, Alex Callinicos and others. Among the central questions they raise: under current conditions, does a socialist revolution and the building of a new kind of state necessarily entail one crucial, explosive moment when the old state apparatus collapses, some kind of 'storming of the winter palace', the result of an insurrectionary general strike or maybe a prolonged, popular, military struggle? Or is it possible to envisage the emergence of new state structures defending a new set of class interests, alongside or even within the old state which defends the old class interests?

## Venezuela



This is probably the most decisive question now facing the Bolivarian movement in Venezuela. For at the risk of simplification, the political process in Venezuela can be described as a nationalist, anti-neoliberal, anti-imperialist revolution, within which there is a socialist revolution struggling to get out. And paradoxically, both aspects are crystallised in the personality of Chavez himself. The socialist revolution is struggling to get out because this is a process which first developed out of a conventional (that is bourgeois representative) electoral victory in 1998, with the backing of quite a broad cross-class alliance, and which at least up until the failed coup of April 2002, did little to step beyond that institutional framework. Certainly the new Bolivarian Constitution of 2000 overhauled those institutions, and had many radical things to say about popular participation and the centrality of human needs and human potential. But it did not challenge the basic premises (either of delegated, representative democracy, or of private property relations). And to some extent it entrenched the class alliance that had backed it.

Since the uprising against the coup in 2002, and especially since the struggle to resist the employers' lockout at the end of that year, the popular mobilizations, the Missions, the urban land committees, some sporadic or partial experiences of workers' control, some of the rural and urban co-operatives, and most recently the emerging Communal Councils, have begun to move beyond the old framework and even to 'defy' it.

But still the central levers of power in Venezuela - including the office of the presidency itself - remain institutionally located, even 'trapped', within the old administrative structures. The problem for the Bolivarian movement - and perhaps for most conceivable revolutionary situations in today's world - is how do you get around the existing apparatus, when you first came to power through it (ie. you were elected into office). In the case of Venezuela, this problem is connected to another: how can the movement develop a real collective leadership and free itself from the overarching dominance of one revolutionary 'caudillo', however honest and able, as Chavez himself seems to recognise it must?

Two of the most recent developments in Venezuela, and one slightly older one, seem to point towards a possible solution. The latter is the experience of co-management with workers' control developed in a few workplaces since early 2005, most importantly at the ALCASA aluminium plant in Ciudad Guayana. This experiment remains very limited in its spread, patchy in its application, and there are some worrying signs that it has fallen out of favour with the central leadership. Chavez made almost no mention of it at all in his keynote speeches of December and January outlining the priorities of the new period of the revolution. But it remains the most ambitious and inspiring example so far of a radical alternative to the old system. The two more recent developments are the call for a new United Socialist Party, as

"the most democratic party Venezuela has ever seen", and the "revolutionary explosion of communal power" that Chavez identified as the fifth and most important motor of Venezuela's transition to a socialism of the 21st century.

Together these three seem to re-assert an old truth. The solution can only be democracy - the radical extension of democracy into every area of social life - because that, in the end, is what socialism is. Indeed 'collective ownership' of the means of production is pointless unless it means the extension of democratic, collective control over the economy.

This is how President Chavez described the challenge of communal power on 8 January as he swore in his new government.

"This year with the Communal Councils we need to go beyond the local. We need to begin to create, by law in the first instance, a kind of regional, local and national confederation of Communal Councils. We have to move towards the creation of a communal state. And the old bourgeois state, which is still there, still alive and kicking, we have to begin dismantling it bit by bit, as we build up the communal state, the socialist state, the Bolivarian state - a state that is capable of carrying through a revolution. Almost all states have been born to prevent revolutions. So we have quite a task: to convert a counter-revolutionary state into a revolutionary state."

This is indeed a far-reaching vision. The Venezuelan revolutionary and former minister Roland Denis - often a critic of Chavez from the left - is surely right when he says the communal councils - which are intended to bring together 200-400 families to discuss and

decide on local spending and development plans - offer an historic opportunity to do away with the bourgeois state. In theory there are already 18,000 of them. This should rise to 30,000. In practice many of them have yet to get up and running.

But there are two related problems with the Communal Councils as presently conceived. One is that they are not entirely autonomous. They were created and are regulated by law, a law drawn up and passed by the 'old state', even if an old state inhabited by chavistas. This is significantly different from the Participatory Budget of Porto Alegre and some of its other more radical manifestations elsewhere in Brazil, which to a considerable degree have inspired the Venezuelan initiative. There the PB was set up 'informally' by a convergence of the social movements in the poor neighbourhoods and the party (the Workers' Party or PT) that was in local government, taking advantage of a loophole in Brazil's post-dictatorship constitution. One of its fundamental guiding principles was that it should be autonomous and self-regulated; there was never any legislation on the PB, it drew up its own rules and could modify them at will, and neither the representatives of local government nor of the party had any direct say in the matter.

Secondly, and again unlike the PB in Porto Alegre, the Communal Councils do not have sovereign decision making power over 100% of local budgets (another of the cardinal principles of the Porto Alegre experience, although one that was only partially exercised). In fact the money that Venezuela's communal councils discuss and spend comes in lump sums allocated directly by the Presidential Commission for

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Communal Power - a total of about \$ 1.6bn last year, and around twice that this year. They do not control existing public budgets and it remains unclear what relationship they will have with resources and administrative structures that currently come under the elected mayors, governors and local assemblies - whether they will begin to absorb and supersede these or merely exist alongside them.

Both of these problems are partly a result of another. In spite of the explosion of all kinds of local mobilization in recent years, Venezuela has neither a tradition of strongly organised social movements nor a mass revolutionary, or even just class-struggle, party, which can organise such initiatives. To some degree the 'Chavez phenomenon' stands in for both.

This is why the call to build a new United Socialist Party (PSUV) is potentially such an important step. It might just be the best way of moving beyond the reliance on one central leader. But only on the condition that it is a genuinely open and democratic party, and not some monolithic instrument for relaying decisions that have already been taken. This is a big challenge for Venezuela's several

small currents and parties that already identify themselves as marxists or socialists. The most important of these from an explicitly revolutionary marxist tradition - the PRS or Revolution and Socialism Party which includes the central leaders of the currently divided UNT trade union federation - has just split over the issue, with some of its best known leaders opting to join the PSUV project, while others have decided to remain outside. In our view the former group are absolutely right to argue that this opportunity must not be missed and that it is precisely because there are real dangers of the project being hijacked by some of the old bureaucratic elements that revolutionaries must fight to ensure that the PSUV is fully democratic and does not include representatives of the Venezuelan capitalist class or the new bureaucracy that has been undermining the Bolivarian revolution from within. This is very similar to the fight waged by comrades of the Brazilian section of the FI in the 1980s to develop the new PT as a "workers' party without bosses" and one which had the maximum internal democracy, with full rights for tendencies, the proportional representation of minorities in the leadership, a 30% quota for women, and so on - a fight that was largely

successful and played a key part in making the PT such a beacon for the international left for a decade or more.

To sum up, there would seem to be three immediate and medium-term challenges facing the revolutionary process in Venezuela. 1) Can the new party become a real, mass revolutionary party - which means can it provide a thoroughly pluralist, democratic space for organising and co-ordinating the activity of all sectors and currents of the Venezuelan working class (in its broadest sense) and other oppressed sections of society? 2) Can the exemplary experiences of workers' co-management with workers control, begun in ALCASA and elsewhere, be extended through much wider sections of the public and private sectors? And can these begin to link up with and involve the Communal Councils and other forms of popular territorial power in exerting democratic control over workplaces and the wider economy? 3) Can the new Communal Councils become real centres of popular power, taking on sovereign decision-making power over all aspects of local and regional budgets and development plans? And can these bodies link up nationally to

build a new kind of state that defends popular interests.

In other words, the immediate challenges are democratic. They point towards the radical extension of participatory democracy beyond the formal political sphere into every nook and cranny of the social edifice. And that of course is what socialism - before, during and after the 21st century - was always meant to look like. An unprecedented deepening of democratic rights. Looked at in this way, the question of nationalizations and the expropriation of private capital becomes a natural consequence rather than a pre-condition. For as soon as capital ceases to be controlled by capitalists, but rather is submitted to the democratic decisions of the workforce and the community, locally and nationally, then it ceases to function as private capital and begins to obey a very different logic - that of human needs and potential, and just as urgently now, that of environmental survival. And the journey between these two points is also one of the things the theory of permanent revolution set out to analyse, some one hundred years ago.

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