

International VIEWPOINT

International Viewpoint—magazine of the Fourth International

IV441 October 2011

CAR INDUSTRY

The state of the European car industry

DENMARK

Use the election victory to put pressure on the government and build up the Red-Green Alliance

DOSSIER

USA Greece

Debt Crisis/Eurozone

Chile

Denmark

Indignad@s movement

Spanish State

Indonesia

Food crisis

Syria

Pakistan

Hong Kong

India

Car Industry

France

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International Viewpoint, the monthly English-language magazine of the Fourth International, is a window to radical alternatives world-wide, carrying reports, analysis and debates from all corners of the globe. Correspondents in over 50 countries report on popular struggles, and the debates that are shaping the left of tomorrow.

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DEBT CRISIS/EUROZONE

The agreement of the 26/27 October 2011 European summit meeting is unacceptable

ÉRIC TOUSSAINT ·

The heads of states, heads of governments, the leaders of the European commission (EC), the private bankers and the managing director of the the IMF met in Brussels in order to find a solution to the risk of serial bankruptcies among Europe's biggest banks, particularly French, Spanish, Greek, Italian, German, Portuguese and Belgian... Those who, before and after 2007 - 2008, multiplied their risk taking behaviors to make short term profits for their shareholders and to give marvelous bonuses to their directors and traders. Domestic and business loans being only a small part of their turnover : between 2 and 5 %. The massive support they have received from the states, the ECB (European Central Bank) or the Fed (Federal reserve Bank of the USA) has not been used to stimulate the productive economy, it has been diverted to more highly speculative activities. Private banks are financed for the short term at the same time as they take on medium and long term engagements : public or private bonds, commodity futures, currency swaps and positions on derivatives that are not under any public control. The bankruptcy of the Franco-Belgian bank Dexia at the beginning of this month of October 2011 is the direct result of these policies. The fear of an oncoming domino effect in Europe and north America weighed heavily on the meeting of the 26/27th October 2011.

The decision to give Greek bonds in bankers possession a 50% haircut, as opposed to the 21% cut agreed on the 21st July, had become inevitable since August following their 65% to 80% price fall on the secondary debt market. Although the state leaders announced they had imposed important sacrifices on the banks, as usual the banks are coming out well. This explains why for the time being, bank stock in particular and the financial markets in general have shown important upward movements.

The 27th October agreement is not a solution for the Greek people who are suffering the full effects of the crisis, aggravated by the austerity measures the government has inflicted on them. This operation is entirely managed by the creditors and is in conformity with their interests. This debt reduction plan is a European version of the "Brady plans" that had such devastating effects on the developing countries during the eighties and nineties. The Brady plan (named after the US Treasury secretary at the time) involved debt restructuring by exchange of bonds, in the principal indebted countries that took part. These were Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jordan, Mexico, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Russia, Uruguay, Venezuela and Vietnam. At the time, Nicholas Brady had announced that the volume of the debts would be reduced by 30% (in fact, the reductions, when they did happen, were much less ; in some cases, and not the least, debts even increased) and the new bonds (Brady bonds) guaranteed a fixed interest rate of around 6%, which was very favorable to the creditors. This also assured application of austerity measures dictated by the IMF and the World Bank. Today, under other latitudes the same logic provokes the

same disasters. The Troika (ECB, EC, IMF) imposes endless austerity measures on the Greek, Irish and Portuguese people. If there is no reaction from their people in time, others will have the same : Spain, Belgium, France...

This plan cannot validly permit Greece to resolve its problems for two reasons :

1. the debt reduction is totally insufficient ;
2. the economic and social policies applied in accordance with the Troika demands will fragilize the country even more. This characterizes the odious nature of these financial agreements with Greece, any future loans in this framework and the restructuring of the previous debts.

Greece must make a choice between two options :

Throw in the towel and be again subject to the gauntlet of the Troika ;

Refuse the dictatorship of the markets and the Troika in suspending the payments and by proceeding to a debt audit so that the illegitimate part may be repudiated.

Other countries are, or soon will be, confronted with the same choice : Spain, Ireland, Italy, Portugal... This list is far from exhaustive. In any case, these same policies are applied, in differing degrees, all over the EU. These austerity plans must everywhere be refused and citizen controlled audits of public debt put into operation.

The events of 2007 - 2008 have not incited governments to imposing strict prudential rules. On the

contrary, measures must be taken to prevent financial institutions, banks, insurance companies, pension and hedge funds from causing further damage. Public authorities, company directors directly, or complicity responsible for the stock market and banking Krashes must be brought to justice, it is urgent to expropriate the banks and put them to the service of the common good by nationalizing them under worker's and citizen's control. Not only must any form of indemnity for the shareholders be refused but they should also have their own wealth put to contribution to cover the cost of repairing the financial system. It is also necessary to repudiate the illegitimate claims that the private banks hold on public authorities. Of course a series of complementary measures must also be adopted : control the movements of capital, prohibit speculation, prohibit transactions going through tax havens, creation of taxes aimed at establishing social justice... In the European Union certain treaties, such as Maastricht and Lisbon must be repealed. It is also necessary to radically change the statutes of the ECB. Before the crisis gets to its worst it is high time to radically change direction. The CADTM supports, along with other organizations, the initiatives that have been taken in certain countries in favor of public debt audits under citizens control. The « Occupy Wall Street » movement has set a creative and emancipative ball into motion. It must be reinforced.

Translated by Mike Krolkowski

CHILE

When triumphant neoliberalism begins to crack

FRANCK GAUDICHAUD ·

He assured his listeners that his government sought "to guarantee education for all and free education for all those who require it". And if Chile's young people were struggling valiantly, that was just proof of the good health of Chilean democracy, all of them mobilized for "a noble, grand, beautiful cause, to give an education of quality" to the people. The magic of a politician's discourse... Who would believe that they were hearing the representative of a hard Right, back at the head of the state twenty years after the end of the military dictatorship (in 1989) and engaged, whatever the cost, in the continuity of the "capitalist revolution", imposed by fire and blood on the ashes of Popular Unity (1970-73) and the corpse of Salvador Allende [1].

In the popular neighbourhoods, in the innumerable marches which are crisscrossing the towns and cities of the country, in dozens of occupied secondary schools, colleges and universities, such a discourse is seen as one more provocation. The government does not understand what is stirring in society. Or, rather, it pretends not to understand. On the day of this speech at the UN, colourful demonstrations and processions were informing the Moneda (the presidential palace) that the movement for "free, public and quality" education was not dead. On the evening of September 23, Camila Vallejo, one of the leaders of the Confederation of Students of Chile (Confech) remarked, with a certain irony, that the speech of the president was full of "contradictions, incoherence and inconsistencies", at the time when he was refusing any serious negotiation and continuing to deploy his arsenal of repression [2].

A social movement for education of historical scope

Since the first march of university and secondary school students, on April 28, collective action has not weakened. Quite the contrary [3]. Throughout May, the actions of the movement became bigger. On May 12, the first "nation-wide strike for education" exceeded all expectations. On May 21, in Valparaíso, while the president of the Republic was making - as he does every year - his annual balance-sheet before the nation, tens of thousands of people expressed their anger. Progressively, discontent swelled. The popularity of the Chilean *indignados* increased. There were 300,000 in the streets on June 30 and 500,000 on August 9 - young people, old people, the middle classes and the popular classes, together. One of the high points of this growing movement was the nation-wide strike on August 23-24, called by the United Workers Confederation (CUT) and by more than eighty trade-union organizations, protesting about deplorable working conditions but also in support of the mobilized students. The repertoires of collective action that are utilised are varied and often original. In addition to the traditional strategies of the street, the festive and creative aspect is at the centre of the contestation of the youth: carnival, kissing contests, original dances and songs, satirical humour, spectacular actions [4].

But we find also more traditional instruments of contestation: strikes in the universities (the public ones, primarily), with the support of the teachers, a multiplication of *toma* (occupations) and even hunger strikes, carried out by young people who intend to show the world their determination. A whole generation seems to have the wind in its sails, giving rise to the most important social struggle since the big *protestas* of 1983-84: a generation which did not experience the dictatorship and

which was born under the auspices of the pact for neoliberal democratization.

The students have always been important protagonists of the social movement. We could thus go back to the time of the "actors of the secondary" who faced the military regime [5]. The current protests are related to the experiences gained in 2001 (the *mochilazo*) and to the "penguin rebellion" (of school students, so-called because of their uniform) of 2006. This exemplary mobilization made the government of the Socialist president Bachelet tremble and cracked the cement of the political consensus [6]. Those who have revolted in 2011 are partly those who mobilized in 2006. And they learned the price of negotiations without a future, the importance of control of the spokespersons by the assembly of students and the strength of self-organization.

Why are these students protesting? The problems are numerous, the demands are clear: free, public and quality education. "In the secondary schools, the students particularly want their establishments to return to the state sector," notes a researcher. "Transferred to the municipal level in 1990, right at the end of the dictatorship, secondary public education has constantly declined since then, to the benefit of subsidized private establishments. In higher education, the financing of studies is particularly problematic. The universities, public or private, demand fees that are in general close to 300 euros per month [7].

The majority of students thus have recourse to loans to finance their studies, without being really sure how able they will be to pay them back once they enter the job market. (...) Moreover, in spite of a law, adopted under the dictatorship, which stipulates that the universities are non-profit making institutions, many private universities have set up systems making it possible to extract the profits that are generated" [8]. A poisoned heritage, subsequently faithfully managed by the Concertation, a coalition of Socialists and Christian-Democrats that was in government from 1990 to 2010 without interruption.

Until the coup d'état of 1973, Chilean public education was known for its quality and exemption from payment. Today less than 25 per cent of the education system is financed by the state. The rest is paid for by the families of the students: 70 per cent of the students have to take on debt and 65 per cent of them stop their studies for financial reasons. Moreover, the Chilean state devotes only 4.4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to education, far from the 7 per cent recommended by UNESCO [9].

Furthermore, we find the same logic in all social fields: health, pensions, transport, the media, etc. So the Concertation may be delighted to see Piñera beating records of unpopularity (with only 22 per cent of approval). But if more than 75 per cent of the population supports the demands of the students and livens up the popular neighbourhoods with immense concerts of pots and pans (*caceroleos*), it is also because they reject twenty years of social-liberal government, which reinforced such an economic model.

The *mea culpa* of the president of the PS, Osvaldo Andrade, recognising that "during the twenty years of the government of the Concertation we were also on many occasions responsible for this abusive policy" changes nothing.

Negotiations, trickery and criminalisation of struggles

On the right, many members of Parliament are anxious about the crisis of governability. In July, Joaquín Lavín, Minister of Education, himself a businessman and a leader of the powerful Independent Democratic Union (UDI) [10], was forced to resign. The disorder in the ranks of the ruling classes also shows through in the leading articles of the newspaper *El Mercurio* and through articles by intellectuals, who - until now - claimed to be liberal, even progressive.

Faced with the return of the spectre of class struggles, they describe, like the historian Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt, their "indefinable malaise" and do

not hesitate to disqualify violently the actions of the protesters [11].

The student rebellion reveals also the true face of this governmental "new Right", which had not come to power via the ballot box since 1956 [12]. For weeks, the only answer of the executive was repression, with the support of hegemonic media machinery. The spirit of "Pinochetism" is still openly displayed. The government spokesman Andrés Chadwick, former president of the Federation of Students at the Catholic University (authorised by Pinochet in 1978), and the mayor of Santiago, Pablo Zalaquett (UDI), affirmed that the students were not owners of Alameda (the principal avenue of Santiago), the latter suggesting the intervention of the armed forces to prevent the demonstrations of September 11 (the day of commemoration of the coup d'état)... Another example, in the same register: Cristián Labbé, mayor of Providencia (Santiago) and former member of the political police of the dictatorship, announced that he would close the occupied colleges and proposed cancelling the school year in order to penalize the mobilized students.

Repression by the carabineers is permanent. There have been hundreds of casualties, thousands of arrests and even the death of Manuel Gutiérrez (14 years old) assassinated by the police with a live bullet. In this context, a small proportion of students have made the choice of self-defence. Every demonstration is the object of pitched battles, in spite of the protests of the organizers, with burning barricades, stone-throwing and Molotov cocktails against armoured cars, teargas, firearms and mounted police. Several leaders of the movement have been threatened, sometimes with death, as was the case with Camila Vallejo.

Faced with the power of a revolt which is not slowing down, on September 3, the government finally had to pretend to negotiate, gambling on the exhaustion and divisions of the movement. The review *A l'encontre* has retraced the chronology of this trickery. "The student leaders clearly stated that all proposals would be submitted to the decision of the assemblies which really represent their

bases. Thus, on September 8, Confech stated its conditions for continuing negotiations. They were, to summarize, four:

1° To push back the date fixed by the ministry for the renewal of grants and loans; economic blackmail of students is one of the weapons used by the government.

2° To suspend the process of framing of laws concerning education, laws which the Parliament must present to the executive.

3° The discussions must be transparent, which implies that they are filmed, so that citizens can take note of the respective positions of the various actors of this conflict.

4° The negotiations must relate to the key question, that of public, free, quality, education, democratic and without profit.

On September 15, the Minister of Education, Felipe Bulnes, challenged two conditions: non-postponement of the date, October, for the end of the semester; and refusal to interrupt of the procedure of framing a law on education. As for the publicity of the negotiations, it is limited to indicating that the official report of the discussions will be placed at the disposal of the public. On September 15, the vice-president of Confech, Francisco Figueroa, announced the rejection of the minister's proposals and indicated that a national mobilization was planned for September 22.

On September 19, President Sébastien Piñera announced on national television that 70,000 secondary school students had lost their year because they had paralysed lessons for four months. A kick in the teeth."

[13] Despite everything, about 180,000 people took part in the mobilization on September 22. And a week later, 150,000 demonstrators marched again. This capacity to hit back was hailed by other sectors of the social movement, starting with the College of teachers.

A new structure of political opportunities for social transformation

According to the United Nations Development Programme, although Chile has succeeded in reducing poverty, it figures among the fifteen most unequal countries in the world. Following on the shock therapy imposed by the dictatorship (1973-1990), Chilean society, moreover, had to be held in the grip of the pact of transition. Over the last twenty years of "authoritarian democracy", society - fragmented, atomized - seemed to have integrated into its genes this model and its institutions: in spite of reforms, the constitution of 1980 which consecrates the neoliberal theory of the "subsidiary role of the State" is still in force. Parliament is locked into an electoral system (known as binominal) which ensures an almost perfect sharing of power between the Concertation and the Right. In parallel, the legal, media and economic fields are bastions of ultraliberalism and conservatism.

Certain critical thinkers talk about the construction of a triumphant neoliberalism (Juan Carlos Gómez) or mature neoliberalism (Raphael Agacino) long-lasting, largely stabilized, among other factors by mechanisms of consumption on credit, by a society of spectacle under the direction of a media duopoly and thanks to the eviction of the popular classes from the space for participation in politics, from the *polis*. A caste of professionals passes briskly from the administration of the state to the management of companies, all dependent in one way or another on a handful of big families (such as Luksic, Angelini, Paulman and Matte). This social order does not exclude social explosions, but makes their emancipatory potential much more complicated [14].

Nevertheless, with the historian Sergio Grez, it is possible to affirm that the year 2011 will go down in history as the "reawakening of social movements after more than two decades of lethargy" [15]. If we look again at the sociology of the politics of the conflict, there is no doubt that a structure of political opportunity has opened up for the mobilizations,

used to their advantage by a new generation which, from a conflict in the field of education, has managed to constitute itself (in the course of a brusque change of scale), as an unavoidable actor on the national political scene [16]. What are the factors which explain this qualitative and quantitative leap? We can cite the economic situation of students in a profoundly uneven period of growth, where the worship of individual success is in permanent contradiction with the conditions of daily life of the great majority.

More broadly, the crisis of legitimacy of the entire political system has been a key factor, reinforced by the provocations of the government. Some of the principal student leaders are certainly linked to organized parties, such as Camila Vallejo, a highly mediatised figure and a member of the Communist Party or Giorgio Jackson (president of the Federation of Students at the Catholic University), who is a member of the Concertation. However, dissident sectors of Confech (in particular in the provinces), organizations of secondary school students, as well as the libertarian and Trotskyist fringes of the movement, criticize the aim of the CP and the Concertation to direct the movement towards an institutional solution. But overall, the reference to horizontality, the refusal to be instrumentalised and the importance of decisions taken in mass meetings explains the duration and the autonomous dynamics of these struggles.

Lastly, a final essential element: the convergence of different revolts under the smooth surface of a model of accumulation which seemed until then to be "triumphant". In fact, the present conjuncture is part of a broader evolution. A molecular accumulation of partial, scattered, conflicts took place, with an acceleration from 2006-2007 [17] First of all let us remember the mobilizations of workers, in spite of an ocean of precariousness and of flexibilisation [18] and a CUT partly co-opted by the Concertation.

Let us recall also the struggles of the copper workers, in particular the *subcontratistas* (those who work for sub-contracting companies), who in 2007

conducted very bitter strikes. In 2010, the Ministry of Labour recognized the loss of 333,000 working days loss because of strikes in the private sector, that is to say an increase of 192 per cent compared to 2000. In the public sector the legal profession, health workers and teachers mobilize regularly. This is also the case of the activists who fight against discrimination and for the right to sexual diversity (LGTB). The cycle of protest took on an unusual dimension, in February 2010, with the uprising of a whole region, the southern province of Magallanes, against the rise in the price of natural gas. The government had to retreat. The recent actions of ecologist collectives have also succeeded in defeating the Right. That was the case in August 2010, in Punta del Choro, against the construction of a thermoelectric dam. More recently, the Hidroaysen mega-project in Patagonia brought more than 30,000 people into the streets. We should also mention the urban struggles for housing and for "the right to the city". And, of course, the indomitable resistance of the Mapuche people which reached peaks of combativeness in 2010, in particular following the hunger strikes of several indigenous political prisoners [19].

One of the challenges for the social movement is to successfully bring about an even vaster desectorization, in order to articulate all its forms of resistance. Such a convergence showed its potential at the time of the protest on May 21. Gradually, people have understood that to win free education means attacking capitalism frontally. In addition, young people know that they are confronting the founding principles of the dictatorship. One of their slogans is: "it will fall, it will fall, Pinochet's education". The question from now on is really to build radical alternatives and not to reform, around the edges, the authoritarian heritage [20].

Untimely bifurcations and the preparation of alternatives: towards a constituent assembly?

Under the impact of this historical mobilization, Chilean society has abruptly become repoliticised, has reoccupied this deserted *polis*, at the same time

as it was occupying public squares, avenues, places of education. It is an untimely bifurcation (a formula of Daniel Bensaid), which will mark the coming years, "calling in question the certainties, the values, the norms, the institutions and the ways of doing things which appeared to have acquired "natural" characteristics for millions of citizens subjected to the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism" [21]. Now, it is how to change the Constitution, the pressing need for a constituent assembly, the urgency of a referendum on education and the renationalization of copper [22] which are being raised in the discussions in mass meetings and in demonstrations. There is a need to open doors and windows for a real democratization to be felt. The objective remains difficult to attain, and we should not underestimate the ability of the government to keep the situation in hand. The movement is on the brink of exhaustion after five months of struggle. Repression is intense. The end of the school year is approaching and as we write, there is still no concrete perspective on the horizon.

How, faced with the oligarchy in power, to obtain - now - free education? How to impose a constituent process "from below", democratic, with the participation of the social movements, as was done recently in Bolivia, to bring down the institutions of "Pinochetism"? That means first of all the development of a formidable relationship of forces, which is not yet on the agenda, but is in the process of being built. The - considerable - absence of mass workers' struggles and the shilly-shallying of the trade union movement weigh enormously in the balance. Because a profound change in class relations will necessarily involve a conscious and determined intervention by the workers' movement, in the broad sense of the term. Without that, the students remain deprived of an essential motor force for social transformation. In addition, the electoral and institutional agenda may prove to be a double-edged sword: municipal elections in 2012 and presidential and parliamentary elections in 2013 will push the parliamentary political parties to "surf" on the onrushing wave of the student movement, often

to try to channel it, but also - on the right - to mobilize the conservative electorate.

The challenge for the mobilized youth, in this new cycle, is to win in the short term structural reforms on the basis of its own demands (such as free education), while preparing the next actions for a constituent assembly alongside other sectors in struggle. The projected laws of the government provide no answer to the problems of quality, of the municipalisation and the commoditisation of secondary and university education. It is important to avoid the mobilization ending in a demoralising fashion and thus to draw up perspectives. In the medium term, the question that is posed is the construction of a political alternative which does not exist yet in the country [23]. Although horizontality, local and regional experiences and the practice of self-management are vital strengths to cultivate, they do not replace the essential collective construction of a political instrument, completely independent of the Concertation and its satellites. An instrument able to unite scattered resistance and the mobilized popular classes, around a coherent anticapitalist, Latin-Americanist and ecosocialist project.

Does the road appear still long? Admittedly. But the dynamic that is underway has just traced a horizon of the possible, something that was still unsuspected six months ago in Chile. In old Europe, the *indignados* of several countries are inventing and experimenting as they combat the austerity and the arrogance of those in power. At a time when the commoditisation of education is underway everywhere in the European Union, the Chilean example can provide arguments to those who are opposed to it. In the Arab world, revolutionary processes are trying to deepen their conquests. Chilean youth in revolt are also responding, indirectly, to this faraway echo. And above all, the "Chilean May" has joined the different popular rebellions which have swept across the whole of Latin America in the last ten years. Argentinean, Mexican and Colombian students are now taking the mobilizations in Santiago as an example. Chile seems in this way to have finally found the pulse of its sister countries, across the Andean cordillera.

October 1, 2010

DENMARK

Use the election victory to put pressure on the government and build up the Red-Green Alliance

SAP (DENMARK) ·

1. Background

Seen in the greater view of things the election result marked a provisional conclusion to a period in the class struggle and in Danish politics, which had its starting point with the welfare demands of the 2006 demonstrations. That period has been marked by:

- a) an upturn in extra-parliamentarian political mobilisations compared to the 1987- 2006 period.
- b) a party-political left turn containing to coherent elements; on one the hand a shared growth for the workers' parties (from 33.1 percent in February 2006 to 49 percent in February 2011), on the other hand a movement of voters within the ranks of the workers' parties moving at first from the Social Democrats (S) to the Socialist Peoples Party (SF) and subsequently from S/SF to the Red-Green Alliance. [1]
- c) a gradually growing wish and expectation of a change pertaining to the change of government.

This development Michael Voss has described in more detail in his article "Five years of mobilisations has paved the way for a new government" [only in Danish].

At the same time the election result is also a result of the slump in mobilisations and the collective decline in voters' support to the workers' parties that we have seen since the beginning of this year.

2. S-SF lost at the election but won government power

The declining support to S and SF has been mentioned quite often by the media during the election

campaign. But the decline started as early as February this year.

The average of February's opinion polls gave S and SF 45.5 percent of the votes and along with the Red Green Alliance, 49 percent, only inches away from a 'Red' majority with the votes from the North Atlantic. It was the third time within two years that the workers' parties got more than 48 percent of votes.

From February to the call of the election, S-SF lost 4.1 percent and on the Election Day they had lost 11.4 percent of which only 3.2 percent moved to the Red – Green Alliance. How can we explain this?

In January-February the discussion of an early retirement allowance peeked after the Prime Minister's New Years speech. S-SF's focus was on a social line of reasoning; almost class- reasoning and they created an image based on a biting anti-governmental controversy, and the Social Democratic leaders in the trade unions organised an rally on the lines of the same theme – as a preemptive move against more radical activities. In the following period both parties clearly moderated their class profile and reacted in a vague way to participation of the Social Liberals (financially right-wing liberal party with a humanitarian view of immigrants and refugees) in the withdrawal of the early retirement allowance. They dubbed the election a referendum about the early retirement allowance, but did not run their campaign accordingly. Even the most radical parts of the Social Democratic party, the 3F union leadership preferred to shield the Social Liberals and did not work for a political shift from the Social Liberals to the workers' parties.

In addition to this, they intentionally tried to keep the expectations to the improvements one could expect from a new government at a low level. During the election campaign, they did not provide an alternative to the right-wing 'economic responsibility- line'. Instead they presented other ways of strengthening the competitive edge of the employers.

Finally, they pushed the voters towards the Red-Green Alliance and the Social Liberals by hanging on to the strict line of the right-wing government's immigrant – and refugee politics.

This is four important parts of an explanation, but it is probably possible to think of others.

3. The political situation after the election

This development during 2011 and the actual election have created a parliamentary situation for the Red-Green Alliance which certainly isn't exactly advantageous for the Red-Green Alliance.

A clear left-wing majority would have made it possible for the Red-Green Alliance to put a maximum of pressure on S and SF, because we could offer a majority. Considering the current Danish parliament the Social Liberals are not only vital (if the Danish Peoples Party - DF [populist right wing party] isn't an option), they also got an electoral victory that has made it incredibly difficult to topple them with a threat of a new election.

At the same time, the current parliamentary situation makes it easy for the S-SF to create a situation that makes it possible for them to blame the Red-Green Alliance if the government has to resign. The Red-Green Alliance will find that it is difficult to hold on to the unconditional class line while at the same time putting pressure on S-SF and making sure that a broader part of groups in society will see that it is S-SF's own doing if they fail.

Once again, this illuminates the fact that in order to put pressure on S-SF to refrain from cuts and instead introduce even just limited improvements,

demands from outside the parliament – from the working class(S and SF's own voters)- are necessary.

Earlier experiences show us that it is difficult to mobilise people to extra-parliamentary activities during the first months to half a year after an election. It is commonly accepted that we have had our say and used our democratic right to vote so now the new majority/government must be given time to show what they can do.

Add to that, that S-SF probably managed to lower the level of expectations.

But that does not mean that it is impossible to build up demands from outside the parliament to the new government. As early as the first week after the election some Social democratic local union leaders demanded that the Social Liberals were kept out of the government if that was what it would take to preserve the right to unemployment benefit (for certain amount of time). At a conference for shop-stewards in the public sector seven demands to a new government were put forward. The leader of the local 3F union, which is not known for its left-wing inclinations, declared immediately after the election that: Our demands to the coming government therefore must be that they despite the former settlement must take responsibility for these peoples destiny and disastrous situation, or otherwise the Danish welfare system is about to fall.

4. Red-Green Alliance's incredible election result

The growth for from 2.2 percent to 6.7 percent and from 4 to 12 members of parliament was incredible and by far surpassed even the most optimistic forecasts. Several elements helped get this result.

The basis of that growth was the growing discontent among the social democratic and - in particular – the SF voters. The movement away from S-SF to the Red-Green Alliance occurred before the two parties actually (as a government) had showed what they represent and where their line of politics would bring about. The explanation is that SF as part of a leftwing two-party-alliance completely

wiped out their own profile. Bit by bit, a considerable amount of people lost faith in SF's ability to pull S to the left.

Even though the Red-Green Alliance many voters' view simply took the place of SF, it is nevertheless a left turn in a small part of the population. The parties hold a more or less fixed place on the left-right scale and to most people it seems to demonstrate a more leftwing position to vote Red-Green Alliance rather than SF and the actual campaign of the Red-Green Alliance has been more leftwing than that of SF four years ago.

The Red-Green Alliance's and SUF's (Socialist Youth Front) election campaign obviously had a great bearing on the result. We need only to look at the fact that the better part of the growth came during the three weeks (from 4.4% to 6.7%).

First of all, the Red-Green Alliance completed a very focused election campaign, in which our main priority was on a relatively small amount of themes and political demands. That, in itself has played its part, making a greater impression on the voters – independently of the content in those themes and demands.

Furthermore, those demands and themes had a class-profile, focused as they were on unemployment (allowances and jobs), low income public service employees, child poverty and a demand that the rich must pay more. The Red-Green Alliance was also the only party which took seriously the voters' interest in the climate and demanded green public jobs.

Secondly, the Red-Green Alliance this time was better than ever at popularising our politics. It was evident what we wanted politically and how we would intervene in the political struggle after the election (within the chosen framework).

Thirdly, we gave voice to a distinct criticism of the VKO-government – and the Social Liberals – also on those discussions that S and SF tried to bring to a close, such as foreigners and the administration of justice.

The fourth reason is that Johanne Schmidt Nielsen had a remarkable appeal. It made a big difference to the number of votes and it is worth mentioning that the appeal she had did not only stem from her age and looks but combination of this with an impressive ability to give voice to our political views and to debate them without an upsetting aggressiveness.

The fifth reason can be that not choosing to campaign around clear anti-capitalist demands may have led more people to vote for us (but this has a price – more on that later). Today it is very unlikely that 7% of the population supports anti-capitalist measures. It is therefore likely that a clearer anti-capitalist profile would have reduced the electoral success. In addition to the lack of a clear anti-capitalist agenda comes also the ignorance, distancing and in some instances direct critic from several prominent candidates of the strategy and programme of the Red-Green Alliance

5. The Red-Green Alliance position after the election

The election has strengthened the Red-Green Alliance's position in parliament. Even if this does not lead to an actual influence on day-to-day politics we will by far become more visible and have greater weight in the political debate.

Furthermore, the Red-Green Alliance has a substantially greater amount of members than before the election. The campaign has made formerly passive and partly inactive members become active and the spirit is high among the members right now.

The Red-Green Alliance also receives far more economic resources at Christiansborg (parliament) and to the party as such.

These two things put together gives us a very good basis for work to be done in the succeeding years. But the Red-Green Alliance also has big and partly new problems. As mentioned above, the situation in parliament will be very difficult to handle and our tactics must be very wise if we are to avoid a situation in which we either renounce our princi-

ples by compromising our political foundation or to the greater majority appear to be a sectarian party that overturns the government because of 'futile' principles.

There will be a considerable pressure on us from the right. It is already there. Journalists, commentators and leading articles demand that the party becomes realistic, pragmatic, and responsible – meaning: just like the other parties. Part of this pressure will come from S and SF when everything else fails; partly as a public debate partly by planned political situations that will make it as difficult as possible for the Red-Green Alliance to explain why we do not renounce our principles to save the government.

A special version of the pressure will come from some of our own voters and perhaps members. That's the part of the voters and members who consider the Red-Green Alliance the 'old' SF or the 'real' SF.

Finally, the pressure may stem from an identity-crisis, if the election results make us see ourselves as a party that has 12 members of parliament so that we unofficially start working to secure that result.

6. In part our own fault

Some of these problems would exist, no matter how we had achieved such a big success and no matter what had led to the current parliamentary situation. But these problems are also partially self-inflicted.

The extreme populism of the demands, the partially toning down of the disagreements with S-SF-R, the almost complete lack of calls for direct actions, the clear deselection of the party's own more explicit anti-capitalist paroles, and the almost monopoly in representing the party in the national media, that Johanne was given, reflects that getting the maximum amount of votes, has been the overriding concern behind every initiative and every statement in the election campaign. As already mentioned this has contributed to the result, that we all celebrate. On the other hand the Red-Green Alliance with this

approach has neglected to prepare people at large, our own voters and members for the current political situation.

Thus we face the real risk of a major chock for many voters and members, if we fail to get a significant influence on the policies of the coming government.

Time and time again during the election campaign, Johanne and other leading candidates emphasized, the shared basic values within the "red block" and that the disagreements were "well known" and that it would be possible to sit down at the negotiation table and work it out. Thus we failed to contribute to a preparation of that part of the population, that listens to us, to the fact that S-SF do not wish to harass or confront the capitalist/ the rich/ "the system" and therefore often will end up attacking working people, except by distancing ourselves from a proposal from S-SF that people should work 12 minutes more every day.

With the large amount of talk about how the Red-Green Alliance will use its influence in Parliament, and the almost complete lack of references to or calls for direct mass action, there is a risk that the people who voted for the Red-Green Alliance, Social Democracy and SF will be completely without understanding when we after the election will explain that pressure from the outside is necessary in order to make S and SF carry out sensible policies.

When S-SF-R in the coming year will introduce an economic policy against the crisis, that does not solve the problems, and which contains attacks on the working class and welfare benefits in addition to clear concessions to capital, the Red-Green Alliance will be forced to present anti capitalist interventions and reform proposals. This is not an idea, we have prepared our surroundings for during the election, and even among our own voters, many will be surprised and turn against us.

In addition to this, the electoral campaign of the Red-Green Alliance partly played along with the focussing on Johanne, for instance by sending her to

all the important debates. Some of the voters we gained alone through the personality of Johanne will turn against us, when the Red-Green Alliance is forced to supplement the basic agitatorial demands and suggestions with more radical demands and a clearer emphasis on the fact, that we are not the critical support troops of S-SF, but a political alternative to reformism.

At the end of the day, the Red-Green Alliance has, with its one-eyed focussing on the common ground with S-SF, on parliamentary influence and on obtaining the maximum votes put itself in a situation, where there is a risk of suffering a massive drop in the polls, a considerable amount of members leaving, and pressure especially from new members, who will try to turn the Red-Green Alliance into the party, which was SF, 5 to 10 years ago.

7. Not necessary

It will always be difficult for a socialist party to strike a balance between the agitatorial demands, which can receive support here and now, on the one hand, and on the other, the propaganda for more radical demands and the introduction of the party as a complete alternative to the other parties. It is incredibly easy to stray into sectarianism, where everything said is correct and with full perspective, but where we convince nobody, and do not gain the visibility, that is offered by a strengthened representation in parliament.

But the one-sidedness of the election campaign of the Red-Green Alliance could have been avoided with few changes without falling into the sectarian trap:

If:

- some of our anti-capitalist demand adopted at the last party conference had been included in the printed leaflets
- our representatives in public debates once in a while had presented these demands, when the crisis was debated, or when questions such as "job and company emigration", "the banks sends the bill

to the customers" or "the national ability to compete" was popping up – preferably with a comment about the fact, that we do not expect to get this adopted in parliament even if we should achieve 15 seats, but we believe that it is necessary.

- our representatives a little more often had mentioned, that it will take outside pressure to persuade S and SF to support some of the demands that we otherwise were promoting in the election campaign

- our representatives, when confronted with questions about the goals and strategy of the party, more often had said, that these are our goals, but we do not demand that S and SF implements all our goals under a new government; or that it is changes that preconditions, that we have been able to convince a large majority about them

- our representatives at least had not denied, that we need to nationalize banks and the major companies or if our representatives had not agreed with everybody else in the studio, that we need private enterprise.

8. Strengthen activism and the pressure on a new government

the Red-Green Alliance thus has a starting point, which on the one hand is really good (MP's, members, economy, enthusiasm), but on the other side we are facing a political situation, which is complicated, and which we have not prepared ourselves for in the best possible way.

This means, that the coming period could go terribly wrong for the Red-Green Alliance. The task now is for everybody in the Red-Green Alliance to implement those activities, which most efficiently strengthen the working class, the class struggle and the Red-Green Alliance. In the immediate future that means:

A) We must exploit the enthusiasm over the election result to strengthen activism in, and the organization of the Red-Green Alliance. We need to hit the streets again for instance, as the Amager

branch of the Red-Green Alliance did recently. This could also mean leaflets with the demands of the Red-Green Alliance to the negotiations about the state budget. We need to strengthen the trade union networks, other structures of intervention, the branches and SUF [the youth organisation that works in solidarity with the Red-Green Alliance].

B) We must strengthen all initiatives for demands and mobilizations from the outside, which can put pressure on S and SF. This is possible for members of the Red-Green Alliance and SUF through their trade unions, educational organisations, tenant's organisations and in many other places. This could also happen through debate meetings and common statements with local branches of S and SF. Such a pressure can arise both from direct demands to the government and parliament, through trade union struggles and from mobilizations against municipal cuts, which, directly or in-directly will put pressure on the government to give money to local government.

C) We must exploit the recently gained strength in parliament to put maximum pressure on S and SF, in order to gain the highest possible number of concrete results and to make as many as possible see and realise that it is S, SF and R, which carries the blame for not achieving more results and the reason why the new government will get into trouble.

D) We must exploit the newly gained parliamentary and activist based strength to project our entire political alternative both to the bourgeois opposition and the new government. It will be a major task to convince people, who have voted for the Red-Green Alliance, that our policies are right. The same goes for a big part of the many new members.

E) We have to strengthen the political discussions and every kind of educational activities inside the Red-Green Alliance and SUF through: speeches at public and branch meetings, introductory meetings, study circles, seminars and publications.

F) Education and discussions must include the entire programme of the Red-Green Alliance. Not in order to change it, but to educate members and

candidates to parliament in it, so that they gain real ownership of it, and make it possible to defend it in wider audiences. This will also test whether the lack of defence of it and the criticisms of the programme by some of the candidates expresses real strategic disagreements, smaller tactical differences or it is the result of lack of education and discussions about how we transform society. This might lead to a wish to update it and revise it on certain points. Such a debate about programme will strengthen the Red-Green Alliance politically. The alternative is to gradually diminish the status of the programme.

9. Tactics and themes

On the election night, the Red-Green Alliance turned the searchlight on R. We must continue this focus. This means that we emphasize the role of this party as a Trojan horse for the bourgeois opposition and as an excuse for the government. By pointing to what policies would be possible with a majority of the workers parties in parliament, we indirectly also criticise the lack of will by S-SF to distance themselves from bourgeois and neo-liberal politics and we are already raising the perspective for a future election: A workers majority, that carries out workers policies.

The basis for doing so is, that we continue to make clear that we support the appointment of [the leader of S], Helle Thorning-Smith, as PM, but that we are not responsible for the program of the new government, in other words we will put continuous pressure on the government from the left.

The question about the early retirement bonus constitutes a special problem, which we dealt with in our newsletter for the previous week. Here the conditions for struggle changes all the time. First and foremost it should be glaringly clear, that we will not take part in or approve of any attacks on this bonus. Secondly we must exploit the possibilities to put pressure on S, SF, R and even DF [Danish Peoples Party] to the very end. Thirdly we must loud and clear call on S and SF rather to lose the vote in Parliament, than put name to and legitimize this "reform" [or rather gradual abolition of]

the early retire-ment bonus. Participation by S and SF will lead to disillusionment of everybody, who expects improve-ment by the new government. But this of course preconditions that S-SF have managed to keep R out-side of the government.

In continuation of this, we must challenge S-SF and R with the proposals and demands that carry the most support by the members of these parties, and where they will be hurt the most if they are re-jected. Amongst these are: unemployment benefits, creation of jobs through (green) public investments, job training for apprentices, municipal wel-

fare, health care, immigration policies and policies on law and order.

Finally we must use most possible occasions to explain that we have proposals for legislation and others measures that really can strengthen the working class and people receiving public support, because they interfere with the power of capital and attacks its profits. This work must all the time take place as a combination of initiatives in parliament and outside. It is important, that the discussions in the Red-Green Alliance in the coming months focus on how best to build such a pressure on the new gov-ernment around concrete demands.

15-O: global indignation

ESTHER VIVAS ·

Gradually the rebellion of the indignant has been taking a real international dimension, beyond actions of sympathy and solidarity. First there was the Greek protest movement, prior to the Spanish and the revolts of the Arab world, which integrated the symbolism and the methods of 15 M and inserted its logic in the emerging international dynamics. Later, there has undoubtedly been the start of the protest in United States, still at an early stage, the most important variable for the time being, whose fate will be crucial to the overall development of the movement.

October 15, 2011 was the most important global protest since the big day of global mobilization on February 15, 2003 against the war in Iraq. Of much more modest dimensions, it nonetheless expresses a deeper social dynamic than the historic event against the war which was simultaneously the peak and the end of the upward phase of the international cycle of anti-globalization process which exploded in November 1999 during the Summit of World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle, and that had been gestating since the January 1994 Zapatista uprising.

"The world has two superpowers: the United States and world public opinion" wrote the *New York Times* after February 15. Since then, however, the international coordination of protests has languished and instruments launched by the anti-globalization movement like the World Social Forum have lost strength, centrality and practical usefulness. The current context is very different from that in which the anti-globalisation movement emerged at the end of the previous century. This cycle occurs in a systemic crisis of historic dimen-

sions and therefore the depth of the social movement in course and its social roots is undoubtedly greater. The vitality of October 15th in the Spanish state again surprised both domestic and foreign opinion, thus refuting some impressionistic analyses on the crisis in the 15-M movement that had proliferated in recent weeks. We are not dealing with an episodic phenomenon or a temporary one, but the beginning of a new wave of opposition that expresses a deep groundswell that will not evaporate.

The very nature of global capitalism and the magnitude of the contemporary crisis impel the internationalization of social protest. The slogan "United for global change" expresses well this new "internationalism of indignation" that emanates from 15-O, whose challenge is to trigger a global movement to bring about another way out of the current civilizational crisis.

In contrast to the period of anti-globalisation, the interrelationship between the different spatial levels of action, the local, the national and international, is now much stronger. The link between the local and global, the concrete and general is very direct and clear. With the echoes of demonstrations in the Arab world, 15-M broke out as a protest in the Spanish State with demonstrations in several cities. It quickly dispersed geographically to an endless number of neighbourhoods and districts of the big cities. The neighbourhood assemblies which emerged strengthened the feeling of being part of a general movement. Its activity localized global claims and goals of the movement and globalized specific problems. There is a return ticket from the neighbourhood to 15-O and vice-versa.

Since its outbreak the movement has resulted in our country in a strong process of re-politicisation of society and a revival of interest in collective af-

fairs. The indignant tide has not yet achieved enough consistency to provoke a change of course and paradigm, but it has resulted in an unprecedented challenge to a very sickly neoliberalism of ailing legitimacy which attempts to socialize the cost of the crisis, something which until a few months ago seemed incontrovertible.

The route that runs from 15-M to 15-O has sent a message of hope in collective ability to influence the grim course of humanity. Indignation is not in vain, it is precisely, as the philosopher Daniel Bensaïd said, "the opposite of habit and resignation".

SPANISH STATE

Statement by Izquierda Anticapitalista on the definitive cessation of armed activity by ETA

With this decision, ETA responds unambiguously, whatever the media and others say, to the clamour for the end of the violence that has long been spreading both in Basque and in Spanish society, as was highlighted at the recent International Conference held in Aiete.

Beyond the media confrontation that now occurs as to the interpretation of the various factors that have contributed to this decision, what is important is that it starts a new period in which the central discussion should revolve around a dialogue-based and non-violent solution to the Basque conflict. A conflict with a long history that wasn't resolved democratically in the mythologized Spanish political transition and that must now be dealt with without excuses and with the political will of all the parties to reach an agreement that allows the recognition of the right of the Basque people to decide their future.

In this process we consider it necessary to also respond favourably to demands like the return of Basque prisoners to Basque country, the repeal of the "Parot doctrine" or the application of prison benefits without restrictions, as well as the legalization of Sortu, today pending resolution by the Constitutional Court. Also, the discretion and arbi-

trariness that have been tried by that emergency court, the Audiencia Nacional, means that large numbers of people have been falsely accused of belonging to ETA, by virtue of being linked to different organizations of the abertzale left; this should be revised to take into account even acquittals such as those of Egunkaria and Udalbiltza. This reconsideration of an "anti-terrorist" policy that has violated the most basic legal guarantees should lead to generous action by the State like the absolution of people such as Otegi and Díez Usabiaga, who have played a key role in pressure on ETA to abandon violence and yet are today imprisoned.

This new political phase also opens a new opportunity for the establishment of new links between the Basque radical left, in all its components, and that which is being reconstructing at the scale of the Spanish state in their common struggle to offer a radical democratic project, a multinational and anti-capitalist front against exclusionary Spanish nationalism and a system in deep crisis. Greater convergence in action through social mobilization and institutional action in its service will help to generate new hopes for breaking with the transition not only in the Basque country but also in the Spanish state as a whole.

Friday October 21st, 2011

INDONESIA

Joint statement in solidarity with Freeport Indonesia workers

The controversial corporation obtained the exploration and mining rights through Work Contract I, several months before the enactment of Law Number 1/1967 on Foreign Capital Investment and Law Number 11/1967 on the Basic Provisions of Mining during the rule of the New Order regime of former President Suharto. Odd but true!

Work Contract I was then renewed by Suharto in 1991. As a result Work Contract II will expire in 2040 and the area of exploration and exploitation was extended to cover 6.5 percent of the total territory of Papua province. It also includes the right to conduct of underground exploration. Freeport began operating 44 years ago but it was not until 1971 that the company began extracting minerals (gold, copper, silver, molybdenum and rhenium).

In the first decade of its operations, Freeport extracted more than 1 million tons of gold, copper and silver annually. By 2010 this had reached 3.4 million tons a year. Freeport reaps profits of as much as 114 billion rupiah a day, so in one year Freeport's net profit is as high as 41.04 trillion or US\$45.60 billion.

The irony is that the total combined wages of all Freeport's employees is only 1.4 trillion rupiah a year or \$2.1-3.5 dollars US per hour. This is far lower than the wages received by Freeport workers in other countries who receive US\$15 or 128,250 rupiah per hour. The proportion received by workers is only 3.4 percent of Freeport's total profits and 60 percent of its net profit are turned over to Freeport McMoran.

Based on this compression, it is understandable that the Freeport Indonesia All Indonesia Workers

Union (SPSI) is demanding a wage increase of between US\$17.5 to US\$43 per hour. Never mind that Freeport workers in the US receive 30-250 dollars US per hour. Meanwhile the wage increase awarded to Freeport Indonesia workers every two years have only been US\$40c an hour.

The Freeport Indonesia management meanwhile has responded to workers' demands with accusations of separatism, psychological intimidation, prohibiting workers from joining the strike, criminalisation of workers and most recently repressive acts by police that resulted in the fatal shooting of two people, Petrus Ayamiseba and Leo Wandagau, and the wounding of seven others.

Acts of violence involving Freeport are not new. During its 44 years of theft, there have been numerous cases of violence in Papua and the Freeport mining area of Timika against Freeport workers and indigenous Papuans.

This clearly demonstrates that Freeport is using violence as a tool and means to secure its vital assets. And, of course, the state since the time of the Suharto regime through to the current administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Vice President Boediono, has fully supported Freeport's interests.

It is already public knowledge that since the 1970s Freeport Indonesia has been providing a huge sum of money for security. A number of documents have cited that between 1998 and May 2004, Freeport paid at least 20 million dollars (around 184 billion rupiah) to the TNI (Indonesian military) and the police in Papua. There has also been an additional 10 million dollars (around 92 billion rupiah) paid to the military and police over this period bringing the total to around 276 billion rupiah. And as ad-

mitted by the Papuan regional police themselves, out of a total of 720 police and military personnel that are deployed in the Freeport exploration area, each officer receives 1.25 million rupiah a month in additional wages outside of regular funds.

In contrast to this, in 2011 the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) recorded that the poverty rate in Papua province stood at 80.07 percent or 1.5 million people living in poverty. This is clear evidence that Freeport does not provide any contribution to the welfare of the Papuan people.

Freeport, which is the largest gold and copper mine in the world, not only steals the country's natural wealth, muzzles democracy, violates human rights and impoverishes the Papuan people, but also destroys the environment. In a single day of operation, Freeport disposes 230,000 tons of waste into the Aghawagon River and other rivers in the vicinity. The acid rock drainage, or the disposal water containing acid (around 360,000-510,000 tons a day), has already destroyed two valleys covering an area of 6.5 kilometers to a depth of 300 meters.

It becomes increasingly clear that there are no grounds to for Freeport Indonesia to be allowed to continue its exploration and mining activities. Freeport must be closed down!

Based upon the fact above we make the following demands:

- The withdraw all non-organic TNI and police personnel from the Freeport area and Papua
- The arrest of James Moffet, Freeport Indonesia President Director Armando Muhler, Freeport Executive Vice President Sintia Sirait and company spokesperson Ramdani Sirait
- The broadest possible dialogue for the Papuan people that is democratic and free from coercion
- A full investigation into human rights violations at Freeport and in Papua;
- An end to union busting
- An end to the use of contract labour
- An international standard wage
- Freeport must be held liable for its past and current crimes

– Dismiss the national police chief, the Papua regional police chief and the Timika district police chief

– Freeport must take responsibility for the environmental damage it has caused

We call on all people, let us unite. We are the 99 percent in the world who are oppressed. Freeport, James Moffet, President Yudhoyono and Vice President Boediono, the political elite and the Indonesian political parties that benefit from Freeport, are the 1 percent that oppresses the rest of us. Yesterday it was Petrus Ayamiseba and Leo Wandagau who were murdered. Next anyone who resists will suffer the same fate. We must therefore unite, act in solidarity and fight back!

44 years of theft, 44 years of state protection, end the violence and close Freeport now

Jakarta, October 20, 2011

Indonesian People Solidarity for Freeport's Workers:

The Student Alliance Against Neoliberalism (AMAN), the Working People's Association (PRP), the People's Liberation Party (PPR), the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras), the Papua Student Alliance (AMP), the Free Women's National Network (Perempuan Mahardika), the Papuan Traditional Social Community Against Corruption (Kampak), the Indonesian Legal Aid and Human Rights Association (PBHI), the Indonesian Trade Union Congress Alliance (KASBI), the National Solidarity Committee (KSN), the Papuan NGO Forum for Cooperation (Foker Papua), the PT Freeport Indonesia All Indonesia Workers Union (SPSI PT FI), the National Students Front (FMN), the Association of Independent Trade Unions (GSBI), the Indonesian Independent Union (SMI), the Greater Jakarta Workers Federation of Struggle (FPBJ), the Indonesian Center for Labour Struggle (PPBI), the Student Struggle Center for National Liberation (PEMBEBASAN), the Indonesian Transportation Trade Union of Struggle (SBTPI), the Working People's Association-Organisational

Saviours Committee (KPO-PRP), the Green Indonesia Union (SHI), the State Electricity	Company Trade Union (SP-PLN) and the United Student Action (KAM Laksi). [Translated by James Balowski.]
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FOOD CRISIS

The food crisis strikes again

ESTHER VIVAS ·

This increase in the cost of food, especially basic grains, has serious consequences for southern countries with low incomes and dependency on food imports, and for the millions of families in these countries that devote between 50 and 60 percent of their income to food—a figure that rises to 80 percent in the poorest countries. In these countries, the rise in the price of food products makes them inaccessible.

We are approaching a billion people—one out of every six on the planet—that today do not have access to adequate food. World Bank president, Robert Zoellick, affirmed that the current food crisis has increased the number of persons who suffer chronic hunger by 44 million. In 2009, this number was surpassed, reaching 1.023 billion people undernourished on the planet, a figure that went down slightly in 2010, but without returning to the levels before the food and economic crisis of 2008 and 2009.

The present crisis takes place in the context of an abundance of food. Food production has multiplied over the three decades since the sixties, while the world population has merely doubled since then. There's plenty of food. Contrary to what international institutions like the FAO, World Bank and World Trade Organization say, it's not a problem of production, but rather a problem of access to food. These organizations urge an increase in production through a new Green Revolution, which would only make the food, social and ecological crises worse.

Popular rebellions

The popular rebellions in northern Africa and the Middle East had among the many catalysts the rise

in food prices. In December of 2010, in Tunes, the poorest of the population occupied the frontline of the conflict, demanding, among other things, access to food.

In January of 2011, youth demonstrated in Algeria blocking highways, burning stores and attacking police stations to protest for the rise of prices in basic foods. Similar cases were seen in Jordan, Sudan and Yemen. Egypt is the largest importer of wheat in the world, and depends on food imports.

Evidently other factors came into play in the uprisings: high unemployment, lack of democratic freedoms, corruption, lack of housing and basic services, etc. In any case, the rise in food prices was one of the initial catalysts.

A central cause

What are the causes of the new spike in the cost of our meals? Although international institutions and experts have pointed to several elements such as meteorological phenomena that affect harvests in produce countries, the increase in the demand in emerging countries, financial speculation, the growing production of agrofuels, among others—various indices point to speculation with raw food materials as one of the main reasons for food price increases.

In 2007-2008 the world experienced a profound food crisis. Basic foods prices such as wheat, soy and rice rose by 130%, 87% and 74% respectively. Then, as now, several causes converged, but the most important were production of agrofuels and the growing speculative investment in the food futures markets. But this increase in the price of food leveled off in 2009, in part probably due to the economic crisis and a reduction in financial speculation.

By mid 2010, with international financial markets calmed down and huge sums of public money injected into the private banks, food speculating struck again and the price of foods began to rise. To "save the banks", after the financial crisis of 2008-2009, it is estimated that the governments of rich countries gave a total of \$20 trillion dollars to stabilize the banking system and lower interest rates.

With the influx of money, speculators saw incentives to acquire new loans and buy merchandise that predictably would rise rapidly in value. The same banks, high-risk funds, etc. that caused the subprime mortgage crisis are currently responsible for speculation in raw materials and the rise in the price of food, taking advantage of unregulated global commodity markets.

The food crisis is intimately linked to the economic crisis and the logic of a system that promotes, for example, plans to bail out Greece and Ireland while sacrificing their sovereignty to international institutions, just as it sacrifices food sovereignty of the peoples to the interests of the market.

A grower's guarantee or a speculator's bonanza?

There has always been some speculation in the price of foods and this is the logic behind futures markets. In their current form, futures markets date back to the mid-1900s when they began in the United States. These are legal standardized agreements to buy and sell physical merchandise in a previously established time period in the future and have been a mechanism to guarantee a minimum price to the producer faced with the oscillations of the market.

It works like this: Farmers sell their production to traders before harvest to protect themselves from uncertainties in the weather, for example, and to guarantee a future price. The trader also benefits. When the harvest is bad, the farmer still gets a good income and when the harvest is optimal, the trader benefits even more.

This same mechanism is used by speculators to make money off the deregulation of the raw materi-

als markets that was spurred in the mid-nineties in the United States and Great Britain by banks, free-market politicians and high-risk funds in the context of the process of deregulation of the world economy. The contracts to buy and sell food became "derivatives" that could be traded independently of the real agricultural transactions. A new business was born—food speculation.

Speculators today have more weight in the futures markets, even though these transactions have nothing to do with real supply and demand. Mike Masters, manager of Masters Capital Management, points out that in 1998 speculative financial investment in the agricultural sectors was around 25% and today it is close to 75%. These transactions are carried out in the markets, the most important of which on the world level is the commodities market in Chicago, while in Europe food and raw materials are traded in the futures markets of London, Paris, Amsterdam and Frankfurt.

A "100% natural deposit"

In 2006/2007, following the fall in the high-risk mortgage loan market in the United States, institutional investors like banks, insurance companies and investment funds sought safer and higher yield places to invest their money. Food and raw materials became a popular alternative. As the price of food soared, investments in the food futures markets rose, pushing the price of grains up and worsening inflation in food prices.

In Germany, the Deutsche Bank announced easy earnings if invested in rising agricultural products. And similar business deals were promoted by the major European bank BNP Paribas. Catalunya Caixa urged its clients in January 2011 to invest in raw materials under the slogan a "100% natural deposit".

What did they offer? A guarantee of 100% of capital with the possibility of obtaining profits of up to 7% annually. How? According to the ads, based on "the evolution of yields in three food products: sugar, coffee and corn". To assure such high yields, the

ads pointed out that prices of these three products had increased at 61%, 34% and 38% respectively over the past months due to "growing demand that is increasing above the rate of production", because of the increase in world population, and agrofuels production.

Catalunya Caixa left out important information, however: food speculation that provided such handsome profits increases the price of food, makes it inaccessible to large parts of the population in the global South and condemns thousands of people to hunger, poverty and death in these countries.

Oil dependency

Another element that exacerbated the food crisis is the heavy dependency on oil of the current model of food production and distribution. The rise in the price of oil had a direct impact on the similar rise in the cost of basic foods. In 2007 and 2008 the price of oil and the price of foods reached record levels. Between July of 2007 and June of 2008, crude oil went from 75 dollars a barrel to 140 dollars, while the price of basic foods went from 160 dollars to 225, according to the FAO Food Index.

Food and agriculture have become heavily dependent on oil. Following the Second World War and with the Green Revolution in the sixties and seventies, and with the supposed increase in production, an intensive and industrial model of agriculture was adopted. In the current system, our food travels thousands of kilometers before it arrives on our tables; production requires the intensive use of farm machinery, chemicals pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. This model could not exist without oil.

The rise in the price of oil and the strategy of governments to combat climate change has led to a growing investment in the production of alternative fuels, agrofuels, such as biodiesel and bioethanol, made from sugar, corn and other crops. But this production has entered into direct competition with food production for consumption and is now another cause of the rise in food prices.

The World Bank recognizes that when the price of oil goes over fifty dollars a barrel, a 1% increase causes a 0.9% increase in the price of corn, since "for every dollar that the price of oil rises the profitability of ethanol rises and consequently the demand for corn grows."

Since 2004, two-thirds of the rise in world production of corn was destined to satisfy the North American demand for agrofuels. In 2010, 35% of the corn harvest in the United States, which is 14% of world production, was used to produce ethanol. And the tendency is on the rise.

But beyond the causes such as food speculation and the rise in oil prices that has an impact on the growing investment in agrofuels, leading to competition among grain production for consumption and for transportation, the food and agriculture system is profoundly vulnerable and in the hands of the market. The growing liberalization of the sector in the last decades, the privatization of natural resources (water, land, seed), the imposition of an international model of trade at the service of private interests, etc., has led to the current crisis.

As long as agriculture and food continue to be considered merchandise in the hands of the highest bidder, and business interests prevail over food needs and the limits of the planet, our food security and the welfare of the earth are far from assured.

info: <http://esthervivas.wordpress.com/eng>

SYRIA

The current stage of the revolution

GHAYATH NAISSÉ ·

Doha was also the scene of several meetings of the Syrian opposition under Qatari patronage, following the visit by the Emir of the Qatar to Iran, aimed at bringing together the different components of the opposition in a single framework, National Council or other, to speak on behalf of the opposition as a whole.

What is going on?

On the ground the peaceful popular uprising, after six months and despite the enormous sacrifices made in the confrontation with the bloodthirsty dictatorial regime, has not yet brought the latter down. The regime still retains enormous potential for violence and murder. Yet this courageous uprising is continuing and will not stop despite all the means of repression of the ruling clique. It is a permanent revolutionary situation, in the sense that the popular layers can no longer accept being governed as in the past, and that those in power can no longer govern as before, with the middle layers oscillating between these two poles even if they begin to join the first.

The regime has not fallen, not yet, but it is very much weaker, has lost its internal legitimacy and has faced international condemnation for its savage methods. It has not been able – and will not be able – to crush this permanent popular uprising. The reactions of the imperialist countries, the United Nations and other international institutions and regional forces, have never been about overthrowing the regime militarily, they want to do let the situation run while they find an alternative: their critical reactions stem from their difficulty in continuing to remain silent on the massacres of civilians perpetrated by the regime for many months. But in re-

cent weeks, these countries have again gone almost silent.

It should be noted that the so-called international community (the imperialist forces) and regional forces have given and still give the regime a stay of execution which continues to allow it to extinguish the uprising, at the cost of a sea of blood and the suffering of the masses. The Iranian and Russian Governments and their allies have developed a discourse around respecting the right of the people to freedom, but they insist on the need for a dialogue between the regime and the opposition, with these two regimes in the position of mediators in this dialogue. Some currents in the opposition are proposed to work with the latter on this basis. The Qatari efforts will go in the same direction.

It seems clear that the Iranian-Russo-Qatari consensus aims to lead the opposition (and to a lesser extent to reassure the regime which rejects even the most formal concession) into a dialogue to get out of the impasse in which the ruling oligarchy finds itself, to prevent the collapse of the regime, and save the bases of the latter by accepting a few formal changes, including the participation of the opposition in the government.

Meanwhile, the opposition is experiencing a turmoil which led to a redefinition of alliances and multiple proposals for ways out of the crisis. This is understandable, after a long absence of political activity because of the dictatorship, but a mood has invaded its political discourse to the effect that an alliance speaking with one voice (National Council, Transitional Council or otherwise) would be a prerequisite for victory (sic)! The failure of the plethora of councils appointed has resulted in a certain disappointment in the opposition and revolutionary milieus on the ground. However, that the (re-united) opposition must speak with one voice is

primarily a regional and international demand (especially from Turkey and Western countries), but is in no way a condition for the uprising to progress or triumph. It seems also, in the light of the failures in the past, that the realization of an alliance of all political forces is not necessarily possible or necessary.

What would be eminently more useful is a coalition of the actual forces of the revolution on the basis of common principles. It is more important to unify efforts in common struggles on the ground to overthrow the dictatorship than to build new political alliances in countless more television and media oriented congresses and other meetings. The unity of all in a formation which claims to be the sole and legitimate representative of the Syrian people (like the PLO) is neither possible nor necessary. The important thing is knowing who? why? And especially: how? The opposition includes different voices, some calling for dialogue with the regime (albeit with conditions), others in a transitional phase in relation the regime and finally others calling for the downfall of the regime. Also, will this be driven by the Syrian people alone (peacefully or by force of arms)? By a foreign military intervention? Or by a revolutionary strategy for the masses to bring down the regime and build their democratic power? It is the latter that the revolution needs and not who proposes or constitutes such and such a national council.

Thus, the attempts of local coordination (groups that organize struggles) and revolutionaries on the ground in relation to the opposition come from the above mentioned absence of a clear strategy to

overcome the dictatorship and the illusions of some that the traditional [liberal] opposition forces can propose one. Yet, after six months of spontaneous uprising, the revolutionaries have understood that this failure will not be satisfied by the forces of the traditional opposition who focus on a non-vital issue, namely that of unification at all costs and how to share power.

In any case, while the regime brutally carries out all kinds of killings and torture against the masses in revolt, while the uprising has still not switched the relationship of forces in favour of the latter, any dialogue with this bloodthirsty ruling clique would be only submission, surrender and a betrayal of the revolution and the sacrifices made by our people.

We call for the unification of the left involved in the revolution (it is still divided into small groups) in a united formation to enable it to have more influence and to be more effective in the current revolutionary process. This left will call for the building from now of a constituent assembly and the bases of a revolutionary popular power from below, through the building of councils or coordinations of workers, peasants, neighbourhoods, soldiers, and so on, to lead the struggle and the daily life of regions, and the accumulation of strikes and forms of civil disobedience up to the mass general strike. It will also call for the formation of a revolutionary people's government, which is the expression of wide popular layers, emanating from these councils and coordinations, to bring down the dictatorial regime and lead the revolutionary process towards its objectives

CHILE

New perspectives for the Chilean anticapitalist Left

Solidarités: What is the situation of the anticapitalist Left in Chile today?

Sebastian Farfán Salinas: The Chilean anticapitalist Left of the 1960s and 1970s has largely disappeared, not only because of the repression of the dictatorship, but also, after the struggles of the 1980s, in particular those of the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez* [1], because of very brutal repression by the successive governments of the Concertation [2]. To that, it should be added that the social and ideological consequences of the triumphant neoliberalism of the 1990s was to the advantage of the Dialogue, which painted a glowing picture of the future. From the 1990s, the revolutionary Left was thus maintained in a kind of marginality, organizing small circles in the universities. However, since the middle of the last decade, the situation has gradually changed, with a certain accumulation of forces and an internal reorganization which enabled it to approach the "penguin revolution" of 2006 [3] in a much better position, relaunching the discussion on an anticapitalist perspective.

Solidarités: What relation is there between this new radical Left and previous organizations like the MIR [4] or the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez*?

Sebastian Farfán Salinas: These organizations still exist, split into multiple currents which often argue among themselves. But the new generation which has emerged since 2006 does not have an organic relationship with these organizations, while trying to learn about and discuss their experiences, but also to rediscover their political achievements and their leading figures. This generation is developing its own forms of political organization and intervention. It was initially organized in a dispersed fashion, at the regional level, before starting

to converge in the course of several experiences of struggle, in particular of the forest and copper workers in 2007, and especially the student movement this year. Some of us then started to aspire to positions of responsibility within the movement, occupied up to now by the forces of the Concertation or by the Chilean CP. That has enabled us to develop radical demands with a mass audience in the heart of these mobilizations, demands which interested neither the Concertation nor the CP, such as free education at all levels, the renationalization of copper, or changing the Constitution. It is on the basis of this extremely rich experience that the Chilean anticapitalist Left of the new generation is reorganizing.

Solidarités: What are the political references of this new anticapitalist Left?

Sebastian Farfán Salinas: The collectives which are developing at present are marked by different political references. Overall, we can distinguish an autonomous sector, influenced by Toni Negri, and a Marxist sector, in which I situate myself. But our Marxist, Leninist or Guevarist references do not lead us to constitute small ideological organizations, but to try to build a mass anticapitalist party. This same process has been repeated in several regions of Chile independently: for example, we in Valparaíso have discovered collectives of the same type as ours throughout the country, with which we did not have any organic link. Between now and next year, we would like to unify this revolutionary student Left at the national level in a single organization of a Marxist character: the *Union nacional estudiantil* (National Student Union). We are discussing actively among ourselves, learning to know each other better, but we do not want to take on board the phantasms of the past, with its quarrels and its factions, repeated ad infinitum, which have their roots in the defeats of previous decades, but

constitute so many obstacles to recommencing a process of organization. Through the experience of this student movement, we have followed a real crash course on the workings of the institutions and of the ruling class of our country, on repression and how to confront it, on the democratic organization of a mass movement. We can stand on our own two feet.

Solidarités: What does the anticapitalist Left represent within the present leadership of the movement?

Sebastian Farfán Salinas: We have succeeded in forming an independent bloc within Confech (the Confederation of Chilean Students), starting from the anticapitalist collectives. And this year, whereas its leadership was traditionally dominated by the CP, there remains only one member of the Communist Youth among the eight representatives of the national executive, Camila Vallejo, and one representative of the forces of the Concertation, Giorgio Jackson. The six others belong to the independent bloc; three belong to the revolutionary Left and three are in contact with it, in other words we are trying to win them to our project of the *Union nacional estudiantil*. Our relations are quite tense with the Communist Party, which sees us as dangerous competition which is continuously progressing, with an orientation much more radical than it. It suffers from the discredit of the Concertation, on which it is politically and electorally dependent. However, for us, whoever works with the Concertation is working with the enemy. They justify themselves by explaining that it is a question of a tactical choice. For the bourgeois press, the moderate and rational wing of the student movement is clearly identified with Giorgio Jackson and Camila Vallejo, while the "extremists" are identified with the representative of the University of Concepción, Guillermo Petersen, with myself and some others, who are constantly stigmatized by the dominant media ([5]).

Solidarités: Where are you with the process of organizing a unified anticapitalist Left today in Chile?

Sebastian Farfán Salinas: We are engaged in a process of constitution. It is a question of bringing together groups which all have a general reference to Marxism. They may read Che Guevara, like us in Valparaíso, Miguel Enriquez [6], like those in Concepción, or Lenin like those in the North, etc. In any case, the collectives concerned are quite broad and numerous. And we all defend an anti-capitalist orientation and a revolutionary perspective of social transformation for today. However, in order to go forward, we must develop a political project which is addressed to the whole country, which goes beyond the framework of student youth and is aimed at the workers, the populations of the poor neighbourhoods, etc. We must define an orientation, develop a programme and make tactical choices.

Solidarités: In the framework of the present movement, have you established ongoing relations with combative trade-union sectors in the work places. And if so, of what kind?

Sebastian Farfán Salinas: We have come into contact with trade unions whose leaderships are combative, and indeed even revolutionary. We have thus succeeded in linking the demand for free education at all the levels with the objective of the renationalization of the copper mines. By taking back control of our natural resources to satisfy the needs of the population and by expelling the multinational corporations, we could finance free education and health in Chile. Around this demand we organized a mobilization with the SITECO trade union of El Teniente, one of the principal copper mines of the country [7], whose leader is a young and very combative trade unionist, Jorge Peña. On June 15, we marched shoulder to shoulder, copper workers and students, in Santiago. This junction is very important for us, because Chile is an economically dominated country, exporting raw materials, and when the copper workers go on strike, the Chilean economy stops. Trade unions like SITECO - and it is not the only one - blame the bureaucratic orientation of the leaders of the CUT (United Workers'

Confederation), linked to the leading layers of the Concertation.

Solidarités: What are the essential debates that you will have to conduct in order to advance towards the formation of a revolutionary anticapitalist organization in Chile?

Sebastian Farfán Salinas: Very recently, Chile had the unhappy experience of the *Movimiento de los pueblos y los trabajadores* (MPT, Workers' and People's Movement), which appeared in 2009, and which brought together many currents of the anti-capitalist Left and the most varied kinds of association. The problem was that it imported the old arguments coming from these formations. So we think that it is necessary to take up again the project of establishing an organization of the anti-capitalist Left at the national level, starting from the youth which has mobilized, even if that takes a little more time. This new political generation must be formed theoretically, work out a coherent programme and develop the bonds of confidence that are necessary between the many groups which comprise it. Our task resembles that of Luis Emilio Recabarren, who was the first organizer of the Chilean labour movement, socialist then communist, at the beginning of the twentieth century. The discussions which we are having are comparable to those that are taking place on an international level on the present crisis of capitalism, on the socialism of the twenty-first century, on the role of elections - because we are being solicited by electoral forces, Concertation and the CP.

What we want is to position our organization in building, developing and organizing real mass movements. We read the classics of Marxism, we discuss and we think, but we also want to contest all the spaces of leadership of the mass movement with those who support compromise with the capitalist order. For that, the anticapitalist organization that we want to build will have to fulfil these two roles, of theoretical and ethical education of its members, but also of social intervention. We want to go beyond the phase of marginality of the radical Left of the 1990s, when its collectives spent most of

their time discussing among themselves. Personally, I fought to bring together all the student collectives of Valparaíso within our Federation, and it is on this basis that I represent our city within Confech at the national level. Our student collectives are numerous: for example, we can count on an about sixty well-organized activists in University of Valparaíso alone.

Solidarités: What are your relations with the activists of the Mapuche people?

Sebastian Farfán Salinas: They are very important. A Federation of Mapuche Students has been accepted within Confech - even though there is no Mapuche university as such, the Mapuche students fight for the recognition of their rights, in particular their cultural rights. In spite of the opposition of the Concertation and the CP, this integration of the Federation of Mapuche Students has resulted on the institutional level in the automatic attribution of one place out of eight for this federation on the national executive of Confech.

Solidarités: What is the role of women within your movement and its leaderships?

Sebastian Farfán Salinas: Chile is a very conservative, traditionalist country with regard to the place of the women in society. As in other Latin American countries, men continue to have a dominant position in all aspects of social life. When Michelle Bachelet came to power, there was much talk about equality, but few things changed for the large majority of women: according to certain studies, in Chile, women earn less than half as much as men. Having said that, within the student movement, we have experienced a very important process of transformation: women assume a role equivalent to that of the men. In my university, several women are leaders, even though the question of parity is not discussed formally. Before me, it was Jimena Muñoz who led the Federation of the University of Valparaíso (at present, she is leading the development of the Popular University in our region); at the Catholic University of Valparaíso, it

is also a woman, Carla Amtmann, who has been at the head of the movement.

Solidarités: What place do you give your thinking and in your struggles to ecological issues, in particular concerning Patagonia?

Sebastian Farfán Salinas: In Chile, it is the hydroelectric project of Aysen, in the south of Chile, which has polarized the debate for some time. It is a gigantic project for several dams, financed in particular by Spanish capital, which is meant to provide the whole country with electricity. It is a major ecological disaster, but also an extremely important economic and social question. In fact, the dimensions of these dams are not designed to produce electricity for the basic needs for the Chilean people, but for the big transnational mining companies, which plunder our resources and destroy our environment for the profit of the big shareholders of the dominant countries. It should be said that this mobilization largely contributed politically to preparing the emergence of the present student movement pol. Beyond HydroAysen, the project of Isla Riesco (more than a hundred kilometres to the west of Punta Arenas), which aims at starting up coal mining again to reduce energy costs - and thus production costs – no matter what the cost for the environment, is also giving rise to strong opposition.

Solidarités: Which relations are there between your movement in Chile and the forces contesting the established order in Latin America?

Sebastian Farfán Salinas: On the basis of our struggle, we have succeeded in establishing contacts with other organizations in Latin America. Recently, with the *Frente Popular Darío Santillán* in Argentina (an anticapitalist and anti-imperialist movement, founded in 2004, and which already has several thousand members]. In a broader sense, with the most radicalized political and social sectors, around the ALBA (*Allianza bolivariana para las Américas*), in particular in Venezuela. They have the project of forming a movement capable of bringing together a new generation of revolutionaries on a continental scale: *América en pie* (America upright), which should be in Porto Alegre next November. It is important for us to think about institutional successes, of a reformist character, which have been won in Venezuela, in Bolivia, in Ecuador etc, and which however represent important advances, in spite of their contradictions. On the international level, our movement has been very attentive to the revolutions of the "Arab Spring", with the movement of the *indignados* in Spain, and more recently with the movement of occupations, which began in Wall Street, in the United States. In Chile, we have understood that the battle over education challenges the essential logics of capitalism and that we can really confront them only on an international level. The question of the revolution is being posed again for the new generations which have turned their backs on the debates of the 1990s on "the end of history", even though the way towards victory is long and sown with obstacles.

PAKISTAN

Occupy Lahore: Anti Capitalist Camp

The camp is being set up in solidarity with the worldwide Occupy Movement and the growing unrest amongst people's caused by the global economic recession.

Addressing the press conference, Progressive Youth Front representative Ammar Ali Jaan honoured October 15 the world stood against the capitalist financial system. This unrest has been developing since 2008 here people believed governments would take to task those responsible for causing the global financial crisis. However, governments gave billions of dollars to bail out financial institutions and corporations at the cost of the masses. In the context of Pakistan which is facing numerous ordeals like price hikes, electricity and gas shortages, and at a structural level feudalism, and capitalism, the security state and there is a global realisation that the system that was preserved by governments has failed us in Pakistan as well and must be overturned.

Lawyer Misha Rehman said, "Very rarely do moments arise when we can get together as a community for dialogue. The purpose of the camp is to provide that space where people can discuss everyday issues, criticize existing systems and find solutions through sustainable engagements."

"One of the slogans the Occupy movements has taken up is, 'We, the 99% of the world, stand up against the 1%.' We understand that the 99% needs to formulate its political voice and this will be an opportunity for the people to formulate a political voice," she said.

Workers' Party Pakistan Vice President Naeem Shakir stated that almost 50 per cent of the general population has been swallowed by impoverishment. "Our view is that this space will give the silenced a voice and the hope is to find a long term plan and vision for Pakistanis who are suffering at

the hands of status quo mainstream parties," he said. He said, "the camp hopes to encourage people to leave their house and discuss the issues in a progressive environment."

Labour Party spokesperson Farooq Tariq appealed to the residents of Lahore and its neighboring localities to join the camp at Nasir Bagh. He said the National Trade Union Federation, Pakistan Trade Union Federation, Railway workers, PTCL, Katchi Abadi alliances, the National Student Federation, Muttahida Labour Federation, the Progressive Youth Forum and other progressive groups have confirmed participation.

The speakers announced discussions were already underway in Islamabad, Karachi, Faisalabad, Mianwali and Okara to hold similar events.

Invitation to Anti-Capitalism Camp in Lahore on Saturday, 22nd Oct at Nasir Bagh

Dear Friends,

This is to invite you all for the Anti-Capitalism Camp to be set up at Nasir Bagh on Saturday, 22nd Oct at 12:00 noon. Progressive forces in Lahore are uniting to express their solidarity with the protesters at Wall Street and around the world who are expressing their anger and their disgust at current crisis of capitalism. It is clear that capitalism has become an impediment to a dignified life for a vast majority of people around the world. These global protests are a way to let our policy-makers know that enough is enough and that this system based on the exploitation of ordinary people will no longer be tolerated. It is a way of reclaiming the political space that had almost been completely taken over by financiers and industrialists with little regard for the interests of the common people. But most importantly, it is a movement that identifies capitalism as the central problem and challenges us

to think of alternatives to the current system that has worked wonders for the rich but has miserably failed for ordinary people around the world.

We in Lahore wish to become part of this global upsurge against Capital. Of course, we have our own issues and context in Pakistan which we would like to highlight. Here, the failures of the system are far too obvious; Hunger, unemployment, load shedding, unequal land distribution, price hike, dictatorial attitude of the IMF and World bank, religious fundamentalism, military oligarchy and US imperialism are some of the more obvious problems caused by capitalism. What connects us to the struggles taking place all over the world is the universal category of Capital that structures our lives and it is time we try to move beyond it.

For over 200 years, the advent and consolidation of capitalism in our region has ruined the lives of mil-

lions of peasants, workers and students. It is these forces that are today uniting to initiate a struggle against this decadent system. Our decision to set-up a camp at Nasir Bagh is a first step in that direction. We invite progressive forces to come to these anti-capitalist camp and raise their own issues so that Nasir bagh turns into a festival of the resurgent Pakistani left. We know that overcoming capitalism is no easy task and it will require a much larger and prolonged struggle to fight. But its a task that we must undertake or else accept our miserable fate as being inevitable and eternal. This camp gives us the opportunity to intervene in public discourse and to ignite a public debate on the need for an alternative system. It will be the first step towards a greater movement for a fundamental break with capitalism.

All Power to the People!

Down with Capitalism and Imperialism.

HONG KONG

Three hundred demonstrators occupied City Center Hong Kong to protest against capitalism

Throughout the afternoon there was a forum, where groups and individuals took the floor in turn. Left 21 members attacked capitalism for bringing the disparity of wealth because it only cares about profit. In Hong Kong a handful of rich people monopolize the wealth of the people so the latter can only earn subsistence wages. The anti-nuclear alliance activist Man Si Wei pointed out that the nuclear power industry was nurtured by the nuclear industry in order to make money. The nuclear industry colluded with the government and the United Nations in fooling the public over the issue of the so called safety level of the amount of radiation absorbed by the body, which does not have real scientific basis. The Japanese government, after the disaster in Fukushima, raised the safety level arbitrarily proved this. Lam Chi Leung from Pioneer pointed out that global capitalism

has become a big casino. Huge amounts of social resources are concentrated in the hands of a few large financial groups, while public medical care, education and social welfare are denied the necessary funding. He called for the overthrowing of the regime of the rich to make way for a government of the working people to fix the problem.

In the late afternoon the forum was adjourned, and all participants marched to the headquarter of the HSBC to continue the assembly and occupation. After the demonstrators arrived at the HSBC headquarters, the police warned demonstrators that their assembly was illegal, and the demonstrators responded with boo. Eventually they were left untouched by the police. There are dozens of protesters who camped at the site overnight and are now still ongoing when this report is made.

October 17, 2011

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GREECE

"A country being bled white and destroyed by those who claim to save it"

SONIA MITRALIA ·

I come from Greece, a country being bled white and destroyed by those who claim to save it, the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission. After the adoption, application and above all the failure of the four shock treatments known as the Memoranda, and the current application of the fifth, which is the toughest and most inhuman, Greece is no longer the country that we knew: now, the streets are empty after sunset, restaurants are desperately seeking clients and the stores on the deserted shopping streets fall into ruins. The reason for this transformation is given by these facts and figures: wage earners and pensioners have already lost 30%-50% and sometimes even more of their purchasing power. Which has the effect that approximately 30% of stores and 35% of fuel pumps have closed forever. That unemployment will probably hit 30% next year. That there will be 40% less hospitals and hospital beds, or that the Greek state was a few days ago unable to provide school books to its school children, who were asked to make photocopies, and so on and on. In short, that hunger, yes hunger, begins to make its appearance in the major cities while suicides are growing in a country thrown into stress and despair.

However, Greeks are not only desperate. They are also combative, they resist, and they struggle. Especially, after the appearance at the end of May 2011 of the movement of the Aganaktismeni, the

Greek indignad@s, who filled the squares of hundreds of Greek cities with huge radicalized crowds with two key slogans: "we owe nothing, we sell nothing, we pay nothing." And "all of them must go".

But beware: to resist in Greece in the epoch of the barbaric austerity of the Memoranda is not easy. First, due to the repression which is terrible, systematic, and inhumane. Then, because of the importance of the issue: Greece is currently a world test case, a true global laboratory in which the capacity of resistance of peoples to structural adjustment plans is tested during the great crisis of public debt. In sum, all eyes, whether of those at the top or those at the bottom, are now turned to this small European country which has the misfortune of becoming the global guinea pig of the most cynical neoliberalism. The result is that to win the least demand practically means overthrowing the government and, neither more nor less, the revolution!

The lesson that we draw from this totally unprecedented situation is that, today more than yesterday, there is no salvation within national boundaries. Faced with the Sacred Alliance of governments and those at the top, coordination and networking of the resistances of those at the bottom is the sine qua non of any hope of success! In simpler words, in order for the Greek test not to run to the benefit of our executioners of the infamous troika, i.e. the IMF, the European Central Bank and the European Commission, we must unite our forces as quickly as possible, to form the Sacred Alliance of those at the bottom!

It was not a coincidence that the first international conference against debt and austerity measures was organized in Athens in early May 2011, by the

Greek Initiative for an International Commission of Audit of Public Debt, a movement of which I am a founding member. The great success of this first International Conference had surprised us pleasantly but, in reality, it was doubly premonitory: first, because only two weeks later, the movement of the Greek indignant burst on the social and political scene with the occupation of Syntagma square in Athens. Then, because it became increasingly clear not only that the issue of public debt is was at the root of all the major issues of our time, but that the independent mobilization around the demand for an audit of the public debt was more than possible, because it met a true popular demand!

I think that the lesson that can be drawn from the experience of the Greek Initiative for a Commission of Audit of Public Debt is no longer valid only for the Greece. It is also valid for all other countries attacked by the financial markets, the troika and capital: the audit of public debt may, at first glance, appear a thankless activity, not very attractive and reserved for specialists, but in reality it is able to inspire and mobilise large crowds on two conditions: first, that it is totally independent of the institutions and supported by citizens mobilized in their neighbourhoods, their places of work and study. And then, that it seeks clearly to identify the illegitimate part of the debt to cancel and not pay!

Five months after this first international conference in Athens against austerity measures and the debt, we can measure the ground covered: the Greek initiative is being emulated almost everywhere in Europe, south and north, in western and in eastern Europe. The task that this situation imposes on us all is clear: these movements and campaigns on the audit of public debt should soon meet and establish networks. And this so as to make their action more effective and the meet expectations of the peoples, before it's too late for everyone.

It is exactly this task that has been taken on by the CADTM, the Committee for Cancellation of the Third World Debt, of which I am also a member, and which combines its expertise - the result of twenty years of struggle alongside the poor in the

South of the planet - with its presence in the field of struggles in several European countries. The theoretical and practical contribution of the CADTM in the development of the movement against the debt and austerity in Greece and other countries has been and remains very important. But I fear that in order to meet the new challenges thrown up by a situation of a veritable war to the death between rich and poor, we need much more than the CADTM, or all the other international networks that are fighting courageously against the debt and austerity. We need many more activist forces, much more programmatic development and especially much more coordination across national boundaries.

I would now like to finish with something close to my heart: autonomous organization, or rather the self-organization and the struggle of women against the debt and austerity. If women are the first victims of the current neoliberal aggression against wage earners and all of society, it is not only because they are laid off en masse and as a priority. It is mainly because a cornerstone of this aggression, namely the destruction and privatization of public services, has as a direct result that women are forced to assume within the family public utility tasks assumed until yesterday by the state. In sum, women are now called on to provide at home, in private, the services once offered by kindergartens, hospitals, hospices for the elderly, unemployment funds, psychiatric establishments, and even social security. And all absolutely free of charge! And more, all this in the ideological packaging of a forced return to home and family by a so-called "nature" of woman accepted only as the obedient slave of others! In short by a return to the most abject patriarchy, which is combined with a frontal attack against the few rights that we women retain.

My conclusion will be categorical: that is why women need to organize independently to combat debt and austerity. If they do not, there is no one who will do it in their place.

Thank you.

15th October 2011: a great victory for the outraged

ÉRIC TOUSSAINT ·

Actions have taken place on five continents. More than 80 countries and almost one thousand different towns have seen hundreds of thousands of youth and adults on the march, protesting against the management of the international economic crisis by governments rushing to bail out the private institutions responsible for the collapse and who are taking advantage of it to strengthen neoliberal policies: massive layoffs in public services, clear-cutting of social spending, massive privatizations, attacks on social solidarity measures (public pension systems, unemployment benefits, collective bargaining...). Everywhere, repayment of the public debt is the pretext used to strengthen austerity measures. Everywhere, demonstrators are accusing the banks.

In February 2003, we saw the broadest international mobilization to try to prevent a war: the invasion of Iraq. More than 10 million people gathered in countless demonstrations all over the planet. Since then, the dynamics of the global justice movement born in the 1990s has gradually faded but never entirely died out.

On 15 October 2011, slightly fewer than one million people took to the streets. Nevertheless, it was a huge victory, because it was the first large demonstration carried out in a 24-hour period around the planet against the people responsible for the capitalist crisis, which has created tens of millions of victims.

The financial and economic crisis, which started in the US in 2007, has spread, above all in Europe, from 2008. The debt crisis faced by developing

countries has spread to the North. It is interconnected with the food crisis, which has hit many developing regions since 2007-2008.

Not to forget the climate crisis, above all affecting the peoples of the South of the planet.

This systemic crisis is also expressed at an institutional level: the leaders of the G8 member countries know they do not have the means to manage the international crisis. Thus, they have convened the G20. For three years now, the latter has proven incapable of coming up with valid solutions. This crisis also involves a crisis of civilization. There are challenges raised to consumerism, generalized commoditisation, the failure to take the environmental impacts of economic activities into account, productivism, the search to satisfy private interests at the expense of the public interest, goods and services, major powers' systematic recourse to violence, the denial of the basic human rights of peoples such as the Palestinians... Often capitalism is the heart of what is being challenged.

No centralized organization had called this mobilization. The Indignados ("Outraged") movement was born in Spain in May 2011 in the wake of the Tunisian and Egyptian rebellions in the previous months. It spread to Greece in June 2011 and to other European countries. It has crossed the North Atlantic since September 2011 [it became the Occupy movement, after Occupy Wall Street the first of its kind - trans].

Of course, a series of radical political organizations and organized social movements support the movement but are not leading it. Their influence is limited. It is a broadly spontaneous movement, mostly made up of young people, with an enormous potential to develop that is very disturbing to political leaders, the heads of major firms and all police forces on the planet. It could die out like a flash in

the pan or be the spark that sets off the fire. Nobody knows.

On 15 October 2011, the call to mobilize mostly rallied demonstrators in cities and towns in countries of the North including the planet's financial centres, which is very promising. The outraged 'occupy'

movements have sparked very creative and emancipatory dynamics. If you are not yet involved, try to join, or launch it if it does not yet exist where you live. Link up and take part in an authentic emancipation.

Translated by Marie Lagatta

USA

Massive occupation targets Wall Street

MARTY GOODMAN ·

Worldwide economic misery, inequality, and war have sparked an explosion of protests against Wall Street's super crooks. The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement, which began in New York City, has spread like a wildfire across the United States. Protesters, led mainly by young people, have built encampments in numerous cities, with accompanying marches and rallies that have brought out thousands.

Their chants strike out at the injustices of capitalism: "Banks got bailed out, we got sold out!" "They say cut back, we say fight back!"

The original call for the Wall Street protests was made on July 13 on a website owned by Adbusters, a Canadian anti-corporate cultural magazine. The protest was set for Sept. 17. Many activists didn't know what to make of it, but on that date about 1000 demonstrators arrived. Within a couple of weeks, the actions went viral, with protests erupting in every major U.S. city. As we go to press on Oct. 8, the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement has spread to over 250 U.S. cities and towns, and is helping to define a new generation of rebels.

Reasons for anger at Wall Street aren't hard to find. Anger has erupted in the context of unpopular wars for oil and resources in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the U.S.-backed war in Libya. The racist execution of Troy Davis in Georgia on Sept. 21 brought many activists to a boiling point. Capitalism is showing its true face to ever more millions, especially the youth who are confronted with bleak job prospects and lack the means to further their education.

The stark economic inequality of the United States has produced a backdrop for their rage. Between the 1970s and today, the inflation-adjusted income

of working people stagnated. In contrast, the income of the richest 1% from 1979 to 2005 rose an incredible 480%. The average annual salary of the top 1% went from \$4.2 million in 1979 to \$24.3 million in 2005.

OWS is loosely modeled on the "Arab Spring" symbol of mass protest, Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt—where the movement toppled the pro-Israel, U.S. puppet dictator Hosni Mubarak earlier this year. The OWS also drew inspiration from the occupation of the Capitol building and mass rallies in Madison, Wis., by militant trade unionists and their supporters last February.

"Festival of the oppressed"

The New York City Occupation is centered in Zuccotti Park, a block-sized privately owned space a short walk from Wall Street. Political discussions go on at all hours. Protesters on the Broadway side display to passersby signs and banners denouncing inequality and mocking greed. Each day there are protests at the opening and closing bells of the stock market. Twice a day the movement has a General Assembly in which hundreds participate, and anyone can speak. On Oct. 8, a Washington Square meeting gathered 3000 people. An Egyptian revolutionary addressed the crowd, to rave applause.

Lenin used the phrase "a festival of the oppressed" to describe revolutions, and while OWS is not a revolution in any sense, it shares with every other genuinely mass movement or strike a family-like camaraderie and feeling of tolerance and mutual support—with the unleashing of creativity and collective decision making.

The number of working groups is continually growing, and includes medics, direct action, food, com-

fort, facilitation (for chairing the General Assemblies), and media. Although from the beginning the majority of the facilitators (who are also central political leaders of OWS) were people of color, a People of Color Committee has been established to rectify the balance of what had initially been a disproportionately white assemblage. Their efforts overlap with the national Occupy the Hood effort. A production team has published a newspaper, *The Occupied Wall Street Journal*.

At the same time, Zuccotti Park is lined with plenty of well-armed police. Video footage of New York cops pepper spraying and savagely beating peaceful protesters on Sept. 24 shocked millions across the globe (see occupywallstreet.org). Over 1000 OWS protesters have been arrested.

Arrests of more than 700 peaceful protesters on the Brooklyn Bridge on Oct. 1 revealed the depravity and fear felt by the profit-driven U.S. ruling class of an issue that has resulted in giant worker-led protests and general strikes in Europe. A class-action lawsuit was filed on Oct 4 against New York City for the Brooklyn Bridge arrests. "We believe the NYPD engaged in a premeditated, planned, scripted and calculated effort to get protesters off the street," said the Partnership for Civil Justice, which represents protesters.

A Youtube video reveals one cop saying to another on Oct. 5, before police savagely attacked protesters, "My little nightstick's gonna get some—a workout tonight, hopefully." But the police violence backfired for the ruling class since the outrage that it provoked served subsequently to bring out many more protesters.

Labor support for protesters

Organized labor's initial response to OWS was slow. But, on Oct. 2, John Samuelson, president of Transport Workers Union Local 100, the 35,000-member New York City subway and bus worker's union, filed an injunction against the NYPD for commandeering from their regular routes five TWU drivers and their buses to have them haul Brooklyn

Bridge protesters to jail. Unfortunately, the injunction request failed, but the TWU's bold action won recognition for its defense of civil liberties and the rights of its members.

The previous week the Local 100 Executive Board voted unanimously to support OWS. Local 100's contract expires on Jan. 15. It is threatened with three zeros and health-care cuts. If it doesn't accept the rotten deal, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority—deeply in debt to Wall Street crooks and rich owners of tax-free MTA bonds—says it will impose another round of mass layoffs. Last year, some 900 members were laid off, mostly African American, Hispanic, and immigrant workers. Most have returned to work.

Said TWU organizer Marvin Holland, "We endorsed Occupy Wall St. because we agreed with 99% of what the protesters were saying. They're 100% right that banks caused this problem. We've had rank-and-file members there since day one."

TWU Local 100 began organizing other unions for what would be an historic Oct. 5 march in support of OWS. It began at Foley Square near City Hall and marched down to Zuccotti Park, a distance of about one mile. Signing on were the United Federation of Teachers, the 1199 Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Professional Staff Congress, the Amalgamated Transit Union, SEIU 32BJ, and others.

Julie Fry, a lawyer at the Legal Aid Society and union member there, put it this way, "We're so fed up and getting nowhere through the old political structures that there needs to be old-fashioned rage in the streets."

The rally attracted around 20,000 demonstrators, which filled Zuccotti Park to overflowing. The call had clearly electrified working-class activists, eclipsing in size recent city union contract rallies. Marchers took up the now famous chants of the OWS, "We are the 99%" and "Banks got bailed out, we got sold out!" "All day, all week, occupy Wall Street!" The Oct. 5 rally was a relief from the more

perfunctory and politically conservative affairs organized by official labor.

Later that evening, some 200 protesters left Zuccotti Park for a march on Wall St., but were met with savage club-wielding NYPD goons armed with pepper spray. Twenty-eight protesters were arrested.

What it takes to win

Capitalism is in an economic and political crisis from which there is no genuine solution but socialism, the democratic rule of the working-class majority over the wealth that we've created. A mere 20 years ago, with the fall of the authoritarian Stalinist governments in Eastern Europe, capitalism's pundits proclaimed the "end of history" and an eternity of capitalist rule. No more. Pro-U.S. dictatorships have fallen or are being seriously challenged by rebellion. Major strikes and rebellions are breaking out in Europe over severe government cuts demanded by banks and international financial institutions.

More and more people are beginning to view the capitalist system as corrupt and unreformable. In the U.S., millions who had expected change with the election of Barack Obama have had their hopes dashed on virtually every issue, from health care to warfare.

Taking the worldview of this trend, a Sept. 27 New York Times article observed, "Complaints range from corruption to lack of affordable housing and joblessness, common grievances the world over. From South Asia to the heartland of Europe and now even to Wall Street, these protesters share something else: wariness, even contempt, toward traditional politicians and the democratic political process they preside over. They are taking to the streets, in part, because they have little faith in the ballot box."

It is no surprise to Socialist Action readers that President Barack Obama received more Wall Street campaign contributions in 2008 than John McCain, his right-wing, pro-war Republican rival.

Obama's largest donors on Wall Street were the mega-crooks at Goldman Sachs, the largest brokerage outfit.

Both parties gave trillions to bail out the mortgage racket, the auto industry bosses, and Wall Street crooks like Bernie Madoff. Meanwhile, these corporate thieves are raping our environment, creating an unparalleled disaster that threatens life on earth. Both parties, from New York state to California, are slashing public services and jobs, wrecking lives, in order to make working people pay for a crisis that they had no part in. Both parties support war and death, from Haiti to Palestine to Afghanistan.

The twin parties of big business know that their options are few within the ever-shrinking prospects of capitalism. The official U.S. unemployment rate in September was unchanged at 9.1%. Economists put the true figure as high as 16%. Unemployment is twice as devastating in the African American community and worst amongst African American, Hispanic, and immigrant youth.

Capitalism is a system born of misery that has been made immeasurably worse by this crisis. Humanity says enough is enough! It will take mass protests and strikes based on millions of organized working people—and ultimately revolution—to stop Wall Street's assault on working people, the unemployed, and immigrants. But wherever the OWS movement goes from here, it has already taught us powerful lessons on the need to organize democratically and independently of the ruling class. OWS has lifted many people from their bitter disappointments in Obama's betrayals and presented a way to fight against greed and inequality.

Socialist Action calls on working people to support the Occupation protests. Deepen the links to workers' struggles. We propose turning our union halls into giant congresses of labor, the unemployed, and the oppressed, for an ongoing democratic discussion on how to defeat Wall Street's attacks. Break with the two big business parties, the parties of war and racism; they cannot be changed or reformed.

We need a party of our own; a truly democratic party built on a militant labor movement—a labor party!"

Labor needs to raise the demand to nationalize the banks and Wall St. firms—that is, to seize the wealth of those institutions for public uses like education, health care, and mass transportation. Taxing and tweaking Wall St. practices will never control these criminals, nor recover the vast wealth stolen from working people by fraud. The money in their banks belongs to us!

Socialists say, "Cancel all home mortgage debt and all government debt to Wall Street crooks! No cuts to public services, no to layoffs! Make the rich pay for their crisis! Nationalize the petroleum industry

and replace fossil fuels to save the planet! Fund human needs, not war! Tuition-free education now! Jail N.Y. top cop Ray Kelly and his club-wielding thugs!"

To struggle to achieve these goals, a revolutionary party is needed; one with experience in organizing and educating the working class against economic exploitation, war, racism, sexism, and homophobia. A party is needed that engages in day-to-day struggles without forgetting the necessity of revolution. We invite you to join such a party—Socialist Action (see socialistaction.org).

Let us all deepen our solidarity with this growing movement. Occupy Wall Street!

Socialist Action, October 2011

GREECE

It's enough! The hour of the rising has come!

ANTARSYA ·

There is another path, the path of the anti-capitalist break with the ruling order, in order to impose the interests of working people:

by stopping the payments to the bankers and the cancellation of debt,

by withdrawing from the euro zone and leaving the EU,

by the nationalization of banks, state-owned enterprises and enterprises of strategic importance under workers' control and without compensation,

through a radical redistribution of wealth, by increasing wages, pensions and public spending in order to cover social needs and to create jobs

by an adequate capital tax and the redistribution of profits

through the cancellation of bank debts for those without vast fortunes, and for the unemployed.

We won't pay your poll taxes!

We shall bring about your downfall

The unified mass political movement will open the way, an uprising of all workers and of the entire population is needed here and now! With unlimited strikes and a nationwide general strike, with occupations as they have already begun in the ministries, with militant demonstrations, and with the democratic coordination of the branches that started fighting and of the rank and file basic trade union units, things can move beyond the bureaucratic leaderships of GSEE (private sector) and ADEDY (public service). Through the united struggle of student occupations and unlimited strikes we can win! It is time for a popular uprising that will lead to the overthrow of the government of shame, that will unshackle the rule of EU, IMF and capital and that will seal the defeat of the black bloc of PASOK, ND and LAOS. All the forces of the Left and the movement involved in the struggles must contribute through their joint action to an unprecedented revolutionary movement.

ANTARSYA fights for the abolition of capitalist barbarism as a whole and is involved with all its forces in the current conflict.

ANTARSYA, 21 Sep 2011

GREECE

We won't pay your poll taxes! We shall bring about your downfall

ANTARSYA ·

The brazenness of the government is beyond all measure, and once again the majority of society is its victim. While the government starts talking to the owners of the shipping companies asking them how they could "contribute to the national efforts" (!), it reduces the tax rate on corporate profits to 20%, continues its unlimited exemptions and tax breaks for capital in the name of "growth," delivers €110 billion to the banks, sells off the accumulated public wealth for a mess of pottage, and mercilessly ruins the unemployed and pensioners, the workers, freelancers, and small farmers. Two years after the introduction of the memorandum policy, the government refers to "empty coffers" in order to hunt and to collect taxes. Thus it shows that its own policy is completely bankrupt. It is facing total collapse!

We call on the workers and the entire Greek population—with support from the mass movement—to engage in mass disobedience against the previous and the new poll tax. Nobody, no worker, no unemployed, no self-employed person should pay the "special contributions" and the "special tax." In addition, retroactive surcharges on already-taxed income are unconstitutional and represent a mockery of any notion of tax fairness.

This fight is not an individual struggle but a collective one that should be organized. It is part of the

general struggle of the people to overthrow the wretched PASOK government and its partners: the right ND (New Democracy) and the radical right-wing LAOS—the troika. The Medium Term Program and the policy of capital, which aims at abolishing all rights of working people and at imposing all of the consequences of the capitalist crisis on the masses, must be abolished. We can bring about its downfall! The potential is revealed by the massive and angry demonstration during the international fair in Thessaloniki on September 10. The conditions for a further escalation are taking shape, which will be much stronger than the nearly insurgent strikes and mobilizations during the public-square occupations of June.

We call on all unions, scientific associations and professional associations, students at the University of occupations, the movement of civil disobedience to declare "WE WILL NOT PAY!" The popular assemblies of the cities and neighborhoods should refuse the new poll tax through collective decisions, leading to continuous mobilizations. They should actively support their members in the refusal to pay. For the development of a broad campaign of strikes and movements with the aim of overthrowing the government, together with all the other butchers, EU, IMF and their lackeys!

ANTARSYA will participate with all its forces in this fight!

ANTARSYA - Anti-Capitalist Left alliance for the overthrow, *Sep 15, 2011*

INDIA

Police intimidate activist in Gujarat

ROHIT PRAJAPATI ·

This was not an isolated occurrence, but the latest in a series of such enquiries that have been going on for some 2 years – police have visited both our home and the offices of trade union Jyoti Karmachari Mandal (JKM). The first visit to Jyoti Karmachari Mandal was on March 7, 2010, followed by a police visit to our home the next day. The first visit to our home occurred in our absence, and the police questioned our young son, who was present at home at that time.

The next visit occurred on 20th April, 2010 when 2 officers spent nearly an hour asking about details of my background, contacts, activities etc. After a few days they returned to collect copies of my passport. A few months later a team of the Special Operations Group (SOG) came to my home in the late evening. Six or seven members of the SOG team barged into my house and straight away went upstairs. We objected to their entry and demanded to know their identity and the reason for their "visit". After that several of the team left, while three remained to question me.

We pointed out that the same kind of extensive (relevant as well as irrelevant) questions had been asked and information collected by the police on earlier occasions, to which they replied that this was different because they were from the SOG. They also took copies of my passport.

The next police visit was on the afternoon of 3rd October 2011 when 3 officers spent about 45 minutes getting "updates" on my activities. One of the matters they questioned me about was my complaint about the residential complex coming up next to industrial hazardous solid waste sites in Ahmedabad (Vatva & Naroda). They demanded to know why I was raising objections against the State

Government's move to amend the law prohibiting residential construction within 500 metres of hazardous waste sites (to permit construction within 100 metres of such sites). In spite of this police officials returned six days later came for further investigation as mentioned above.

During all the visits and questioning by the police, no specific reason has ever been given for the questioning; they have always insisted that these were "merely routine" enquiries. So far, I have cooperated with the police and provided whatever information or documents they have asked for, including things like bank account details. My activities in association with the People's Union for Civil Liberties, Jyoti Karmachari Mandal and Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti (PSS : Environment Protection organisation, a radical environmentalist group operating in Gujarat) organizations have been completely open, legal and public (and in the public interest). I have never had any reason to conceal any information related to these activities.

However, in the light of repeated visits by the police, with demands for the same information provided earlier and already available with them, it is now difficult not to conclude that these repeated visits have any other purpose than intimidation and harassment.

In today's Gujarat, it appears that anybody who questions the correctness of government policy or actions, or is seen in any way to obstruct the purposes of the government, is a target for intimidation and harassment.

I have written to the Police Commissioner requesting to the reason for the repeated questioning by police, whether there are any allegations or charges, and if so, what these are and if there is an investigation of any kind what is its nature.

My Recent Activities

I am involved in three organisations – PUCL, JKM, and PSS. As a Trotskyist, I have been an internationalist, and have collaborated with comrades in the Fourth International over trade union, environment and other issues. In 2002, during the pogrom like atmosphere created by Hindutva fanatics, I along with other friends played some role in fighting that. As a matter of principle, we decided to stay on in Tandalja, resisting the attempt to turn it into a purely Muslim ghetto. We campaigned for the restoration of peace. We brought out, through PUCL, a comprehensive report of the Gujarat Carnage.

We also collaborated in bringing out the first collected documentation in English about the Gujarat Carnage, *The Genocidal Pogrom in Gujarat: Anatomy of Indian Fascism*. Though I am also involved in a new organisation, Radical Socialist, my chosen areas of work have been, in the last half a decade or more, the three organisations already named.

My work as a trade unionist and my work as an environmental activist have been intertwined. We believe in the need for environmentally aware trade unionism, as well as a class approach to the question of environment protection. As a result, for a decade and a half, we have been developing environmental agenda connected to industrial pollution.

We have consistently raised the issue of industrial pollution in Gujarat and exposed the industry-Gujarat Government nexus that touts 'treatment facilities' as a solution to the problems of hazardous solid waste, effluent, surface and groundwater contamination. Our position has been founded on the facts and figures obtained under the Right to Information Act (RTI). Gujarat Pollution Control Board officials admitted that a lot still has to be achieved in pollution control.

As treatment facilities were / are not able to meet the Gujarat Pollution Control Board's (GPCB) norms a moratorium on starting of new industries

or expansion of existing industries was declared for the Ankleshwar area in July 2007 and now Ministry of Environment and Forests has extended it until March 31 2012.

In January 2010 a moratorium was declared for other areas like Vatva, Bhavnagar, Junagadh, Vapi,. The moratorium was subsequently lifted for the Vapi, Bhavnagar, Junagadh area. PSS objected to the lifting of moratorium for Vapi because treatment facilities of Vapi are still not able to meet the GPCB norms. Today the moratorium for Vatva, Ankleshwar is extended till 31-3-2011. This has stalled the projected huge investment in these areas of Gujarat. However, we believe that as responsible citizens, we are not and cannot be concerned only with the size of investment, but with what is being invested, what the goal of the investment is, and how it affects the masses of working people.

On 4-1-2007 Government of Gujarat granted permission to incinerate the hazardous waste of Union Carbide, Bhopal at Ankleshwar. We opposed this and filed an intervention application in the Jabalpur High Court. Ultimately Government of Gujarat was forced to withdraw its permission by letter dated 4-10-2008 and now the case is pending in the Supreme Court.

A direct outcome of our persistent efforts since 1994 has been GPCB / Government having to act against Hema Chemicals which was responsible for illegal dumping of hazardous chromium waste. The Supreme Court Monitoring Committee ordered the company has been ordered to pay Rs. 17 crores as a first instalment towards remediation of the site. The GPCB was constrained to order the confiscation of passport of Hema Chemicals' owner, and prohibiting him from disposing of his property. The owner's name was flashed across all international airports in India so that he does not leave the country.

We also launched a complaint against residential & commercial complexes coming up in the vicinity of hazardous solid waste sites in Ahmedabad (Vatva & Naroda) in violation of GPCB notification on indus-

trial hazardous solid waste and The Hazardous Waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 1989.

Now we are given to understand that Forest & Environment Department and Urban Development and Urban Housing Department of Government of Gujarat have decided to modify the CPCB & GPCB guideline and norms – which require 500 meters distance from TSDFs & CETPs for the residential complexes – and reduce it to 100 meters to legalize illegal residential complexes. The original guideline was issued with the intention of preventing risk to peoples' health and safety. The revision looks at the profit margin of unscrupulous promoters, not the innocent buyers who will suffer in future.

The decision to continue to enforce the 500 meters distance stipulation clearly shows that this norm is not wrong and that is why Government of Gujarat is now modifying it to 100 meters to regularize of illegal residential complexes which violate the guideline and norms. This will be disastrous for health and safety and can only be due to immense pressure from the rich and powerful.

We opposed the proposed dilution of norms and letters were written to Government of Gujarat and also to Ministry of Environment and Forest to intervene in the matter to prevent such illegal modification.

Vapi Industries Association (VIA), United Phosphorus Limited (UPL), and Avik Pharmaceutical Ltd. have filed a defamation case to the tune of Rs. 25 Crores against 'The Times of India' and Rohit Prajapati in the Vapi Court, District Valsad, Gujarat with reference to a news item which appeared in *The Times of India* on 5th June 2010 <http://articles.timesofindia.indiat...>

On 17th September 2011, I filed an RTI application with the Chief Minister's office, seeking information regarding the 'Sadbhavana Mission'. The application enquired how much money was spent on this programme, who were the sponsors, and under which policy or rules this programme was conceived and carried out.

There is sufficient reason to think that individuals and interest groups affected by our efforts may resort to legal, extra-legal and other means against some of us. We want to alert you to that possibility and request quick action in case of any such eventuality. I have already been subjected to repeated questioning by police both in our office and at home, amounting to intimidation and harassment.

I would therefore appeal to friends and activists in trade unions, in human rights movements and in environment protection movements, as well as in other sectors of social movements, to take note of these developments and to extend solidarity with us.

Solidarity from CITA

Dear colleagues,

As participants in the International Council of Car Workers (CITA), we give greetings and wish you much success for your European meeting of car workers. Thank you for your invitation. Unfortunately, for reasons of timing, we cannot be with you.

At the 6th international Council of Car Workers, in late 2009 in Germany, with 450 participants from 17 countries, we adopted an international program of struggle for car workers. It took into account a comprehensive restructuring of the global industry and the consequences of the battle of mutual destruction of the carmakers for car workers and their families.

In fact, tens of thousands of jobs have been destroyed, wages have been reduced, in particular in the United States, Russia, Spain and Italy, not to mention the closure of the Opel plant in Antwerp. In Europe, Opel has reduced its workforce by 10,000, or 20%. Opel workers in Bochum (Germany) have been informed of massive layoffs of about 1,200 jobs.

The initial impact of the world economic and financial crisis was attenuated by partial unemployment and, often, an increase in compensation. With scrappage schemes and significant discounts an even deeper collapse of production was avoided in many countries. But now, the increase in exploitation, the concentration of car companies and considerable job destruction has become more apparent.

In many companies, daily struggles are on-going against increased exploitation, for higher wages and so on. The huge expansion of production capacities, particularly in the BRICs, is based on each group's hope of outdoing its competitors. We must

therefore expect new restructurings related to closures of factories, massive layoffs and so on.

Against the various attempts at division by management, it is necessary to forge the unity of workers around the whole world!

In the factories, political debate is lively and not only on the immediate issues of work. Because the capitalist system is showing its overall decay, like its inhuman energy policy, indifferent to deaths, like the nuclear disaster in Japan, its economic and financial crises and its wars in Afghanistan, Libya, Ivory Coast and so on.

The Fukushima nuclear disaster brought hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets in Germany. The international working class should get even more involved in the fight for the preservation of the natural environment. Among other things, this question is very important in our activities because the crisis of the environment and the exploitation of workers have the same cause: the pursuit without end of the maximum profit. The fight to save the bases of life for humanity, the struggle for a better future, without exploitation and oppression, requires class awareness and organization. Our Council has always said: we will think beyond the system of capitalist profit and we will discuss a social alternative.

We hope that your meeting will be a success and we want to take this opportunity to invite you also to our 7th Council of Car Workers from May 7-20, 2012 in Munich, Germany (more information can be read on our site: www.automobilarbeiter-ratschlag.de))

Militant greetings and solidarity,

Fritz Hoffman, Ulrich Ittermann, Birgit Schumann

(participants in the International Council of Auto Workers)

FRANCE

Ford Blanquefort, an example

JEAN-CLAUDE VESSILLIER ·

The plant was set up by Ford at Blanquefort near Bordeaux in 1973 to manufacture gear boxes. It has employed up to 2,500 employees. In its European restructuring, Ford decided to sell this plant to a German group, HZ Holding, who created First Aquitaine industry. The plant was to continue to produce for Ford which became a customer of the purchaser. In fact, no industrial project was developed and this buyout was limited to a simple financial operation generating government subsidies.

A fatalistic approach would have been to accept the programmed dismantling of the factory and negotiate severance. It is often the solution chosen in the absence of perspectives and sometimes at the instigation of far left activists who prefer to fight for big severance payments rather than for the maintenance of jobs deemed a priori impossible to save. At Blanquefort, at the instigation of the organisers of the CGT union at the factory, this option was not accepted.

A long battle began for the maintenance of all jobs and the placing before its responsibilities of Ford Europe, the principal and still the "client" of the company that it had just sold. This was not a minority battle and all trade unions present in the plant were involved in the action for the maintenance of all jobs. Of course, this unity did not come about without contradiction or opposition, but at each moment of tension it was the mobilization of the vast majority of the employees which imposed the maintenance of unity of action, without downward revision of the demands.

This fight was also a demonstration of transparency in all discussions. In the hours that followed any

negotiation, the CGT blog, "Good news" provided an account of the meeting that had taken place. The negotiations were thus always open to the employees. And it is clear that this practice breaks from the bureaucratized methods of too many trade union bodies that use the secrecy of negotiations to endorse demobilizing compromises.

The fight was not confined to the boundaries of the plant. The disappearance of a factory like that of Blanquefort would have effects well beyond the employees of the plant. Families, but also the many related jobs in the area would also have been affected. This was a basic objective for a local mobilization of magnitude. The local support collective that was set up was a real body of mobilization including employees, families and all the left organizations.

Politicians of all types found themselves obliged to take a position. Even one of the main right wing politicians of the French bourgeoisie, the Mayor of Bordeaux Alain Juppé (UNP), requested the maintenance of industrial activity on the site. The French government were also questioned. In two successive car shows, in October 2008 and 2010, several thousand employees and their families came to Paris to assert their demands.

This mobilisation led to a first spectacular result. On January 1, 2011 Ford Europe repurchased the plant. The senior echelons of Ford Europe came to Bordeaux to assert this return.

But the battle was not won because no serious commitment to activity for maintenance of jobs had been taken. The battle for the rejection of redundancies in the factory took the form of demanding Ford present a "structuring" project. This demand reflects the particularity of this plant as a components factory. In so doing, the unions at the plant have not turned into counter-experts detailing vi-

able and profitable industrial solutions in today's capitalist world. But they placed the Ford Europe directorate and the French government – at both national and local levels - before their specific responsibilities. It is this approach which has paid off.

Finally, on May 6, 2011 Ford Europe announced forthcoming investment in Blanquefort plant to maintain nearly a thousand jobs at the site. Of course, nothing is definitively acquired and these promises will only become reality at the price of a continued mobilization at the level of that which has been built over several years in the factory and in the region.

As of now, this long term mobilization has paid off and it is no coincidence that one of the main organisers of this struggle in the Ford Blanquefort plant is Philippe Poutou, the activist that the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) has chosen as candidate for the French presidential election of 2012.

This is a report on the situation in the car industry in France given to the European Conference of Workers in the Car Industry, held at the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam on May 28-29, 2011. We have also published Declaration of the European Car Workers' Conference an overview at Creating cross-border links between militants and Solidarity from CITA from the same event.

USA

From Occupy Wall Street to Occupy America

DAN LA BOTZ ·

Occupy Wall Street and its offspring, nearly all of which began with white youth, have grown not only larger, but more diverse, attracting people from all walks of life and every segment of the society. They are making real their chant, "This is what democracy looks like." While some of the young people have been inspired by the occupation of Tahrir Square and by the indignados of Spain, this is an essentially American movement about American issues. The Occupy folks are furious at the corporations and many are angry at government as well, they are generally hostile to the Republicans and disappointed in the Democrats. Frustrated with the economic and political situation, they want to tax the rich, they want to stop the foreclosures, they want jobs for themselves and all the other unemployed. Many demand an end to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

An impressive organization

While most of those down at Zuccotti Park where the occupation is taking place are from New York, others have come in ones and two from around the country to take a stand against corporate greed. Visitors are impressed with the organization: the kitchen, the medical center, the media center, the daily lectures. Intellectual luminaries such as Joseph Stiglitz, former chief economist of the World Bank; Jeffrey Sachs, Harvard Professor and special advisor to the United Nations' secretary general; and Barbara Ehrenreich, feminist and author. There is now also a newspaper, The Occupied Wall Street Journal, which plans to go national soon. Tens of thousands of dollars have been raised

through small contributions by both Occupy Wall Street and the newspaper.

The peaceful movement has had clashes with the police both in New York City and in other cities and towns, but it has forged ahead. There have been dozens of arrests not only in New York City but also in Boston, Seattle, Des Moines, and yet this has not deterred the growing movement. The weekend of October 8-9 saw a huge demonstration of 10,000 in Portland and good size protest of 750 in Cincinnati. While, as usual, things may be larger, faster moving, and more radical on the coasts, the movement has also touched the "fly-over" country of the Midwest. In Chicago previously planned protests by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), other unions and community groups brought out thousands in demonstrations against financial institutions that ended up merging with Occupy Chicago, a development that could either strengthen or swamp the Occupy movement there.

Utopian and inspiring

Occupy is in part a coming together of activists. Watching any of the demonstrations in any city on any day one sees pass by on the t-shirts and jackets all the logos of every movement that has touched the country in the last decade: anti-war, LGBTQ, foreclosures, and civil rights activists. Walking among them are others new to the movement, blue collar and white collar workers, so far without their logos, slogans, and banners, carrying their hand painted signs with slogans like "Create Jobs, Reform Wall Street, Tax the Wealthy More," and "The People are Too Big to Fail" (a reference to the argument that the U.S. government had to save the banks because they were "too big to fail"). The sense of hope that the movement is creating was expressed by one sign down at Wall Street that

read, "This is the First Time I've Felt Hopeful in a Very Long Time."

The movement has a utopian character. Many of those involved in it want not only to overcome the immediate effects of the economic crisis—they want a better life, a better country, a better world. The movement as such has no ideology. This is populism of a left wing sort: the people versus big business and bad government. Though there are anarchists in it and they have given it some of their style, it is not an anarchist movement. Though there are some socialists in it, the movement is by no means socialist. What is perhaps best and most exciting about the movement is the confluence of the many social movements with middle class and working class people who have come down to Wall Street or in some other town or city down to Main Street to say, "We've had it." The utopianism of the movement has inspired ordinary people to say, "We can live differently, we must, and we will."

A month or so into the Occupy movement, the labor unions began to take an interest. In New York the unions turned out thousands of their members for a major march in October. At about the same time, Richard Trumka, head of the AFL-CIO spoke out in favor of the movement, as did leaders of various national and local unions. Yet the AFL-CIO and the Occupy movement remain wary of each other. The AFL's principal goal in the next year is to help Obama and the Democrats win the November 2012 elections, and both the AFL and the Democrats would love to figure out how to harness Occupy for their political goals. Many in the Occupy movement would love to have more workers involved, the unions involved, but they fear the labor bureaucracy's heavy hand. And, more important for some, they fear losing their political independence to union officials and Democrats.

Occupy Wall Street and politics

The Republican Party, of course, loathes the politics of Occupy. House Majority leader Eric Cantor referred to the Occupiers as "mobs." Alluding to President Barack Obama he said, "Some in this

town condone "pitting Americans against Americans." Mitt Romney, the leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination said, "I think it's dangerous, this class warfare." Whatever they may say to the media, the Republicans' real fear is that Occupy Wall Street could buoy up the Democrats, while their hope that the movement's radicalism will blow their opponents to the left, costing them votes in the center.

The Democratic Party Congressional Campaign Committee and the think-tank Center for American Program would like to bind the Democratic ties to Occupy Wall Street, believing that the movement could put wind in the party's sails for the 2012. Other party leaders fear that the identification with the movement would move the party toward the left and away from the center where they believe the voters are. Even more important, some Democratic Party leaders argue, supporting a group that is attacking Wall Street could result in fewer donations from the banks and corporations that fund the Democrats. Bernie Sanders, the only independent in the Senate who calls himself a socialist (though he caucuses with the Democrats) spoke to the Occupy movement with an op-ed piece calling upon the government to break up the banks, support small business, and stop speculation in the oil industry. That was the Progressive Party program of 1912, the traditional program of American populism, but it misses completely the radical spirit of this movement.

Some Democrats would like to see Occupy Wall Street become their Tea Party, the rightwing group that brought new vitality to the Republicans. But Occupy Wall Street activists have kept their distance from the Democrats refusing to provide them a platform for their candidates. For example, when Representative John Lewis, a legend of the civil right movement and liberal African American Congressman from Georgia appeared at an Occupy Atlanta, he was not permitted to speak. Apparently, so far, the movement is committed to defending its independence.

Many of us are working to nurture this movement, to build it, and to help its potentially radical implications emerge.

This paper will be published in the bimonthly Swiss socialist newspaper SolidaritéS (n°196).

USA

A man was lynched

The hypocrisy of the United States was on full display late Wednesday night, "International Peace Day," as the Supreme Court ruled that Georgia should proceed with the execution of Troy Davis. His body was strapped to a table, injected with a mixture of poisonous chemicals at 10:53 PM, and pronounced dead fifteen minutes later. Outside the prison, crowds of supporters rallied, while vigils were held at the Georgia State Capitol in Atlanta [photos here] and on the steps of the Supreme Court in Washington, DC. The state's determination to kill Davis based only on the flimsy testimony of two witnesses had exposed the racist injustice of the death penalty to millions worldwide.

Troy maintained his innocence at his arrest in 1989 for the murder of Savannah police officer Mark MacPhail, when he was sentenced to death in 1991, and finally as he addressed the MacPhail family from the death chamber. But like countless Black men in the United States, the police effort to catch and incriminate him by any means possible put him in jail through the manipulation and intimidation of witnesses. Like countless other poor people in the United States, he was condemned by an inadequate legal defense at his trial. Found guilty at his jury trial, he faced the nearly impossible legal burden of later proving his innocence. Four times he'd come within days or even hours of execution while the state, under the pressure of a grassroots movement, delayed it through various channels.

The campaign to exonerate Troy Davis grew from the tireless efforts of his sister, Martina Correia, to become a statewide cause in Georgia and eventually an international movement. He escaped death three times before as this movement propelled legal

challenges through all levels of the court system. In the days leading up to his murder, thousands of people worldwide held rallies and vigils. Over one million signatures were collected demanding clemency from the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles. Despite hearing from witnesses who had recanted their testimony and even a juror who told them she would not have voted to sentence Troy Davis to death, the Board denied clemency.

Due to the multiple appeals, many levels of the justice system were exposed in this atrocity: from the District Attorney in Chatham County, Georgia all the way to the federal Supreme Court. The courts, the police, and the legal codes that defend every police shooting, oversee the deportations of millions of immigrants, and above all enforce the rule of the banks and big business functioned exactly as they are meant to do.

The prisons of the United States hold more people behind bars than any other society on earth. The world's leading prosecutor of "humanitarian" bombing and military invasion is also one of the leaders in the murder of its own people. And in recent decades, the entire prison and "corrections" system—including the private contractor, CorrectHealth, that administers lethal injections in Georgia—has increasingly operated on a for-profit basis.

Capital punishment follows the tradition of lynch mob "justice" as a means of intimidation and repression: the ultimate use of state power to police and punish Black, Brown, and poor white people. Of the many racial discrepancies in the application of death sentences, Troy Davis faced perhaps the most damning: a Black man accused of killing a white police officer. On the other side of the country, Johannes Mehserle (who was videoed pinning Oscar Grant to the ground as he shot him in the

back) served less than one year in prison before his release.

Troy Davis leaves us a legacy. There are thousands of other people sitting on death row, millions in prison. The long distance fighters against the death penalty, and millions of people who were newly

awakened to the cause, must become a powerful movement to dismantle this system and to take on the broader injustices in society.

<http://www.solidarity-us.org/site/n...> September 22 2011

More Observations from Occupy Wall St

STEPHANIE LUCE ·

It seemed like things were beginning to change, however. In the summer of 2001 the AFL-CIO put someone on staff for several months to build labor participation for the coming IMF/World Bank meetings to take place that fall. People were mobilizing around the country, and the world, to build a common movement against neoliberalism and "structural adjustment." The weekend of September 6-9, 2001, over 1000 labor and community activists convened in Cleveland for the Jobs with Justice conference. Spirits were high, and there was a real sense that the world was about to change.

Little did we know how it would change. Only two days later were the 9/11 attacks. And suddenly the movement we had been building collapsed.

It has taken ten years, but the scene at Occupy Wall Street (OWS) seems to suggest we've rebuilt what we had been building then. OWS was started by a group of mostly young people, seemingly unfocused, seemingly mostly white, seemingly not very strategic. But whatever they were they created a space that was flexible enough to allow others in. That hasn't happened smoothly in all cases, and certainly is not yet enough, but anyone who goes to Zuccotti Park seems to feel the same thing. A sense of exhilaration at the audacity, the feeling of freedom and possibility.

TWU Local 100 was the first union to endorse Occupy Wall Street. Individual members had already been participating in events at Zuccotti Park, but the unions were absent. Local 100 took a bold move to come out early in support of a movement that was still hardly covered by the media, and mostly denounced as a fringe circus. Once Local 100 endorsed, the flood gates opened and unions

and community groups jumped on board. Many have endorsed a large community/labor march in New York. Others not based in New York have expressed general support for the Occupation (such as the Steelworkers).

Quickly the Beyond May12 coalition helped pull together a labor/community march in support of the Occupation, and with less than a week's notice, got most of the city's largest unions on board, and pulled off one of the largest marches we've seen in the city for some time.

Where did this come from?

Some writers have suggested that OWS sprang from nowhere, completely spontaneously. That is somewhat true, but misleading. As I said, the movement is in some ways picking up from where we left off before 9/11. But in other ways, this is just one moment in a series of fightbacks that has been going on for awhile, particularly since the economic recession hit. You wouldn't know it from mainstream media sources, but there have been an incredible number of protests over the past few years, involving large numbers of people. Of course there was Wisconsin, but there have also been large scale strikes (e.g., Verizon, nurses, longshore), hunger strikes and prison organizing (e.g. Pelican Bay, Georgia), environmental justice protests (e.g Tar Sands), foreclosure fightbacks, bank protests (New Bottom Line), economic justice rallies (One Nation), immigrant rights campaigns (the DREAM Act) the US Social Forum, which had 15,000 people plus numerous large scale marches, and more.

Then there are the international protests - the Arab Spring, Greece, Portugal, Spain, China, London, South Africa, Benin, Brazil, and more. While the US is often US-focused there is no doubt that protests elsewhere have inspired and motivated many here.

The idea that resistance is possible, and that fights can win, helps put more people into motion.

As social movement scholars show, we don't know which of these protests will be the one to spark a larger movement. We try and try, and lose a lot, until one time it sticks. Occupy Wall Street is clearly building off the momentum of resistance seen around the country and world over the last few years, and tapping into the memory of where we were ten years ago.

We are all Troy Davis; We are all Sean Bell

Occupy Wall Street started out small and got little attention. It is possible it would have fizzled out as people went home. But four days into the occupation, Troy Davis was executed by the state of Georgia. This provoked outrage across the country, including among many at OWS, who joined in with others out to protest the execution. This brought new energy, as many people were feeling outraged and disempowered by a racist legal system.

The connection was strong in New York, where protestors have long pushed around by the police. Anyone who has been to a march in this city knows that at least since 9/11, but perhaps since Seattle, the NYPD has used aggressive tactics to keep control over protests. Barricades are used to channel people into narrow spaces, separating marchers from supporters, and often breaking marches into pieces. I've been in that situation a lot. In 2002 we were protesting the World Economic Forum meeting in New York. The police continuously stepped into the line of the march with barricades, breaking us into pieces, and pushing us around. At one point they barricaded us from both ends of a block and began pushing. I was in the front, and suddenly a line of NYPD were shoving barricades into my stomach. When I tried to attend the massive anti-war protest on the eve of the Iraq War, I and thousands of others never made it to the actual march because police would not let us enter the street where the march took place. They had cordoned off major parts of the city, giving protestors confusing

and sometimes incorrect information about how to enter.

These tactics are alienating and disempowering, and seem a complete violation of our Constitutional rights, but of course are nothing in comparison to the daily harassment of people of color in this city. That ranges from the infamous "stop and frisk" to violent arrests and sometimes death. There are already groups fighting police brutality in New York, and in the early days of OWS and after Troy Davis was executed, some OWS protestors marched through streets chanting, "We are all Sean Bell, NYPD go to hell." Saturday, September 24, the forces merged in a spontaneous march, and this is when the NYPD took action, beating and arresting people. When the news broke about the police attacks on peaceful protestors, a lot more people started paying attention to OWS. A large spark that moved the OWS from a small protest-as-usual into this larger phenomenon was this intersection. The Troy Davis execution made clear to many of us just how powerless we are.

But what are the demands?

Many on the left have expressed frustration at the lack of concrete demands coming out of OWS. This surprises me a bit, because it is one of the things I find so liberating. Often, when we make demands in our struggles they immediately limit us to the short-term and winnable. Our demands certainly tend toward the least common-denominator and the pragmatic. I understand why that is the case: it builds a broader base and it puts in place something we might win. But it limits us.

Some people point out that the uprising in Egypt started with a concrete demand. That is true. But the demand that "Mubarak must go" is so much less than the demand "Change the system." I'm not suggesting that "Mubarak must go" was the wrong demand for the time and place, and the victory of this was incredible. But here we have a moment to dream big.

Even in Wisconsin, much of the demand got framed as "reasonable." We'll agree to your concessions if you let us maintain collective bargaining. This "message" polled well, but again, it limited our imagination.

The effects of capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and imperialism go wide and deep. They interfere with just about every aspect of our lives: the way we work, the way the economy runs, how families are structured, citizenship and rights, police brutality, environmental destruction, the human life span, what we eat. Occupy Wall Street has left open a space for us all to feel we are a part of the movement. If the demands were already set many of us might feel outside - that there wasn't a place for us, that we couldn't dream about our issue, that we had to stay "on message." Our fightbacks are so often balkanized and diffuse. Occupy Wall Street feels exciting in part because it doesn't force us to choose, to prioritize. We have a few weeks when we don't have to reduce our dreams to a slogan on a flyer. Where else do we get to chant "We are all Sean Bell," "Tax the rich," "End foreclosure," "Democracy now!" and "We got sold out, Banks got bailed out" all in the same afternoon?

In the meantime, we push the organizations we belong to clarify and step up their demands. Just about all of them tie into the spirit of OWS, and there is no reason why we can't continue to push in those arenas where we all work on a regular basis. OWS allows us to be more bold and militant in our demands that we are already working on, whether that is student loan forgiveness, a millionaire's tax, single payer health care, ending the wars, ending the death penalty, expanding immigrant rights and protecting the rights of workers to organize.

True: we don't have real forces pushing for greater change: public ownership and democratic accountability of the Federal Reserve; federal jobs programs to hire more teachers and health care workers; repeal of NAFTA and other trade agreements; and serious reforms to the political system. We need those. Hopefully Occupy Wall Street will finally create some political space to grow the organizations required to build the real alternatives.

7 October 2011

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USA

Solidarity with Occupy Wall Street

SOLIDARITY STEERING COMMITTEE ·

We're a movement of the underdogs. We embrace the unemployed, the homeless, the ex-offenders, the down-and-out and the downtrodden. We welcome those who are discriminated against, those who are outcast. That's what democracy is all about. And we're building an independent movement fighting for democracy.

Inside The "99%"

* In July, the official unemployment rate was 8.2% for whites— but 16.8% for Blacks and 11.3% for Latinos

* In 2009, the median household net worth was \$113,149 for whites—and \$5,677 for Blacks, and \$6,325 for Latinos

* In 2009, 15% of white households had zero or negative wealth—but so did 35% of Black households and 31% of Latino households

* Black men make up less than 10% of the U.S. population—but make up 35.4% of the overall prison population

We have all sorts of folks here, people from every race, from all religions, men and women, LGBT and straight, people of all ages coming together to build a powerful force to oppose the greed and corruption of Wall Street and Washington.

We didn't start yesterday. Earlier union and community protests and occupations like Bloombergville fell on deaf ears. Now we're getting stronger every day. The whole world is watching; and the unions and social justice organizations of New York City have arrived. We invite everyone marching today to occupy or return when you can.

We know that today the banks and corporations dominate America. We know that corporate CEOs

and financial insiders collude with the Republicans and Democrats to determine the national agenda. Together they make the rules—and they make the profit. We pay the price. It's time to stop it.

We need a new distribution of wealth in this country. We need to provide jobs for all at living wages. We need free education and health care for all. And it can be done too. We need to start by ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, bringing all the troops home, and closing the hundreds of U.S. military bases around the world. Most importantly: we have to change the system.

The Declaration of the Occupation of New York City adopted on September 30 indicts corporations as responsible for joblessness, homelessness, environmental destruction, and imperialism. The Declaration describes the damage done by the capitalist system in the US and the rest of the world.

Wall Street is the nerve center of global capitalism. We are here staring the spider in the eye, but we know the problem is not the spider—it's the web.

Right now, we're symbolically striking at the system's heart here on Wall Street. In the days that come, we need to go on to build a movement that can transform this system into one based on true equality and democracy. Everyone in our country—and in the world for that matter—deserves a decent life. Standing in the way of that possibility are the financial institutions clustered here on Wall Street. Standing in the way is the web: capitalism.

We need to strengthen our movement. The power of this movement is not just the individuals participating, but ties to our families and friends, to our communities and workplaces, to our unions, schools, and religious congregations. We need to bring these groups together as a social force and a political movement based on solidarity between the

working class and oppressed. Not their politics. Not the bankers or bosses. Not Democrats and Republicans.

Our politics are the politics of people who recognize that something has to change. Our movement is made up of youth without jobs who can't afford school. It has to be a movement of working people who've lost their jobs, families who've lost their homes, and of people of color who never fully shared in opportunity. We are working together to build the power to create a new democratic system and bring justice to our society.

How amazing and exciting that we're here. We have to learn from the Egyptians in Tahrir Square, the indignados in the plazas of Spain, and the workers of Wisconsin. Occupy Wall Street has led to Occupy movements throughout the country. We're part of an international movement for democracy and social justice around the world. We're part of a new movement that can change history and the direction the world's headed. A movement that can save the planet and its people by bringing about a different system.

5 October 2011

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BRAZIL

Strike wave sweeps Brazil: no sector unaffected; a new union movement on the march

DAN LA BOTZ ·

And strike they have. Since the beginning of September there have been strikes by bank workers, postal workers, and metal workers, including the auto parts workers at GM plants. Several of these strikes are on-going. With the inflation rate at about 5.0%, many workers are fighting to catch up with rising prices. Workers are demanding big wage increases: metal workers want 9.5% more, bank workers 12.8 percent. Postal workers are striking against a reform passed by the Brazilian Congress that gives the Brazilian Post and Telegraph Company (ECT) greater power, including the power to form partnerships with the private sector.

In addition to the strikes in industry, services and the public sector, there is also a very vigorous agricultural workers movement. The month of September opened with the "Marchas das Margaridas," that is, the "March of the Daisies." 70,000 women rural workers, wearing their uniform of straw hats and purple clothing, marched through the nation's capital Brasilia. Maria Luiza dos Santos, a rural worker from Afonso Cunha in the state of Maranhão, explained that the women wanted, "women's rights, wage equality, and land distribution" to the landless.

Brazil's Powerful Unions

An American executive who works in the Brazilian petroleum industry posted an article in the Oil & Gas Financial Journal this month, warning his colleagues about the "inflexible" Brazilian labor laws and the "powerful" unions. "To say Brazilian unions are powerful is a gross understatement," he wrote.

"In Brazil, workers automatically 'join' a union, defined by the region the worker works in, and his field of work. A worker, by law, must pay dues that to union (one day's salary per year). In Brazil there are around 18,000 labor unions, all deeply rooted in their respective sectors, with guaranteed dues to fund their operations and enormous political influence."

The U.S. oil man's shock at the strength of Brazilian labor tends to oversimplify the great complexity of the labor movement. Brazil has several labor federations, each with political positions a little different from the others, some left, some center-left, some center or moderate. These federations both compete and cooperate with each other, and lately, says Siqueira, they're cooperating more than in the recent past. Local unions and workers are cooperating too, engaging in sympathy strikes, one group of workers supporting another, even though they may not be in the same union or the same federation. The strikes and the general effervescence in the labor movement has given rise to a new more militant middle layer of union officials, says Siqueira. Just back from visiting his homeland, Siqueira says he hasn't seen anything like this new wave of union militancy since the 1980's.

Union Movement Born In Struggle

Brazil's contemporary union movement was born in the struggles against military dictatorship that ruled the country from 1965 to 1985. Led by the metal workers in the "ABC" industrial suburbs of São Paulo, workers first created industrial unions, then a new labor federation (the CUT), together with a Movement of the Landless (MST), and then the Workers Party (PT) which brought Luiz Inácio

da Silva to the presidency in 2002 and reelected him in 2006. Lula, as he is popularly known, continued the neoliberal policies of his predecessors but with a difference, promoting poverty programs that benefited Brazil's poorest people.

Lula's first term in government was a mixed blessing for workers. PT leaders and activists filled important political positions in the government. The CUT had greater influence than labor had had at any time before in the nation's history, but it was only influence, not power, and the federation's tendency to rely on Lula to make change, rather than organizing the unions and workers to fight for it, weakened the labor movement. The Movement of the Landless (MST) continued to fight on, virtually the sole radical social movement in the country.

Despite those unfortunate developments, with the global commodities boom, the economy growing, and an estimated 14 million new jobs created, during Lula's second term the labor movement made a comeback. Strikes grew, the unions created coalitions with other social movements, new leaders came forward, and unions adopted political platforms to pressure the government.

The election of Lula's handpicked successor Dilma Rousseff to the presidency has created some anxiety in the labor and social movements and in society generally. Coming to power on the basis of a broad and ungainly political coalition, she is not promising to move the country toward socialism, nor even to dismantle the neoliberal economic system. There has been speculation about whether she will continue Lula's brand of neoliberalism plus social programs for the poor, but the unions aren't waiting for her to act. From one end of Brazil to the other, in a wide variety of industries, workers are on the move.

So far the new militancy has not been accompanied by a new radicalism. By and large the unions are not opposed to the government. The unions are pushing President Rousseff, the PT, and the government to fulfill their promises to the labor movement and the poor. What will happen when the government proves unwilling or unable to do so in the face of the next stage of the unfolding world economic crisis remains to be seen.

3 October 2011

[First published on the Solidarity website]

EUROPE

Europe Against Austerity Conference Declaration

"This European conference meets not a moment too soon.

The peoples of Europe face an unprecedented social, political and economic crisis.

Our governments are implementing the most savage spending cuts designed to destroy all the social gains of the post-war period. These will wreck the lives of millions by devastating jobs, pay, pensions, health, education and other services.

The world financial crisis of 2008 was transformed into a crisis of state debt – nation states bailed out the financial system, but in doing so seriously weakened their own balance sheets. Greece stands on the verge of default and other states will not be far behind.

The only solution offered by the ruling elite is austerity for the great majority and bailouts for the banks and the wider financial system.

While ordinary people face great hardship, trillions of Euros are being poured into the pockets of the rich. There has never been a greater disparity of wealth between capital and labour – between rich and poor.

Throughout Europe people are fighting back. They are determined to defend their societies and to overturn the barbarism of austerity. Our aim is to help unite these struggles. We need a common European front to defend the peoples of Europe. We are committed to opposing all cuts, privatization and attacks on the welfare state and to build solidarity with resistance to these attacks.

Thus we support resistance by the trades unions through strikes and other forms of industrial action. We say no to imperialist wars and their end-

less drain on resources and say yes to welfare, peace and justice.

We oppose the scapegoating of immigrant communities for the economic crisis and the stirring up of racism and islamophobia which divides and weakens our resistance. We will campaign against the rise of the far-right which seeks to do this.

The way forward relies both on resistance and the elaboration and promotion of an alternative economic strategy: the banks must be placed under democratic control. Private banks must be socialized and the financial markets regulated. The European Union and national governments must meet the needs of people – not impose austerity programmes. Taxes raised for the rich and corporations. Illegitimate debt must be renounced. The creditors must be held responsible. We won't pay for their crisis!

An alternative economic and political strategy would support welfare, develop homes, schools, and hospitals, protect pensions and foster a green approach to public spending – investing in renewable energy and public transport, thereby creating millions of new jobs.

This conference resolves to build on the links developed in preparing this conference and to establish an ongoing European co-ordination to organise and support resistance to debt and austerity.

We pledge to support the mobilisations of the Indignados on October 15, actions against debt and International Financial Institutions from 8th to 16th October and the G20 in Nice in November. We also pledge to work towards a common day of action against austerity in 2012 and call on the trade union movement across Europe to prepare a day of industrial action against austerity."

CAR INDUSTRY

The state of the European car industry

JEAN-CLAUDE VESSILLIER ·

In Europe, restructuring and job losses continue in the car industry, a sector which combines in the most intense fashion the ecological, social and economic crises of capitalism, while remaining one of the continent's largest employers.

The recession which in 2008-2009 led to historic lows in car production in Europe, North America and Japan has for now passed. Most world car groups saw a return to profit in 2010 at the price of blows against employment, working conditions and wages. But in Europe, the factors at the origin of the recession are still present and the current return to profit does not mean exit from the crisis, in particular for the employees.

The aggression of job losses should not hide the fact that the European car industry employs in its factories and design offices three and a half million workers, or one tenth of all European manufacturing industry. The facts and data are stubborn: the car industry in Europe is not a sector on the path to extinction. Levels of employment, wages, working conditions and relations of forces with workers continue to be decisive issues for the employers.

The industrial implantations of the European car industry have been geographically extending for fifty years. After the old European imperialist countries it was Spain and Portugal which would constitute new areas of implantation in the 1970s. And in the 1990s, it was the turn of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to be sites for the construction of new factories.

In the 1960s and 1970s, factories with tens of thousands of workers existed in Germany, France, Italy and Britain. This concentration favoured the creation of relationships of force which made the sector the advanced element of workers struggles. The

social confrontation continues, but in the opposite direction; under the pretext of crisis, the employers wish to make the car industry the example for reactionary counter reforms, resting on the fear of unemployment to reverse the gains and collective agreements won by employees in previous decades.

The recession of 2008-2009 is not a simple "accident" after which the car industry would resume the same course with the same sites of production and sales zones, the same modes of exploitation of workers, and the same firms selling the same products. It is necessary to examine the current conditions of exploitation of the workers, with their traditional and new forms in the context of the crisis which continues to sap all the capitalist economies. These concrete experiences in the different European countries and different firms should be shared so as to begin to construct common and coordinated responses.

New areas of growth, still the same groups

The capitalist globalization of the car industry is a long term process. From its industrial beginning the techniques of production and forms of exploitation of workers were copied with more or less delay and with a trend towards growing internationalisation of exchanges. From the 1930s, the methods initiated in its US factories by Ford generalised to all industrial countries. Since the 1960s the same US, Japanese and European groups have controlled car production. Since globalisation is not, of course, a finished phenomenon, each geographical area experiences differentiated developments, even if the big recessions have a tendency to become increasingly synchronised.

The North American market is marked by strong and frequent falls, followed by spectacular revivals and this has been the case since the beginning. In

past decades, the European market has grown more regularly, with clearly less marked recessions. As for the car industry in China, there is no historic precedent to such a strong increase in demand in a continent: an increase in annual registrations of new vehicles of more than 7 million in five years! Neither the US of the immediate post war period, nor Europe in the 1960s had experienced such a boom. The Chinese market has within 10 years arrived at the level the USA reached over 80 years.

The important fact in this early century is certainly the growth in car production and sales in Asia and in particular in China, which has since 2008 become the biggest world market for car sales! In 2010, the Indian, Brazilian and Russian markets were at the level of the main West European markets, or between 2 and 3 million cars. As a direct consequence of this growth the new sites of massive car production are the sites of new social confrontations. Strikes in recent months in Chinese car factories witness to this permanence of class struggle regardless of periods or continents.

The recession is over but the crisis is still there

It is in this context that the violent recession of the sector, concentrating all the consequences of the world crisis which has ravaged the capitalist economy, took place. The maximum number of cars produced in the world had in 2007 been more than 73 million. The total in 2009 was 61 million, or a fall of 12 million vehicles, -17% between 2007 and 2009. It is a considerable fall, of a breadth not seen since the Second World War. The two preceding oil shocks had very much more limited consequences: a fall of 5 million from 1973 to 1975, and 6 million from 1979 to 1982.

One can really speak, in 2008-2009, of a collapse of production in the USA, the flagship country for cars since the 1930s. The level of car production in the USA in 2009 was that of the pre 1950 period. In 2010, the increase in production allowed catch up with the levels of the 1960s.

In Europe, the breadth of the recession has been less than in the USA and at different levels of intensity according to the country. In the UK and in Italy, the falls in production have been of an equal scope to the collapse observed in the US. In Germany and France, scrappage schemes involving public subsidies for the purchases of new cars largely allowed the maintenance of levels of sales. If they have been preserved, the same is not true of levels of production. The fall in production has been strongest in France, compared to the evolution of sales levels. Among European car builders, the French have been the most active in profiting from the crisis to internationalise their production.

From the end of 2010, the level of 2007 was reached, but this total figure on the world scale covers a great geographical diversity. This catch up and even increase in car production was attained thanks to the growth observed notably in China, and also in India, Russia or in Brazil. On the contrary, in the "old" car countries of Western Europe, Japan and North America, the increase in production observed starting from 2010 has not yet made up for the falls observed during the recession.

The crisis of capitalist overproduction of the car industry

In Europe, the crisis of the car industry continues to have the characteristics of a crisis of capitalist overproduction. Europe is the geographical area of the world where competition among car builders is the sharpest. All the globalized groups — North American, European, Japanese and Korean— are present there to sell and produce cars. On the contrary, a number of European firms, notably Renault and PSA, are absent from North America, while production in Japan is essentially provided by national enterprises alone and 99.5 % of the cars sold in South Korea are manufactured in the country.

In Europe, all the manufacturers are present in a geographical area where car sales no longer have an upward trend: since the mid-1990s, sales oscillate around the figure of 20 million cars. The countries of Western Europe have gone through a phase of stabilisation since the 1980s and the sales increases

observed in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are not significant enough to modify this trend to stabilisation. The overall equilibrium observed at the European level implies a fall in production in Western European countries like France, Italy and Spain. Capitalism functions under the dictatorship of "always more": more production for more profit. The fact that car production is no longer increasing significantly in Europe means that the car industry has no other future than crisis.

This trend to the stabilisation of car sales in Europe is structural. The current levels of car ownership in the countries of Western Europe will never be exceeded. The purchase of new cars is increasingly reserved to the richest and oldest fractions of population. Wage austerity throughout Europe will weigh still more on the purchasing possibilities of employees. Car use will become increasingly difficult with petrol increasingly rare and dear. Individual transport by car is one of the main causes of global warming, leading to new standards that the capitalists and bourgeois governments will be obliged to install.

Faced with such a situation, the classical capitalist policy is to seek other outlets. The option is blocked of finding possible new outlets for material production of cars in Europe. The groups who control production there as well as in the other continents will increasingly less use Europe as a platform for the export of finished cars to other parts of the world. It is an irreversible fact that only a European chauvinist nationalist viewpoint would wish to challenge.

Non-growth of production in Europe and presence of all the car groups leading to sharpened competition: the causes of capitalist overproduction are there. Production capacities are only used at two thirds: this indicator is provided by the European car builders themselves. Even if the latter might swell the figures to better justify their factory closures and suppression of jobs, the reality is very much there.

And this situation worsens because the manufacturers continue to invest: the logic of completion and the maximisation of profit are at work. So much the worst for the unused overall production capacities, each firm wishes to have more productive and profitable equipment than the competitors. Despite overproduction, new equipment and entire factories are either transformed or newly built. The objective is to put in service more productive and profitable machines, but also to break up work groups which, on the basis of the daily organisation of labour, serve as a support for micro resistances in the workshop. A new factory and new equipment presents the opportunity to destroy such groups and impose harsher working conditions.

Generalised competition and relocations

European car builders have plunged into capitalist globalisation. The first consequence is the growth of exchanges. Contrary to the nationalist discourse growing in Europe, the development of these exchanges takes place more between countries in Europe than between Europe and the rest of the world. What characterises this growth of exchanges is a generalised competition among firms, constructors and components manufacturers, factories and countries at the world level.

The car industry is not in the situation of other industrial sectors, for example textiles, where production has been massively relocated to low wage countries. Even if this trend should decline, Europe continues to be a continent from which manufactured cars are exported. The enterprises of the European Union have benefited from capitalist globalisation. Whereas the decade 1990-2000 saw a weak growth of exchanges, they grew threefold in the decade 2000-2010. The industrial relocations observed in several western European countries are the sub product of this global phenomenon.

Europe is still a car exporting geographical zone and this result is not mainly due to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe where wages are effectively the lowest. The main European car exporter

country in relation to the rest of the world is Germany. On the other hand, France, Italy and Britain have deficit balances, importing more cars than they export.

Another fact to remember - for France, for example, the most significant deficit in terms of foreign trade exchanges, is not in relation to the low wage countries, but to Germany. Facts are stubborn: it is first and foremost the competition between capitalist firms in the richest countries which is at the origins of the exchanges of cars between countries and geographic zones with effects to the detriment of wage-earners

It should also be noted the car production records observed in China are above all destined for that country. Without prejudicing what will happen in the coming years, there is today virtually no export of cars manufactured in China towards Europe or North America. Car groups of the first rank like the German group Volkswagen, invest in China in partnership with Chinese capitalist firms, to produce for China and other Asian countries. Chinese cars are not invading the streets of European cities. Also car exchanges are in all geographic directions - the threats of relocation are not one way. The blackmail practiced in France or Italy is practiced also in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In Poland, Fiat and General Motors Opel put Polish factories in competition with those of other European countries.

No nationalist response or submission to the laws of the globalised market: in each factory threatened with dismantling, and whatever the country, the immediate struggle is of course, based on the rejection of blackmail and the diktats of the employers. And the solidarity of all, beyond the national frontiers of each country, should go towards each factory and workshop thus attacked by the employers. The exchange of experiences is especially indispensable on this question: rather than nationalist responses, the struggle against reaction means responding to the internationalisation of the employers by acts of solidarity among workers.

Differentiated European employer strategies

Capitalist globalisation applies to all car builders. But each firm internationalizes under its own terms. Among the European groups, it should be noted that the strategies followed by the Renault and Fiat groups are different from those followed by Volkswagen or PSA.

Renault was a nationalised enterprise until 1986. Its privatisation was undertaken by the different governments of the right and the Socialist party. The privatised Renault cemented in 2000 a capitalistic alliance with the Japanese group Nissan. The Renault Nissan alliance tends to take its distances in relation to the historic base of Renault. The financial seat of the alliance is situated in Holland, for tax reasons, but also to escape the over-tight control of the French government which remains owner of 15% of the share capital of Renault. The consequence of this is a forced march internationalisation of Renault as much from the viewpoint of shareholders as of production activities. The Renault Nissan alliance has become unbalanced to the benefit of Nissan which has become the more profitable enterprise. The profits recorded by the Renault company stem in great part from the dividends paid by Nissan profits.

Fiat, the product of one of the big Italian industrial groups, has cemented an alliance with Chrysler and gone on to acquire a majority stake in it. This will be a new group where the old Fiat will be no more than a component. Manifestly the policy of Fiat's current CEO is to extricate the company from its Italian historic base to insert it in the policy of a globalised group. If the recent threat not to invest in Italy certainly amounts to pure blackmail, it reflects this desire to construct a new group less and less dependent on Italy.

The orientations of Renault and Fiat seeking to construct new groups and alliances which are autonomous in relation to their countries and states of origin are problematic. The experience of the recession of two years ago has shown that the governments of the bourgeoisie were very useful for, in the

last resort, providing all risk insurance to falling enterprises and employers. And the desire for independence of the current leaders of Fiat and Renault comes up against this reality. Fiat and Renault workers are today the most affected by this policy with jobs in decline in Europe and particularly in the historic countries of origin of each of these two firms.

The biggest European car builders, Volkswagen, VAG, and the French group PSA have also plunged into capitalist globalisation. The VAG group is present on every continent and sells and produces more cars in China than in Germany. Volkswagen has bought up a significant number of other companies, first and foremost European ones. But unlike Renault or Fiat, these are not alliances. The shareholders of Volkswagen have always preserved full powers of ownership and decision making. The brands bought out were always smaller. And it should be noted that the link maintained between the VAG group and its imperialist reference state, Germany, has allowed it to guarantee its globalised development.

With a more reduced size than the VAG, group, PSA has for the past century belonged to the same family of capitalists which plays a significant role in the political arrangements of the French bourgeoisie. Until now the family which owns Peugeot and PSA has rejected dissolving its shareholder rights in bigger conglomerates.

These disparities in employer strategy are not necessarily durable. So far as France is concerned, Renault, the product of a post second world war nationalisation, was the enterprise where the workers were the best organised, in powerful trade unions, unlike the Peugeot and Citroën factories, characterised by "house" Unions in thrall to the employers. And Renault is now at the apex of the fall in car production in France. But the demands of shareholders, whether an old family of European rentiers in the case of PSA, or pension funds in the case of Renault, are the same. Industrial capitalism does not oppose financial capitalism for rapacity and the exploitation of the workers. And in France it is PSA

which envisages the closure of one of its main factories at Aulnay in the Parisian region. But the key question for workers is overcoming each of the partial experiences originating from the exploitation practiced in each firm to build a front of common struggle.

Fall in jobs and material dispersion of production activities

Each of the crises marking the history of the car industry has led to new mergers and restructurings between firms. The concentration in capital of the sector will again increase. But a new element, which is also amplifying in the crisis, is the combination of this phenomenon, in particular in Europe, with a dismembering of the human and material processes of production.

The time of the great workers' citadels of thousands of employees is part of the past in Europe. Only the Volkswagen site at Wolfsburg has more than 50,000 employees. The average size of the other most significant European car factories is around 10,000. Car production is increasingly divided between assembly factories, motor mechanics factories, component manufacturing establishments and various levels of subcontractor.

The fall in employment in the car industry did not begin in Europe with the last recession. Fiat, Renault or PSA are the champions of it. It is firstly the consequence of processes of automation in the factories and the restructurings-concentrations which affect the whole car industry. The internationalisation of exchanges and the crisis of outlets only historically intervened later. That is why a real solution to job suppressions does not lie in an impossible increase in production but rather in a reduction of working time which would allow a division of the work available among all.

Less than a quarter of the value of a car is today directly produced by the manufacturer, who puts a label on the finished product, whereas this proportion was half in 1990. Besides the car manufacturers properly so called, the car components manu-

facturers are in an active phase of concentration and restructuring.

The earthquake and the tsunami which ravaged Japan highlighted the dependency of numerous European car manufacturers in relation to electrical parts manufactured in Japan and installed in cars manufactured in European factories. The most visible consequences have been stoppages in production in numerous European factories for lack of components produced thousands of kilometres away.

The workers in the subcontracting enterprises, suppliers of components or car builders have been the first affected because it is there that it is "easiest" to close a factory. The phenomenon of relocations is especially intense in the subcontracting enterprises: the purchasing departments of the big car groups outbid each other all the more when the parts bought can be easily transported

In France, struggles have broken out in small and medium enterprises under the blow of closures decreed by distant head offices. In each factory thus attacked, even if it belongs to the car networks, we are far from the finished car product. The designation of the big manufacturers as order providers, that is to say as responsible for the jobs suppressions, is the precondition for broadened movements throughout the sector.

What crossroads between climate emergency and workers movement?

The question of the conjuncture in Europe between the social movement which has begun to emerge around the climate emergency and the workers' movement in the car sector faces us. In this area there are no givens. It is not possible to subordinate the necessary and urgent resistance to attacks on jobs, wages and working conditions to an agreement and a shared understanding of the ecological dimensions of the crisis striking the car industry.

It is certainly financial interest which guides the behaviour of the car industry. It matters little to them that road transport — car and heavy vehicles — is

the sector which has most increased carbon emissions over the past ten years. On the other hand, the irreversible rise in the price of oil and its end as an abundant source of energy forces the car industry to implement other solutions. It is not about the wellbeing of humanity but a strictly financial interest for the car manufacturing groups. The manufacturers, after decades without serious investment in these areas, begin to prepare hybrid motor and electric vehicles. What they haven't done in the years of growth — their first concern being the dividends of their shareholders — they claim to undertake now.

But the crisis of the car industry will not be resolved with technological recipes. Electricity is produced in most European countries by thermal power stations running on oil and coal, and in France by nuclear power stations threatened by the Japanese disaster at Fukushima. This type of technological solution is not a response to the structural factors of the crisis in cars.

Whereas public transport is privatised and gets worse, the battle for the maintenance of a service accessible to all is a matter of social urgency. Of course new means of public and semi-public transport remain to be invented. The resources for this social invention exist first and foremost among the workers of the sector. But how can this creativity be deployed without workers' control over production and without confrontation with employers who are not concerned about the social utility of the commodities they sell on the market.

As Lars Henriksson, a Swedish worker in the Volvo factory puts it, "If we do nothing faced with this and simply hope that others will do it, there is the likelihood that we will find ourselves out of a job. To transform car production can appear an impossible task for us who work at the lowest levels of the enterprise. But the truth is rather that we are alone in being able to do it! No aid or solutions can be expected from the bosses".

Under the pretext of the crisis, everywhere in Europe the employers are on the offensive in the

cars sector. The previous periods were accompanied by the conclusion of collective and branch agreements. That reflected the relationship of forces that the workers' movement had imposed though a history of worker and trade union struggles.

The presence and orientations in the factories and enterprises were varied. There were simple "house" unions directly under the thumb of the employers to control the workers from the workshop to the home, not forgetting their leisure activities. There were unions who went along with the employers' policies but wished to dispose of a genuine power of negotiation with the bosses. And there were still more combative orientations preserving the independence of the workers' movement, as well as currents with a perspective of self-organisation of the workers and a class struggle without concession.

Nuances are increasingly less possible. And there is less and less place for the intermediary positions of the workers' movement: the confrontation between that movement and the employers cannot be avoided in the face of the offensives from the latter. That is what is revealed by the aggression undertaken by Fiat Mirafiori in Turin against the FIOM.

The practice of "blackmail referendums" has spread: Fiat in Turin, General Motors in Strasbourg, Nissan in Catalonia, Continental in

Midi-Pyrénées in France. It is a veritable wave which in all these cases resorts to the same recipes: to go around the representative trade unions to address the workers directly with the same blackmail: either the rollback of existing conditions, or the closure of the factory.

But counter examples of successful struggles also exist. Near Bordeaux, Ford Europe has been forced to buy out its own factory for the manufacture of mechanical parts that it had itself sold some years ago to an asset stripping component manufacturer. This struggle lasted several years and finally ended in this buyout and the promise by the directorate of Ford Europe to maintain a thousand jobs on the site.

What is urgent is a counter offensive, all together against the employers' policies. But that is no easy thing. The big car groups know how to both develop their competition and coordinate at the national, European and global levels their policies towards the employees. The effective coordination of struggle and resistance among workers should be put on the agenda of the whole workers' movement in Europe.

Let's begin by sharing and exchanging experience, discussing demands, refusing to accept this capitalist crisis.

EUROPE

Europe Against Austerity conference report

FRED LEPLAT ·

The conference adopted a declaration agreeing to establish a network, to plan for a day of action against austerity next year, as well as to call on unions to organise a day of industrial action across Europe. The conference put on the agenda in Britain and across Europe the need for an audit (although that is not in the final declaration) and cancellation of the "illegitimate" debt. It also started a debate in Britain on the European Union and the euro, hopefully drawing it away from a simplistic "No to EU" position, and putting withdrawal from these capitalist institutions as a consequence of our campaign against austerity, rather than as a starting point. It was a serious and sober event which recognised both the scale of the economic crisis and the tasks ahead in escalating the resistance against austerity. Olivier Besancenot for the NPA explained it starkly when saying "We have to find ways of coming together to build this social movement of the people in Europe..... And this isn't a whim or just propaganda, working towards the first general strike in the history of Europe is a duty for political activists in the coming months."

The breadth of representation was impressive as it encompassed most of the anti-neoliberal left (Die Linke, Sinn Fein, European Left Party) and a particularly strong anti-capitalist current (NPA, CADTM, Bloco). Major unions supported the conference such as UNITE, the NUT and the RMT from Britain, Solidaires from France, the teachers union OLME from Greece, and LAB from the Basque country. There were also representatives of the CGTP of Portugal, COBAS of Italy and many

others. Particularly noteworthy was Elżbieta Fornalczyk of the Free TU "August 80" representing Tesco workers who outlined the dramatic condition of women in Poland as mothers and workers. Sonia Mitrailia of the CADTM in Greece also stressed how the crisis was hitting women harder.

This conference, as well as the demonstrations this weekend, is an excellent springboard for making the November 30 strike by over 20 trade-unions a massive success. We need to mobilise other sections of society not on strike about pensions, but who wish to fight to defend the welfare state. It is also important to mobilise from the conference for European-wide events such as the G20 on 1st November. Congratulations were sent in by many people. Those who travelled from far, such as the 12 CGT, FSU & SUD stewards from Le Havre in France, thought it was interesting and a necessary event for stepping up the resistance across Europe.

Olivier Besancenot of the Nouveau Parti Anti-capitaliste from France spoke in the closing plenary. This is a translated and slightly edited transcript of his speech.

The sovereign debt crisis follows on from the sub prime crisis in the United States in 2008. What we are seeing now, in spite of the intervention of different governments, is the explosion of the financial crisis across every economy and every society. In just the same way that the sub prime crisis was itself the outcome of the crisis of overproduction and over-accumulation, in the Marxist sense, which had been brewing in our societies for years and years.

And that's the whole problem with the neo-liberal policies we're fighting against. They're not only unfair. They also make the economic crisis much worse. This crisis of capitalism is global because it

combines questions of climate change, food supplies and energy sources. We are seeing an historic tipping point in the relationships between the imperialist powers. We already spoke about wars, but we must remember that the great powers like Europe and the United States are now in decline and the United States barely manage to compensate for it by their military supremacy. New powers are emerging.

The powers which dominated the world through the history of capitalism are currently in decline and that has political consequences for us and the political debates that concern us.

What type of movements and what type of alternative? We can no longer debate in the way we used to debate. Previously it was a thing we had big arguments about. Some people thought that it was only workers' mobilisations and nothing else which would allow us to establish a political alternative and there were others who thought that we had to recreate a credible political alternative in order to encourage workers mobilisations. Today there is a complementary, dialectical relationship which obliges us to try to create a synthesis between the left in the social movements and the political left in each of our countries. This needs a complementary relationship in which one strengthens the other, without a hierarchical relationship between them and which gives us both political responsibilities and responsibilities in the movements. In the movements, we have to find ways of coming together to build this social movement of the peoples of Europe. Of course we have to help and support the indignados on the 15th October. And it needs to be not just for amusement or just for propaganda: working towards the first general strike in the history of Europe is a duty for political activists in the coming weeks and months.

In each of our countries we are having days of action and general strikes or semi-general strikes. The fact that for the first time we find ourselves on strike at the same time on the same day would give us the possibility of having a European unity, not just for the sake of it, but to enable us to be on the

streets for a long time, to continue the strike, to bring the economies and governments to a standstill.

What is the anti-capitalist perspective suffering from at the moment? It's the absence of victories for industrial action. There is resistance and there are struggles because there is a crisis of capitalism. However we haven't yet demonstrated that we are able to stop a single part of an austerity plan, to destabilise even one part of a government which is implementing these policies. None of what we are talking about will happen if we can't persuade a significant part of the population to burst onto the political scene, to stop allowing politics to be conducted by the professional politicians.

To make a programme we have to be a bit more radical than we can imagine, not for the pleasure of being radical but to respond to what is at stake in the economic crisis itself. For the austerity programmes are being carried out by governments of the right and the left and sometimes they are helped by what calls itself the radical left.

The question that is posed today is to understand that the response to the crisis is neither borders nor the capitalist state. It's not borders because they put peoples in conflict with one another. For us the real question isn't whether or not we should stay in the euro zone it is should we stay under the dictatorship of the financial markets.

The response is not to have stronger capitalist states. We had illusions in the anti-globalisation movement that to turn back the neo-liberal wave we needed a bit more state intervention in the economy. However we can see that capitalists are quite comfortable with state intervention when it's a matter of sharing their losses across society while privatising their profits.

The anti-capitalist movement today should be leading campaigns to cancel the illegitimate debts across Europe, to demand transparency to know who own what and to expropriate the private banking system and propose a public European banking system which will be the basis of a radically differ-

ent Europe, a Europe of the workers and the peoples.

About a one hundred and fifty years ago someone used to say that the emancipation of the workers

would be achieved by the workers themselves. In a new context, in a new period, in the countries of the south and in the Arab world. And our responsibility is to see that the wind of this Arab Spring blows across all of our countries.

DENMARK

A new period for the Red Green Alliance

THOMAS EISLER ·

Ten years of right government

When the Liberal-Conservative government won a majority with the DPP it was a break with decades of governments based on participation or support from centre parties like the SLP. Though the DPP maintains a profile as the defender of workers and pensioners it has been willing to lend votes to government attacks as long as they were paid off with attacks on immigrants.

During the Liberal-Conservative government, mobilisations in defence of workers' rights, against social cuts and the Iraqi war have been closely linked to the perspective of another government.

The attacks on early retirement

One of the central questions in the Danish political debate during the last 15 years has been the right to early retirement at the age of 60. During the centre-left government in the 90's the prime minister guaranteed that early retirement was there to stay. When the centre-left government changed the early retirement in 1999 from a general right to an insurance system linked to the unemployment system it lost a lot of trust from the working class and thus paved the way for the right. The Social Democrats and Social Liberals also took part in a political agreement to gradually raise the age where people would be entitled to early retirement and pensions by five years. In his new year speech on 1 January 2011 the prime minister came with a proposal to abolish the early retirement entirely. This initiated campaigns by the trade unions in defence of the early retirement scheme and in opinion polls it was close to a left majority without the Social Liberals. The

Conservative-Liberal government managed to get an agreement with the Social Liberals and the Danish Peoples Party to advance the cuts on the early retirement.

The Centre-left "alternative"

The central topic in the political debates up to and during the electoral campaigns was how to balance the state budget in 2020. According to some economic forecasts there will be a deficit of 47 billion kroner in 2020 on the public finances and there will be a shortage of labour. The Social Democrats and Socialist Peoples Party basically accept the same economic and demographic assumptions as the right. Their alternative economic plan called "fair solution" is based on increasing working time by 12 minutes per day through agreements with the trade unions and employers' organisations. They claim that this is a necessary measure to keep early retirement and avoid cuts in public welfare. To meet criticism that this is ridiculous while there are 200,000 unemployed they have made the concession that it should not happen before there is full employment. Also the economic plan of the right is based on the assumption that in the long run there will be full employment.

A centre or left government

The trade unions and most of the electoral base of SD and SPP have put hopes in a new left government that would defend the interest of the working class. Nevertheless the leaders of SD and SPP have been more ambiguous, while some have mentioned the importance of reinstating the cooperative parliament that makes agreements across the centre excluding the extreme parties, meaning the RGA and DPP. This was also a clear invitation to the Social Liberals and since the elections the SD-SPP

alliance has made an agreement with the Social Liberal Party to form a common government. The government platform includes the agreed attacks on early retirement. There is a majority for the parties which made the agreement. If the SD-SPP had kept the Social Liberals outside the government they could have avoided taking responsibility for the attack. In the Danish political system a government has to follow decisions by a majority of the parliament but can be in minority without having to resign.

The rise and fall of the SPP

This is the first time ever that the Socialist Peoples Party has been in government. It has been a goal of the party for many years and led to making many concessions in order to prove it is a responsible party. One of the first was the acceptance of the Maastricht treaty in 1993. During the last five years it has gone through a dramatic transformation to become more a peoples' party and less a socialist party. This included a very populist attitude towards immigrants. They gave up the defence for immigrants and asylum seekers rights. The chairman condemned reactionary Muslim groups in a way that it could be understood as being generally against all Muslims. The new populist profile of the party seemed to a great success. From the 2005 to 2007 elections they rose from 6 to 13 %. Later polls gave the party around 20 % though closing in on the Social Democrats to be the main left party. During the last years the Social Democrats and Socialist Peoples Party has formed a very close political alliance. Not only have they developed common political proposals but they have made common advertisements on bill-boards etc.

In autumn 2010 the Liberal-Conservative government presented a plan to put extra criteria for family union with immigrants. This could mean that it would be much more difficult to get a stay-permit for a spouse from a non-European country. The SD and SPP took some time as they considered whether to support this proposal. Finally they decided to present an alternative that still included

more strict criteria than the existing though more moderate than the right had proposed. This seemed to the straw that broke the camels back and they started to lose support.

The recent success of the RGA

The RGA first passed the 2% threshold needed for parliamentary representation in 1994, after the SPP accepted the Maastricht treaty. Since then the RGA reached a low point in the elections 2007. On the one hand the RGA was in a difficult situation with internal disagreement and external attacks for choosing a Muslim woman wearing a hijab as a candidate, and on the other the SPP was profiting from a general "cool factor" making it a very popular party in particular among youth. The discontent with the populism of the SPP is the main reason for the possibilities for the RGA. But it is also the general adaptation to the liberal economic policies by the SD-SPP alliance. According to opinion polls the rise in its support began in autumn 2010. Many new members have also joined. When the elections were announced on 26 August support was about 4.5%. During the three weeks of electoral campaign SD-SPP continued to lose support as they did not represent a clear alternative to the right and thus made it possible to undermine their credibility. It was thus only with a small margin that the four parties for a new government got a majority of 50,2% of the vote against the right.

The RGA campaign

The electoral campaign of the RGA beat everything it has done before. There were more militants taking part in the distribution of materials and poster-ing than ever before. Around 1.5 million leaflets and pamphlets were distributed. Furthermore the RGA reached a new audience, breaking through the barrier of being a "strange" party and being taken seriously by a broader part of the population. The RGA became the "cool" party among youth with the charismatic spokesperson Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen in front. The campaign had the slogan: "There is room for welfare". It was to break with

dominating economic agenda and pointed to the taxation of rich, multinationals, speculators and the oil resources. The RGA presented a plan to create 100,000 jobs in public services and to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Defence of asylum-seekers and immigrants as well as unemployed were other central issues.

RGA and the new government

To fight to overthrow the right government and make the populist right lose their dictatorship over immigration policies has been a goal for the RGA ever since the government won the majority with the DPP 10 years ago. RGA gives its unconditional support to the new government. The RGA supports the formation of the government but makes no promises to support the proposals from the government. Decisions will be taken on an issue by issue basis and the RGA will not accept packages that link attacks on some with improvements for others. This will not prevent the RGA being put under pressure from the centre-left government. The government will try to give the RGA the responsibility for forcing the government to make deals with right. The ultimate pressure will be on the approval of the budget because the government will have to resign if it is not able to pass a budget. In its nature the budget is a package that includes all sorts of things including a budget for the military. During the SD-led government 1992-2001 the RGA never

voted in favour of the budget though abstained on one occasion.

In order to prepare for this situation the RGA have had several debates on how to deal with the situation under a new government. At the 2010 RGA congress it was concluded that:

"The RGA encourages a new government to make a break that replaces the policies from the previous government with policy that is based on social equality, solidarity and sustainability. A budget that marks such a break will also have our votes. But we will under no circumstances vote in favour of a budget that:

- includes attacks;
- doesn't include significant improvements;
- is the summary of one year of austerity, done with the parties from the right."

This formulation was proposed by two SAP members in order to sharpen the original proposal from the leadership of the RGA.

The RGA will put forward demands on the government and work within the movement to build support for the demands to put the strongest possible pressure on the government. The RGA executive committee has made a call to branches, commissions and candidates of the RGA to organise public meetings with invitations to trade unions to debate expectations and demands on the new government.