

International VIEWPOINT

International Viewpoint—magazine of the Fourth International

IV478 November 2014

SOUTH AFRICA

NUMSA secretary addresses COSATU EC

ECONOMY

Debt and the international context in the South and in the North from 2000 to 2014

DOSSIER

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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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SOUTH AFRICA

First measures of intimidation against independent trade unionism and the socialist left

CLAUDE GABRIEL ·

This nauseating document explains, among other things, that NUMSA and its friends claim that "socialism is the solution to all the challenges the country faces." That they intend to build a party in order to carry out their project of regime change. That they are instigating violence and instability in the various communities. That they are seeking to influence and disturb these communities by using socialist rhetoric and theories.

A more classic kind of defamation comes with the cunning plot originating from abroad (but from where exactly?): "The use of so-called 'international experts' to validate and facilitate their plans to overthrow the regime; the establishment of their own intelligence structures (in collaboration with foreign governments and international companies) so as to facilitate their programme of regime change." After which the paper publishes photographs (see the illustration below) of NUMSA leaders, of some politically engaged academics, of Ronnie Kasrils, a former leader of the ANC and the Communist Party, but now clearly opposed to the regime, as well as photographs of some foreign participants who came in August 2014 for a seminar

on socialism organized by NUMSA, where nothing very subversive was discussed: the balance sheet of the Brazilian PT, the Bolivian experience, political recomposition in Germany, etc.

This document is obviously only the beginning. Since it is unsigned it is difficult to designate peremptorily its authors. But all the same, a little strain of music in the way it is written reminds us of some Soviet trials of the 1930s. And then there is a question: how and from whom did the authors obtain the photographs of this dozen or so guests of NUMSA? Since it cannot be from NUMSA itself, then from whom?

So this is not a joke. There is a clear beginning of intimidation and threat. In a country proclaiming its democratic character! The more the social and political crisis of the ANC regime and its ally the Communist Party increases, the more this kind of "information" will increase. But in a country where people are dying every day from the ordinary violence of poverty, drugs and gangs, political violence is easy to disguise. That is when the duty of solidarity and of the international defense of the independent trade unions and the South African left begins!

SOUTH ASIA

Has the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) failed?

SUSHOVAN DHAR ·

The road ahead

In a few days from now, the 18th Saarc summit will be held in Kathmandu, Nepal. November 26-27 will witness the head of states arriving at this Himalayan capital with their cavalcades, engage in wishful conversations, momentarily setting aside their mutual distrust, hostility, and enmity.

This indeed is a time for celebration for most South Asians. The pious declarations to tackle the immediate problems of the region, to lift us out of poverty, deprivation, and exclusion would certainly create an immediate happiness.

We wish that the South Asian realities would reflect the contents of those sanctimonious declarations made in the previous 17 summits, and also the one to be made soon. We wish we can be eternally happy.

There are also more reasons to feel proud of our economy, our political systems, and the governance. For instance, recent estimates made by the World Bank projects South Asia as the second fastest growing region in this planet after East Asia and the Pacific. It assures us of an economic stability and a pick-up in growth.

The "growth happy" Chinese would surely spare no chances to nourish us with growth, from breakfast to dinner. The figures projected by the bank are rosy, undeniably. We can be contented by the fact that this part of the world has arrived at the world stage with a bang. South Asia looks ready to reap enormous economic gains, finally. The optimism portrayed by the bank is enough to raise our expect-

tations for the next two years and leave us contented in abstraction.

The reality and issues

However, beyond this bright picture, the region is mired in a pale gloom of darkness. While we hear of brutal internecine confrontations around the world, we too are doomed in a conflict-ridden part where living is getting dangerous every day. Apart from four full-fledged wars in the past, between India and Pakistan, we have witnessed a series of conflicts within the national frontiers – something that has not spared any South Asian nation state.

The recent border clashes between the two big brothers are tellingly evident that we have refused to learn any lessons from the past. Continually haunted by militant religious fundamentalism, majoritarian dominance, and acute democratic deficit, our region is synonymous with endemic poverty, chronic hunger, mass undernourishment, abysmal illiteracy, and ill health; the scenario is replete with social deprivation and marginalisation resulting in systemic exclusion. The youth wake up every morning to discover themselves "well placed" in overwhelming underemployment and rising unemployment.

Rampant environmental degradation caused by "development" efforts in the interest of the regional elites and the ruling classes, looms large. Home to around half of the world's poor, perhaps no other location encounters more acute threats from global warming than South Asia. Therefore, it is already beleaguered by unpredictable levels of internal security threats from food, water, and energy crises; livelihood and unemployment crisis, etc.

With its closer integration into the global capitalist economy, the informal and family-provided social security and safety nets have collapsed without any formal arrangement to substitute it. South Asia exists on the faultlines of a fragile internal security threat that can potentially compound with the existing external security threats and apprehensions for each state with its own internal dynamics and complications.

The creation of Saarc

It was assumed that a regional forum created to foster regional goodwill and reduce intra-regional disagreements and discords could steer the region away from this embroilment and impasse. The official forum of the South Asian states, Saarc, created in 1985 for the advancement of peoples' welfare and collective self reliance, has miserably failed in this account.

This 29-year-old entity has too little to show in terms of political consolidation, conflict mitigation, regional harmony, free movement of citizens, intra-regional trade and economic cooperation, financial and monetary integration, etc.

To be more precise, the progress, or a progressive evolution of Saarc, is dependent on the settlement of the Kashmir issue. A genuine settlement of this question and the Kashmiri interest of self-determination is nowhere in sight in the near future, as Kashmir is sandwiched between two powerful states that only look at the valley as a strategic "real-estate" that has to be retained at any cost or human sacrifice. Therefore, Saarc appear as an entity held ransom by its founders.

People's Saarc

It's in this context that a number of South Asian people's movements (women, youth, peasants, labour, socially marginalised groups, and civil society organisations) have planned to converge in a people's assembly at Kathmandu from November 22-24. People's Saarc Regional Convergence 2014, being held in parallel to the official Saarc summit,

would involve participation from grassroots seeking answers to various issues and problems that they endure.

With the dreams of a "People's Movements Uniting South Asia for Deepening Democracy, Social Justice & Peace" and being motivated by visions of alternative political, social, economic, and cultural systems, the convergence would attempt to seek alternatives to majoritarianism, violence, and oppression based on gender, caste-ethnicity, religion, etc.

We are faced with the worst forms of developmentalism (at times mutually competing) ensuring a catastrophic future for all of humanity – economically, ecologically, socially, culturally, and politically.

This region is termed "poor" not because it lacks any potential – natural or human – but it has not been able to guarantee accountable democracy, an end to oppression, and external interventions. Even with galloping economic growth, we would not be able to lift ourselves out of poverty if each one of us in the region does not have the opportunity to realise the fullest development of human potential.

A society free from exploitation can create a climate in which all of us live in accord and prosperity; re-establish the ecological balance and harmony with environment; abolish the artificial and human barriers that divide lands, people, and minds; and transcend all boundaries. The convergence would bring all such issues to prominence, which could ensure sustainable development in the region.

The road ahead

It is in this context that people's movements of the region, in collaboration with the global ones, need to play an immense role in the future of South Asia. Since it is only they who can compel Saarc to put more importance on human security in lieu of "national" security, and trade agreements which follow the neoliberal paradigm.

An organic alliance and the unity of people's movements and organisations while retaining their autonomy, can bring changes through a sustained movement for a just, sustainable, and egalitarian society.

They would be able to confront all anti-democratic forces like some businesses, communal and religious fundamentalists, patriarchy, caste systems, and discrimination of all kinds. A unity of move-

ments through shared ideology and strategies has the potential to give rise to a strong political force that can alter the current regionalism of the ruling class. It can also create conditions for developing an alternate regionalism and building South Asia from below.

21 November 2014

Dhaka Tribune

ENVIRONMENT

Climate justice built from the grass roots

BADRUL ALAM ·

The caravan started from Dhaka, Bangladesh on November 10 2014 with 160 participants from different countries like Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, USA, UK, Germany, Australia, Sweden and New Zealand. We arrived in Kathmandu yesterday evening. Today is the 13th day of our long overland journey. The caravan hosts include Bangladesh Krishok Federation, Bangladesh Kishani Sabha, Bangladesh Adivasi Samity, Bangladesh Agricultural Farm Labor Federation, Ekattra in Bangladesh; National Hawkers Federation, Informal Sector Workers' Action Alliance and Jana Sanghati Kendra in India; All Nepal Peasants Federation in Nepal.

It is unfortunate that 17 of our participants were stuck on the Indian side of the border as they were not allowed to enter Nepal by the Indian port immigration. They made the lame excuse of that they had no Nepali visa but we all know Nepal gives port entry visa to Bangladeshi citizens. All of our delegates have their multiple entry Indian visas. So, there was no strong reasonable ground for denial.

Following the advice of the same Indian immigration authority they bought plane tickets to come to Kathmandu for joining the PSAARC but they were not allowed by the airport immigration except one person who took his visa in Australia. So the immigration pushed them into further big monetary loss as well. They went back home with bitter and painful experience of the immigration personnel. The whole situation reminded again the urgency of visa free South Asia which we have been demanding over the years.

Our caravan was for South Asia, covering three countries: Bangladesh, India and Nepal. It was a caravan on Climate Justice, Gender and Food sovereignty. The main message of the caravan was to highlight the planetary emergency which is in force. Our only living planet so far found in the whole universe, earth, is in peril due to the global climate change as well as global warning. Green House Gas (GHG) Emissions account for climate change and industrially developed countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia, Japan and European countries have been emitting GHG for the last 200 years since the beginning of the industrial revolution.

So they are the major actors responsible for the global climate change. They have been doing so for their development, life-style and over-consumption. Transnational Corporations (TNCs) are playing pivotal role in Green House Gases effect on the atmosphere and the mother earth. They are doing everything for their own profit and capital. The human beings and existence of the mother earth is below their profit making target. They are just profit-mongers, nothing else. The caravan defended the declaration of the right of mother earth adopted in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2010 which recognized the living existence of the earth and the importance of its ecology.

Yet climate change has become a great concern at global level because of the continued pressure of the global resistance. The responsible countries could not help but talking on this issue. They (Annex-1 countries) even acknowledged their role in the climate crisis and made frequent commitment to cut in emission in order to keep the average temperature of the earth below 1.5 Degree Celsius. But they do not keep their commitment but continue to emit GHG. Now the average temperature of the

earth is nearly 2 degrees Celsius higher than the average, which is so alarming.

Owing to the adverse impacts of climate change, the entire world is facing devastating super calamities with extreme weather events, like cyclones, storms, water-surges, desertification, droughts, crops failure in agriculture, rising sea level, change in season's cycles, excess heat, excess cold, excess rainfall, excess snowfall, salinity in the coastal belts, melting of concentrated glaciers in Himalayas and in both north and south pole, and so on.

During the caravan in different workshops, seminars, exchange of opinions and rallies we assessed that the food sovereignty ensured by agro-ecology is under threat in the context of global climate change. The caravan agreed on the fact that peasant-based sustainable agriculture with small scale peasants, family farmers and indigenous people can feed the world with nutritious food without causing any harm to the climate.

The caravan expressed concern about the AR-5 (Assessment Report-5) of IPCC which has given an indication of the dreadful consequences the earth will encounter unless there is no significant change in the carbon reduction level. It has predicted the disappearance of coastal countries and small island states in the world within the 21st century.

The caravan also expressed concern about the level of carbon in the atmosphere which has crossed the 'safe' level, 350 PPM. Now it has crossed even 400 PPM. It is over the tolerant level of the atmosphere which existed for millions of years, presenting an acceptable ecology for human beings. The caravan advocated keeping the carbon level in the atmosphere within 350 PPM by reducing GHG emissions.

The caravan put emphasis on the question of climate justice and gender. It clearly assessed that climate justice is the historical and ecological dues of the responsible countries and they have to pay to the global south in the form of reparation. Women are extremely and disproportionately victimized by

climate change and deserved the reparation on the priority.

The caravan argues that South Asia consists of one-fifth of the world's population and the majority of the population still goes hungry and live in poverty. They have their right to reparation. Following a democratic method, the reparations should go to the people who are affected by the climate change, but have not caused it.

The caravan stressed on the question of building alternatives to climate change from below, not sitting idle. So it has emphasized adopting everywhere agro-ecological farming methods which cool the planet. It also advocated for the use of some renewable energies, namely community controlled solar power, windmills, bio-gas generation, small scale hydro power generation, effective geo-thermal power generation and many more other options instead of fossil fuel-based dirty energy which is contributing to climate change.

The caravan clearly rejected the false solutions like CDM, agro-fuels, REDD+, GMOs, carbon off-setting, smart agriculture, green economy, etc. so far proposed by the UNFCCC as answers to climate change. These will further aggravate the climate crisis. The caravan thinks that the real solutions lie in the grassroots.

60 percent of the world resources have already been used up by the TNCs. The remaining 40 percent is ocean, sea, forest, air. They are also trying to grab these resources. The caravan is strongly opposed to all types of resource grabbing including land, which is the main source of lives and livelihood of the people.

The caravan highly criticized the adoption of GE Bt. Brinjal (Eggplant) in Bangladesh whereas it is banned in India because of its negative consequences. The caravan considered GMOs unethical and they should have no future. It strongly defended the local seeds for our future, guaranteeing our food sovereignty. It underscored to protect, preserve, conserve and restore the indigenous seeds for ecological balance protection.

The caravan expressed the deep concern of the climate forced migrants which is a reality in the whole world. Their right as climate migrants should be protected by the framework of UNO (United Nations Organization). Presently there are 250 million climate migrants in the world and this is increasing

During the caravan there were lots of interactions, sharing and lessons learned among the participants who met thousands of people on the ground who are naturally trying to adapt to and mitigate with the climate change on their own experience. However, it does not mean that the responsible countries should continue with emissions. It is just an example of the capacity of the grassroots people.

The main objective of the caravan is to build a strong grassroots movement network in South Asia which will be a complement to the global campaign on climate justice.

The caravan urges the official SAARC to demand climate justice from the northern developed countries for the benefit of the global south. It has also demanded to strengthen the food and seed bank

mechanism under SAARC for both the reduction of hunger and for the protection of rich bio-diversity and genetic resources in South Asia.

A declaration of caravan is under way. It will be submitted to the official SAARC here in Kathmandu and to the climate conference in Lima, Peru to be held next month, prioritizing the grassroots people's experiences and a proposal to the solutions to the global climate crisis.

We have had a very fruitful, productive, constructive and effective caravan in terms of outreach, and repercussions amongst the people and the caravan participants. However, still we have a long way to go and the ultimate victory is in the hands of the people. We demand system change, not climate change. We have to go hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder, united.

Long live South Asia with peace, prosperity, democracy, non-communality, secularism in a visa-free region with people to people and movement to movement connectivity! Long live international solidarity! Long live South Asian regionalism! Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you all.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate caravan completes its journey through India and Nepal

In the afternoon of November 18, National Hawkers' Federation, led by famous leader Shaktiman Gosh, welcomed the caravan with the participation of more than thousand people hailing from different sectors of the hawkers' community and an exchange of views meeting with leaders of Informal Sector Labor Action Alliance (Asangathito Khethra Sramik Sangram Manch).

There was also an evaluation meeting on the caravan activities in Bangladesh. The participants were divided into 4 groups on the basis of language. The outcomes of the group discussion were back to the plenary.

In the evening of that day the caravan started off for the border between India and Nepal and arrived in the afternoon of 19 November. Most participants entered Nepal except 18 participants who did not have the Nepali visa in their passport, because of a new circular by the Indian authority. Immigration officials advised them to fly as there is no legal barrier for this. Finally 8 persons out of 18 decided to fly to Kathmandu. The remaining 10 decided to go back to the county. They could have crossed the border but they did not want to break the immigration law. However, they chanted the slogan for a visa free South Asia which is more urgent in the context of climate change. Those who entered Nepal were warmly received by the grass-roots movements of Nepal at the border.

On 20 November in the morning there was a seminar in Kakarvitta, Nepal on Climate Change and Food Sovereignty. Dr. Keshab Khadka conducted the meeting while the ANPFA Vice-President presided over the seminar. Badrul Alam as the key leader of the caravan explained the aims and objec-

tives of the caravan. Representatives from UK, Australia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Philippine, Nepal also spoke. All explained the dreadful consequence of the impact of climate change in South and South East Asia as well.

Badrul Alam said that we have to have a strong solidarity among the movements in South Asia in order to realize the climate justice in the form of reparation from the industrially developed countries. He told the audience that the reparation is our right; based on the payment of historical and ecological dues, not on sympathy to the global south at all. He also criticized the developed countries where there is still no significance emission reduction although they are committed in doing so every year.

On the same day, the caravan arrived in Sharlahi, Kalikapur. Here the grass-root people gave the caravan traditional reception with the support of mother's community in Nepal and organized a roundtable. On behalf of the caravan Badrul Alam depicted the caravan's aims, objectives and goals. After the caravan there was dairy farm visit where the participants found milking cows, bio-fertilizers made of cow-dung, bio-pesticide, etc.

On 21 November 2014, in the morning the caravan left for Kathmandu. It is unfortunate that 7 out of 8 persons wishing to fly to Kathmandu buying ticket were intercepted at the airport immigration. They faced further loss of money with non-refundable air ticket. The caravan arrived in Kathmandu in the evening of 21 November 2014 and stayed in the National Agricultural Research Centre in Nepal.

On 22 November 2014 at 10:30 am a people's march took place to the venue where the People's South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

was taking place which the caravan's participants took part in, having already been warmly welcomed with floral wreaths by local participants. The People's SAARC takes place alongside the official SAARC involving the governments of the region which is taking place in Kathmandu from November 22-27

The caravan joined the inaugural function of the P-SAARC with Badrul Alam speaking as part of the inaugural panel. The Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Bam Dev Goutam were present. He

explained the experience of the caravan in detail. He demanded the visa free South Asia in the interest of lasting peace and democracy within the region. Alam requested that the official SARRC demand climate justice from the northern developed countries for the benefit of climate affected people in the global south. He asked SAARC to strengthen the food and seed bank mechanism to ensure food sovereignty which will remove the hunger and poverty from South Asia which is home of one-fifth of world population.

OBITUARY:

Rest in peace Leslie Feinberg

J. VREER VERKERKE ·

Leslie Feinberg is dead. Zie [1] identified as an anti-racist white, working-class, secular Jewish, transgender, lesbian, female, revolutionary communist. The radical movement and the queers have lost an important person.

Leslie succumbed last Saturday November 15, 2014 after a long sickbed to the effects of multiple tick-borne diseases. Hir writings have been life saving for many young queers and hir engagement with many struggles made hir an example for many to follow. Zie died at home in Syracuse NY, with hir partner of 22 years, Minnie Bruce Pratt, by hir side.

Born September 1, 1949 in Kansas City, Missouri in the USA, Leslie Feinberg grew up in the 1960s as a young butch lesbian in the bars and the factories of Buffalo, New York. There zie had her coming out, hir first jobs and experienced direct discrimination but also did hir first organizing.

Leslie was arguably the first one to develop a Marxist approach to transgender liberation. In June 1992 zie published *Transgender Liberation: A Movement whose Time Has Come: A Marxist View of When and Why Transgender Oppression Arose*. This booklet was to my knowledge the first to couple the fight for our gender identities with revolutionary communism.

Zie writes there (as in hir later book *Transgender Warriors*) that transgender is ages old. "It is passing that is historically new. Passing means hiding. Passing means invisibility. Transgendered people should be able to live and express their gender without criticism or threats or violence. But that is not the case today." Nowhere, I might add. Not even in Argentina, which holds the gold standard for gender recognition these days.

The word transgender was coined by Virginia Prince in 1969 and is an umbrella definition that, in brief, indicates that a person's deeply felt idea of who they are is different from the sex/gender assigned at birth and the expectations that accompany that. Trans* stands for all forms of transgender such as cross dressers, genderqueers, "transsexuals" (an identity taken from the psychiatric handbooks, requiring "full" transition), gender-blenders and other gender-non-conforming people and is a complex of gender (identity and expression) diversity.

Feinberg links transgender oppression directly to the patriarchal structures of society and offers a historical materialist analysis of how the trouble began: with the transition to feudalism and with Christianity (Catholic only in those days) as the rising religion of the landowning elites, which needed to stamp out the old religions in order to rule. And continued to do so with its colonial conquests.

We know gender diversity existed in pre-Columbian Latin America. Feinberg traces trans* people from early history through Joan of Arc to the post-Stonewall years. Hir *Transgender Warriors* reclaims and queers activists and saints from the dust of history.

Feinberg is most famous for hir 1993 novel *Stone Butch Blues*, which tells the story of Jess Goldberg, a young white working class butch lesbian who left hir family and started working in the factories around Buffalo, New York. This engaging story of butch and femme, working class queers and masculine women, was for many young butches and trans masculine people in the 1990s and beyond the first book through which they encountered a positive view of themselves. Not like the tormented Stephen of the *Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall [2] some generations before.

In all Feinberg's work, hir white working class revolutionary trans background shows: both in the novels *Stone Butch Blues* and *Drag King Dreams* and in hir nonfiction works. Feinberg may not have contributed much to a Marxist theory on transgender liberation, but zie was a living example of solidarity. Talking about transgender liberation in the same breath as other forms of liberation was already revolutionary in itself. Leslie Feinberg's communist work also took the form through hir membership of the Workers World Party (WWP) [3] of fighting for all oppressed groups, opposing imperialist wars and standing with the exploited Chicano workers of Coca-Cola and other big brands. Hir last campaign, for which zie was sent to jail, involved actions in solidarity with CeCe McDonald, a black trans woman who got jailed for self-defence against

transphobic attackers, because one of them died in the aftermath of the attack.

Leslie Feinberg's revolution was grounded in feminist revolution. The personal is political. And zie took the political into hir personal life, as zie shows in *Drag King Dreams*. Living with and working for the cause of all oppressed at home. With the WWP zie may have adopted some dubious standpoints on solidarity abroad, but zie was engaged early on in the fight for the rights of Palestine and at home in an intersectional and anti-capitalist women's, LGBTI rights and workers' rights struggle.

We will miss hir great example of trans involvement in revolutionary struggle, who made solidarity practical. Zie showed the revolutionary movement how not forget gender identity issues. May hir work live on in all our organisations.

USA

Ferguson Responds to Lack of Indictment

JOHN REED ·

Within days of the August 9 shooting, McCulloch's refusal to bring charges against Wilson and his effort to hide behind a grand jury had met with widespread criticism and disdain. Jeryl Christmas, a former prosecuting attorney in the city of St. Louis and a defense lawyer, called McCulloch's handling of the grand jury "a charade" designed to avoid charges.

It's nearly unheard of to present evidence to a grand jury without recommending charges or explaining how the evidence justified the charges. Nor is it customary to present justifications for the perpetrator's actions, as McCulloch did. These actions betray extralegal motivations.

Race was the central issue behind the prosecutor's charade. The murder of Michael Brown served as a tipping point in a long history of police violence against Black youth, and touched off weeks of protests that culminated in a nationwide march on St. Louis in October and exposed a culture of racist, predatory policing rampant in metro St. Louis and elsewhere.

As the grand jury proceedings dragged on, justice advocates held a series of workshops on nonviolent protesting in Ferguson and St. Louis. Protest organizers negotiated "terms of engagement" with police and mayors. The St. Louis area descended into anticipatory paranoia. Store owners, even in areas miles away and worlds apart from Ferguson, boarded up windows. School districts prepared to close schools so that students didn't get caught in violent disturbances. Dentists even made arrangements to use offices in other counties and moved patient visits out of St. Louis. Everyone, it seemed, expected McCulloch's office to fail to indict a killer cop.

Everyone accepted that the community would be outraged by that failure, and many people feared the outrage would turn violent.

When it came time to finally announce the grand jury's decision, McCulloch opted to inflame tensions even more. In a tone heavily weighted with condescension, he began his speech by criticizing news organizations and social media for daring to discuss the killing without all the facts. He attempted to lecture the public about the importance of inconsistencies in witness statements over time, while ignoring inconsistencies in the versions of events that came from the Ferguson police department and Darren Wilson (others have written on how unbelievable Wilson's testimony was).

Then, McCulloch tried to lecture everyone on the importance of contradictions between witness statements and physical evidence, while ignoring those between Wilson's testimony and the physical evidence. Wilson, for example, testified that Michael Brown was only 20 feet from Wilson's car and charging when Wilson fired the shots that killed him. The physical evidence shows that Brown was 135 feet from the car. McCulloch also said that Wilson stopped Brown because he fit the description of a suspect in a convenience store robbery, even though that contradicts repeated statements from the Ferguson police department and Wilson's own testimony. Inconsistencies are common in witness statements, but for McCulloch, the only inconsistencies that matter are the ones from African Americans who mistrust the police.

After announcing that the grand jury returned no indictment, McCulloch issued a generic, feel-good call to the community to work on issues to make sure such tragedies are not repeated. Under questioning, however, it became apparent that his call was a veiled form of blaming the victim. When

asked what "issues" he meant, and what changes he would recommend to policing, he said he would never second guess a police officer.

Then, completely ignoring the several exposés of predatory policing in St. Louis County, which showed that police targeted African Americans for enforcement of minor "nuisance" laws, criminalized minor infractions like jay-walking, and turned fines into debts and jail time, McCulloch said that by issues he meant those that placed [African American] men in situations where the police could shoot them! His performance left little room to wonder why the grand jury did not return an indictment.

Preparation for Protest

In preparation for McCulloch's press conference, a coalition of groups acting as Ferguson October had sent out text messages calling for people to assemble at Shaw and Grand Avenue in south St. Louis. That was in the Shaw neighborhood where an off-duty, white, St. Louis cop had gunned down 18-year-old Vonderrick Myers on October 8. Another group of protesters gathered in Clayton, across from barricades set up in front of the County Justice Center, where McCulloch staged his performance. Several hundred other protesters gathered in front of the headquarters of the Ferguson Police Department.

Riots erupted in Ferguson after McCulloch's announcement. In Shaw, a multi-racial group of about 300 protesters, most under the age of 30, marched south on one of the city's main commercial streets to the South Grand business district, then turned around and marched north again. However, instead of marching to St. Louis University or through the city's nightclub district as previous marches had done, the march leaders took the throng down an entrance ramp to I-44 where they stopped traffic in both directions of the eight-lane highway.

Many in the south St. Louis crowd pulled out phones and began texting, tweeting, or calling friends to relay the news that they were blocking

the highway. The crowd quickly swelled to over 500, with about half the protesters occupying the pavement while the other half chanted from the highway embankment. It took the police time to react. They had to divert traffic and back most of the blocked traffic out in order to move up vans and cars full of police in riot gear. Over half an hour passed before riot police lined up across the Interstate under an overpass. Then they waited for more police to clear the overpass and the embankments on either side and for the arrival of an armored vehicle and loud speaker. By the time they warned people to clear the road, the highway had been shut down for almost an hour.

When the police ordered protesters to clear the road, march leaders led them off the highway and back up the entrance ramp to assemble again in the middle of Grand Avenue. When the police ordered them to disperse, they instead marched south again towards the South Grand business district. Many of those who had spent an hour on the highway in subfreezing wind chills drifted away, but a steady stream of new protesters arrived to replenish the numbers of those marching.

St. Louis police, who stayed put at first to make sure the highway was secured and open, later caught up with the protesters and clashed with them at about 1 a.m. in the South Grand business district. The police raided "sanctuaries" and fired gas canisters at a coffeehouse serving people who had been in the protest, and windows of about half-a-dozen businesses were smashed.

On Tuesday morning, clergy in a protest organized by Metropolitan Congregations United blocked six intersections in downtown Clayton, the county seat, during morning rush hour. A couple of hours later, Color of Change led another protest through Clayton. At noon, several hundred more people turned out in downtown St. Louis for a march to the federal courthouse called by Ferguson October.

Creativity and Diversity

The variety of groups calling protests illustrates the movement's chaotic nature that, at the moment, is

both a strength and a weakness. Numerous activists groups have emerged such as Millennial Activists United, Hands Up, Black Lives Matter, and so on. They are getting crucial help from already established groups, such as the Organization for Black Struggle, Veterans for Peace, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Amnesty International. The breadth and diversity of the leadership deprives the police of a single target, but the intensity of the actions cannot likely be sustained for long.

Demonstrators stage a "die in" outside the White House following the announcement in Ferguson.

So far, protest leaders have shown tremendous creativity and organization. They have compelled the same government that once arrested bicyclists and raided the homes of anarchists in order to forestall demonstrations at a Monsanto-led agribusiness forum to recognize that people have the right to assemble in the streets and block traffic as a form of protest. Instead of negotiating how they will accommodate the police and local governments, they are demanding that police and governments accommodate them. And they have taken protests out of the neighborhoods to government and financial centers and the trendy hotspots of real estate development.

If it can be repeated, the highway shutdown may turn out to be one of the most effective pressure tactics. Just last month the metro area's main business booster organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce, in conjunction with real estate developers, launched a new nationwide effort to attract distribution and logistics centers to St. Louis. The companies they want to attract are unlikely to want to locate in a place where protesters are shutting

down highways to get action on their demands for racial justice.

Yet there's a danger of some of the movement's energy becoming co-opted by the very forces that created the culture of oppression. An organization created by local capitalists to push the consolidation of area governments and erosion of public oversight rules, so that they can reduce the approvals they need to move their project forward, is working strenuously to depict police repression as the result of too many local governments and too many elected officials. The organization, called Better Together, argues that eliminating local governments and elected offices will end police repression of the Black community. At the same time privatizers, including charter school and private school advocates, are well represented on the Ferguson Commission appointed by Gov. Jay Nixon. School privatizers already have argued that public schools are the root of the problem. (Unions, by contrast, have no representation on the commission.)

The killing of Mike Brown was the fuse that lit this movement. The leaders that have emerged have done an exemplary job of making his death about more than just one man. In reaching out to the families of other young men killed by police, they have made the movement about national issues of racial injustice, double standards in law enforcement, predatory policing, and civil rights. Their challenge will be to continue reaching out to keep the movement alive and focused on broad issues, and to continue to creatively put pressure on local capitalists to compel local politicians to make real changes.

November 26, 2014

*From **Solidarity** webzine.*

DENMARK

Big Pharma and criminal super profits

MICHAEL VOSS ·

Of course this provokes debate among hospital professionals, politicians, journalists and academics in the field. Unfortunately, it is the wrong discussion: Can society afford very expensive medicine that may only prolong the life time of serious ill persons with few months or a maybe a year?

In a recent newspaper article these medicines are mentioned as examples of expensive medicine:

? Zytica for the treatment of prostate cancer

? Yervoy for the treatment of birthmark cancer

? Gileneya for the treatment of sclerosis

If the reporter had taken the time for a little research, she would have learned that these three drugs are produced by Janssen Biotech (formerly Johnson & Johnson), Bristol-Myers Squibb and Novartis.

This might have given her a hint of what the real problem is. All three of these pharmaceutical firms are mentioned among the villains in a book that was published last year in Denmark with the title "Deadly medicine and organised crime". [1] The book is written by a renowned Danish professor, Peter C. Gøtzsche. It is a 450 pages long and well documented indictment against pharmaceutical industry (Big Pharma) for fraud, corruption, extreme super profits and distributing deadly drugs.

Among his points are:

- An unreasonable high number of people die because of medicine
- Big Pharma markets medicine that has no positive effect on patients in relation to their illness – and industry knows

- The industry deliberately withholds data and manipulate data in order to cover up serious side effects

- The industry pay (bribe) researchers to praise their products, and they pay doctors to market and distribute the products among their patients

- Big Pharma are regularly sentenced to pay millions of Euros in fines for marketing dangerous medicine or medicine without any effect, but more often they accept out-of-court deals in order to avoid the brand-damaging court decisions and to avoid being forced to publish the data behind the case.

- Research academics and public authorities assist the industry in replacing relatively non-expensive medicine with new more expensive medicine with the same effect

- The industry allocates more funds for marketing than for research while at the same time they try to legitimize their monopoly patents with high research costs.

This is all based on documentation from the global pharmaceutical industry. Several of the examples include Bristol Myers Squibb and Novartis.

Among the conclusions of Gøtzsche is this: "In 2012 the 50 largest firms sold for 610 billion dollars in prescription drugs. I am absolutely convinced that this could be reduced by 95 %, equal to 580 billion dollars, because our most common drugs are 20 times as expensive as the alternatives with the same effect, and because our citizens are "over-treated".

So maybe the solution for the Danish public health system is not to deny patients the necessary treatment, but to look into the methods and profits of private pharmaceutical industry and to start to curb

their power and their profitmaking. Even for this purpose professor Gøtzsche offers his assistance. One whole chapter deals with political solutions to the problem..

On the most basic level is the suggestion that the authorities should prosecute the criminality of Big Pharma with the same energy that they use for ordinary crime, and that they should protect whistle blowers from within the industry and compensate them for their loss of job.

Going more radical step by step Gøtzsche offers these kinds of proposals:

- To make it obligatory for firms to publish research data and all other knowledge about their drugs

- To make it obligatory for firms to publish all contracts

- To make it illegal for private medical firms to make their own clinical research; instead they should pay a special tax to fund public medical research.

Finally he looks at the core of the problem and the real solutions. The first one is to de-medicalise society. The second one is to prohibit privately owned medical firms and to replace them with state owned production units or non-profit companies. He writes. "To let the forces of the market rule medical praxis does not favour the needs of the patients, and it is incompatible with an ethical based profession. Profitmaking does not produce social benefits," he writes.

ECONOMY

Debt and the international context in the South and in the North from 2000 to 2014

ÉRIC TOUSSAINT ·

Several changes have occurred since the end of the 1990s.

1. Several countries in the South have moved away from neoliberal policies

After over twenty years of neoliberal policies and multiple forms of resistance, towards the end of the 1990s and at the beginning of the new millennium, several Latin American nations disposed of their neoliberal presidents thanks to massive social mobilisations and elected heads of state who implemented policies that meet the people's interests. The people of those countries wanted to free themselves from measures derived from the 'Washington consensus,' as imposed by the IMF and the World Bank (privatisations, cuts in public services, 'liberalisation' of trade that deprives small local producers of any protection, enforced commodification, destruction of decent jobs, cancellation of subsidies for food staples and services such as water, electricity, gas, and transport). These policies were implemented on the pretence of repaying their public debts, much of which was illegitimate or illegal, as was the case in Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia... [3] Ecuador's government took a remarkable initiative in 2007-2008 when it carried out a complete audit of its debt with the active participation of representatives from social movements [4]. On the basis of this audit, it then suspended repayment of the part of the external debt identified as illegitimate, and imposed a significant reduction of the debt to its creditors [5]. This made it possible to increase social spending. Unfortunately, this initiative did not snowball as had been hoped, since other countries in the area did not follow suit.

On the upside, let us note that the governments of these three countries also increased taxation on

large foreign corporations that exploit these countries' natural resources. This development significantly boosted their tax revenues, and made it possible to increase social spending.

Moreover, citizens in these three countries democratically adopted new Constitutions, which include a measure on the removing of elected representatives at mid-term.

Finally, it should also be added that Bolivia in 2007, Ecuador in 2009, and Venezuela in 2012 took the wise step of leaving the WB International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).

The International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID),

The ICSID was founded in 1966, with the purpose of providing a means of conciliation and arbitration to settle investment disputes between contracting States and nationals of other contracting States. To put it simply, it is an international arbitration tribunal, which deals with disputes arising between a private investor from a contracting party State and the State where the investment is based. The Centre's jurisdiction (article 25) extends to disputes of a legal nature, relating directly to an investment, between a contracting State (or a government organisation or body dependent on that State and designated by it to the Centre) and a national from another contracting State.

The Centre is usually designated as competent to deal with disputes arising within the context of bilateral investment agreements. Thus, almost 900 bilateral treaties on the promotion and protection of investments explicitly name the Centre as the

instance for settling disputes between the private investor of a contracting party, on the one hand, and the State where the investment concerned is based, on the other. The Centre's arbitral sentence is mandatory and cannot be appealed (article 53). The ICSID is a member of the World Bank Group, but from an institutional point of view, it is an autonomous international organisation, which completes the Bank's range of intervention.

There is no obligation to have recourse to the ICSID for conciliation or arbitration. However, once the parties are engaged, neither may withdraw unilaterally from the ICSID's arbitration. Once the ICSID has made a decision, all the countries that have ratified the convention, even if they are not involved in the dispute, must acknowledge and apply the decision. Since 1978, the ICSID's area of jurisdiction has been extended. A whole new set of rules allow it to intervene in cases that do not fall within the domain of the convention. Thus, it can now intervene in arbitration procedures even when one of the parties to the dispute is a State or the national of a State that has not ratified the convention. It can also be called on to bear witness on facts in a case.

Until the mid-1980s, the disputes dealt with by the ICSID arose from agreements made under investment contracts. Since then, it has dealt increasingly with disputes arising from agreements made under bilateral treaties.

The World Bank's spider web

The World Bank's subsidiaries (the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), and the International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)) have been designed to weave an even tighter web.

Let us take a theoretical example to illustrate the effects of their policies. The World Bank grants a loan to the government of a country if it promises

to privatise its water distribution and purification system. In this process, the public company is sold to a private consortium including the IFC, a World Bank subsidiary.

Then the population affected by the privatisation protests against the sudden sharp increase in rates and the fall in the quality of the service provided, and the government turns against the predatory transnational company, the dispute is dealt with by the ICSID, which thus finds itself on both sides of the judge's bench.

A situation has been reached where the World Bank Group is present at every level: it imposes and finances privatisation via the IBRD and IDA, it invests in the privatised company through the IFC, it provides the company with guarantees covering it against political risk, through the good offices of the MIGA, and it judges any disputes that may arise through the ICSID.

This is exactly what happened in El Alto, Bolivia, between 1997 and 2005.

2. Increases in raw materials prices and currency reserves

In 2003-2004, the prices of raw materials and agricultural products began to rise [6]. This situation enabled the developing countries [7] exporting such products to increase their revenues, especially in strong currencies (dollar, euro, yen, and pound). Certain developing countries used the additional revenues to increase social spending, while most of them accumulated foreign exchange reserves [8] or purchased US Treasury Bonds—thus contributing to financing the leading world power. In other words, they increased their loans to the world's principal economic power, thus contributing to maintaining its domination by providing it with the means to continue living on credit and maintaining a large trade deficit. An explanation for this is that the US borrows large amounts from countries that are prepared to purchase its debt instruments (US Treasury Bonds).

The table below indicates the volumes of US Treasury Bonds and other treasury bonds held in March 2014 by a number of developing countries. China alone has lent the USA \$1,270 billion (from its foreign reserve exchange accumulated through its trade surplus with the USA), and therefore holds more than one fourth of US external public debt.

Developing countries that are creditors of the USA: values of US Treasury Bonds (in \$billionsdollars) held in March 2014 [9]

Extraction PDF Ukrainian socialist: 'The future of demilitarisation lies in stopping Russia's war machine now'

The yield on US Treasury Bonds and other government bonds is from 0 to 2.57% in function of the maturity (one month = 0.01%, while 10 years = 2.57%) [10]. Given the inflation rate in the US, the real yield is very low, or even negative, which enables the US to finance itself at a very low cost.

3. The loss of power of the World Bank and IMF vis-à-vis certain developing countries

The increase in foreign exchange reserves and the decision of some governments in the South to use part of them to increase social spending and infrastructure investments have contributed to decreasing the influence of the IMF, World Bank, and most industrialised countries over some of the developing countries [11]. This loss of influence also comes from the fact that China and the other 'BRICS' (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), especially Brazil, have greatly increased the number of their loans to certain developing countries.

4. China becomes a powerful creditor

Another factor has reinforced this phenomenon: a rapidly expanding China has become the world's workshop, and has accumulated huge currency reserves (mostly in dollars). In December 2013, China's foreign exchange reserves reached \$3,821 billion [12]. It has significantly increased its international trade, particularly with developing countries on various continents. It has also in-

creased very significantly its loans to African, Latin-American, and many Asian countries. Its loans are now competing with those of the World Bank and the IMF, other multilateral financial institutions and the governments of the most industrialised countries. That has reduced the ability of these institutions and of countries in the North to exert pressure on some developing countries. However, we should remain vigilant regarding these large debts taken on by developing countries. China is a new capitalist power, which does not give anything away, and its investments are aimed at ensuring its control over the raw materials it needs and over the markets to which it exports its manufactured goods.

5. In 2014, the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) announced the creation of a multilateral bank that would belong to them [13]

If this bank begins doing business one day (which is not sure), it will not be an entity capable of offering a positive alternative for developing countries, because the governments founding it are seeking to create a bank which will directly serve their interests (ensuring sources of raw materials and outlets for their exportations) and not those of the people.

6. Increases in internal public debt

Over the past 20 years, internal public debt has increased significantly. In a significant number of developing countries, it has become greater than external public debt (see table below on Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico). This is true for all of the richest developing countries, particularly for the so-called 'emerging' economies.

Comparison of external and internal public debt (in \$billions and as a % of total debt) for some Latin American countries (2000-2013) [14]

Extraction PDF Against Russian Imperialism

However, we should not be fooled. The domestic banks that issue loans to the public authorities of their country in the local currency are often in fact

subsidiaries of foreign banks, and the loans in local currency, in many cases, are pegged to a strong currency (generally the dollar). This means that if the local currency is devalued or the value of the strong currency increases, the amount to be reimbursed increases considerably [15]. It also means that the major foreign banks are making large profits from the internal public debt. For example, Santander, the principal Spanish bank, makes enormous profits from the loans granted by its subsidiaries in Brazil [16] and other Latin American countries to public authorities by buying government securities from them. The same is true of other banks like Citigroup/CitiBank, which have a strong presence in Mexico, and the Spanish bank BBVA, present in several Latin-American economies, not to forget the British bank HSBC, which is particularly active in Asia.

7. The food and climate crisis

In 2007-2008, the peoples of the developing countries were faced with a sharp increase in the price of foodstuffs. This situation resulted in food riots in 18 countries. The number of people suffering from hunger, which was approximately 900 million before the crisis, increased by nearly 120 million, bringing the total to over one billion in 2009. As we will see farther on, that figure has gradually been reduced, but the fact can only alert us to the incredible vulnerability of hundreds of millions of people. This dramatic situation is directly linked to other factors related to the global crisis and the debt system. One thing is certain: the rising price of food staples and increasing number of human beings suffering from hunger are not the result of a lack of food resources throughout the world. Some of the factors behind this global food crisis, which is keeping one out of eight humans in a permanent state of hunger, are financial speculation on the prices of basic food items (and fuels) on the over-the-counter market in Northern countries, as well as the promotion of agro-fuels in Northern and some Southern countries—including Brazil —, land grabbing, the 'free-trade' agreements imposed on Southern countries, the end of subsidies for basic

food staples and to local producers in Southern countries, and the priority given to cash crops intended for exportation to the detriment of local market gardening... [17]

In addition, the effects of the ongoing climate crisis are increasingly dramatic in developing countries. Here again, the policies rolled out by the World Bank in particular, and the productivist capitalist system in general, are part of the problem and not part of the solution [18].

8. Debt is one of the core concerns in Northern countries, where it is considered to be the consequence of the crisis that erupted in 2007-2008

The crisis caused by major private banks in the US and Europe has generated a strong increase in the debt of the countries concerned. Private and public debt have become core concerns in Northern countries, particularly within the European Union and the United States. That is why the CADTM has engaged in more studies and actions targeting the countries of the North, while still not neglecting the South. The lessons drawn from the Third World debt crisis in 1980-1990 are very valuable for understanding the events that followed the crisis of 2007-2008 and taking action in its aftermath [19]. The countries in the North where people have been the most severely affected are Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Portugal, Spain, Cyprus, Romania, Hungary, the Baltic Republics, Bulgaria, and Italy. The policies being applied by creditors in the most industrialised countries in the North today closely resemble those that were imposed on the countries of the South in the 1980s, which caused and exacerbated third world debt.

9. Centre/Periphery relations within the European Union based on domination

The existence of a common economic, trade, and political zone enables European transnational corporations and the economies of the Centre of the eurozone to profit from the debt crisis in the Periphery countries (Spain, Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Cyprus, and countries in central Europe

and the Balkans), as well as in Italy, to make their companies more profitable and make points in terms of competitiveness with respect to their North American and Chinese competitors. At the current stage of the crisis, the aim of countries in the Centre of the eurozone is not to relaunch growth and reduce asymmetries between the strongest and weakest economies in the EU.

In addition, European leaders believe that the collapse of Southern Europe is going to translate into opportunities to privatize corporations and public goods massively at cut-rate prices. The intervention of the Troika and the active complicity of governments in the Periphery are helping them. The dominant classes in the countries in the Periphery are in favour of these policies, because they are counting on getting a part of the cake they have been drooling over for years. The privatisations in Greece and Portugal prefigure what is going to occur in Spain and Italy where the public commodities up for grabs are far more lucrative, given the size of these two economies.

The close ties between government leaders and Big Capital are no longer even concealed. Individuals from the world of high finance, and in particular the investment bank Goldman Sachs, are now at the head of several governments, in key ministerial positions, and President of the ECB [20].

10. The crisis and the increase in public debt are misleading arguments exploited in the greatest offensive against human rights in Europe since the end of WWII.

Governments and employers use countless deceitful arguments in the greatest offensive in Europe since WWII against the economic and social rights of most people. Increasing unemployment, more and more debt to repay, the constraint of balanced budgets and the competitiveness of the European countries, between themselves, and on the world markets, are all used as postulates to attack and whittle away at social spending and public services. For the Capitalists the agenda is greater insecurity for the workers, to reduce the worker's capacity to

organise and resist, while imposing lower wages and less benefits, at the same time as maintaining big differences between EU workers in order to increase the competition between them, and to precipitate them into the debt trap.

The report '**Safeguarding human rights in times of economic crisis**' by Nils Muiznieks, **Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe** (4 December 2013) draws an unforgivable picture of the consequences of the austerity measures applied in Europe. The sectors of education, health, employment, justice, housing, water distribution, and subsistence are all damaged by the nefarious effects of these policies. Nils Muiznieks stresses the inefficiency of austerity plans and their counter-productive results, which in the long term will cause necessary increases in public spending [21].

Here are the opening paragraphs of the introduction to this important report: *'Europeans are living through the deepest economic recession since World War II. What began as a meltdown in the global financial system in 2008 has been transformed into a new political reality of austerity, which threatens over six decades of social solidarity and expanding human rights protection across Council of Europe member states.'*

Austerity measures have exacerbated the already severe human consequences of the economic crisis marked by record levels of unemployment. The whole spectrum of human rights has been affected and many vulnerable groups of people have been hit disproportionately. Poverty, including child deprivation, is deepening and is likely to have long-term effects.'

11. This is a worldwide attack on Labour by Big Capital.

What wage earners, pensioners and beneficiaries are going through in Cyprus, Ireland, Greece, Spain, and Portugal, among others, was imposed on the populations in developing countries during the debt crisis in the 1980-1990s. In the 1990s, during and after the Reagan presidency, the workers in

North America were attacked, the Thatcher regime in the UK attacked British workers and similar policies were then applied throughout Europe, including in the ex-eastern bloc countries, which were subjected to the harsh policies imposed on them by their governments and by the IMF. According to the International Labour Organisation's Global Wage Report 2012-13 *'In Russia, for example, the real value of wages collapsed to less than 40 per cent of their value in the 1990s, and it took another decade before wages recovered to their initial level.'* [22]. Then starting in 2003-5, although less harshly than in the Third World countries (the World's poorest countries and the emerging economies), the attack turned against German workers. The harmful effects are still felt today by many people, even if Germany exports and the explosion of part-time work has limited the number of unemployed and part of the working class has not been directly affected.

This offensive, which started at the beginning of the 1980s, has intensified since 2007. The International Labour Organisation has analysed a shorter period (1999-2011) and made the following interesting remark: *'Between 1999 and 2011, average labour productivity in developed economies increased more than twice as much as average wages. In the United States, real hourly labour productivity in the non-farm business sector increased by about 85 per cent since 1980, while real hourly compensation increased by only around 35 per cent. In Germany, labour productivity surged by almost a quarter over the past two decades while real monthly wages remained flat.'* [23]. Further on, the ILO indicates: *'The global trend has resulted in a change in the distribution of national income, with the workers' share decreasing, while the share of income earned by Big Capital has increased in most countries. Even in China, a country where wages roughly tripled over the last decade, GDP increased at a faster rate than total wages, and hence the share going to labour went down.'* [24]

Evolution of wages as a percent of global GDP (1980-2011) [25]

Extraction PDF The Turkish State Today

This significant global trend is the demonstration of the increased added-value extracted from Labour by Capital.

12. Illegitimate personal debts

The CADTM has started focussing on a new field of analysis and intervention in the 'debt system'. While whole populations are direct victims of the 'debt system', so are individuals: Indian farmers are being driven to suicide (more than 270,000 between 1995 and 2011 [26]), hoping to free their family from the burden of debt; millions of families are being dispossessed by the repossession of their homes by the creditor banks, mainly in the US (since 2007, 14 million families, unable to pay their mortgages, have been evicted from their homes by banks). The same is true in Spain, where about half a million families have been evicted [27], in Ireland, in Iceland, in several central European countries and the Balkans. Women (men too) are victims predatory micro-credit systems in the South. English, Chilean, and North American students are over-indebted and needy or in downright misery, (the total amount of student debt in the United States exceeds \$1 trillion, the equivalent of the external public debt of Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa combined).

In fact, if one goes beyond appearances, it is not a collection of individual victims of injustice. **These individuals are part of the classes being exploited and robbed by the capitalist system:** the small farmers of the South, urban and rural proletariat of the North and South, educated youth from the working classes ... Among the victims, women are the most exposed to class and gender exploitation: **patriarchy and Capitalism work hand-in-hand to perpetuate a system of oppression and exploitation.**

13. Lower interest rates in the United States and Europe have decreased the cost of debt

in the South, creating a dangerous feeling of security

The lower interest rates imposed by the central banks of the most industrialised countries starting in 2007-2008 [28], in order to help their major private banks and capitalist corporations, resulted in a lower cost to refinance the debt in developing countries. The combined low interest rates and high revenues from the exportation of raw materials have created a dangerous feeling of security for the governments of developing countries. However, the situation may be reversed in the near future: the price of raw materials could drop and interest rates may finally go up again [29].

We must pay careful attention to this situation, and ask the governments in Southern countries to take advantage of the current economic situation that is relatively favourable to their country, and put in place policies in favour of basic human rights and nature protection. In sum, we must make a radical break with the current model of development.

14. Public and private debt has increased throughout the world, and the BIS itself has spoken of the 'debt trap'

Private and public debt have skyrocketed in an extremely dangerous way since the beginning of the 2000s. First, there was an enormous increase in private debt (of financial corporations (banks in particular), non-financial corporations, and households), principally in the most industrialised countries. Then public debt literally exploded because of how the crisis was managed in the interest of Big Capital. In the most developed countries, public debt has increased by about 40% since 2007 [30]. Meanwhile, the debt of non-financial corporations has risen 30% throughout the world. Household debt has decreased (in response to attacks on buying power, jobs, and general living conditions, those 'at the bottom' have paid off their debts). The debts of financial corporations (major private banks in particular) remain the highest (they are much greater than public debt), because their books have not really been cleaned up contrary to the re-

assuring speeches delivered by government leaders. The Bank for International Settlements (BIS), which is a forum for the principal central banks on the planet, launched an alert in its Annual Report published in June 2014 by speaking of the 'debt trap'! Obviously, we are not astonished to learn that the BIS recommends we should continue pursuing neoliberal policies [31], whereas in reality we must make a radical break with them.

15. The debt of developing countries, which represents a tiny portion of world debt, also increased

It is important to highlight that the total debt of all developing countries (internal + external public and private debt combined) represents only about 5% of total world debt. Meanwhile, public and private debt in the most industrialised countries, where only 15% of the world population lives, account for 95% of total world debt. The external public debt of all the developing countries (about \$1.8 trillion), where 85 % of the world population lives barely represents 1% of total world debt. These figures clearly show how easy it would be to cancel this debt.

In reality, more than ever before, developing countries are net financial creditors of the most developed economies. These figures do not include the 'ecological and historic debts' people in developing nations could demand from the dominant classes of the most developed countries (and from the dominant classes in the developing countries, who have been complicit with those in the North).

Overview of the evolution of public debt

Evolution of the external public debt of developing countries from 1980 to 2012 (in billions of dollars) [32]

Extraction PDF Introduction to Marxist Theory:

Selected Writings by Ernest Mandel

* PECOT = central and eastern European countries + Turkey

We observe that external public debt continued to rise from 2000 to 2012, particularly in Latin

America, and in the countries of central and eastern Europe + Turkey (PECOT) as well as in south Asia.

Evolution of the external debt of developing countries and of the resources used to pay it back from 1980 to 2012 (in \$billions) [33]

Extraction PDF "The solidity of a rock and the flair of a perfumer"

Extraction PDF The American Caste System

We observe a constant increase in the total volume of external debt. In terms of repayments, between 2005 and 2012, it is especially the ones made by private companies that increased. That means that private companies (industrial, commercial, banking, and so on) took on large amounts of external debt, and if there is a crisis, there is a very high risk that these debts will have to be paid back by the government, which has already occurred many times in the recent past.

16. Poor countries issue and sell external debt bonds on international markets

Rwanda and Senegal, two poor and heavily indebted countries, have sold public debt bonds on the financial markets of the North. This has never been seen before in the last 30 years. The Ivory Coast, having emerged from a situation of civil war just a few years ago, has also issued bonds although it is also one of the poor and heavily indebted countries. Kenya and Zambia have also issued debt bonds. This testifies to a highly peculiar international situation: the financial investors of the North hold huge cash assets, and faced with very low interest rates in their region, are on the lookout for higher yields. Senegal, Zambia, and Rwanda promise a yield of 6 to 8% on their bonds. They therefore attract financial companies, which seek to place their cash on a provisional basis even if the risks are high. The governments of these poor countries become euphoric and try to make their people believe that happiness is just around the corner although the situation may take a dramatic turn. These leaders are accumulating debt in a completely irresponsible way, and when the economic situation deterio-

rates, it will be their people who will have to foot the bill.

Furthermore, the bonds they issue are linked to contracts including clauses that could be real time bombs. We must require public authorities to make the contents of these contracts accessible to the public.

17. The Fed is destabilizing emerging market economies

When the US Federal Reserve System (the Fed) hinted in May 2013 that it would gradually normalize its policy, there was an immediate negative impact on the 'emerging' economies. What changes were proposed?

1. Reducing purchases of toxic assets [34] from the US banks, made to relieve them of this burden.
2. Reducing the acquisitions of US Treasury Securities from these banks, which the Fed does in order to give them cash injections [35].
3. Raising interest rates (0.25% today).

This announcement itself was enough to lead major financial companies in the US and other countries (banks and their satellites in the shadow banking system, mutual funds, etc.) to pack-off some of their liquid investments from the emerging market economies (EMEs). This destabilized those economies: plunge in stock markets and currency depreciation (Indonesia, Turkey, Brazil, India, South Africa ...) [36]. In fact, the low interest rates prevailing in the US and Europe, combined with the central banks' massive cash injections in the economy, have always set financial companies on the trail of maximum profit by investing in the EMEs, which offer better returns than the North. The outflow of financial investment from the EMEs towards the most industrialized economies can be explained by the fact that the financial companies expected attractive returns in the North as soon as the Fed hiked interest rates [37]. These companies thought that other 'investors' would withdraw their capital from these countries and it was better to act first. A herd mentality response resulted in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Finally, the Fed did not raise interest rates and waited till the end of 2013 to reduce purchases of structured securities and treasury bills from banks. The dust has almost settled.

The situation in June 2013 gives some idea of ?? what might happen if the Fed increases interest rates significantly. The Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the central banks' central bank, says 'Capital flows could reverse quickly when interest rates in the advanced economies eventually go up or when perceived domestic conditions in the host economies deteriorate. In May and June 2013, the mere possibility that the Federal Reserve would begin tapering its asset purchases led to rapid outflows from funds investing in EME securities' (BIS, 84th Annual Report, 2014, p. 76, <http://www.bis.org/publ/arpdf/ar2014e.htm>)

The BIS brings to light a worrying trend: financial companies that invest part of their assets in EMEs do so in the short term. They can swiftly withdraw their funds if they discover other profitable avenues. The BIS says, 'A higher proportion of investors with short-term horizons in EME debt could amplify shocks when global conditions deteriorate. Highly volatile fund flows to EMEs indicate that some investors view their investments in these markets as short-term positions rather than long-term holdings. This is in line with the gradual shift from traditional open or close-end funds to exchange-traded funds (ETFs), which now account for around a fifth of all net assets of dedicated EME bond and equity funds, up from around 2% 10 years ago... ETFs can be bought and sold on exchanges at a low cost, at least in normal times, and have been used by investors to convert illiquid securities into liquid instruments.' (BIS, 84th Annual Report, 2014, p. 77, <http://www.bis.org/publ/arpdf/ar2014e.htm>).

In short, the wellbeing of the EMEs depends a great deal on the policy followed by the most industrialised economies (especially the US, Europe, and Japan). A hike in interest rates in the US may result in a significant outflow of volatile capital invested in EMEs with higher returns in mind.

'In addition, roughly 10% of the debt securities maturing from 2020 or later are callable, and an unknown proportion have covenants that allow investors to demand accelerated repayment if the borrower's conditions deteriorate.' (BIS, 84th Annual Report, 2014, p. 76. <http://www.bis.org/publ/arpdf/ar2014e.htm>) This means that financial companies that purchased debt securities maturing in a relatively distant future (2020 or later) can demand accelerated and full repayment from a crisis-hit country. Obviously, this can only aggravate the situation of an indebted country: all inflows will stop simultaneously. This is another reason why the populations of developing nations need to be aware of the serious dangers posed by their country's public debt. Payment of the illegitimate portion of the debt must be challenged immediately.

The decline in revenues from raw material exports is another factor that might lead to a fresh and acute debt crisis in developing countries, since China – a major consumer of raw materials for its manufacturing industry – has reduced its huge imports. A drop in the price of raw materials can be fatal to the economic health of developing countries, which depend mainly on exports. In this respect, raw materials prices might also drop if the Fed increases interest rates, as this reduces speculation responsible for high prices. The combined effect of a hike in interest rates and a decline in raw material prices could produce a situation similar to what happened in the early 1980s, when the debt crisis exploded in developing countries. It is imperative to learn from that crisis and to act, so that the Southern people do not have to foot the bill again.

18. Vulture funds [38]

Public debt has become the target of the speculative strategies of 'litigating creditors, known as 'vulture funds'. These are private investment funds, most of them located in tax havens, which specialise in buying up debt securities from States that are in default or on the verge of default. They then sue these States in the courts of English-speaking countries, demanding that they reimburse their debt at its

nominal value, with the addition of interest, penalties for late payment, and court costs. Unlike traditional creditors, they refuse to participate in any negotiation and restructuring operation, preferring judicial solutions, and in case of non-payment, seizure of debtors' assets (diplomatic properties, revenues from exports, and various assets invested abroad). Since the 2000s, some twenty States that are among the most heavily indebted on the planet have fallen prey to these strategies, in South America (Argentina, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Peru) and Africa (Sierra Leone, the Republic of the Congo, and Uganda), during major judicial-financial battles that are still in progress today. Since 2007, the phenomenon has been directed against countries in Southern Europe (Greece, Spain, and Portugal). In the future, vulture strategies are likely to prosper in the South and North. Newly issued debts continue to be placed under American or British law, which is favourable to creditors, and certain countries are again contracting debt on the international capital markets and show a preference for indebtedness to China, which will encourage future debt repurchases on secondary markets.

Argentina was in the spotlight in 2014, when the US Supreme Court rejected an appeal by the Argentine government, and ruled in favour of the vulture funds NML and Aurelius, forcing Argentina to pay them \$1.33 billion. Argentina adopted a law on 10 September 2014 aimed at providing it with a mechanism to defend itself against vulture funds. The CADTM would like to point out, however, that the best defence against them consists in refusing to recognise the competence of foreign courts in settling claims with creditors and inserting a clause in contracts stipulating that the local courts have jurisdiction.

19. Citizen audits

In recent years, movements have developed to work towards conducting a citizen audit to identify illegitimate, odious, and illegal debts. These movements in several countries [39] provide an opportunity for interesting and enriching reflection to clarify which parts of public debt should not be paid.

With no claim to being exhaustive, we can propose the following definitions:

a) Illegitimate public debt: debt contracted by government authorities with no concern for the general interest or in such a way as to be detrimental to it.

b) Illegal public debt: debt contracted by the government authorities in flagrant violation of the prevailing legal order.

c) Odious public debt: credits extended to authoritarian regimes or which impose conditions for reimbursement that violate fundamental social rights.

d) Unsustainable public debt: debt whose reimbursement condemns the people of a country to impoverishment and deterioration of health and public education, increased unemployment, or problems of malnutrition. In other words, debt whose reimbursement makes it impossible for government authorities to guarantee fundamental human rights.

A citizen audit of public debt, combined in certain cases with unilateral sovereign suspension of its payment, can enable the illegitimate, unsustainable, and/or illegal part of the debt to be abolished/repudiated and the remaining part to be greatly reduced. It is also a way of discouraging this type of indebtedness in the future.

20. By way of conclusion: the impact of the 'debt system' - more topical than ever

The 'debt system' exploits public resources to pay creditors, to the detriment of people's needs and fundamental rights. The relationship between creditors and debtors is therefore terribly unbalanced in favour of the former. One aspect common to the Latin American external debt crisis that erupted in 1982 and the euro crisis since 2010 is that in both cases the first reaction was to deny the evidence and do nothing. Subsequently, the measures taken are set up in favour of the creditors' interests. In order to try to inverse the public deficit trend and thus be able to pay off the debt, adjustment or aus-

terity policies are applied, whatever the price to be paid by the people, who are victims of the crisis. The creditors, supported by local elites, demand that the debt be reimbursed and that the adjustments be made to prioritise this repayment instead of all social needs, thus negatively affecting people's most basic rights. The measures put in place also prove to be counter-productive, because they only make the problem worse. Excessive indebtedness becomes a structural problem.

The 'debt system' aggravates inequalities. Debt enables a privileged minority to monopolise a series of financial revenues that enable it to increase its wealth permanently. By consequence, the State loses resources necessary to satisfy people's fundamental needs. The richest minority accumulates wealth, inequalities grow, and the increased power of the few enables them to exert greater pressure on public authorities with regard to policies. The rise in debt, and its concentration in a few hands, leads to a redistribution of income in favour of the richest members of society, which in turn is both the cause and consequence of heavier exploitation of labour and natural resources. In response, the CADTM, together with other organisations, argues that it is essential to audit public debt under citizen control in order to clarify its origins and determine which part should be considered illegitimate and/or illegal and therefore cancelled.

However, the CADTM is denouncing the entire debt system. It is the same mechanisms of domination and exploitation that govern public debts and

illegitimate private debts, respectively subjugating people as collective subjects and as lower social class individuals (indebted small-scale farmers, families expelled from their homes by banks, women trapped by the micro-credit system in Southern countries, over-indebted students, etc.)

Of course, cancelling all illegitimate debts needs to be backed by other measures. For example, the socialisation of the banking and insurance sector to transform it into a public service, a radical reform of the tax system in favour of the overwhelming majority of the population, the expropriation of the energy sector and transformation into a public service, a radical reduction of working hours combined with job creation and increases in salary and social benefits, the improvement and extension of public services, the improvement of redistributive retirement pension systems, effective equality between men and women, and radical political reforms including changed constitutional processes. The aim is for these measures to be part of a vast plan for social, ecological, and political transition in order to get out of the devastating capitalist system. The struggle against the 'debt system' as a whole, more necessary than ever in both southern and northern countries, is part of the much broader-based struggle for a world freed from all forms of oppression and exploitation.

Translation by Christine, Snake, Mike, Charlie and Adam. Thanks a lot to all of them !

CADTM

SYRIA

Kobanê, Turkey, and the Syrian Struggle

JOSEPH DAHER ·

New Politics. Regarding the recent events in Kobanê, you have reported on a statement by the YPG General Command (the acronym for the People's Protection Units, the currently recognized army of Syrian Kurdistan), and their fight against Islamic State (IS). The report details their determination to see the fight for Kobanê as the struggle for a free and democratic Syria. How do you read events in Kobanê and the struggle against IS, especially since the United States has not only been directly involved in airstrikes against IS, but has been sending supplies to Kurdish fighters?

Joseph Daher Let me begin by saying, as a question of principle, that we as the revolutionary left current in Syria support the self-determination of the Kurdish people, not only in Syria but also in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran as well, where they have been oppressed for decades. Further, in Syria we should not forget that the Assad regime developed a policy of colonization of northern and northeastern Syria, where the Kurds are very much present. We strongly condemn this. At the same time, we say also that we would like the Kurdish popular forces to become an ally with us, with the democratic and progressive forces of Syria, to build, and to struggle for democratic, socialist, and secular Syria. We are happy to note that the statement of the YPG Armed Forces goes in this direction.

The latest events in Kobanê show once more that even though a U.S.-led coalition has recently strengthened its bombardments on IS forces, the intervention is still insufficient in many ways in protecting the Kurdish forces. The sending of arms is propaganda and solely to avoid a complete massacre of the Kurds. I think from the standpoint of

the imperialist and sub-imperialist states, the issue of Rojava — which is the Kurdish autonomous region — is a problem and a challenge. These states only favor an autonomous region for Kurdish political forces that are submissive to imperialism, like Barzani in Iraq. Turkey does not want to see a challenge to the status quo that began with the 2013 peace process between the PKK and Turkey. If the PKK had bases in Syria, or ties with a sister organization — which is the YPG — it could challenge the status quo with Turkey. This is an important framework to think about when we speak about the U.S.-led intervention. Only now is the intervention taking a more direct form with some assistance given directly to the Kurdish forces by the United States. But it is very, very light. We will see what will happen. Of course, when Washington really wants to support an ally, like Israel — which is a surrogate of imperialism in the region — it really does work effectively.

We should put Kobanê into a framework of the U.S.-led coalition, and also remind ourselves that the Rojava administration is a direct consequence of the Syrian revolutionary process. There is no way Kurdish autonomy could have existed without that process. Kurdish autonomy would never be given by the Assad regime, which is chauvinist and Arab nationalist. The Assad regime has been oppressing Kurdish national rights for forty years. It was the Syrian popular uprising that pushed the regime to withdraw from regions where the Kurds are a majority. And some very good things are happening in these areas, although we should not fetishize them; there are also problems. As a principle we support the self-determination of the people of an oppressed nation, but we can also criticize the political leadership. Just as we support the self-determination of the Palestinian people, but we should criticize very much the Palestinian Authority or

Hamas. This does not stop us from supporting the self-determination of both peoples.

What is happening in the Kurdish autonomous region is far from perfect. There is repression of Kurdish activists and forced conscription — people who refuse are imprisoned. Institutions that criticized the PKK were closed. The PYD — the Democratic Union Party, a Syrian Kurdish political party established in 2003 — like its mother organization the PKK, is not democratic in its internal functioning. We must remember for example the protest movements in late June 2013 in some cities of Rojava, such as Amouda and Derabissyat, against the repression by the PYD of Kurdish revolutionary activists.

But at the same time you have some very positive aspects when it comes to the protection of religious minorities, strengthening women's rights, and secularism. In comparison with the popular councils that were established from below in the liberated areas of Syria by the revolutionaries, which are real example of self-administration, in the case of Rojava it is more a dynamic from above, led and controlled by the PYD. So again, these are the different aspects that you can say about this intervention in Kobanê and how I see it.

But I also understand that the fall of Kobanê will not only be a big loss for Kurds, but for the Syrian revolution as a whole. Any kind of progress towards greater Kurdish self-determination is linked to the deepening of the Syrian revolutionary process. If that revolutionary process is defeated, you can be sure that the Assad regime and Turkey will do everything in their power to undermine any kind of Kurdish autonomy.

NP. The latest news speaks to Turkey's conflicting interests, on the one hand bombarding the PKK, while on the other also allowing Iraqi Kurds to cross the Syrian border to fight ISIS. How do you read Turkey's actions?

JD Turkey's actions are definitely linked to the peace process with the PKK that has been ongoing

since 2013, and its will to control the PKK's process and Kurdish autonomy in southern Turkey. We are very far from peace, and we can see that curfews have been implemented for the first time since 1992 in the southern and eastern regions of Turkey that are majority Kurdish. Approximately 30-35 Kurdish protestors have been killed and a thousand arrested, so repression is still very much present. There is a fear in Turkey that the PKK might get strengthened by Kurdish autonomy in areas of Rojava.

The Turks refused the passage of Kurdish PKK fighters to go to Kobanê, just as they wanted to kick out people that were affiliated with the Syrian PKK, and put them back in Syria. The Turkish government has also declared that the PKK are terrorists similar to IS, while saying that it did not understand why Kobanê was such a strategic city for the USA, a way to criticize the very small assistance given by the Americans to the PYD.

So the solution was, in my view, to allow the passage of a symbolic number of 200 Iraqi peshmerga that are linked to Barzani, who is a Turkish ally. We should not forget that the biggest investor in northern Iraq and Kurdish Iraq is the Turks, and Barzani has been an ally of imperialism for decades. To let the Iraqi peshmerga pass was a way to deal with the Kobanê issue, because they do not want it to fall completely. The Turks wouldn't like to have IS on their border. But at the same time, today the Turkish government said that it was a bad idea for the Americans to send weapons through airdrops to the Kurdish forces in Kobanê. So we can see the double game. Certainly Turkey is not a friend of Kurdish self-determination and Kurdish popular forces. Exactly the opposite, they are an enemy and Turkey sees any kind of strengthening of Kurdish popular forces and Kurdish autonomy as a threat to its own political interests.

NP. What would you like to see happen in Turkey?

JD I would like to see an uprising against the Turkish government and the Turkish army, both of

which represent the different interests of the multiple factions of the bourgeoisie in Turkey. They both use forms of sectarianism and national chauvinism against religious and ethnic minorities, with the objective of dividing the popular classes. So I can only support my comrades and the left in Turkey to build a large and independent, democratic, social

justice oriented organization, opposed to sectarianism and nationalism. The Turkish left must build a strong front, allied with the Kurdish minorities, to challenge the kind of bourgeois interests represented by the AKP and the army.

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BANGLADESH

Caravan for Food Sovereignty Climate and Gender Justice hits the road

TERRY CONWAY ·

Bangladesh Krishok Federation President, Badrul Alam inaugurated the caravan with an introductory presentation on the objectives of the caravan while other leaders such as, Bangladesh Kishani Sabha Organizing Secretary Asma Begum, Bangladesh Adivasi Samity President Sree Biswnath Singh, Bangladesh Agricultural Farm Labor Federation General Secretary Abdul Majid, Friends of Bangladesh(Australia) Member Emma, Ekattri-An Urban Youth Organization President Meghna Alam spoke in the meeting.

Badrul Alam emphasized the question of agro-ecology as an alternative to industrial agriculture. "The earth's future is alarming due to climate change. We need a deep cut in carbon emissions from developed countries, as they are responsible for climate change. They need to pay their historical and ecological dues to the Global South who are most affected by the climate crisis!" he told.

He also said that the main objective of the caravan is to reach out the grassroots people and communities who are facing the serious impact of the climate change. Furthermore, it aims at building awareness among the people on the climate change and building solidarity in South Asia in order to realize climate justice.

The declaration to be formulated with opinion of the grassroots people with regard to alternatives at the end of caravan will be put forward to Lima, Peru where the next UNFCCC takes place in December this year. He urged the policy makers to give up false solutions to climate change like CDM,

REDD+, agro-fuel, GMOs, green economy, etc. The alternative is the proposal coming out of the Mother Earth's Right conference held in Bolivia in 2010 and the proposal of La Via Campesina, an international network of peasants' organizations.

Bringing GMOs into focus

The caravan moved on the next day to Gajipur district, 80 kilometers away from the capital Dhaka. A morning plenary on the issues of GMOs and their impact on the environment and on women at Bangladesh Rice Research Institute(BRRI) where there is a test field of Bt brinjal, a transgenic variety of aubergine [1].Bt. brinjal is banned in India whereas it has been introduced in Bangladesh with the help of Mahico-Indian Pesticide Company and Monsanto.

Presided over by Badrul Alam, the meeting was addressed by Dr. Jiban Krishna Biswas who is Director General of BRRI and Dr. Ansar Ali who is Director (Research) of BRRI, Debika of Pesticide Action Network from USA and others. Speakers questioned the authority for the introduction, approval and commercialization of Bt.brinjal in Bangladesh. They expressed concern with environmental, ecological and health risks of Bt, brinjal. They rejected the optimism around Bt. brinjal as an answer to climate change. People have already witnessed the crops fail. Instead they support the collection of local seeds of brinjal which are protected, conserved and restored by the peasant women in the country out of the grip of the multinationals. They said that the promotion and commercialization of Bt. brinjal would make the peasant women unemployed in the rural areas. President Badrul Alam emphasized that indigenous seeds which has

been promoted by the peasants for thousands of years, which is suitable to the aged old traditional farming method, which is environment friendly.

After the plenary based on the issue the participants split into 4 groups. There were 190 participants in total. Every group went through brainstorming on the GMOs and Bt. Brinjal and its impact on human health, agriculture, ecology and the economy of the country. The participants put emphasis on the local seeds which are sustainable, healthy and safe. The participants in Gajipur had the scope for sight-seeing as well as for witnessing the Bt. Brinjal test field. They also shared the concern about GMOs with higher officials of BARRI in a dialogue in the evening. They proposed to the authority to ban the Bt. Brinjal keeping in view its negative impact.

Crossing Bangladesh

On 12 November 2014 at BADC (Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation) in Madhupur, Tangail there was a seminar on agro-ecology; grassroots solutions to climate change; food sovereignty and indigenous peoples land right. 170 participants attended the seminar. After the seminar the participants divided into four groups. There were significant numbers of indigenous from the area. The participants expressed their concern about the condition of indigenous peoples' rights. They are of the opinion that indigenous people are very close to the nature and preserve the ecology and are the first victims of global climate change. The outcomes of the group discussion were put forward to the plenary again. The participants visited solar water pump and seed processing center in Madhupur. An interaction meeting with agricultural farm labors followed the seminar and workshops. They was also an evening meeting with organic pineapple tillers in Madhupur, Tangail.

On 13 November 2014 in Iswardi, Pabna a seminar was held on renewable energy and zero waste in Sugarcane Research Institute took place. The DG of the Institute Dr, ASM Nurun Nahar spoke the seminar expressing solidarity with the caravan. She

said that they did not promote any GMOs in their institute but are trying to promote sugar beet to increase sugar production of to fulfill demand. Jarrad Sferruzzi from Australia elaborate the impact of the coal based energy production in Australia and advocated renewable energy as an alternative to fossil fuel. He stressed the recycling of waste to respond to climate change.

The president of Bangladesh Krishok Federation discussed the broader aspect of climate change and proposed to UNFCCC to accept the grassroots people's thoughts around solutions to climate change. He said that the real solutions lie in the grassroots consisting of community people. He said adding that use of solar power, windmill, bio-gas, small hydro-electric power generation, charcoal, limited scale geo-thermal power generation can guarantee the clean energy. The seminar rejected the existing energy security based on fossil fuel mining which jeopardizes the usual decoration of nature. He told the audience that nature has become angry to the human being because of over exploitation of it. He also mentioned that extractive industries operated by TNCs are generating the dirty energy which is pushing the planet into destruction instead of energy security. There were 165 participants in the seminar in Iswardi, Pabna. In the end of the seminar, the participants were grouped in into 4 for workshops. After closing of the workshops the participants visited the different sugarcane fields promoted by the institute. The report back of the workshops took place in the field while enjoying the sugarcane juice.

On 14 November 2014 in Sadhuhati, Jhenaidah a seminar was held with the participation of local communities on climate change, climate migrants, grassroots adaptation and mitigation. Badrul Alam and Anna from Sweden led the discussion with 300 participants. The seminar felt that the rights of climate migrants should be protected by the UN convention. Adaptation and mitigation are taking place at different levels in the affected countries but the responsible countries should have deep and drastic cut in their emission levels immediately. They must

pay reparations to the people of the affected country as their historic and ecological dues. The participants asked all South Asian governments to be active in order to realize the reparation for the people affected by climate change. Earlier the participants visited the pesticide and chemical free organic vegetable cultivation and harvested eggplant, cauliflower, beans, etc.

On 15 November 2014 in Cotton Research and Seed Multiplication Farm at Jagadishpur in Chaugachha, Jessore a seminar on grassroots networking in South Asia and next UNFCCC conference in Lima, Peru took place. Badrul Alam elaborated the relevance of grassroots networking for the climate justice. There was a question and answer session at the end of deliberation. Scientific Officer of the institute and other leaders of peasants' organizations spoke on the issues. Three representatives of local non-government organizations also participated in the seminar. The seminar agreed to form a network with grassroots movements existing in South Asia to combat the climate change. A short visit to the agricultural labor in Seed Processing and

Production Farm of BADC in Chuadanga district preceded the Seminar. There was also a short dialogue with the Assistant Director General of the farm.

On 16 November 2014 in the morning the caravan crossed the Indian border to Kolkata, West Bengal. In a week the caravan travelled around 850 kilometers within Bangladesh, crossed 10 districts, stayed in 6 destinations, and touched one station meeting different community people on the way. Throughout the caravan leaflets and booklets were distributed among the local people to make them aware of the objectives of the caravan and the issue of climate change. The whole week was so educational, interactive and experience sharing for the participants. The productivity in terms of lesson-learned was enormous. The impact of the caravan on the locality will be long lasting. People's feelings of sustainability in agriculture will bring fruits. It will contribute to the dream of a peasant based agroecology and help the dreams to come true.

Based on reports on Via Campesina and direct from the caravan itself.

SOUTH AFRICA

The Accelerating Recomposition of South Africa's Political and Trade Union Landscape

CLAUDE GABRIEL ·

A historical cycle has closed. Because at the very beginning of the 1980s, while the mass movement was reconstructed and struggles against the white regime took on a great breadth, two currents of thought disputed for hegemony. On one side the African National Congress (ANC) and its pilot fish, the CP, on the other the trade union leadership born from the growth of a classic industrial proletariat (metals, chemicals, textiles). The first essentially defending a line of national democratic revolution, the latter a line of democratic and socialist revolution. If the activists of the ANC and the CP operated clandestinely within the mass movement, the latter enjoyed a relative legality as trade union leaders.

The tension was extreme during the first part of the decade. While some of these trade unions, grouped at the time within the federation FOSATU (Federation of South African Trade Unions) were trying (in vain) to win hegemony in the townships, the CP complained in its press of "leftists", "armchair revolutionaries", "Trotskyists" and so on. But the objective pressure for trade union unification between those who openly supported the line of the ANC (beginning with the miners' union, the NUM) and those that still posed the question of a Workers' Party and an independent labour movement eventually led to the formation of a single large national federation, COSATU, in December 1985.

Thirty years of rotting

In the beginning, everybody was supposed to retain their right of expression and there was some ten-

sion during the early years between the two "wings" of the movement. Then came the time of the negotiations between the ANC, the liberal bourgeoisie, the West and then with the regime itself, at the time of glasnost and pressure from Gorbachev. Sometimes through naivety, often through opportunism, a large part of the "independent" trade union leadership was converted. Many of their leaders later joined the CP and the ANC, in the name of new times, of the hegemony finally won by the ANC, realism, the sudden democratization of Stalinism and many other reasons mentioned. After the historic elections of 1994, they became ministers, businessmen, chairs of all sorts of bodies with a very high remuneration. Unions such as NUMSA were totally led by members of the CP, supporting without too much trouble the decisions taken in the name of the "first stage" (nonetheless very neoliberal) of the march to "socialism". Union dues were used in part to finance the CP, "natural" spokesperson of the proletariat! Within COSATU as a whole, direct bribery took a hold, turning for example Cyril Ramaphosa, the former leader of the miners' union, into a millionaire and a shareholder in the mines although number two in the ANC.

But time passed: rank and file demands, worsening poverty, broken promises, employers' firmness, the emergence of a new generation in the elected bodies. And then, the last major event, the massacre of 34 striking miners at Marikana on August 16, 2012. The NUMSA congress of December 2013 took note of all this and proclaimed its political break with the government and the CP. No more contributions, no more calls to vote for the ANC and an appeal to other unions to adopt this same line. All covered by a reference to a united front for social-

ism and the objective of an independent workers' party.

What is both damning and stimulating is that we are now witnessing, almost, the same debate as in 1983/85. Thirty years after, the successors of the protagonists of that time are in the same conflict in virtually the same terms. Thirty years lost? Of course not. Because at the time there was a political battle within the struggles, whereas today one of the two camps is in power, uses the violence of the state, expresses the point of view of a deeply corrupt bureaucracy, and colludes with big white capital (which was predictable three decades ago).

For NUMSA, the equation is complex. It cannot simply make reference, as today and in a fantastical manner, to what it believes to be the correct positions of the ANC and CP before the degeneration. It must make this balance sheet and understand that the concepts, for example on the national question ("colonialism of a specific type"), hid since the origin the local adaptation of the Soviet line of the national and democratic revolution involving the class alliances and systemic compromise that we have seen for 20 years. It can no longer think, as the CP claimed and still claims, that the working class is "unique" and its political representation necessarily passes through a single "workers" party. Things are infinitely more complicated in this vast country of multiple social diversities. Finally, a retroactive analysis of the process of bureaucratization is needed if NUMSA wants to turn the page.

What trade union and political recomposition?

The process of organizational clarification is, therefore, only in its infancy. The priority for NUMSA should be first on the trade union front. It is excluded from the COSATU but eight other trade unions inside COSATU have established links with it. The joint meeting which was held with these unions, on November 9, 2014, in the aftermath of

the expulsion, went well and bodes well for a joint collaboration between NUMSA and these unions which are still (temporarily?) COSATU members. A common meeting seems to be emerging for the next few weeks.

In addition, other unions already exist outside of COSATU, like the AMCU (Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union, formed in 1998), located in the platinum mines, as well as the ongoing divisions within COSATU unions, for example in education. A national movement of the rural poor has just been set up. The burning question is therefore that of an alternative trade union grouping, but also its form, its objectives and its internal democracy. For the rest, on socialism and the "workers' party", the confusion within NUMSA's leadership remains very high, between the concept of a united front of anti-capitalist forces and the simple self-proclamation of its own proletarian leadership.

However, there cannot be an escalation of intense social struggles without political forces emerging in parallel. First of all there is the case of the current from the ANC youth, the Economic Freedom Fighters, linked to Julius Malema, who with 6.35% of the votes in the general elections of May 2014 (or 1, 169, 259 votes), account now for 25 seats in the national assembly and are the biggest opposition force in several provinces. The EFF is itself in the midst of a programmatic debate as regards its profession of socialist faith.

Other political forces exist, very active in the trade unions and social movements, and in discussion with NUMSA and the EFF. The map of militant forces and the socialist project has therefore every chance of being different in a few years if not a few months. Without forgetting that there will be government repression in a country where everyday social violence leaves large margins of manoeuvre to the violence of the state itself.

BRITAIN

Left Unity conference – some important steps forward and challenges still ahead

TERRY CONWAY ·

In his TV interview on Russia Today's 'Going Underground' programme, Left Unity Principal Speaker Pete Green summed up the Left Unity conference this past weekend, by rightly situating the discussions there in the context of the Tory claims of a recovery – a recovery which is for the few not the many.

The fact that Labour, despite the occasional commitment with which the left agrees, goes into the election campaign committed to carrying through a policy of austerity and cuts emphasizes the reasons why Left Unity was founded last year, why it has succeeded in winning 2000 people to membership and establishing more than 70 branches across Britain.

Supporting campaigns such as those against the privatisation of the NHS [2], for decent affordable homes for all, against tests created to deprive disabled people of their benefits and standing alongside those survivors of sexual abuse who are demanding their voices are heard in the enquiry into organised abuse by the elite, are part of the life blood of Left Unity.

Internationalism is a key part of the stance of an organisation which took much of its inspiration from the struggles of people across Europe against the austerity of the Troika, Conference listened in rapt attention to Marina Prentoulis from Syriza bringing greetings and explaining the likelihood that her organisation will form the next government in Greece. Left Unity is well aware that in that event, solidarity from across Europe against the bosses and the bankers will be absolutely necessary – and we are committed to mobilizing that solidarity. After the successful speaking tour last month or-

ganised by LU and attended by over 1,000 people, Conference was also inspired to hear that Podemos is at the top of the election polling in Spain.

Left Unity members with our banners and our leaflets were on the streets of London and other towns and cities across Britain over the summer demanding an end to the siege of Gaza and to Israel's murderous assaults on the Palestinian people. Conference complemented that activity on the streets by overwhelmingly passing a motion from Waltham Forest LU supporting boycott divestment and sanctions (BDS) actions in support of the Palestinian people.

Left Unity is an environmental party and agreed a strong policy statement from the environmental commission which commits us to continued campaigns against fracking but also to a serious mobilization for the March 7 demonstration on climate change and for COP21 in Paris in December 2015.

Policy commitments are vital for a socialist, feminist and environmental party such as Left Unity – but they need to be matched by activity on the streets, in the communities and in the workplaces. By combining these two approaches we create a vibrant, sometimes chaotic, internal life

Policy debates

This second policy conference followed earlier debates in Manchester in March and focused on completing policy discussions to allow the new party to elaborate a coherent manifesto for the General Election in 2015 – and to agree a strategy for the election itself.

A packed agenda saw policies adopted on the Environment, Education, Equalities, Crime and

Justice, Internationalism and Social Security which now sit alongside those agreed earlier on the Economy, Europe, Health, Housing, Migration and Trade Unions.

In a generally good -humoured discussion, Left Unity members worked their way through more than 100 pages of policy commission reports, motions and amendments – not to mention a supplementary report from the hard working standing orders' committee of 35 pages, across two days of deliberations. The conference was open to all with only members being allowed to speak and vote – and was live streamed on the internet and recorded, to allow those who were not able to attend in person to follow it.

Inevitably there were moments of contention. Conference remitted the social security policy and its amendments, while passing a lengthy campaigning motion on the same topic which deals with many of the key issues we need to address both on the ground and in our manifesto. While the Education policy commission text was passed a long amendment dealing with a myriad of different questions was remitted – not least because many delegates could not work out how they all fitted together in the time allowed.

In terms of policy, it was in the inevitably wide-ranging international discussion that the sharpest differences existed and were expressed. The strong statement from the International policy commission was overwhelmingly passed, but amendments on the European Union were not agreed.

On the European Union, the issue of contention was not whether Left Unity should campaign now to leave the European Union – the Manchester conference had agreed this was not our stance – but what attitude it should take were a referendum to be called in 2017. Motivating an amendment from Lambeth, Stuart King argued for an abstention, while Fred Leplat from Barnet argued that LU would need to discuss the political context in which a referendum was being called at a conference closer to the actual date. While neither amendment was

carried, it seems inconceivable that this issue will not be raised again.

On the situation in the Middle East conference agreed motions which called for the decriminalization of the PKK, opposed UK military intervention in both Iraq and Syria while opposing the Assad regime and supporting Rojava. They commit Left Unity to campaign for material solidarity for the PYD.

One motion which was agreed further argues that: "The people of Kurdistan and anywhere that is in the path of the IS have every right to resist IS incursion and use whatever means available in order to protect their homes and communities from them". This clearly includes the right to demand arms but conference did not agree that this could also include the right to close air support as one of the defeated amendments had argued.

Internal matters

In its founding statement adopted last November, Left Unity declared itself a socialist, feminist and environmental party. One of the ways in which we have sought to "do politics differently" has been to make the new party one which is genuinely habitable for women – and well as for black people, disabled people, LGBTQ people and for young people.

Within this context there has been a long discussion on the need to adopt ways of organising but also procedures which make clear that the fight against prejudice and discrimination within the organisation is central to how we build the party.

This is a complex task given that no one wants to put up barriers to recruiting new members or to act in moralistic or judgmental ways. At the same time without clear rules and procedures, we are much less likely to be able to create an organisation in which the most oppressed and exploited are supported; including through being able to take on leadership positions at every level of the organisation.

The discussion around Left Unity's proposed 'Safe Spaces' policy which attempts to put such an approach into practice has involved many people and countless changes to both the motivation, the suggested code of conduct and the proposed processes to deal with breaches.

The Communist Platform (the name under which the 'Weekly Worker' grouping operate within Left Unity together with a small number of fellow travellers) has been arguing against the approach outlined here for some months and wrote an alternative motion to conference deleting any political understanding and putting forward an ineffective 'Code of Conduct'.

The Communist Platform motivation on conference floor was extraordinary – arguing, for example, that heckling in meetings was completely acceptable and that people just had to get used to it while suggesting that any problem rests with the complainant rather than the person who they are complaining about. They referred to the people arguing for the Safe Spaces approach as "the safe spaces police" and sought to trivialize the issues that were being raised.

In retrospect perhaps it was a mistake not to ensure more prior discussion, particularly about the aims of the policy, at both leadership and branch level. Further a very late attempt to composite two very similar documents, one of which had initially not been allowed onto the conference agenda which was then accepted through a successful challenge to the Standing Orders Committee report on Saturday, though done with the best of intentions actually ended up muddying the waters rather than clarifying things.

In the end the proposals put forward by the Communist Platform received slightly more votes than the Safe Spaces composite in an eliminating vote, though it was then defeated by vote of the conference. The National Council in December will need to consider how to continue this discussion at every level of the organisation in the future

Conference went on to agree the report and proposals from the LU Disputes Committee. This was also a contentious issue with some, including the Communist Platform, arguing that the Disputes Committee was wrong to have suspended members pending investigation and undermining essential commitments to confidentiality.

Process

The original proposal from the National Council had been that like the two previous Left Unity conferences this would be a one day event which would be entirely devoted to completing discussions on the manifesto topics – with the single addition of the Safe Spaces discussion. Looking back it would never have been possible to complete this business in a single day.

Two things made the last National Council in September change its mind.

Firstly it has become clear that there were some problems in practice with Left Unity's existing constitution. In particular the composition of the Executive Committee is not currently fixed but apart from the officers and caucus representatives includes a rotating portion of both the nationally elected members of the National Council and the regional representatives. Such a fluctuating membership both undermines the political continuity of the EC and also the likelihood of non-officers taking on practical work and so building a broader leadership team. There were additional constitutional issues of concern to different people but this was the core issue.

Secondly in the wake of the referendum campaign in Scotland [3] more members of the National Council had become aware of the progressive dynamic behind the Yes campaign, particularly that exemplified by the Radical Independence Convention. The National Council not only agreed to send a delegation to the RIC conference this coming weekend in Glasgow but also agreed to re-establish the commission on the British constitu-

tion and to bring proposals on this question to conference.

It further agreed to extend Left Unity's conference to two days in order to deal with these additional questions. Looking back, it was an error not to consider the conference agenda in more detail. Even with two days, the objectives we were setting ourselves were extremely challenging. This was compounded by the fact that there were a small number of motions submitted on questions which the National Council had not put on the agenda – on Austerity and Equalities for example and also on Housing (which had already been discussed at the Manchester policy conference in March).

What actually happened was problematic. The LU constitutional amendments were not reached.

On the question of British constitution, the new commission had produced only a draft report and this was in the end also not taken – though the emergency motion from Wigan on the imposition of an undemocratic bilateral deal by the Tories and Labour on Greater Manchester which would give lots of power to a directly-elected Mayor [4] (which had previously been rejected by local people) rather than devolving any real power to local people, was overwhelmingly agreed. The National Council in December will discuss and hopefully agree a proposal for a special National Council in January which will debate the questions of British constitution and democracy. It is essential that this is a well-prepared discussion and Socialist Resistance will carry material on this question over the weeks and months ahead.

Conference also remitted a number of motions in the International section that were not reached; on Ukraine, on Latin America, on Zionism and on general questions of international solidarity.

While the standing orders committee, who did a prodigious job, has the authority to make proposals as to how the conference agenda is structured, in future more work needs to be done by the National Council to shape this in advance. Consideration also needs to be given as to whether there should be

some mechanism for prioritisation as there is in many other comparable conferences.

General Election

For the General Election itself, Left Unity had already agreed to aim to stand a small number of candidates under its own banner. It had sought discussions with other parties with which it has agreement on key questions to seek to develop at least non-aggression pacts and hopefully more developed collaboration. In the run up to conference national discussions had already happened with the Greens, Respect and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

Discussions were already planned with the relatively new National Health Action Party.[Founded in 2012 the NHAP is a party devoted to reversing the privatisation and cuts of the NHS]] On the question of the NHS, Left Unity has strong agreement with that organisation about the need not only to defend the National Health Service against further ravages but to reverse the cuts and privatisations that have already taken place. Conference strengthened that stance by passing motions calling for stronger electoral collaboration but also for support by Left Unity for the NHS Reinstatement Bill 2015, which has the backing of NHS campaign groups.

In terms of the Green Party, the situation is contradictory. On environmental issues and on some other questions, there is a strong degree of agreement between Left Unity and that party, which has grown rapidly over the last year and moved to the left. But there is a major problem as shown by the experience on the ground in Brighton, the one city in Britain where the Greens run a local authority. Caroline Lucas, the local Green Party MP is a valiant tribune of the exploited and oppressed, but the Green Party leader on Brighton council Jason Kitkat is completely the opposite. Since it came to office Kitkat's administration has attacked the terms and conditions of council workers, particular those in the refuse department who have taken strike action; while Lucas supported the strikers.

That's the context in which Brighton Left Unity have agreed to support Lucas' re-election campaign but are also discussing standing Left Unity candidates for the council elections in 2015. This was the context too in which the Left Unity conference did not support seeking a closer working relationship with the Green Party.

But it is relationships with TUSC which have been most contentious for Left Unity since its inception. TUSC is an organisation which brings together two organisations of the far left; the Socialist Party and the Socialist Worker's Party with the RMT union and a small number of independent socialists (some of whom are also members of Left Unity. TUSC is not a political party and in most areas of the country doesn't have any existence on the ground outside standing candidates in elections. Each member organisation has a right of veto within TUSC and the right to select their own candidates and choose where they stand, so it doesn't provide a political home for those who want to campaign and elaborate policies on an ongoing basis. On a number of key policies areas Left Unity has strong disagreements with the positions put forward by TUSC, for instance on immigration.

Left Unity has consistently passed motions to seek discussions and collaboration with TUSC and at least try and agree non-aggression pacts in terms of electoral contests. On the ground in some localities there has been more consistent collaboration. But this has not been sufficient for a small number of Left Unity members who believe that there should be greater collaboration involving subsuming LU within TUSC at a national level. A motion came forward to conference making this proposal which, after a relatively lengthy debate, received scant support.

At the same time, conference did strongly agree a proposal to endorse local collaboration which had not been universally supported by the existing LU officers' group.

The proposal arose from a particular situation in the Hackney South constituency in East London,

where the secretary of Hackney Left Unity Terry Stewart has received local support both within Left Unity and TUSC locally to stand as a candidate on a joint Left Unity and TUSC name against the sitting Blairite, Meg Hillier. Terry has a long record of campaigning activity in the area – against police harassment, against cuts and privatisations, for decent homes for all and in support of LGBTQ rights. His nomination was seconded by a well-known local Kurdish activist – a key community in the constituency. Socialist Resistance has also supported this process and outcome.

Some key activists in Left Unity are concerned that by agreeing this proposal Left Unity is diluting its own potential profile in the election campaign. But with a Left Unity candidate and the provision that we can put out our own election materials on questions such as migration where we have policies which are far stronger – in terms of recognizing the many positive contributions of migrants and therefore supporting a stance of open borders – than TUSC's rather mealy-mouthed 'opposition to racist immigration controls', these fears are in the end misplaced.

What remains for Left Unity to do coming out of the conference, which will be a key feature of the December 13 National Council meeting, is to endorse the list of constituencies in which Left Unity will mount an electoral challenge at the General Election in its own name. At the same time we know that in many areas, branches don't yet feel ready to stand a parliamentary candidate but are proposing to stand for the local council elections on the same day.

It is equally vital that the National Council gives a sense of shape to an election campaign where in some towns and cities there will be no Left Unity candidates – and where in others there are not yet any Left Unity branches. Building on the excellent policies that have been adopted on a whole range of questions, Left Unity needs to work out how to profile our views on each of these campaigns at both a national and local level simultaneously. Acting in concert will gain us a wider audience for our politi-

cal ideas and allow us to strengthen our organisation throughout Britain.

While Left Unity has rightly never seen itself as a purely electoral organisation, a General Election gives a political party a unique opportunity to reach out to the widest possible audience – to people who rightly feel that those doing politics in the same old way have nothing to offer. Doing politics differently doesn't mean not contesting elections – but doing

so in order to give a voice to the voiceless, to champion all those fighting for survival on so many fronts in neoliberal Britain.

The next General Election is likely to be the closest fought for many decades and will be a key political battleground for ideas and an opportunity to build Left Unity amongst a wider audience. The decisions of this conference in the main will take this vital work forward.

The Murderous Spiral in Jerusalem

DAVID FINKEL ·

"We are so kind, we are allowing Arabs to come into our neighborhood and work and support their families," said American-Israeli teacher Lisa Goldenhersch, quoted in the Jewish Daily Forward online [1], referring to the fact that one of the attackers reportedly worked at a nearby grocery store. "And this is what we have got in return."

Shockingly, the paper notes, this attack occurred "in the picture-postcard West Jerusalem neighborhood of Har Nof, miles away from the tense seam line that divides the Holy City." In Arab East Jerusalem, it might be noted, there are no tranquil neighborhoods, no picture-postcard places of safety from marauding settler gangs or Israeli soldier raids.

Secretary of State John Kerry, losing no opportunity to make a pompous fool of himself, proclaimed that "to have this kind of act, which is a pure result of incitement, of calls for 'days of rage,' of just irresponsibility, is unacceptable." What Kerry means by "incitement" and "irresponsibility," of course, is that it's all the fault of the Palestinian leadership. That's the line of Israeli prime minister Netanyahu—directly contradicted by none other than the head of the Israeli security agency Shin Bet, Yoram Cohen, who says the Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas isn't inciting anything.

Kerry didn't mention how Palestinian bus driver Yusuf Hasan al-Ramuni, 32 years old and father of two, was found hanged in his vehicle in West Jerusalem one day earlier. Or how the Israeli police spokesperson announced that "no suspicion of criminal activity was found," borrowing the time-honored custom of U.S. southern sheriffs declaring African American lynching victims as "suicides." Or

what a coincidence it was that this occurred in the wake of multiple attacks by Jewish settlers on Arab taxi drivers in Jerusalem. [2]

The murders in the synagogue immediately became the lead story in world news. The death and probable murder of al-Ramuni was not—it was a third or fourth-place story, and then mainly because of the Palestinian stone-throwing and Israeli soldiers' tear gas and gunfire that followed that followed. How then are most Americans supposed to understand this except as another example of Muslim religious violence?

Twelve of the synagogue attackers' family members were rapidly detained [3], and their Jabal al-Mukabbir neighborhood sealed up with cement blocks. That kind of collective punishment is never inflicted when Israeli Jews kill Palestinians, even when (and if) the perpetrators are arrested

The death spiral in Jerusalem seems to wind downward by the week. Settlers seize Arab homes; Israeli soldiers smash their way into al-Aqsa mosque; Palestinian motorists crash their cars into commuter rail stations, with fatal results. There is talk of a third Intifada, but tragically there may be only a continuing descent into butchery.

Israeli soldiers attacked the Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem, firing tear gas and rubber bullets at worshippers.

Ominously enough, as the provocative influx of Jewish rightwingers into the "Temple Mount" and the synagogue attack indicate, the brutalities are taking on a more religious cast. No doubt about it, life in hell produces bad religion, and bad religion in turn makes the flames of hell burn hotter.

But let's be clear: the cause of the catastrophe is the Israeli Occupation, and the U.S. subsidy that main-

tains it. The worst "incitement" is the behavior of the 500+ Israeli PR team known as the U.S. Congress, jumping up and down whenever Netanyahu obscenely proclaims "undivided Jerusalem" as "the eternal capital of the Jewish

people," thereby insulating him from any threat of sanctions or the elementary requirements of sanity.

19 November 2014

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BRAZIL

History of the Left: Brazil's PSOL – Another Way of Doing Politics

DAN LA BOTZ ·

Tremendous opposition to Brazil's PT establishment has come from both left and right, as seen in the June 2013 demonstrations that swept the country. And in the October 2014 elections, both the left and especially the right grew as a result. The more conservative Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB) succeeded in harvesting much of the discontent that expressed itself in the tremendous demonstrations of June 2013, other rightwing parties have also grown and a number of far right candidates have been elected. Thus we see a polarization of Brazilian society with gains for both the far right and the far left.

On the left, the Party of Socialism and Freedom (PSOL) [1] proved most successful, especially in Rio de Janeiro where it emerged as a real electoral force to the left of the PT. There are also at least two other important far left parties, the United Socialist Workers Party (PSTU) and the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), though they are both less significant electoral forces, the former having received 188,473 votes and the latter 66,615 votes in the recent national election. The PSTU is a more important force in the labor unions, while PSOL has deeper roots in other social movements. There have been proposals for electoral fronts of all three parties in the past, but in 2010 and 2014 PSOL was not an attractive electoral ally because it was too weak, so PSTU ran its own candidates. With PSOL's strength in this election, a left electoral front is more likely, as has already happened in some states.

This article is a companion to another that analyzes the Brazilian elections which will appear in the January issue of New Politics. We look here at PSOL through the experiences of some of its leaders and activists.

The Party of Socialism and Freedom (PSOL), a left-wing breakaway from the Workers Party (PT) that has governed Brazil since 2003, did quite well in the October 2014 election, especially in the State of Rio de Janeiro. The PSOL increased its Congressional representatives nationally from 2 to 3 and state representatives from 3 to 5. The PT's candidate for governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro, Tarcisio Motta, won almost 10 percent of all votes cast. Running for Congress, Chico Alencar was victorious with nearly 200,000 votes as was Marcelo Freixo who received almost 350,000. Luciana Genro, PSOL's presidential candidate won 1,745,470 votes, compared to the party's candidate in 2010 who won 1,144,216. The election results make PSOL the most electorally significant party of the far left. Even more important, however, PSOL used the elections to organize and win new activists to its project.

PSOL represents a different way of doing politics on the far left in Brazil. Unlike most other organizations on the far left, PSOL does not see itself as a party in the Leninist mold, but is rather a pluralistic organization that contains several different political tendencies with different histories. While PSOL has its own clear organization and political program, its members strongly identify with the labor and social movements and feel a strong loyalty to them. It is this melding with the movements that allowed PSOL to have greater success in the spontaneous upheavals of June 2013 and to make a

strong showing in the October 2014 elections. While in Brazil in August, we had an opportunity to talk with PSOL leaders activists in the enormous metropolis of São Paulo, in the magnificently beautiful city of Rio de Janeiro, and in the historic capital of African Brazil, Salvador. Their biographies help to illustrate the pluralistic, multi-tendency character of PSOL.

João Machado - The Trotskyists in PSOL

To better understand PSOL, we asked several of PSOL's leaders and activists to talk with us about their personal histories, their work in the party and in the movement. We start with João Machado of São Paulo, who for decades has been in the leadership of the Trotskyist, Fourth International tendency in Brazil, because he and his comrades were so influential in both the PT and then in the creation of PSOL. Machado, one of the central leaders of *Insurgência* [2], a tendency within PSOL, was born in 1951 in the state of Minas Gerais. He first became politically active in 1965 at the age of 14 during the period of the military dictatorship as part of Catholic youth group led by priest who organized political discussions. When he was 18 in 1969 Machado had entered the university where he became a Marxist and got involved with a group of people who formed the group *Democracia Socialista*.

"We had the idea that we in *Democracia Socialista* could fight for the leadership of the PT until the early 1990s," says Machado. "The PT was moving to the left throughout that period." Then Lula and the PT began to turn in a more conservative direction. "Lula's government never broke with the bourgeoisie. They wanted to get along with the bourgeoisie while introducing some improvements in the social situation. For example, Lula's Finance Minister, Antonio Palocci, adopted neoliberal programs, while the government also increased social programs."

Machado explains how the DS could in the 1990s have had such hopes of possibility winning leadership in the PT and transforming it into a revolu-

tionary party. "We had an alliance between *Articulação Esquerda* [Lula's tendency] and the DS which gave us a majority in the leadership of the PT. Lula wanted to base the party on a broader multi-class coalition and he was in favor of more conservative programs. He was very shrewd would have others present his ideas and when he lost, it didn't hurt him. During that period Lula often lost votes. We on the left were often able to defeat him up until the early 2000s." But by 2003 when it was clear that Lula had moved to the right, the situation could no longer be maintained. DS militants and others on the left criticized and voted against Lula and his allies, and were eventually expelled to found PSOL.

Why, we asked Machado, has the Brazilian capitalist class now become so hostile to Lula, Rousseff and the Workers Party even though they adopted the pro-capitalist neoliberal model? "Under Lula and under Dilma there was an attempt to increase the power of the state in its dealings with big capital, and it was this that led the bourgeoisie to decide to stop collaborating with the PT. They have never felt that the PT was theirs. Now they feel that they could have a president and political party which directly represented their interests."

Returning to PSOL, Machado says, "We are aware that back in the 1980s the Workers Party was founded by grassroots movement, rank-and-file movements of workers, of people on the left, and of Christian groups, both Catholic and Protestant—while PSOL was formed in the early 2000s by an expelled senator and expelled deputies. That is, it began with a parliamentary orientation and with positions which were not as far left as those of PT at the time of its founding. PSOL faced a greater parliamentary temptation. Its virtue is PSOL has not been consolidated, it can improve."

Machado is optimistic about PSOL's future. "We believe that the left opposition is well positioned to be able to dispute power with the PT. We have better politics on environmentalism, and we are anti-bureaucratic, opposed to the bureaucracy not only

of the PT and other parties, but also to the bureaucracy of the labor unions."

Leo Lince – From the Communist Party to PSOL

Others came to the PSOL by other paths. Leo Lince, a leading figure in PSOL's large Rio da Janeiro organization, is a close advisor to Chico Alencar, a PSOL Congressman. Lince told us, "I was born in Goiás, Brazil in 1947. I became a student activist in the university in Goiás, joining the Communist Party of Brazil (PCB) in 1964—the year the military took power—and was involved in clandestine activity during the period of the military dictatorship. The PCB was a small, illegal party, a party that didn't have even one congressman. I was arrested in 1968 at the age of 21 and spent one year in prison. I then went into exile and from 1970 to 1972 lived in the Soviet Union. In Moscow I studied at the university but also attended a Communist training school. When I returned to Brazil there were only two legal political powers in the country: the military and the Party of the Democratic Movement of Brazil (PMBD) that had been established by the dictatorship in 1966. While still a Communist, I became active in the PMBD as a way of doing politics.

"I became part of a group within the Communist Party of Brazil (PCB), a group of about 200 Communists who left the PCB and entered the Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT) in 1989. The group was led by Leandru Konder, a noted intellectual, and Carlos Nelson Coutinho, a long-time PCB leader. That same group, which formed a tendency within the Workers Party (PT), later left to join in the foundation of the Party of Socialism and Freedom (PSOL) in 2004, participating in gathering the 500,000 petition signatures needed to create an official, electoral party. I became part of the national leadership of the PSOL."

Asked why he and his comrades left the PT, Lince explains, "In 2002 the Lula government began to move away from the PT's positions, for example on the question of social security. When they spoke out on this issue, a number of PT leaders and ac-

tivists—such as Luciana Genro, who was the party's presidential candidate in October 2014,—were expelled. There were waves of expulsions. We left and formed the PSOL in 2004. Within PSOL there are groups that have come out of the armed organizations, the Trotskyists, various Marxist-Leninists, Luxemburgists, and the believers in the Theology of Liberation." Lince does not belong to any of the PSOL's internal tendencies; he is an independent.

Brazil today, says Lince, is in a transition period that requires a different way of doing politics. "Hannah Arendt once said, 'We are between "no more" and "not yet".' We are in a time of movement, of dislocation, not just a time of change, but a change of time. The events of 2013 were an expression of this transition period."

"We saw in the protests of 2013" says Lince, "a complete rejection of parties, though interestingly not of PSOL, and in particular not a rejection of Chico Alencar. One of the reasons for this was that PSOL didn't try to put itself forward as the leader of the movement, with huge banners with its name on them, but rather entered modestly as part of the movement. In the book that Chico has just written—*A Rua, A Nação, e o Sonho: uma reflexão as novas gerações* (The Street, the Nation, and the Dream: A Reflection of the New Generations)—there is a programmatic section. He takes the terms for this section directly from the signs carried by protestors in June 2013."

From the Morenistas to PSOL - Ana Carvalhaes

Ana Carvalhaes was born in São Paulo and became active at the age of 17 during the last years of the military dictatorship. She became a journalist working for several important Brazilian newspapers while also earning a master's degree in political economy. She joined the organization of the followers of the Argentine Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno, the group today called the United Socialist Workers Party (PSTU), and worked with them for many years. Through her journalism and her political work she spent five years living in the mining region of Bolivia (in Oruro and Llallagua), a year in

Peru, and six months living in Argentina, and as a result of her journalistic and political work speaks not only Portuguese, but also Spanish and English fluently. A group from the Morenista Trotskyists of which she was formerly a member broke away from the main body in 2002 and became some of the founders of PSOL.

We asked Carvalhaes about the relationship between Insurgência and PSOL. "Insurgência is the result of a merger between several different groups and is affiliated with the Fourth International. We are nearly 700 strong in Rio de Janeiro and play an important role in the Party of Socialism and Freedom (PSOL). We have a representative in the city government. We also have influence in north-eastern Brazil, in the city of Fortaleza where we also have a representative in government there, João Alfredo."

When asked about PSOL's internal life, Carvalhaes explained, "We have in PSOL three tendencies. The first is on the right is called Popular Socialist Action (APS) and they are Stalinists. They are at the moment the leaders of the coalition that dominates the party as a result of a 51/49 vote at our last convention. The second is on the left and includes Insurgência. The third is MES, the Movement of the Socialist Left which is also affiliated with the FI as an observer. Our presidential candidate in 2014, Luciana Genro, comes from that tendency which is strong in the South."

What does Carvalhaes think about being a member of a pluralistic, multi-tendency party like PSOL? "With all its problems," says Carvalhaes, "PSOL is richer than any centralized or vertical party. Reaching any decision or taking any action is difficult. We have to negotiate constantly with all the other groups. But this is a far more interesting and richer process."

We asked Carvalhaes how she saw the enormous social explosion of the June Days of 2013. "The movement," said Carvalhaes, "was the result of discontent as a result of economic conditions. The government of Lula and of Dilma, that PT govern-

ment, had succeeded in improving conditions a little, a very little. But now the people said, 'We want more.' We have jobs and we have wages, but we don't want to pay the high bus fare. One of the slogans of the movement was, 'It's not about the 20 cents.' But it was about the 20 cents. People said FIFA (the World Cup) needs us, but we have needs too, we need health care and education.

"We should be clear that the PT has not overcome the national scandal of inequality. Brazil has a long history going back to the Portuguese conquest of violence, oppression, and inequality, and those issues continue. And inequality is racial as well. We can say that Brazil has a history of 'negotiated oppression' that arose from the Portuguese conquers dealings with the women that they took to bed with them. We have a history of oppression that is based on class, race, and gender violence.

"So we had this social explosion against everything: against the government, the politicians, the labor unions, against all parties, against us. But, interestingly when Chico Alencar or Marcelo Freixo went to the demonstrations, they were embraced. People loved them because they were known and they were there.

"People who are not on the left think that it was a just a youth movement, but it was also a workers movement. At the end of June, a lot of middle class people pulled out of the movement and only the working class was left.

"It's important to understand that in addition to the broad movement in June there were also several strikes. The primary teachers went on strike for months. It was a strike against the mayor of Rio that involved about 10,000 teachers. All of the left groups became involved in it. It was the first such strike in thirty years. There were many demonstrations of thousands of teachers and their supporters and there was solidarity from teachers all over the country. The strike resulted in a draw, but there had been a very large movement.

"Then there was the strike of the garis, that is, the garbage collectors. That strike took place in

February during Carnival and the garbage was piled high in the streets, and the wealthy were surprised that the general population supported the strikers.

"This was followed in May by a strike in the subway system that moves three million people each day. When you shut down the subway, you shut down Rio. The movement was severely repressed with 70 workers being fired and fines against the union."

Anarchists represented a significant current during the June Days. We asked Carvalhaes how Insurgência and PSOL related to the anarchists. "We defend the anarchists who have been criminalized by the government. There are 23 anarchists who were arrested and put on trial. We believe it is wrong to criminalize them and we participate in the movement in their defense. But, we don't agree with their way of behaving. They go to a movement meeting, but they don't feel any sense of responsibility to the collective. They leave and do whatever they want."

In June 2013 there were eight million people in the streets—today Brazil is quiet. What, we asked Carvalhaes, happened to that movement? "The movement in general retreated," she told us. "A part of the movement went to the ultra-left, to the anarchists and the black bloc. A small part went to the socialist left, to groups like the Unified Socialist Workers Party (PTSU) and to Insurgência. The June events and the rise in the class struggle are what made it possible for the various groups to come together to form Insurgência. At one point we had a youth camp (Rua campamento) with over 700 young people."

Asked about the state of social movements today, Carvalhaes told us, "The LGBT movement is the largest and the most important social movement in Brazil and it is really impressive. The environmental movement and the women's movement are both quite small. Though it's interesting that the young women who were involved in the June movement are, we might say, unconscious feminists. For example, they don't allow men to take advantage of them,

and if a man does something inappropriate, they push back."

From the Brazilian Socialist Party to PSOL - Claudio Serricchio

Claudio Serricchio, who works for the national oil company Petrobras and is also an environmental activist. He was a member of the Partido Socialista Brasileira (PSB), then led by Eduardo Campos, before becoming involved in PSOL. We asked him about the Workers Party environmental policies. "When Lula first became president, he appointed a wonderful group of socialist environmentalists, but within a year the group was paralyzed because of the power of economic interests," said Serricchio.

"The Lula government dealt with the problems of drought in the northeast region, imposing a very expensive and questionable watershed transference project from the San Francisco River. There were many investigations and billions were spent, but they did not deal with the issues. The Lula government permitted the introduction of transgenic soy beans and corn for the agro-export business. We see the use of pesticides and insecticides on an enormous scale. Lula permitted the expansion of the nuclear program and the planning of construction of five new nuclear plants and that was only stopped because of Fukushima. The PT has gone backwards on environmental issues," he said.

Serricchio gave expression to the frustration felt by so many in Brazil. "As we saw in the demonstrations of 2013, one of the fundamental slogans was 'Não nos representam.' The legislators don't represent us. We are at a complete impasse. They pass laws only for themselves. They don't pass laws to advance social welfare, health, or education. The big agricultural and pharmaceutical interests are against measures to improve the environmental health of society. We see no solutions at present. People talk about new majorities, but at the moment the people see no way to advance their interests through politics.

We also have the problem of environmental groups that get money from corporations, so that they are more concerned with the money they get from the corporation than they are with the environment. Today it is interesting that the public prosecutors and the environmental courts are more powerful than the environmental movement.

Guilherme Moreira da Silva – A Young, Afro-Brazilian Oil Worker Leader

Guilherme Moreira da Silva at the age of 31 is the leader of a local oil workers union, part of the national petroleum workers union (SINDEPETRO), in Salvador, Bahia. His father worked at the airport and his mother was a homemaker. He was born in Fortaleza where he went to school and met his wife Lidianny in high school. Later Guilherme went to college and studied mechanical engineering and then got a job for the state oil company (Petrobras).

Moreira's union represents eighty technical workers in the State of Bahia where they work in the construction of refineries in the petro-chemical industry.

Moreira told us, "The Brazilian labor movement is very fragmented. It is divided into several centrais (labor federations) and many of these federations have a negative impact on the workers. The most important federation is the Sole Confederation of Workers (CUT) which is affiliated with the Workers Party (PT), but it has become very bureaucratized. Then there is the Confederation of Brazilian Workers (CTB) which is affiliated with the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB). The different groups on the left are involved in these federations, especially the more leftwing federations, and in their affiliated unions.

"First, there is CONLUTAS in which the Unified Socialist Worker Party (PSTU) affiliated with the Morenista international (LIT) is involved as is the Left Socialist Movement (MES), a faction of the PSOL. Second, there is the Intersindical which has about 40 affiliated unions in which the Insurgência faction of PSOL is involved. Third, there is the

Corriente Nacional de Trabalho or CONAT." While there have been attempts over the last five years to merge the leftwing federations, but they have failed. Still Moreira believes it's important to promote unity in the labor left. "In my own Petrobras union, the left—PSOL, PSTU and the CUT left—put up a common chapa or slate. We believe that we can only develop mutual trust and confidence when those on the labor left work together."

Asked about the state of class struggle in Brazil, Moreira told us, "The level of class struggle was very low until last June 2013, then the level of struggle increased but it has been very uneven. The older industrial groups—metal workers and bank workers, for example—have found it harder to mobilize. They have been slow to act. Transportation workers, teachers and others have been more active, fighting both against their employers and their union leaders who have failed to take up their issues.

"In my union and in others, the government's tactic has been to draw the workers into negotiations, offering them a small raise together with a one-time-only bonus, in our case a bonus of BR\$5,000. The bank workers were offered something similar, though as a profit-sharing scheme, a small percentage of the bank's profits. Union members are reluctant to be drawn into fights because they have no confidence in their leaders."

Moreira is also involved in Brazil's Movimento Negro, the Black Movement, which is strong in the state of Bahia where he lives. "Bahia is the state with the greatest black population and Salvador the city with the greatest percentage of black population," Moreira told us. "I work in the Instituto Búzios which brings together the black movement, the women's movement, and the environmental movement. We identify with the Salvador Revolt [also known as the Malê Revolt or Great Revolt] of 1835 that was an expression of the influence of the French Revolution on the African descent population of Bahia.

"Color has an impact. Brazil has an ideology of 'racial democracy,' though in practice such a democracy doesn't exist. For example, in many of the 'shoppings' they do not employ black or brown workers, so we have protests to demand that they hire brown and black workers. The PT government has a Ministry for Racial Equality and they have appointed a very famous and well known black person to head that, but the ministry does not have a very large budget or strong administration. We mostly see photo-ops not action.

"There are racial quotas in the schools and in competition for public employment. When those quotas first went into effect about ten years ago, suddenly many more people said that they were black.

"The areas where the black movement is strongest are Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, and Sao Paulo. There was a black movement in the 1960s and 1970s that created the Movimento Negro Unificado, the Unified Black Movement, and, while that still exists, it is not as strong as it once was. Five years ago there was a National Congress of the Black Movement that brought together many organizations including religious organizations that practice the *condomblé* religion and black women's groups. Unfortunately the administration succeeded in dividing that group, winning some to work with the government.

"The Movimento Negro is an organization for *formação política*, that is, political education and training. We educate about history and current issues of the black movement. We are currently planning to participate in the Second International March against the Genocide of Black People. Our movement has been influenced by the Black Panthers in the United States and by other experiences in other countries.

"The Movimento Negro is made up of diverse groups. Most are not socialists and some believe that one can abolish racism without abolishing capitalism. We socialists believe that we must abolish capitalism in order to abolish racism."

PSOL, as we noted, represents a new way of doing politics in Brazil, one based on political pluralism. We might end by remembering Ana Carvalhaes' words: "With all its problems, PSOL is richer than any centralized or vertical party. Reaching any decision or taking any action is difficult. We have to negotiate constantly with all the other groups. But this is a far more interesting and richer process." The question is whether this richer and more interesting process can also be more effective.

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HONG KONG/CHINA

The Umbrella Movement and the 1989 Democratic Movement: Similarities and Differences

AU LOONG-YU ·

The Goal

How to tackle the Hong Kong-China relations has always been a conundrum for the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement since the 1970s. There are three different attitudes in the current movement: the first one is advocating that Hong Kong should separate itself from China and forget its Chinese nature; the second one is advocating that the movement should link itself with the pro-democracy movement in Mainland; the third one is a wait-and-see attitude. Most pan-democrats, the social activists and also the HKFS (Hong Kong Federation of Students) have always supported the Mainland Chinese democratic movement, as is shown by the fact that they all actively take part in the annual 4 June Memorial. Strangely, they often completely separate these activities from Hong Kong's own pro-democracy struggle. Those who led the chanting of "build a democratic China" slogan in the annual 4 June Memorial are not keen on bringing this same slogan into the "1 July" demonstration (Hong Kong's annual pro-democracy march). This separation of democratic aspirations for Mainland China and for HK is getting more visible now when the right or far right localists are rising.

The mass base of the movements

In both movements, students played a vanguard role and subsequently inspired the working people

to take part in. But the Umbrella Movement took the step of mobilizing workers at an earlier stage. Although the student demonstrators in 1989 welcomed the support from the general public, they deliberately avoided contact with the Workers' Autonomous Federation and showed little interests towards the issues of people's livelihood. The student leaders only called for strikes several days before the government crackdown on 4 June, which was too late. Conversely, the HKFS always maintains a good relationship with the trade unions and often raises the issues of people's livelihood. This alliance between Hong Kong's students and wage workers could become a significant force. However, the unfortunate fact is that the congenital weakness of the trade union movement in Hong Kong made the previous call for strike not so successful.

The sign of a combination between student and trade union movements has appeared in recent years: students began to participate in the May Day march. It is worth noting, however, that universal suffrage and people's livelihood are always seen as two separated issues: the demands raised in the May Day marches were not necessarily mentioned in the "July 1st" demonstrations. This also applies to certain trade unions, although things have improved a bit in recent years. This gap has not been consciously filled in the Umbrella Movement. Although some groups have raised the labor issues in different scenario, the dynamism is not strong enough to make these issues the official demands of the movement. This continues to limit the movement's capacity in attracting more grass-root support it deserves.

Background

Nevertheless, the major cause of the two movements is precisely the antipathy to the extreme polarization in social wealth. In 1989, students mainly focused on the political aspect, but the general public's posters and slogans also targeted the corrupted CPC officials who pocketed public wealth or expressed the discontentment towards low wage. A similar discontentment, especially towards youth poverty, exists in the Umbrella Movement as well. The denouncements of the excessively high housing price and the oligarchy of the big developers are clear evidences.

Similarly, knowing this background is necessary for understanding the occupiers at Mong Kok, who are more proletarian and brave than those in Admiralty. In battling the police, those people, who are always at the bottom of the heap, suddenly felt that they had gained the power to change their destiny. "We beat back the cops" gave them a taste of collective power.

Leadership

The 1989 Democratic Movement was a sudden outbreak of mass actions. Its leadership was constantly changing and the decisions to retreat were often overturned by new leaders. The growing number of students from outside Beijing also created different tendencies: the Beijing students were tired and wanted to retreat; but those new comers from different provinces said they would not retreat because they had just traveled a long way to get to Beijing. The longer the movement lasted, the more it was subjected to spontaneity. So at that time people said the movement was just following the demonstrators' instincts, which sowed the seeds of defeat.

The Umbrella Movement has better congenital conditions. Unlike in the Mainland, people in Hong Kong enjoy political freedom, which means they were not completely unprepared before the outbreak of the movement. However, the long existed pan-democratic parties could not provide any leadership at all from the beginning; the HKFS's leading role only took place at the early stage of the

movement. Then the Umbrella movement also ended up with "following the occupants' instincts" as it is more and more leaderless.

Development

The 1989 Democratic Movement showed declining signs in May. The demonstrators might have dispersed by themselves if the government had not provoked public anger again by declaring martial law on 19 May. Similarly in Hong Kong, without the sharp crackdown on 28 September, it is arguable whether the student protest would have become today's Umbrella Movement. Consequently, the suppression-resistance cycle can potentially force the government to become divided or even to split. In various degrees, this scenario appeared in both the two movements.

The Hong Kong government has been taken a dovish line after 28 September, which allows the occupation to continue. However, the longer the occupation lasts, the more weak points of the movement have been exposed. The basis for a united movement is in fact very fragile—people who participate in the movement often demand quite different things. When the three initiators of Occupy Central with Love and Peace announced the official start of the occupation in the early morning of 28 September, the crowd did not cheer, instead half of the protesters left the site. If the police had not fired 87 rounds of tear gas later in the day, the Umbrella Movement probably would not have lasted so long. Although the movement has become a long term occupation, the basis for unity has not been consolidated. A *Mingpao* survey published on 20 October states that the demonstrators do not have a consensus on the conditions of retreat. Now the occupation has lasted for more than a month, but the central government shows no sign of compromise. In order to get out of this impasse, the movement must either escalate its actions or carry out a tactical retreat. Nevertheless, calling for retreat will give the far right excuse to attack, while it is also hard to escalate.

Denouement?

The 1989 Democratic Movement's denouement had two aspects. One was the bloody crackdown. The other one was the thorough purge after the movement, which was more fatal because the CPC had successfully wiped out the voices of democracy for an entire generation.

Hong Kong has a much better political environment. A crackdown here won't be as brutal as the one in 1989; I explained this in one of my articles last year. Neither could the SAR government elimi-

nate the pro-democracy force altogether. However, this does not mean that the occupiers should throw caution to the wind.

Anyhow, the Umbrella Movement is at least the rehearsal for a future even greater democratic struggle. Hong Kong will never be the same.

8 November, 2014

*This is a translation of the Chinese original, published on 19 November in **Ming Pao Daily**. It is slightly revised for English readers.*

CLIMATE CHANGE

U.S.-China 'climate' agreement: too little, too late, and dangerous

DANIEL TANURO ·

This comes only a few weeks after the publication by the European Union of its own objectives for reducing emissions. It increases greatly the chances that the conference on climate change in Paris at the end of 2015 (COP 21) will not be a remake of the Copenhagen conference (2009) but will result in a proper international agreement.

But at the same time, the general content of the commitment signed by the two biggest emitters of greenhouse gases confirms an even larger probability that this international agreement will be ecologically insufficient, technologically dangerous and thus socially unfair.

China's commitments

Let's start with the Chinese side of the agreement. The text presented in Beijing by Barak Obama and Xi Jinping stipulates that "China intends to achieve the peaking of CO₂ emissions around 2030" and intends to "increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 20% by 2030". In order to judge this promise you must know that "zero carbon" sources in China represent in 2013, 9% of the primary energy consumption and the 12th five years plan aims at 15% in 2020. An extra growth of 5% in the next ten years is not a big performance: 65 billion dollars have been invested in "non-fossil fuels" in 2012. One must also know that "zero carbon sources" is not the same as "renewable sources".

The energy produced by the big hydro-electric dams and nuclear plants is not renewable (the dams will be filled by sediment, the uranium reserves are limited). But these energy sources are

considered as being "zero carbon" or as "low carbon". In April 2014, China had 20 working nuclear plants and 28 plants under construction (2 of them being EPR). The nuclear program was suspended after Fukushima, but it has now been restarted: the nuclear capacity will be tripled in 2020...

And finally, we should know that, according to the IPCC, in order to respect the 2°C limit and taking into account the differentiated responsibilities of the different groups of countries ("developed" , "emerging" and "others"), countries such as China should increase their energy efficiency – which means decrease their relative emissions – by 15 to 30% (depending on the level of development). With the objective of 20%, China remains at the lower level of this objective.

The U.S. commitment

Let us now look at the commitments by the U.S. According to this agreement, the United States intends to achieve an economy-wide target of reducing its emissions by 26%-28% below its 2005 level in 2025 and to make best efforts to reduce its emissions by 28%. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in 2005 the United States released 7.254 Gigaton (Gt) of greenhouse gases. A reduction by 26% in 2025 would mean that emissions go down to 5.368 Gt (and 5.223 Gt for 28%).

Several elements have to be taken into account in order to understand the meaning of this objective:

- According to the Kyoto protocol (signed but never ratified by the USA), Uncle Sam should have reduced his emissions by 8% in 2012 in comparison with 1990. This means that emissions should have gone down from 6.233 Gt (figure in 1990) to 5.734

Gt. But emissions rose at an average rate of 0.2% per year reaching 6.526 Gt). In other words: Obama pledges if achieved would take us to a place which is only **a small improvement in 2025** than the objective the USA should have reached **two years ago**.

- Emissions have been increasing in the U.S. between 1990 and 2005, after which they declined by 1.4% per year on average. This decline is in part due to the use of shale gas replacing coal in electricity producing plants. According to this agreement, emissions would go down from 6.526 Gt in 2012 to 5.368 Gt in 2025, or a reduction of 96 Gt per year – exactly 1.4%. In other words, Obama promises simply to maintain the current rhythm of lowering emissions ... thanks to the catastrophic exploitation of shale gas [1]

- And last but not least: in order to keep a reasonable chance not to go beyond the 2°C, and respecting the principle of "differentiated responsibilities" of the different groups of countries, the emissions in the developed countries should, according to the IPCC, decline by 25 to 40% from now until 2020 in comparison with 1990. In the case of the U.S. this would mean aiming at emissions between 4.665 Gt (- 25 %) and 3.740 Gt (- 40%) ...in 2020. Compare this with the agreement: 5.368 Gt emissions in ... 2025.

Nuclear energy, shale gas, capture and sequestration ...

Let's look at the means the U.S. and China will use to reach their objective. The text of the agreement is clear: "The two sides intend to continue strengthening their policy dialogue and practical cooperation, including cooperation on advanced coal technologies, nuclear energy, shale gas and renewable energy, which will help optimize the energy mix and reduce emissions, including from coal, in both countries."

The term "advanced coal technologies" refers to the geological capture and sequestration of CO₂. In earlier articles I already pointed to the fact that this technology of the sorcerer's apprentice is being im-

posed as THE capitalist (and hence false) compromise solution between the fight against global warming and the interests of the fossil fuels multinationals.

The agreement between China and the U.S. confirms this analysis. Indeed, the agreement mentions the following: "establishment of a major new carbon storage project based in China through an international public-private consortium led by the United States and China to intensively study and monitor carbon storage using industrial CO₂ and also work together on a new Enhanced Water Recovery (EWR) pilot project to produce fresh water from CO₂ injection into deep saline aquifers;"

In other words: the two major coal producing countries China and the U.S., want to continue to burn their enormous stocks of coal (200 to 300 years at the current rate of consumption!) by storing the CO₂ resulting from this combustion, into the soil.

Capture and sequestration is one of the geo-engineering techniques imagined by those doctors Strangelove who consider capitalist growth as a law of nature, even more unavoidable than the laws of gravity ...

The risks of the capture are real, beginning with the danger of massive CO₂ leaks in case of an earthquake (which could, according to some, even be provoked by such capture!). But nothing should hinder the pursuit of profit. The U.S.A. will deliver the technology and China the locations for the sequestration. And under the leadership of the "Communist Party", the workshop of the world will be able to continue to use fossil fuels for the production of cheap commodities to be sold massively on the western markets. Injecting CO₂ into saline aquifers, will allow them to recuperate this water, which, once it is being desalinated, will constitute a precious exploitable resource ... of course to be paid for in hard currencies.

These crackpots who rule the world...

According to this system, the fight against climate change is only conceivable if and to the extent that

it allows business to be made. If this is the case, it proves that it is good policy, no? Just like the agreement says: "The global scientific community has made clear that human activity is already changing the world's climate system."(...) "At the same time, economic evidence makes increasingly clear that smart action on climate change now can drive innovation, strengthen economic growth and bring broad benefits".

Let's go for those profits and don't listen to the Cassandras.

This agreement between China and the U.S. reminds one of the famous sentence from Churchill:

"Too little, too late". This is really the situation and herein also resides the danger of its violent antisocial dimension. We should continue to explain: it is the poor who will pay for global warming (this is already happening!) and this price will be colossal. Let us mobilize with our organisations, our unions, our women's and our youth movements. Lets make those crackpots who rule the world, retreat. Together we should impose an energy transition which is at the same time efficient ecologically and socially just.

14 November

LCR-SAP

Catalonia: After 9-N, where will it end?

JOSEP MARÍA ANTENTAS ·

At the same time an act of sovereignty and disobedience, 9-N marks a turning point in the cycle opened in 2012. The Spanish government has not been able to prevent the holding of a democratic and massive event, making clear its inability to actively confront a political challenge of more profound significance than what was initially expected. But at the same time, it was not an act of institutional and legal rupture from Catalonia that precipitated the events decisively, but a last minute improvisation that it has allowed a consultation that was not merely testimonial, but that does not open an unequivocal future scenario. The future is never written in advance, and even less so in this case. There are still many unexpected twists, and many detours for all parties to circumvent. Many paths but also many possibilities.

The results of 9-N, 2,305,290 million votes, show the strength of the civic and democratic impulsion behind the sovereignty movement. The participation was, without doubt, a success, in view of the institutional obstacles and the lack of formal recognition of the consultation. What was also clear was the consistency of the "si-si" bloc (1,861,753 votes), the voting option that today has most democratic potential, to constitute a clear and seamless break with the current institutional framework, and a consistent federalism from below that rests on the recognition of Catalonia as a sovereign political subject.

Separatism has become hegemonic, but without having an overwhelming absolute numerical electoral majority, but processes of change often do not

start from absolute numerical majorities, but broad active minorities (or pluralities), around which a block of political and/or social transformation can be structured.

But in the logic of referendums the quantitative majority is key. Certainly an important part of Catalan society remains outside the sovereignty process. Both mistrust and indifference coexist, as does opposition to the same (in general passive with little will to mobilize, being expressed electorally in the support for Ciutadans and the PP, but which could be activated in the event of an officially recognized consultation). The lack of explicit social content of the sovereignty movement is the most important handicap in mobilizing those who regard it with suspicion. If the demand for independence was partnered with some basic emergency proposals to tackle the social crisis, things could be very different. Then the clash with the economic policy of Mas would be very clear.

He was forced in September 2012 to surf on a wave of pro-independence feeling that threatened to drown him. Inversely to the fears then awakened, Mas has not been able to capitalize on the process, and his electoral decline has been unstoppable since then. In these two years, the president has not controlled the process by putting forward his own agenda, although his privileged institutional position has allowed him to play with an advantage and seize on the strategic weaknesses of the ANC, focused on a policy of pressure on Mas, but without questioning his leadership.

And, when he seemed most cornered, the proposal of the "new 9-N" opened an unexpected track that has given him an unforeseen boost. This wrong-footed an ERC that was intent on pushing Mas into an open institutional confrontation, in which he would have moved with much care due to the na-

ture of his social base and his party, or capitalize on an eventual capitulation before the state by Mas. There is no doubt that the success of 9-N clearly reinforces the president politically, and that he will take advantage of this to try to force the ERC into a joint list or to retrieve his position in the polls and risk elections alone, or just to play for time if there is no other option.

With the legislature and the process begun in September 2012 having reached its culminating point, the call for elections seems to be the most logical exit to open a new post 9-N and ensure that the democratic aspirations expressed in the consultation are not frozen. We should, however, differentiate ourselves from Mas's claim to give a "plebiscite" (or "referendum") character to these elections, and postulate an alternative strategic proposition of "constituent elections". Although the term is very imprecise and is used with different meanings by a wide range of forces, it expresses, albeit in a generic intuitive manner, the willingness for a political process of democratic refoundation of Catalonia.

Rejecting the plebiscitary logic implies opposing a possible "national" unitary list. This is usually justified on the grounds, self-interested or naive depending on the case, that it is now time to leave behind the partisan interests. But the notion of a unitary list is precisely due to the partisan interests of a CDC that needs to avoid electoral defeat or, at best, a very precarious victory propelled by the personal success of Mas with 9-N. The proposed unitary list is, first and foremost, a takeover bid by the CDC over the ERC and, in the (unlikely) event that is accepted, a takeover bid towards the other forces.

Make no mistake: elections are not a consultation. They do not decide a single issue alone. They decide on models of society and proposed political alternatives. A possible government and parliamentary majority that emerged from a unitary "national" list would have to take decisions every day on health, education, public order, environment or transport.

Would this patriotic government cut health and education? Would it open commissions of inquiry in parliament on sensitive cases of corruption? It is impossible to support a candidate who is not clear on this. We are not all in the same boat. Catalan society is traversed by divisions and contradictions. In it there are the victims of cuts and cutters, the evicted and the evictors, the dismissed and the dismissers. A rhetoric of patriotic unity that subordinates the interests of the majority to the financial minority is worthless.

As a whole, the sovereignty movement expresses a great democratic potential. After the demand for independence, there is a strong democratic aspiration, which is common to all struggles today, to be able to decide and to be able to control your own destiny, at a time in which this appears bleak and dismal. In the absence of other alternatives, independence appears as a specific way out of the current crisis, a credible and tangible proposal of a possible future that does not appear diluted by a present of endless crisis.

The bulk of the middle and popular layers that defend independence do so because they think that they will live better, because it will be the starting point for building a country which is more just and solidarity-based and an option to wipe the slate clean. But, paradoxically, independence per se, as defined by the main actors in the sovereignty process guarantees none of this. In an independent Catalonia in the hands of the CiU or ERC, where the weight of the families and businesses that dominate the country remains intact, little will change. The construction of a Catalan Republic opens up possibilities, but does not guarantee their consummation. To do this it will be necessary to extend the logic of a sovereign democratic impulse to extend the right to decide to all areas. Something which is, of course, the opposite of Mas's project.

In reality, the potential for social change that the process opens can end up fading away if we do not articulate a broad political bloc of rupture that weighs decisively in Catalan politics, and promote the need to promote a democratic and constituent

process from below (not from above and technocratic) which embodies another vision of Catalonia. Even without guarantees of success, the instability of the whole Catalan political system entails opportunities that, unfortunately, do not always arise and

will not be repeated very often. Thinking and acting strategically, in accordance with a moment as exceptional as the current one, becomes, then, the main challenge ahead of us.

TUNISIA

Parliamentary elections

DOMINIQUE LEROUGE ·

The future government

The government will not take power until early 2015. But before the end of November, the Prime Minister proposed by Nida will be in charge of putting it together in the following month, or even two months. Endless haggling is therefore to be expected because Nida does not have a majority in the Assembly. The President of Nida had said before the election that he would go in the first place to the three small parties with which it had originally decided to stand for election. But the latter did not win any seats. Declaring at the time that he wanted to broaden this alliance to "the parties sharing the same vision and the same plans as ours", he had simultaneously answered by an enigmatic pirouette the question whether the latter could include Ennahda.

An electoral advance for the left

Unlike October 2011, the bulk of left forces were united for the elections. The number of elected members of the Front Populaire increased from 6 to 15, including 6 from the Workers' Party, 4 from the United Democratic Patriots, 2 from the LGO, and 3 Arab nationalists. Strong pressure will be exerted on the Front to vote confidence in the future government, and even participate in the latter, or vote for the budget. For relaying its demands, the population can also count on some elected independents, like for example Adnan Hajji, an emblematic figure from the mining basin of Gafsa.

A strong commitment to "turn the page on 2011"

Nida has the project of Tunisia fully resuming its place in the policies desired by foreign and Tunisian investors, the IMF and the World Bank. In continuity with previous governments, this involves:

- Continuing to pay the foreign debt,
- Developing free trade in the agricultural sector, services and public contracts,
- Lowering taxes on the profits of corporations,
- Privatizing companies confiscated from the Ben Ali clan,
- Continuing the squeeze on social spending in particular by reducing subsidies to basic needs products.

The place of mobilization

After having been relegated for almost four years by bipolarization between "modernist" neo-liberals and neo-liberal Islamists, the social question will therefore return to the first level. In this area, the attitude of the UGTT will play a decisive role. In 2012 and 2013, its leadership was mainly absorbed by its willingness to peacefully remove the Ennahda government. Hence its motor role in the establishment of the consensual framework which led in January 2014 to the adoption of the Constitution and the establishment of the provisional "technocratic" government responsible for preparing the elections.

This policy was accompanied by amicable relations with the employers' organization, UTICA. Now that the political objectives the UGTT fixed have been for the most part achieved, it remains to be seen how the relationship of forces inside it will develop, between those who do not want to "obstruct" the future government in the name of the "national in-

terest", and those who consider that the resolute defence of the interests of workers remains the basis of trade union action. It also remains to be seen how the associative and trade union political left

will meet the expectations of those who have been the engines of the revolution: the youth, the unemployed, the workers, women and the poor of the interior of the country.

EGYPT

Mahienour al-Masry: Icon of a Revolution

NOHA RADWAN ·

They also rejected the patriarchal model that aims to transform women into domesticated dependent members of a repressive family structure and reduce their social roles to being good wives and mothers. The result was an abundance of women who were full participants in all the activities that transpired between January 25th and February 11, 2011 and led to the ouster of Mubarak.

Today, even though the Tahrir sit-in no longer exists and the square itself is more often than not circled by army vehicles to bar all forms of dissent and resistance, for many women activists the spirit of the sit-in lives on.

Egyptian women have paid an excruciating price for their participation in political movements of dissent. From as far back as 2005, Egyptian police have been targeting women with multiple forms of sexual abuse that begin at the sites of the street rallies and marches and continue and escalate to full-scale rape in police custody and in prison.

Yet in the face of these horrors, women have continued to work for the goals of the revolution and to exercise their right to be fully engaged with the resistance to all forms of repression. One such woman is Mahienour al-Masry, a young lawyer from Alexandria.

Mahienour was active in the resistance to state repression and police abuse even before 2011. Alexandria activists have known her since the protests to the brutal murder of Khaled Said during his arrest by the police in 2010.

During the last four years, Mahienour has been ceaselessly working with and in support of hundreds of other activists. Besides organizing and taking part in protest action, she has also been visiting

jailed activists providing legal and financial support, visiting families of those who lost their lives to the struggle, networking, fundraising and organizing to give these families both the material and moral support they very much need.

Sentenced to Prison

In November of last year, a new "protest law" was added to the Egyptian constitution, which was being amended following the ouster of President Morsi by the military. The law in effect bans all forms of protest assemblies, rallies and marches.

Activists organized several rallies to protest this law and the government, rallies that often ended with the arrest of the participants. Naturally, Mahienour was at the forefront of several of these rallies.

This past May, Mahienour and nine other activists were sentenced to two years in prison on account of an assembly that took place in December 2011 outside the courthouse where the murderers of Khaled Said were being tried. Mahienour's friends wrote to her every day, messages that at the time she could not read. She has also recently received the 2014 International Ludovic Trarieux Human Rights Award, which is annually awarded to advocates of human rights.

From behind bars, Mahienour had become the proof for many that something of the revolution of 2011 refuses to be defeated, that it will not all come to naught. On September 21st, while the mass campaign for hunger strikes in support of the political detainees was escalating both in Egypt and abroad, the court ordered Mahienour's release and suspended her sentence.

As her fellow activist Alaa Abd al-Fattah, who was released a few days earlier while on his own hunger strike, tweeted, there is no real judicial system in

Egypt nowadays. All decisions are political and arbitrary. Mahienour's (and earlier Alaa's) release still remain one hard-earned and badly needed

small victory for the beleaguered revolutionary struggle in Egypt.

EGYPT

Protesting Injustice

NOHA RADWAN ·

In the latest of numerous campaigns seeking justice within the Egyptian judiciary system, more than sixty of Egypt's political prisoners began hunger strikes in August. Tens of other activists and public intellectuals are also partaking of the strikes in solidarity with the prisoners as part of the campaign that has been dubbed "gibna akhirna" or "we have reached the end of our rope."

The precarious and therefore particularly courageous nature of this wave of hunger strikes is easy to see in light of the case of Mohamed Soltan, a 26-year-old United States citizen of Egyptian descent, who was arrested in the wake of the massacre of the Rabaa sit-in of August 2013.

Soltan has been on a hunger strike since January 26th in protest of his continual detention and maltreatment. His decision to strike was taken after his first court date which itself came after a four-month period of detention without charges stretching from August 2013 to January 2014. His family reports that he was severely abused during this period.

In January Soltan was charged, together with 50 other defendants including senior members of the Muslim Brotherhood, with spreading false information and funding the Rabaa sit-in. To this date, these charges have not been proven and no verdict has been issued. Several court dates have been set, only for the judge to postpone the trial.

Soltan, who graduated from Ohio State University in 2010, has made appeals to the U.S. government to intervene on his behalf, and similar appeals have been made by his supporters in a few American cities.

There has been no response from the American or Egyptian governments, in spite of several medical reports that have confirmed Soltan's deteriorating health and imminent danger to his life. As of October 11, he is in critical condition and the trial adjourned until the 15th.

While Soltan's case is made urgent by his worsening medical condition, it is certainly not exceptional. According to some counts, the number of political prisoners in Egypt exceeds 41,000, the majority of whom are either in detention awaiting trials or have been sentenced in cursory trials that barely maintain a semblance of justice. Detainees and their families report horrific conditions of filthy overcrowded prisons and abusive treatment.

Drive to Silence Dissent

Although most of those arrested immediately in the wake of president Morsi's ouster by the military in July 2013 were charged with belonging to the recently outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, the government of president al-Sisi has since moved swiftly towards the incarceration of a wider spectrum of dissenters including Islamists and secularists alike.

The arrests, detentions and inhumane treatment of political detainees have been part of a larger state policy to silence all forms of dissent and to corral public opinion behind al-Sisi, the Egyptian army, and the police. It is now quite obvious that while members of the Muslim Brotherhood and supporters of ousted President Morsi continue to bear the brunt of state repression, what started as mass arrests and murder of Islamists has become a more inclusive and wider-scoped totalitarian strategy.

A hastily formed committee charged with amending the constitution ratified an anti-protest law that criminalizes virtually all forms of street protests,

including the most non-violent. In December, the same month the Muslim Brotherhood was branded a terrorist organization, senior members of the secular democratic April 6 movement, Ahmad Maher and Mohamed Adel, were arrested with Alaa Abd al-Fattah and 22 others with charges of violating this law. Four months later, the April 6 movement was outlawed and its activities banned altogether.

Harassment of all civil liberties organizations such as the ECESR (Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights) has become routine. Even the most minor criticism of the government in Egyptian media can become cause for harassment or complete suppression.

A presidential decree announced in June now gives the president the power to name the presidents and deans of public universities in a blatant effort to silence political dissent on the campus — and so it continues.

For some, like novelist and columnist Alaa al-Aswany, these repressive measures may have come as a surprise. Al-Aswany, who was initially one of al-Sisi's most ardent supporters and who cheered the earliest efforts at silencing and even massacring the supporters of the ousted president Morsi, announced on June 24 that he would stop writing his weekly column in *al-Masry al-Youm*, because as per his tweets, difference of opinion is no longer allowed.

For others, including the Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists, it has been clear from the start that al-Sisi's counterrevolution aims to re-instate Mubarak's regime and police state without his person, and that the persecution of Morsi's supporters has been part of a plan to eliminate not only the Brotherhood but all the forces that brought about the Egyptian revolution: <http://revsoc.me/statements/sqt-lkh...>

"The massacres of today are only the first steps on the roadmap of the counterrevolution," said their official statement in condemnation of the murderous dispersal of the Rabaa sit-in.

Toxic Political Environment

Surprising or not, the current situation in Egypt remains discouraging to everyone who shared the aspirations of the 2011 revolutionary struggle for social justice and civil liberty. As recent articles have reported, activists feel that the political environment has become stifling and even toxic.

Those who in 2011 were fighting for a better Egypt are now fighting for their own survival, chased by a brutal state security, vilified by mainstream media in total absence of the rule of law, and with little attention from a public which is either complacent with the status quo or shackled by despair of any attempts to change it.

Last December, Egyptian television went on a rampage for several days against Ahmed Maher and Mohamed Adel, following their arrest on charges of violating the anti-protest law. Talk show hosts accused the activists of treason and of upholding "an unpatriotic foreign agenda" after they aired recorded phone conversations that were allegedly made by them. The accusations were made with total impunity, without questioning why and how the conversations were recorded and leaked.

This past August, television networks aired several hours of ousted president Mubarak's defense in which his lawyer elaborated on the claims that what transpired in January and February 2011 was not a revolution or even a genuine mass uprising, but a conspiracy hatched out by ill-intentioned and self-serving saboteurs.

Uncertain and Difficult Prospects

Naturally, the million dollar question remains: can the counterrevolutionary forces be curbed and the tides of oppression reversed in the foreseeable future? This question is hard to answer under the best circumstances, but in Egypt the task is nearly impossible given the absence of venues where dissent can be expressed and the state's ability to forge and fabricate indicators of economic and social change.

The presidential elections of last May are a good case in point. Despite media hype and prominent displays of support for al-Sisi, the polls appeared empty on the election days — suggesting that many who presumably were not in support of the presidential candidate, but had resigned themselves to his predetermined victory, opted out of voting.

The voting period was extended from two days to three, government employees were given the day off, and statements were made about issuing fines to qualified voters who abstain. In the end, al-Sisi was declared the winner of 96% of the votes of 46% of the country's eligible voters, a result tarnished by the events of the election process and hardly indicative of the mass support that the media claim he enjoys.

So far, and as a recent article in the state paper Al-Ahram Weekly noted, President al-Sisi has yet to articulate any public policy or strategic plan for development. A professor of political science at Cairo University told the newspaper that al-Sisi could afford to remain without one because of his reliance on "popular support and the army:" <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/711...>

While certain doubts can be cast over the president's popular support, the power he accrues from his control of the army, one of the country's largest institutions — which maintains control of a sizable part of industrial production and the country's resources, an undisclosed budget, and a labor force of annually drafted young men — cannot be overstated.

It is still easy to see, however, that both the interim government of 2013-2014 and the one which formed under al-Sisi's presidency have failed to address the immediate concerns of the mass of Egyptians, 40% of whom live under exceedingly pressing conditions of poverty. Instead, there have been discussions of austerity measures, and calls upon the workers to halt their protests and demands for higher wages.

In June, the price of gasoline was raised causing the inevitable price hikes. Rolling blackouts lasting

up to several hours were a daily event in most parts of the country over the summer, and serious water shortage has been reported in several areas around the country.

A megaproject was announced in August that involves widening the Suez Canal and increasing the maritime service that the Suez Canal Company can offer to passing ships. The government has issued certificates that promise 12% annual interest as a way to fund the project.

According to Al-Ahram, 14.5 billion pounds have been raised out of a targeted 60 billion pounds. The feasibility and expected productivity of this project remains to be verified by independent sources.

Yet the success or failure of al-Sisi and his government in leading the country out of its disastrous economic and social condition is not the only factor determining the length of his presidency, or how long he continues draconian measures to suppress dissent. There is also the question of foreign support, which in the Egyptian case translates into U.S. and Saudi support.

As president al-Sisi readied himself in mid-September to attend the United Nations General Assembly meeting, president Obama was talking of counter-terrorism efforts with the support of allies in the region. It is no secret that al-Sisi (together with the Saudi king) is a primary candidate for such an alliance.

While ISIS (or ISIL) has been named the primary target of this alliance, it will be easy to direct some of these efforts against both the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, as well as whomever is deemed a threat to the alliance regardless of their affiliation. Naturally, such a scenario bodes ill for the pursuit of Palestinian rights and of civil liberties for the people in the region.

The power of the most reactionary Saudi government can only grow with the alliance and with it, the willingness to bankroll al-Sisi's repressive efforts. One can also safely assume that the United States will keep the military aid flowing and close

its eyes to atrocious practices on the part of both the Egyptian and the Israeli governments — the wave of popular American opposition to the latest assault on Gaza notwithstanding.

Last but not least, there remains the subjective assessment of the feasibility of continuing what was started in 2011: to continue to push for revolutionary change in the region and to demand social justice, civil liberties and an end to state terrorism.

It is within this context that supporters of progressive change around the world must not be fooled by this anti-terrorism show. It is a show conducted by some of the world's most reactionary forces. Its chances of success in uprooting terrorism are no higher than its chances in uprooting any revolutionary struggles for a better future.

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USA

Mass Incarceration and the Left

HEATHER ANN THOMPSON ·

It would be nice to think that these elected officials are now discussing our historically unprecedented rates of incarceration because there has been some sort of moral awakening — some new degree of discomfort if not outright dismay that the United States now has more than seven million people, an overwhelming disproportion of whom are Black and Brown people, under some form of correctional control and more than 65 million marked permanently by a criminal record. [1]

It would be as gratifying if they were now reconsidering current justice policies because mass incarceration has orphaned millions of children, destroyed already fragile neighborhoods, and rendered millions of people permanently unemployable.

At the very least it would be a relief to know that they were motivated to consider a less punitive approach to the nation's social ills, because mass incarceration has distorted the very democracy they claim to hold sacrosanct. Too many of these elected officials, though, are willing to rethink today's carceral crisis only because it has become so very expensive to maintain.

No matter what is motivating them, though, so many of us who have spent years now watching the horrific collateral consequences of mass incarceration play out, and those who have experienced this fall out first hand, are glad to see Democrats like Attorney General Eric Holder call for an end to mandatory minimums, and even Republicans like Rand Paul call for getting "smarter" on crime.

At least, folks reason, we might be going in the right direction here. But are we?

The reality is that this nation is at a major crossroads. Yes, the United States can indeed get smarter about operating its criminal justice system — for example, do a lot less policing of low level "offenses;" continue to decriminalize marijuana; even start relying more on restorative justice practices in schools.

We also could simply stop sending people away for so long. And yes, doing all these things would both ease the realities of hyper-criminalization and mass incarceration that grind down so many, while also saving politicians some substantial money. These dollars could, at least theoretically, be spent in a much more humane manner.

To rely on this plan, however, is highly risky. Any reform plan that is motivated by fiscal insecurity is perilous, because it depends upon economic crisis to get political buy-in. They very quickly lose momentum the very minute that purse strings are loosened and funding is freed up.

To rely on this particular financially motivated reform plan is especially hazardous. There are, in fact, many ways for states to save money in the criminal justice system that have absolutely nothing to do with ending our nation's true carceral crisis. One of the easiest ways for them to do so is just to make things much worse for the people who are serving, and will still serve, time.

From reducing necessary human services inside prisons such as needed medical care, to eliminating basic commodities like toilet paper and tampons, to shifting bodies from prisons into local jails, to tethering prisoners and making them pay exorbitant fees to incarcerate themselves at home, balancing state budgets does not have to mean decarceration. [2]

Indeed, in many states the desire to save money on imprisoning people has simply meant the escalation of privatization — of services and institutions alike. To the extent that there has been an easing in the numbers behind bars in recent years, importantly, the bulk of the reduction was court mandated, not clamored for by politicians nor legislated in the halls of power. [3]

So far, the plan to address today's carceral crisis has been a bit of a shell game — what one may well call a "Decarceration Dodge." [4]

A Central Organizing Necessity

The truth is that getting too enthusiastic about today's so-called "bipartisan move" to get "Smarter on Crime," is not only risky, but also deeply, profoundly problematic. In short, the current criminal justice reform moment — in its various two-party permutations — has reckoned very little with either the human implications or the historical origins of mass incarceration. Therefore, it will be limited at best and, at worst, it will utterly fail.

It is time, then, that the American Left makes the more meaningful fight against mass incarceration its central organizing and mobilizing issue over the next decades. This, however, might be a more complicated task than it may at first seem. The question of how exactly organizations on the Left might most effectively impact upon the crisis of mass incarceration isn't obvious.

Yes, leftists should be the people who constantly and consistently push every local, state and federal reform effort to address the current system's catastrophic human fallout in truly substantive ways. But what would this look like in practical, everyday terms? What coalitions must be built? What partnerships must be abandoned? Which must be forged?

Further, we must also push the nation fully to understand the historical origins of mass incarceration — to see that this policy itself was rooted in racial as well as economic injustice and was a direct

response to the efforts of those most oppressed to resist this oppression.

But what is the most effective way to do this? How are mass audiences reached if one really seeks consciousness-altering discussion?

Of course, we will also have to work hard to make sure that community, educational and social service structures are rebuilt and refunded so that decarceration doesn't mean utter desperation for those who return home. How is this done, though, without getting so embroiled in pushing politicians that energies needed to mobilize for a very different future, in which such structures are basic to all human beings, are not sapped?

As complex and even overwhelming as the Left's role in the fight to end our current carceral crisis seems, it is perhaps less daunting when we consider how logical this strategic move is and how impactful it really could be. In short, the very process of waging this struggle inevitably empowers every one of the other vital struggles that we already are waging.

Indeed, it is time for us all to stop thinking of the crisis of mass incarceration as merely one of many serious crises facing this country's poor, marginalized and oppressed populace. It is in fact an all-encompassing crisis that itself creates unemployment, deepens poverty, leads to evictions, increases community-level violence, intensifies educational disparities, distorts democracy, exacerbates racial injustice, and widens all inequalities. [5]

Ultimately, then, to focus organizational energy on today's carceral crisis means taking on a central source of virtually all American oppressions and injustices.

There is yet another really good reason for the Left to commit itself to this specific mobilization with particular focus and vigor. As history makes clear, the Left has always been vital to the success of this nation's most crucial fights against injustice in the criminal justice realm.

From the fight against the ultimate unfreedom, slavery, to the battles against the vicious convict leasing system of the Reconstruction Era, to the struggles against the racist justice system during the trial of the Scottsboro Boys, to the powerful defense efforts on behalf of the Attica Brothers, the American Left has been front and center.

The Left has shaped the dialogue and determined what really was possible from 1814 to 1914 to 1944

to 1974. It is time to focus its extraordinary vision and commitment again on the justice system and commit itself to beating back the carceral crisis of 2014. We must be there to help shape this debate and we must be there, once again, to remind the nation what really is possible.

Against the Current

BELGIUM

120,000 demonstrators against Michel 1!

THOMAS WEYTS ·

From different regions, in Flanders also, the extra trains planned were still inadequate to bring everyone to Brussels, so that some trade unionists who wanted to join the march had to return home. There could have been even more people!

It was more than obvious that this demonstration brought many more people into the streets than active trade unionists alone. For many participants, it was not only the first time that they were participating in a union demonstration, but the presence of many students, high school students and youth organizations, the feminist bloc formed by a whole series of groups of women, and especially the visible and appreciated presence of Hart boven Hard ("the heart, not rigor") which represents hundreds of organizations and movements of the social and cultural sector in Flanders, was heart-warming.

During the demonstration, groups of young leftists (JOC, our youth groups JAC-JAK, Young FGTB and Young CSC, the Union Syndicale Etudiante and so on) led a brief occupation of the head office of the FEB, where a symbolic people's tribunal was held against the big employers and their interest groups. The action was entirely peaceful and without major problems.

What about the clashes?

Serious problems erupted in the neighbourhood behind the Midi station when some of the demonstrators wanted to move toward the head office of the MR in the vicinity. The police responded with water cannons and a muscular cordon. Several cars and a police motorcycle were burned in the course of the afternoon. Meanwhile, it was revealed that provocateurs (some neo-Nazis, but also police officers) were also involved in these events. The

Association of Professional Journalists also reported police violence against journalists.

At this time when we are at the beginning of a major plan of action, such violence does not contribute to the success of the actions. At the same time, many activists have had more than enough of the fairly traditional Nord-Midi walks, which have been organized on several occasions in the past few years. Some of them could probably no longer suppress their thirst for more direct action. Of course, there are other elements to the source of this anger (particularly the attacks against the dockers), and it is essential to remember that the real responsibility for the riots is located in the government.

But it might not be a bad idea to better regulate this desire the next time and therefore make better targets. But we also believe that it is essential that the broadest possible layers of the population are involved in the action plan of the unions, and not only the "hard core" of the trade union movement. It is therefore important that counter-productive slips are avoided.

Win the strikes!

The next step in the national plan of action will be the various provincial strikes. They also must be a resounding success. Failure is not an option, what is at stake here is the future of all our social rights, and that of the trade unions themselves!

The best way to win the actions is the broadest and most active involvement of all union members and activists. There are already some good examples here and there. Thus, the public service sector of the CGSP-ACOD in Antwerp functions with an action committee, where the activists, members of the executive and secretaries meet to prepare strike actions. In Limburg, the same CGSP-ACOD has already adopted this example in the form of a work-

ing group. The inter-sectoral CGSP in the region of Antwerp is taking steps in the same direction (even if the number of persons present in this specific action committee is inexplicably limited to two per sector). At the national level, there are similar initiatives.

These action committees contribute to the fact that the strike action can be organized with much more chance of success, by putting side-by-side of the activists in the strongest and weakest services or workplaces, by helping each other to produce leaflets and materials, but also by leading in this way the broadest possible democratic debate, which is useful to train a whole new layer of trade union activists and to raise their level of consciousness. Which in turn helps to develop around the union movement a broad and socially deeply rooted social resistance. The demonstration yesterday was a promising and enthusiastic starting point. It reinforces confidence in our own forces, which is very important. The belief that we can win is crucial for maintaining the basic struggle in the long term.

Don't be satisfied with mouldy crumbs!

After the demonstration, the leaders of the three trade unions were invited by Prime Minister Michel for a discussion. From the statements by Michel, Peeters (CD & V), Chastel (MR) and trade union officials after this discussion, it is clear that the government is not ready at all to put into question the essence of its plans. They only want trade unions to be involved in the implementation, and they can still only discuss the details. They hope to repeat

what Prime Minister Wilfried Martens did in the mid-80s: turn back the unions with "some biscuits".

We believe that the trade union movement cannot be satisfied with pursuing negotiations on the crumbs – mouldy ones - which fall from the table, but that it must above all now implement the entire plan of action. Fortunately, it seems for the moment that the leadership of the three trade unions realizes this, while certainly also helped by the pressure from its rank and file and 120,000 people in the street.

According to the testimonies, those in the FGTB responsible for the private sector have already made it know - before the demonstration - to the federal committee of the FGTB that they would be willing to develop a response to the plan of action after the New Year, provided that there were more than 100,000 demonstrators. This condition has been very clearly fulfilled. Now let's introduce the discussion on the follow up of the actions after December 15!

Aside from that, the unions must also urgently open the broadest possible debate on their own alternatives, demands and the policies to be applied. In any case, the consultation cannot take place behind closed doors: the trade union rank and file must know what is being said on this subject and especially have the possibility of having its own word to say. No agreement without democratic votes in the entire trade union movement!

<http://www.lcr-lagauche.org>

BELGIUM: WHAT NOW?

Perspectives for the LCR, the PTB and the trade union left

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE LCR-SAP ·

1. How does the LCR see the result of the PTB-GO lists at the elections of May 25, 2014? How does this result compare to those of other elections in the past?

The eligibility threshold for the Belgian federal parliament is 5% and the constituencies have been enlarged at the provincial level. The thresholds for access to regional parliaments are sometimes higher (except where a particular mechanism allows the technical grouping of lists to circumvent the threshold of 5%). This makes the election of a first parliamentarian more difficult than in other countries and helps explain why Belgium was one of the only European countries without elected representatives of the radical left.

Since the neoliberal turn from the beginning of 1980, in spite of many social struggles against austerity (co-managed by the PS and Ecolo), no list or organization to the left of the PS came near the threshold of eligibility. The results of the left ranged between 0.5% and 2%. At the European elections in 1994, for example, the United Left list (LCR, CP and independents) won 1.7% and the PTB 1%.

We sensed a change at the federal elections of 2010. It was then that the PTB took first place. On the Francophone side, it gained 2.07% of the vote and the Left Front list 1.15% (LCR, PC, PSL and independents). But the qualitative change came two years later. At the local elections of October 2012, the PTB increased its elected representatives at the communal level from 15 to 47, with scores that placed it at the level of the established parties in the major cities and in some working class communes, in Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels. Therefore, a

breakthrough at the central level of parliaments became possible.

This breakthrough occurred on May 25, 2014, when simultaneous elections for the federal parliament, the regional parliaments and the European Parliament took place. Two candidates of the PTB entered the Chamber, two in the Walloon parliament and four in the Brussels Parliament. All were elected on the PTB-GO (Gauche d'Ouverture) lists in Wallonia, and on a bilingual PTB-PVDA-GO! list in Brussels. These lists gathered independent personalities around the PTB, the LCR and the CP. They also benefited from the sympathy and even support of trade union sectors.

On the Flemish side, the PTB decided that there were no partners for an opening of the same type. Its result in Antwerp was excellent (4.52%, more than 8% in the city), but it did not pick up the hoped for election as deputy of its national president, Peter Mertens. Beyond this disappointment, Belgium is no longer an exception in Europe: the radical left has entered the elected assemblies.

2. How do you explain the unblocking of electoral opportunities for the radical left?

The main reason for the blockage lay in the fact that social democracy has long retained a real popular social base. In Flanders, the greater part of this base left social democracy several years ago, but to go to the extreme right and then to the nationalists. The political field is so dominated by the right that the "useful" vote for the Socialists (and especially for the Greens, who are in opposition to all levels) appears as a lesser evil. This situation is reflected in the Francophone part of the country where the PS (and the Greens) are in the majority and apply neoliberal policies, but present themselves despite

everything as the bulwark against the right and against "the Flemish" ("without us it would be worse"). For nearly thirty years, social democracy has thus been able to retain an electoral monopoly on the left, despite the fact that it was conducting in government a right wing policy and some of its leaders were implicated in corruption scandals.

This mechanism started to crack after the protracted political crisis following the federal elections of 2010. At the end of the latter, the president of the PS, Elio Di Rupo, was finally unable to fulfil his ambition of becoming prime minister. The fact that his federal government did not have a majority in Flanders, and was attacked by the liberal nationalists of the NVA (the Neo-Flemish Alliance, which had emerged as the biggest party) led Di Rupo to apply neoliberal policies with a very special zeal. From January 2012 to May 2014, he imposed a "shock therapy" in the hope of allowing the classic Flemish right (Flemish and Christian Democrat: CD&V; Flemish Liberals and Democrats: OpenVLD) and the Sp.a (the PS in Flanders) to regain a majority against the NVA. His calculation was that the PS would thus have every chance of staying in government.

It was working people who paid the bill for politician's calculation, and it was a high one. The unions were pushed into the corner, wages were frozen for two years, retirement has been made later, Maggie De Block [1] had carte blanche to tighten the screw on asylum seekers, the undocumented and foreigners, the security policy of the SAC was imposed against all. To plug the hole dug by the rescue of the banks under the Leterme government, twenty-two billion Euros in savings have been taxed at swingeing rates, penalising notably the unemployed, recipients of social aid and the public sector.

This policy caused discontent all the more deeply in that it was conducted under the guidance of a PS Prime Minister. This is the first reason for the unblocking of the electoral possibilities for the left, and the most important. During the campaign, on the ground, activists realized that a part of the tra-

ditional social base of the PS intended to punish it and express its desire for a social alternative.

The second reason is the general tone of the PTB-GO! (and PVDA+ in Flanders) campaign. The discourse adopted, the arguments made, the concrete demands proposed, the way of expressing oneself before the mass of the people: all this "stuck" fairly well to the current level of radicalisation. The credit goes mainly to the PTB, and not only to its spokesperson. This discourse and tone is the product of the centralization of the experience on the ground of the members of the PTB in the neighbourhoods, workplaces and associations. While in the 1990s activists were disarmed before the neoliberal ideological offensive, the PTB has maintained the idea of building a party to challenge social democracy in its own popular social base, and this perseverance is today rewarded. Whatever the criticisms to be made of the program, ideology and functioning of the PTB, it is a lesson for the entire left.

The third reason is the image of unity created on the Francophone side by the "Gauche d'Ouverture" (the LCR, the CP, the personalities) and its major trade union support. From 1970 until recently, the entire Belgian left had been contaminated more or less by the blatant sectarianism of the PTB, which is its main component. Thanks to the "GO", left voters had the feeling that the old quarrels were in the process of being overcome, so that a vote for the PTB-GO lists would allow them to simply express their sympathy with the slogans, values and principles fundamental to the whole (true) left such as social justice, fiscal justice and solidarity. Despite its shortcomings or imperfections, PTB-GO was the only response to the appeal launched on 1 May 2012 by the FGTB of Charleroi-Sud-Hainaut [2], which called for anti-capitalist unity in order to present a political alternative to the PS. That is why the other lists on the left presented in these elections have been completely marginalized [3].

3. Was the success due primarily to this unity?

No, all three elements of explanation have played a part and the first two are decisive. But it is indisputable that the polls took off immediately after the press conference of presentation of the GO, at the end of January. The impact of this press conference was very important. The members of the Standing Committee of the FGTTB in Charleroi were present, not to support the PTB (as the press has said), but to welcome a first step being taken in the direction of their appeal of May 1, 2012. This intervention by Daniel Piron and his comrades has had an enormous weight, not only in the media but also, and above all, at the base, in the workplaces.

Given the score attained in the province of Liege, it is very likely that Raoul Hedebouw would have been elected even on a PTB+ list, without the support of the GO. But it is certain that, without the dynamic of the GO, he would not have been joined by Marco van Hees. The PTB-GO! list for the Chamber in Hainaut did not get beyond the eligibility threshold of around 1,300 votes. However, the two candidates of the LCR brought 2,500 votes to the list, and that of the CP nearly a thousand more. Above all, it is in this province that the trade union left was most explicitly involved, and it has done so because there was an opening.

Two weeks before the vote, the 150 members of the committee of MWB Hainaut-Namur (FGTTB metalworkers) voted for a resolution which ended in these words: "The left in power... has decomposed and is diluted in the right... After a legislature marked by austerity and the dismantling of social rights, it is time to begin a 180 degree turn to the left: the real anti-capitalist left brings hope for the world of work". This text was disseminated by many workplace delegations (this is one of the causes of the surprising score for the PTB-GO lists in the province of Namur: 4.86 per cent!). In western Hainaut, FGTTB metalworkers openly supported the PTB-GO campaign, particularly by organizing on April 25 a public debate with Marco van Hees and Raoul Hedebouw (PTB), Freddy Mathieu (LCR) and Francois d'Agostino (CP). A less visible but real support was provided by other trade

unionists, including CNE [4] activists who organized with the FGTTB of Charleroi the meeting for an anti-capitalist alternative to the Géode, in March 2013.

4. The PTB was originally a Mao-Stalinist organization which was very sectarian, fiercely anti-Trotskyist and led in an authoritarian manner. Now it has become a genuine small political party with a few thousand members. But is it in a position to follow the evolution of the SP in the Netherlands, which is no longer anti-capitalist and participates in coalitions with the Liberal party? On the other hand, has GO allowed the PTB to de-demonise itself without explicitly breaking with its past?

The past of the PTB is indeed marked by some frightening positions: mobilization against "Soviet social-imperialism, main enemy of the peoples"; the denunciation of Cuba as a "fifth column" of this "imperialism"; support for the crimes of Stalin, the Khmer Rouge, Karadzic, Kim Il Sung and so on without counting the impressive number of zigzags on the attitude to trade unions: originating outside of the workers' movement, the PTB was originally violently anti-union.

But the PTB comes from Mao-Stalinism, which is not quite the same thing as Stalinism itself. The Maoist reference explains in particular the commitment of the PTB to work on the ground among the popular classes (through medical centres where patients are treated at the rate reimbursed by health insurance) and its ability to carry out investigations to "rectify" its errors.

In the early 2000s, noting that it had not actually penetrated electorally in spite of the success of its campaigns and its "people's doctors" notably, the PTB leadership conducted an investigation which led it to rectify its image to make it less partisan and less "extremist". At the same time, the general secretary inspired an attempt to break through with lists controlled by the PTB but expanded and which no longer bore the acronym of the party. In the

2003 elections, a "Resist" list was thus formed in alliance with the European Arab League. As this was a major defeat, an acute conflict broke out between the secretary general and the president-founder, Ludo Martens. The first was dismissed, but the second fell seriously ill, and then died.

The party cadres then developed a new orientation. Adopted in 2008, it was in large part created by a new generation, of which several figures are the children of historical PTB cadres. The key elements are the maintenance of a non-sectarian and non-extremist image, focused on very concrete immediate demands, a major effort of communication to give the PTB a profile as such in the media (the episode of the "Resist" list being closed), a "unitary" practice in the social movements, the absence of any public criticism of the big organizations (including the union bureaucracies) and great caution in propaganda on the ground concerning "difficult" questions (racism, immigration, the undocumented, homosexuality and so on) - which does not mean that the PTB is silent on these issues or is absent from mobilisations.

This transformation has enabled the PTB to recruit members and activists more and more widely, which has strengthened the mass campaigns (for the reduction of VAT on energy, for example). The latter are supported in their work by an effective research office, the attention of the major media has been drawn, and the political breakthrough is now underway.

During the campaign, some have criticized the LCR for "capitulating to the PTB" and participating in a "post-Stalinist adventure". Rather than campaigning with the PTB, we have been urged to build something like the Greek Syriza or the Portuguese Left Bloc. However, Syriza is a creation of the Synaspismos Party, the Eurocommunist and rightist wing of the Greek Communist Party: this movement is therefore born from a "post-Stalinist adventure". With regard to the Left Bloc, its main component at its creation was the Maoist UDP party, sister party of the PTB at the time... Incidentally, most of the organizations that come from Stalinism

or Mao-Stalinism have never made a thorough balance sheet of Stalinism, the conditions of its victory and what should have been done to fight it. That has not prevented them evolving in such a way that collaboration becomes possible and even necessary.

In reality, many of those who have denounced the LCR were those who thought that no left deputy was better than PTB deputies. Some tried to push the PTB away from the dynamic opened by the appeal of the Charleroi FGTB, and even to exploit this appeal so that it would serve only to regroup "anti-Stalinists" and to strengthen them against the PTB. The LCR has fought these ideas and attempts. We thought, on the contrary, that the new PTB had a key role to play in the dynamic, and that its participation was decisive so that the appeal of the trade unionists of Charleroi led to the election of parliamentarians to the left of the PS and Ecolo.

This does not eliminate our disagreements with the PTB or the questions we are asking on its break with its Mao-Stalinist past. But conjunctures change, organizations evolve. Politics is not a game of timeless copy-paste but a concrete activity based on the analysis of concrete situations in their possible evolution. There are times when it is necessary to apply the maxim of Napoleon: *on s'engage et puis on voit*. Therefore, without forgetting the past, we have decided to judge the PTB on what it says and does today.

With respect to the future, it seems clear that the PTB is inspired by the experience of its former sister party, the Dutch SP. But it is too early to say that it will evolve quite in the same direction as the latter. The Belgian context is very different, in particular because of the specific weight of the trade union movement in general, and of the socialist trade union movement in particular. Other possibilities seem open, some of which might be more interesting to the left. On the international scene - in Greece, Portugal, the Philippines, for example - the trajectories of other organizations of the Mao-Stalinist movement show a great diversity.

5. Now that the LCR no longer judges the PTB on its ideological origin, how does it see the strengths and weaknesses of the current PTB, including its internal regime?

The answer follows from what has been said above. The strong points: the desire to build a party, several thousand members, a few hundred dedicated cadres, immediate concrete demands, a research office producing quality analysis, an often remarkable work on the ground (in neighbourhoods, workplaces), effective communication, good spokespersons, a real investment in the social movements, a true effort to grasp the environmental issue, a discourse which seeks unity around the values of the left ... on several of these points, we have much to learn.

The weak points: the relative muting of the socialist discourse, the under-estimation of anti-capitalist demands to provide a bridge between immediate objectives and social transformation (the 32 hour week did not appear in the electoral program of the PTB, nor the nationalization of the entire financial sector), the over-timid character of some immediate demands (1,000 Euros per month minimum is insufficient to combat poverty) and tailism in relation to the union bureaucracies. This last point is key: the PTB does not seem to see that there is a struggle between left and right in the unions. In any case, it is as if this battle did not exist, as if the PTB was the political expression of the entire labour movement. To us, this is an error.

Another crucial point is that the PTB does not seem to really measure the importance of feminists and LGBT struggles. This under-estimation was clearly reflected in the campaign, particularly in the composition of the lists. The issue is located at several levels. At the level of struggles and programs, because women are first in line as victims of austerity. At the level of forms of action, because the self-organization of women is needed to combat specific oppression. At the ideological level, because social regression is always matched with the restoration of reactionary values. At the level of project of society, finally, because the struggle against patriarchal

oppression will have to continue in a non-capitalist society. You can see that the PTB is reticent on all these issues that it seems to perceive as factors of division. And in fact, the struggles of women (like those of the LGBT community, but also those of oppressed nationalities) challenge the monolithic vision of the class struggle, therefore, also the monolithic vision of the party, which are two characteristics of Stalinism.

In addition, we should not forget the international issues. They did not really arise during the campaign but of course they are of a very high importance. Although it has broken with North Korea, the PTB remains strongly marked by a vision of the world in black and white, which is to estimate that the enemies of our enemies are necessarily, if not our friends, at least our allies. In the LCR, we believe that this simplistic view does not allow us to orient correctly. We are fighting in priority against our own imperialism, but without automatically choosing to support the opposite "camp". Our camp is that of the exploited and oppressed. We believe that the evolution of the international situation justifies this. We have seen it in Ukraine, in Syria and in Iraq, for example. The fact that the USA is bombing Islamic State does not mean that the left should be in the "camp" of Islamic State, which is a criminal organization.

As regards the internal regime of the PTB, we do not want to interfere with it. We find that the PTB is no longer a monolithic organization and that the atmosphere in its public activities is open and friendly. There seems to be a great freedom of discussion, and even of action. But these positive elements are not necessarily incompatible with partitioning and verticalism.

6. Has the campaign of the FGTB in Charleroi for a political alternative to the left of the PS played a role in bringing the PTB to accept cooperation with two much smaller organizations like the CP and the LCR/SAP?

On May 1, 2012, the FGTB of Charleroi (102,000 members) denounced the neoliberal policy of social democracy and called for unity in order to build an anti-capitalist political alternative, to the left of the PS and the Greens. This is a historic event, unprecedented in the history of our labour movement. This is not the first time that a trade union sector in Belgium has broken with the PS, but it is the first time that leaders have emerged from "pure trade unionism" to act on the political terrain in the interest of their members, while maintaining their trade union independence.

The position of Charleroi is interesting because it reverses the roles between the social and the political, between the social movements and political parties. Inasmuch as it is accompanied by a struggle for broader union democracy - and this is the case at Charleroi - this concept seems to us emancipating (in the sense that Marx said that "the emancipation of the workers will be the work of the workers themselves").

It is important to emphasize that the FGTB of Charleroi has not contented itself with a "slanging match". Its executive bodies have discussed and adopted two programmatic documents which have been printed in pamphlets of ten thousand copies. One of these pamphlets is a pedagogical explanation of the reasons why the union should act openly on the political terrain, without giving up its independence in relation to the parties (this strategy is explicitly opposed to that of reliance on "political friends"). The other is an anti-capitalist emergency programme with ten objectives.

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On the basis of these two documents, the FGTB of Charleroi organized, in collaboration with the CNE, an open assembly which brought together 400 activists of all backgrounds. In addition, it has convened all the political organizations which support its initiative to meet in a support committee, which it has chaired and whose work it has facilitated.

Not only the PTB, but all the organizations on the left have had to face their responsibilities. The

trade union movement has a considerable weight in our country, so that the appeal of the FGTB of Charleroi has aroused hope and enthusiasm everywhere. And those who were there on May 1, 2012 have had the impression that a breach was opened finally in the control that social democracy exercises on trade unionism. It was an insult to believe, as some did, that they could go into the elections as if it were nothing, by ignoring the FGTB of Charleroi, or wanting to dictate themselves the conditions of unity.

Rather than speculating on the internal debates raised within the PTB by the initiative of the trade unionists, we prefer to focus on our balance sheet as the LCR:

A) We have found that this call was totally in the direction of our "open letter to trades unionists" made public three months earlier;

(B) We have immediately supported and with all our forces the call of the trade unionists from Charleroi;

C) We considered that the PTB was unavoidable in beginning to make concrete progress in the direction of this appeal;

D) The relationship of forces has led us to conclude to the need for a gathering around the PTB, in which this party would necessarily play a decisive role. The PTB being what it is, we have therefore excluded any idea of an alternate list, but also any idea of a cartel with the PTB or a unitary list under a specific name. It is thus that we have actively collaborated to develop what would become "PTB-GO".

In practice, this "sui generis" kind of gathering has not always been comfortable for the LCR. The PTB has for example imposed a maximum number of LCR and CP candidates per list and has alone decided on their place. However, things basically went well. Above all, the essential thing in our eyes was to ensure that the appeal of May 1, 2012 found at least a beginning of realization, in order that the trade union left would be reinforced by the test. Social democracy speculated on a failure, the trade union right also. It is of crucial strategic impor-

tance that these forces have been beaten and the LCR has taken its responsibilities for this.

7. The LCR/SAP, while working for the PTB/Go, had within the alliance the right to circulate its own material, to put its own accents in the election campaign. What was the profile and the specific contribution of the LCR/SAP in the common election campaign?

In fact, there was very little common campaigning. In particular, there was not a common platform. The only common document was the appeal "A rendezvous not to be missed", launched by the support committee for the PTB-GO lists. The program that the PTB drew up under the PTB-GO rubric did not commit the independents, the LCR, or the CP. This situation was in part the result of the lack of time, partly the result of the fact that the PTB is considered as sole leader of the GO. That is the other side of the coin.

The other aspect is that we have had full freedom to carry out our own campaign on our own program, with our own material and calling for a vote for our own candidates. We did this in the two parts of the country, including in Flanders where, although there was no "GO", we have nevertheless presented candidates on the lists of the PTB (PVDA in Flemish).

Our profile has been more radical than that of the PTB: anti-capitalist, feminist, eco-socialist and internationalist. We have notably defended the 32 hours without loss of pay, the nationalization without compensation of the banking and energy sectors, defended a consistent feminist program and so on. We have not acted in a spirit of one-upmanship, but because this radical program is objectively necessary to meet the challenges of the period. This is also what the FGTB of Charleroi, whose "10 objectives" we explicitly supported, said.

The strong point of our campaign was our meeting in Brussels, with Olivier Besancenot (NPA), Aurelie Decoene (head of the PTB European list), several

personalities from "GO" and a series of our candidates.

It should be noted that not all of the inputs of the LCR have been visible: we have played a discreet but considerable role so that the "GO" was possible, bringing personalities and trade unionists to support this initiative.

8. What is your assessment of the election campaign and of the cooperation within the PTB-GO? Have you been able to strengthen your public presence and media coverage, multiply your contacts, forge bonds of comradeship with activists of the PTB and the PCB, win new members?

In three months of campaigning, the LCR has been more present in the media than in the previous ten years. The balance sheet from this point of view is very positive.

We have established links of comradeship with members of the PTB, and even with the leaders of that organization. But we do not aim to go fishing for members in the ranks of the PTB, or to carry out "entryism" in this organization. If members of the PTB want to come to us, they are welcome, but on the basis of agreement with our program and our strategy. Being dissatisfied with this or that aspect of the operation of the PTB is not a sufficient reason.

On the left in general, as has already been said, our decision to opt for unity around the PTB has not been unanimously appreciated. Some have remained very sceptical, others were downright hostile. But a lot of left activists have agreed with our approach. Speaking on our site, a trade union leader thanked us for offering him an opportunity to vote at a time according to both his heart and his mind. His comment summed up the state of mind of many people who have not made the step of being active with the LCR in this campaign.

Given the possibility of electing deputies, the campaign went beyond the sphere of pure propaganda. Thanks to its presence in PTB-GO, the LCR has

participated in a social combat and concrete politics. We have oriented in our own way, that is to say starting from our line (the need for a new class party) and from our analysis (on the major importance of the fight between left and right in the unions and the engagement of the union left in the political arena). This is one of our characteristics.

A few people who didn't know us have made contact with us on the basis of our propaganda material. By contrast, dozens of people who knew us have fought this battle with us and want to continue to carry it out. This opens up possibilities for strengthening, some of which are already being implemented in new memberships.

The most important element of our balance sheet concerns our links with the trade union left. During the campaign, we have confirmed the status of the LCR as an organization that takes its responsibilities in the interest of enhancing this left, because it is in the last instance in the interest of all workers, all the oppressed. The fact that we have maintained this approach, even in an election period, is much appreciated. Relations of trust and collaboration have been strengthened. This is not necessarily measured in numbers of members, but it is decisive for the future.

9. Will the cooperation with the PTB continue at the level of extra-parliamentary work, mobilizations, public rallies, joint debates?

We argue in this direction, and the personalities of "GO" also. The PTB does not seem really opposed, but places a strong emphasis on its own construction as well as on the broadest social front in the fight against austerity. We are of course for this broad social front, but it must, at the same time, continue the fight for an anti-capitalist political alternative, in the sense of the Charleroi appeal. For this, there is a need to consolidate GO along with the PTB, to show together that we want to continue. Some fear that the PTB seeks to drown the fish, to close the door on unity because it considers that its deputies, and the financial results of the electoral

victory, belong only to them. We will see more clearly in a few weeks or months.

It is very important that everyone carefully analyzes the new political situation. It is likely that a federal government of the homogeneous right will be set up. Social democracy will attempt to restore its reputation in opposition, by focusing on the fact that a part of the voters who have left will return to the fold of the "lesser evil", which could lead to the defeat of the PTB-GO deputies. In the north of the country, social democracy is absent from all levels of power, the Greens also. It is clear to us that this situation reinforces the need to continue in the path of unity on the Francophone side, and encourage them to open a debate on the possibility of unity on the Flemish side also. This is moreover what the left trade unionists want: throughout the campaign, their representatives have stated that they did not support the PTB, PTB-GO was a first step in the direction of their appeal, and that there should be others subsequently.

10. What perspective opens for the next steps on the path to the construction of a party with a mass vocation to challenge social democracy from its left and create a political instrument capable of defending the interests of employees and all the oppressed?

The steps forward in this direction mainly depend on the development of the trade union left, of its capacity - or not - to involve other social movements and the ability - or not - of left political organizations and independent intellectuals to promote this development and to interact with it.

There are several aspects to the question. A geographical aspect first: the Charleroi appeal has received too little support in other regions, and nothing similar has happened in the trade union movement in Flanders. Then an inter-union aspect: at the beginning, the most lucid leader of the FGTEB in Charleroi had promoted contacts and collaboration with the Christian trade unionists of the CSC, including those of the Centrale nationale des em-

ployés. Also, they clearly showed their willingness to develop a project for the whole of the working class. Unfortunately, they have had to back down before the sectarian prejudices and the apparatus logic of some of their own colleagues. These two dimensions - geographical and inter-union - are related, especially in Flanders where the Christian union is in the majority and organically linked to the Social Christian Party (CD&V), so that the question of political extension is posed very specifically.

But the most important development concerns the involvement of the trade union rank and file. The appeal of the FGTB in Charleroi has been launched by the bodies of the union. It has been the basis of many discussions in trade union meetings, where the need for a political alternative was felt, and the two pamphlets have been discussed in forums with many workplace delegates. However, the battle has been supported mainly by the secretaries. Among these, some fell back with the approach of the elections, without that this necessarily being at the request of their members and delegates. In a more general way, the pressure of the right wing union bureaucracy is very strong.

These difficulties can be overcome only if the base is organized to grasp the strategic question, link it to its struggles, and to ensure that the debate is taking place at all levels and in all professional federations. The question "How to broaden the political breach opened on 25 May?" (You might even say: "How can we prevent the PS closing it?") is reduced in the end to another one: "How to expand the trade union left?"

The entire left is involved. In particular the PTB, whose responsibility is proportional to its strength. What will be its orientation? On the one hand, it has many combative trade unionists, which places it in a position to play a leadership role. On the other hand, it presents itself systematically as the political relay of the trade unions in general and has avoided any public criticism of the apparatuses (even when bureaucratic repression has struck its own members) which risks putting it on a slippery slope that others have taken before it and which leads to social democracy. An active involvement of the trade union rank and file will be the best way of encouraging it to make the right choice, which would be in the interests of the entire anti-capitalist, social and political left.

Izquierda Anticapitalista on the decisions of the Podemos Citizens' Assembly

IZQUIERDA ANTICAPITALISTA ·

We live in accelerated times. Times when political change is no longer an aspiration of a radical minority, but an immediate goal of a clear social majority grown tired of the misery that we are condemned to by the austerity policies of the corrupt regime of the 78 and the Troika.

When we started Podemos with Pablo Iglesias and other comrades many said we were crazy. We would not change anything, we were destined to be another electoral failure. Reality has demonstrated something very different: Podemos is the vehicle through which the outrage of the citizens is expressed and a unique opportunity to break fundamentally with the miseries inherited from the dictatorship and forty years of neoliberal capitalist and oligarchical offensive.

Many things have happened since we co-founded Podemos. Everything has changed and we must change also to continue to work in the prospect of building a socialist democracy.

That is why we have taken two decisions:

A) Although we do not agree with the ban on so-called "double militancy", we are going to abide by it. We believe that it poses a serious risk to pluralism within Podemos and is a totally ineffective way to avert the danger of the arrival of careerists in Podemos. The key to combating these phenomena is control from below, from the circles and the spa-

ces of construction of popular unity, as well as the maximum freedom in debate and criticism. However, in spite of maintaining our opposition to the measure, we accept the decision taken by a large majority and, in accordance with it, no activist in Izquierda Anticapitalista will contest the elections of the State Citizen's Council of Podemos.

B) As the core founder of the initiative, we've decided to continue to contribute our ideas, approaches and work in the construction of Podemos as an instrument of democratic and social change. We believe that in Podemos we can fit all those who defend human rights and want a just society, democratic and egalitarian. However, so that real change is possible, self-organization is essential, as well as the possibility of maintaining areas of development, education and initiative. Given that Podemos, in addition to being our project, has decided to become a political party, our party, we are going to hold the first phase of our congress in the last weekend of November to adapt to the new framework that has been decided by the Citizens' Assembly.

Thus, we will continue to work as loyally as we have until now, doing everything in our power to ensure that we can win the elections and building people's power from below so that when we conquer government, we have sufficient social support and organized strength enough to transform society and not disappoint the hopes that millions of people are placing in us.

SOUTH AFRICA

Statement by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa

What we have warned the South African workers and broader public about has come to pass. The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) with its 350,000 members was expelled as an affiliate by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in the early hours of Saturday morning (after 1 am), November 8, 2014, at a Special Central Executive Committee meeting (SCEC). This expulsion took place through a vote which was 33 for our expulsion and 24 against.

We have convened this press conference to state for the record our anger and dismay at this and factional and irresponsible action. We want to be on record to say that what happened was that a few leaders (many with no mandates from their own structures) decided the future of 2.2 million COSATU members in a boardroom through a vote.

NUMSA's application for urgent relief

It would be remembered that NUMSA went to the South Gauteng High Court on November 6, 2014, to request the courts of law rescue NUMSA from a Kangaroo Court that was to be convened as a SCEC of COSATU. Some media reports and the president of COSATU went public to falsely claim that the court ruled against NUMSA's application. If truth be told, the attorneys of NUMSA and COSATU presented the judge with the following agreement:

1. That NUMSA's application be postponed and that the judge do not make a ruling on urgency.
2. That COSATU's letter of February 11, 2014, making reference to five charges that NUMSA must answer should not be so wide as to say "but not limit-

ed to". NUMSA should only address the five charges as per the COSATU letter of February 11, 2014.

3. That cost be reserved.

For NUMSA this was enough of a victory because for close to a year NUMSA has been asking the COSATU National Office Bearers to provide the real and actual reasons why NUMSA would be suspended or expelled. COSATU failed up to November 6, 2014, to show NUMSA the courtesy and decency of a reply. It took a High Court to limit the charges made by COSATU against NUMSA to five issues.

NUMSA's submission to COSATU

NUMSA had been asked to explain to the SCEC why it should not be expelled, which we did very comprehensively, providing a detailed dispassionate analysis of our political and organisational analysis in relation to working-class struggles. (See our 48-page submission with a more detailed version of 105 pages.)

We founded this federation. It is a federation that is governed by a constitution that provides for a minimum number of affiliates democratically requesting a constitutional meeting, especially the convening of a Special National Congress, if the need arises.

Our request for a Special National Congress, given the untenable situation the federation finds itself in, is in line with the constitutional provisions of COSATU. We are in an untenable situation in relation to:

How the policies of the ruling party, the African National Congress, negatively affect the working class;

And how the leadership of affiliates and the Federation respond to these anti-working class policies.

The NUMSA demands at the CEC are all located within the COSATU constitution but the leadership of the federation has continued to violate its own constitution.

Political division

One of the most important reasons for the tensions around all the constitutional violations is a political division between those who support the interests of the working class, as our constitution requires us to do, and those who are prepared to sacrifice those interests for an alliance with the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP).

The "hearing" against NUMSA on Friday, November 7, 2014, in the SCEC was not a fair hearing as the decision to expel NUMSA had already been decided by some affiliate leaders using many different platforms over the past year.

In fact even members of the ANC task team, who had intervened in the COSATU CEC process of dealing with NUMSA, themselves demonstrated their bias against NUMSA and its congress resolutions.

NUMSA's biggest crime has been to democratically, in its own congress, argue for the political independence of the federation, given the worsening material conditions of the working class as a result of neoliberal ANC policies. We have noted with grave concern how our congress resolutions have been misrepresented and distorted.

NUMSA has always intended to procedurally argue for its congress resolutions to be democratically debated by workers at a COSATU Special National Congress (SNC). All attempts to stop the SNC are linked to a fear of the outcomes of democratic debate by workers about their political and material future.

NUMSA wants to state for the record some key areas of struggle with the ANC, SACP and national office bearers of some affiliates and national office bearers COSATU:

1. NUMSA is concerned that key policies of the ANC; the National Development Plan (NDP), which is a cut and paste of [the formerly pro-apartheid] Democratic Alliance policy, and the Growth, employment and Redistribution plan (GEAR), have replaced the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter gave the ANC its liberation character. It is a militant, popular program which challenged property relations in South Africa.

The NDP is a neoliberal program, which entrenches existing property relations and attacks the working class and the poor in the interests of mining and finance capital.

2. The ANC leadership has abandoned democracy.

3. There is a serious threat to COSATU's militancy and independence. COSATU has become consumed by internal battles between two forces:

- (i) Those who continue to support the ANC and SACP, with their neoliberal agenda.

- (ii) And those who, despite their understanding of the ANC as a multi-class organisation, consciously and consistently fight for an independent, militant federation which stands for the interests of the working class before any other class.

4. Both at Marikana and in the farmworkers strike in the Western Cape, the armed forces of the state intervened in support of the owners of capital against striking workers. In both instances the result was the murder of workers whose only crime was to refuse to sell their labour for less than a living wage.

The inconsistency on how affiliates are treated demonstrates a well-orchestrated agenda against NUMSA. Other affiliates have rejected the [ANC-COSATU-SACP] Alliance and have not been threatened with similar sanction. There are three known examples of this which include:

1. NUMSA itself in 1993 resolved to canvass COSATU and its affiliates to support our position that we break with the Alliance and to form a workers' party. COSATU affiliates democratically engaged with this debate in the federation's national congress and it is common cause that NUMSA lost that debate in COSATU, yet no strong-arm tactics were ever applied to deal with NUMSA's democratically arrived at decision.

2. SASBO [the Finance Union, formerly the South African Society of Bank Officials] applied to become an affiliate of COSATU and is now an affiliate. Its constitution specifies that it "shall not belong to or support any political party". It does not contribute to the COSATU Political Fund. The leadership of COSATU at that time were prioritising unity of the working class. We can't say the same of the current leadership. Yet again SASBO had not been dragged in to a Kangaroo Court.

3. On March 9, 2011, the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) issued a public press statement which directly confronted the status of the federation in the tripartite alliance. It listed the failures of the ANC. It then recorded that the union resolved: "In the spirit of SAMWU's commitment to support the ANC in the forthcoming elections, we find it impossible to convince our members and the community to do this until the issues mentioned above are resolved. We thus call upon the ANC leadership to intervene urgently to address our concerns."

Other affiliates violate federation policy without consequence. Some examples of this include:

- The National Union of Miners (NUM) has on several occasions disagreed with the COSATU position on nationalisation.
- The Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) has spoken against the COSATU campaign on e-tolls

There has been no call made for their expulsion.

NUMSA is in good standing and there has been no threat of expulsion of the many other affiliates who

have not been in good standing in the past. We have paid both our subscriptions and the COSATU/SACP political levy. It is in fact the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SA-TAWU) and POPCRU who have outstanding levies to pay over to the federation.

However NUMSA is being asked to continue paying a levy to the SACP which continues to threaten to liquidate the union and has publicly declared that it will intervene in the federation to isolate what it called a "lingering irritation".

Of the different issues that NUMSA must account for to the COSATU CEC the one that appears to be driving the call for our expulsion is the decision to expand our scope of organising.

We have provided a comprehensive presentation that demonstrated:

1. How value chain organising already exists and is being used by a number of affiliates and new unions.
2. That other affiliates organise across sectors and compete with one another and there is no sanction from the federation
3. Almost all constitutions of affiliates overlap in scope and to date the federation has not addressed this.
4. There are many overlaps in scope that have led to conflict among affiliates.
5. A detailed list showing that the vast majority of affiliates have amended their scope to infringe on others.

We want to reiterate for the record that workers are approaching us and asking us to organise them. We are not poaching. We provided evidence of this to the SCEC.

Also for the record we want to repeat our position about the unconstitutional and divisive conduct of the COSATU leadership and some un-mandated leaders in the CEC:

1. The president of COSATU [Sidumo Dlamini] has violated the constitution when he refused to convene the SNC since the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) made the first call in April 2013 and eight other affiliates followed the call thereby meeting the constitutional threshold.

2. COSATU CEC deciding not to convene the SNC when it had no powers to do so.

3. Suspended the COSATU general secretary [Zwelinzima Vavi] who had to be reinstated through the South Gauteng High Court

4. The continued presence of Zingiswa Losi in all constitutional meetings in her capacity as second deputy president despite the fact that she has ceased to be a member of an affiliate.

5. Acted in bad faith in the process of seeking to expel NUMSA.

6. Failed in their duties of unifying the working class.

7. It is becoming a common practice that workers' control, open debate and criticism and the right to differ in the federation are suppressed

We told the COSATU SCEC on Friday night that they are more loyal to an alliance of the ANC and SACP than they are to the working class.

We told the COSATU SCEC on Friday night that they want to expel us because we constantly remind them how they are failing to protect the interests of the working class, which includes both the employed and the unemployed.

What are we going to do about our expulsion?

What are we going to do about our expulsion? As a worker-controlled organisation we are going to convene NUMSA constitutional meetings and mass meetings to develop a program of how we move forward and how we continue to raise our voices on working-class struggles. This fight is not over!

The NUMSA leadership calls on all NUMSA members across the length and breadth of the country to

remain united. We further call on all workers across all affiliates of COSATU to remain united and to reject the illegal expulsion of NUMSA by a factional group of leaders led by the COSATU president.

Today it is sad to see leaders who are hell bent on violating the COSATU constitution at every turn to serve their selfish political interest.

Today we see leaders who can knowingly destroy the federation of Elijah Barayi [COSATU's first president] and [another former COSATU president] John Gomomo. A federation built on the sacrifices, sweat and blood of so many workers who have come before us.

NUMSA's leadership remain resolute that we shall continue serving in COSATU structures in different capacities as we will challenge the boardroom dismantling of our federation.

We urge our local and provincial leadership to attend all the COSATU meetings in their numbers as we will not be pushed out by a now hidden now open agenda to split the federation. We remind our local and provincial leadership that there are many COSATU affiliates who are also prepared to fight to reclaim and unit our federation.

We know there is a special project of individuals who are ex-NUMSA and ex-COSATU leaders, (many of whom have been rewarded with big positions in parliament and legislatures), who are working externally with the leaders in the COSATU CEC, ANC and SACP to liquidate NUMSA. They are now going to try to get into our workplaces. They will try to get into our workplaces using the union they set up called Metal and Electrical Workers Union of South Africa (MEWUSA). We are prepared to fight back.

COSATU's decision to expel NUMSA must be understood for what it is — a well co-ordinated reactionary attack on the organisation of workers — an attack on COSATU, an attack on the poor and an attack on workers.

These reactionary forces that have been plotting within the alliance to destroy the unity of COSATU are doing this for their own selfish material interest. This COSATU boardroom struggle is not about workers' interest.

What we must give them credit for is that they managed to achieve what the apartheid regime failed to do which was to destroy a federation that had been both a shield and spear in the hands of workers and in the consciousness of the nation.

We call on all workers to stand together to remain united and fighting till the bitter end. All workers must join metalworkers in dislodging the boardroom wedge drivers who can expel and dismiss workers because they demand democratic worker control of unions. These boardroom wedge drivers have long forgotten that the task of unions is to:

- Serve the interest of workers.
- Champion shopfloor struggles.
- Link shopfloor struggles with community struggles.
- Pursue a revolutionary agenda through campaigns that must be taken forward as resolved in the COSATU 11th congress

NUMSA leadership across the length and breadth of this country will be convening open shop steward council meetings and open general members' meetings. These meetings will be open to all COSATU members so that they can understand

why they also should be fighting our illegal suspension.

We will in addition be explaining our SNC resolutions to all workers in these meetings and explain the underlying political struggle in the federation.

The NUMSA leadership calls on all our structures to intensify service delivery to our members in line with our Service Charter adopted at our December 2013 SNC. We must forge ahead with our recruitment target of 400,000 by 2016. We make a clarion call to all workers interested in a militant worker-controlled union to join NUMSA in their numbers.

We call on all metalworkers to remain vigilant in these testing times as the wedge-drivers move out of the COSATU boardroom and attempt to move into our workplaces. They will be driven out of NUMSA workplaces. This we are confident of.

There is no turning back on the NUMSA SNC resolutions and in line with these resolutions we are going to launch a national united front in December 2014.

We shall consolidate our work on the Movement for Socialism in the March 2015 central committee of NUMSA.

We remain committed to exploring an independent working-class political organ.

Our solidarity is our strength. Our unity is our strength.

MIDDLE EAST

Turkey lost its 'big brother' role in region

GILBERT ACHCAR ·

Professor Achcar, the international community is face-to-face with the threat of the Islamic State (IS, also known as ISIL), and some claim that IS is the product of the big powers such as the US and Israel.

No, this is conspiracy theory. If one means by that that the US is behind the creation of al-Qaeda or IS, it is quite absurd. But if what is meant by that is that the actions of the United States, the invasion and occupation of Iraq, created the ground for the development of al-Qaeda and the IS, then that is true.

How is Turkey seen in the region?

Erdoğan went to Cairo at the beginning of the whole upheaval in the region. He made a statement defending secularism and at that time it shocked the Muslim Brotherhood. He was projecting a line that could have been attractive there: Turkey could have appeared as a model for a secular democracy which would be respectful of people's religious practices but with basically democratic institutions. This has been jeopardized by the support of Turkey to the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood does not support secularism but is very much in favor of religion-based institutions, with Shariah integrated in laws and constitutions. This is not the image that was projected by Turkey initially. Instead of being a big brother in the region, Turkey is just seen now as one player among others in this ongoing conflict.

As you mentioned in your book "The Middle East is Boiling," there are claims that the map of the region might change. How do you assess this claim?

I don't think that the map of the region is now in the process of being redrawn, with one exception. The exception is the Kurdish nation. The Kurdish

nation is the only major nation that was not given any form of sovereignty, even partial sovereignty by the Western powers at the time of World War I. The Kurdish nation was divided into minority sections of larger national ensembles. They were deprived of sovereignty and this, of course, has already been changing. The first major change in this regard was the emergence of Iraqi Kurdistan as a de facto autonomous state entity.

For all intents and purposes, Iraqi Kurdistan is in fact acting as an independent or autonomous state that is in a kind of confederation with the rest of Iraq. This was a major shift. Then it has been followed with the condition created in Syria by the civil war leading to the autonomization of Syrian Kurdistan, the Kurdish region in Syria, the one where fighting is taking place today with the offensive by IS to take Kobani and the rest. This of course has been seen as an alarming development by Turkey because of the sensitivity of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. All the more in that the PYD in Syrian Kurdistan is closely allied or linked to the PKK in Turkish Kurdistan. That's the real reason of Turkey's reluctance to allow for support be given to PYD fighters in Kobani.

Kurds claim they have set up a more progressive movement against the old regime and also IS in the region. What can you say on this specific issue?

No doubt that compared to IS on one hand and the [Bashar al-Assad] regime on the other hand, the Kurdish forces in the Syrian part of Kurdistan or Kurdish part of Syria are much more progressive. I think there should not be any doubt that the PYD is much more progressive than IS. In that sense, it is a bulwark against IS. I think that any progressive democratic views should be supportive of Kurdish resistance to IS. This should be obvious. And the

statements by Erdoğan himself that the PYD are equal to IS and that the PKK and IS are equally terrorist are, I believe, unacceptable and untrue, especially speaking for PYD in Syria. No one can call PYD a terrorist organization.

Are you hopeful for the future of the region, then?

It was a long revolutionary process, and as every revolutionary process in history it has moments of revolution and faces counter-revolution in other moments. We are now presently going through a phase of counter-revolution when you look at what

happened in Egypt and the kind of development that you have in Syria. But this is not the end of the story. This is just a phase and the transition is quite rapid. So I think that the situation is quite open. There will be further changes and the region will remain in a state of turmoil for several years, if not actually several decades. All will depend ultimately on whether the progressive forces in the Arab countries manage really to organize themselves as an alternative both to the old regime and to Islamic reactionary forces.

Today's Zaman 4 November 2014.

BRITAIN

Political volatility despite the limits of the fightback against austerity

DAVE KELLAWAY ·

Over 80% of the demonstrators were public sector workers. Lower paid workers, particularly women from the Health sector, were prominent. Strike action in the National Health Service in the week before the demonstration helped in mobilising people for the demonstration whereas the other strikes in local government had been called off. However the demonstration was significantly smaller than last year's. Resistance among working people is still weak, marked by decades of defeats, the effects of austerity and the continued rightwards shift of their 'traditional' ally, the Labour Party.

Ed Miliband – the British Hollande – says any future Labour government would respect the existing budget constraints. Labour would make spending cuts and respect the welfare cap established by this government. The welfare cap cuts the amount of welfare support that a family can receive. Only 12 'left' Labour MPs (all veterans over 60 years old!) voted against this welfare cap. Miliband appears just like an intellectual who has never had a real job and cannot relate to ordinary people. Labour act like a defensive football team who are hoping to win one-nil. It thinks it can win the election by keeping steady while the Tories lose votes to the anti-EU UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party). The problem is that Labour's opposition is so lack lustre that it is also losing support to UKIP and the resurgent Greens. Since the demonstration there have been significant rumblings of opposition inside the Labour Party with supposedly twenty shadow ministers and senior MPs calling for a change of leadership. The favoured candidate, Alan

Johnson who has amore working class background but is, if anything a bit to the right of Miliband, is refusing at present to be drafted in as an unchallenged replacement. Outside this political bubble people are angry and frustrated with the Westminster political caste and are turning away from the mainstream parties.

There is a crisis of the political system primarily caused by austerity politics. In Britain this is aggravated by the issue of EU membership and the Scottish question. Opposition to the EU has been reinforced by anti-migrant resentment since the majority now come from the EU. If you add the devastating social effects of austerity and distrust of politicians fuelled by expenses scandals then you have a potent mix which has helped the rise of the racist UKIP party. Already the largest single party at the European elections UKIP recently won its first parliamentary seat and looks likely to win a second one – both with candidates who have split from the Conservatives. UKIP also threatens Labour as it came within 600 votes of winning a Labour-held seat near Manchester. The Conservatives and Labour are now imitating UKIP in promoting a tougher line against migrants.

At the demonstration left-leaning trade union leader, Len McCluskey, called for Miliband to be bold and not implement austerity-lite policies. But he creates illusions by talking as if Miliband would steer left if he could just face down his Blairite advisors. Mark Serotka, civil servant leader, talks more realistically, but vaguely, about the need to build a left movement, even a new party, to challenge Labour. For the radical left outside Labour all eyes are on Scotland where Labour is being seriously challenged by forces to its left. The Radical

Independence movement will have a conference of over 2500 and the Scottish Socialist party has increased its membership by over 1200. There are calls for a Podemos-type movement there. Recently the Scottish Labour leader resigned criticising Miliband. They face losing half their MPs in Scotland according to recent surveys. In the rest of the UK the radical left still suffers from too much division although the Left Unity project initiated by Ken Loach has consolidated 50 branches and nearly 2000 members. It aims to work for further unity of the left.

One urgent issue for the left of Labour is how to challenge Miliband's Labour party at the general election in May. Left Unity is probably only able to put up around a dozen or so candidates. The Trade Union and Socialist Coalition is an electoral bloc without individual membership or local branches but organised through the leaderships of the Socialist Workers Party, the Socialist Party and the

railworkers union the RMP. It is aiming to stand 100 candidates, partly in order to qualify for an electoral TV broadcast. In many areas the Greens will be standing with credible candidates with policies well to the left of Labour. Consequently Left Unity members will be supporting varying candidates and campaigns depending on local circumstances. Although current political volatility means the overall vote for smaller parties outside the mainstream will be bigger than ever and may lead to an unclear outcome next May, the undemocratic first past the post electoral system makes it very difficult for alternative parties to be fairly represented. Socialists will be using the elections to get as many votes as possible but also as a basis for reinforcing the anti-austerity fightback and building a more embedded class struggle alternative to Labour's tepid 'social' neo-liberalism.

9 November 2014

SOUTH AFRICA

NUMSA secretary addresses COSATU EC

Comrades,

I stand here as the General Secretary of the biggest affiliate of this federation, as a founding member at the Congress of 1985. I will be reminding comrades here of our common history.

I stand here because the Central Executive Committee of this federation has offered Numsa an opportunity to explain to you why we should not be expelled or suspended from this organisation. I am going to fulfil that task thoroughly. I will explain in great detail exactly why Numsa should not be expelled or suspended and why, instead, this federation should obey its own constitution and allow workers, as owners of the federation, to decide on its future. When we founded this federation, we were wise enough to foresee that there might be political conflict in the future. We put in place a rule to cater for that eventuality. The rule says that if one-third of the affiliates of the federation ever think that there are issues that require the consideration of a Special National Congress, they can require the President to call that congress.

What kind of issues would require such a special congress? There are two powers of a National Congress which no other structure has.

- o It makes policy
- o It elects leadership.

The purpose of the rule is precisely to deal with conflict over policy and leadership. Right now, we have a crisis of policy and leadership. The reason that Cosatu is paralysed by this dispute, resorting to the courts and expensive lawyers to decide our future, is that we have refused to decide it for ourselves. We have committed the most heinous sin against the spirit of the founding fathers of this federation. We have refused to decide our own future.

In order to abandon this responsibility, the leadership of this federation has chosen to break its own rules. To violate its own constitution. As so often happen with corruption, when it starts, it doesn't stop.

- o Those who break rules have to defend themselves against those who challenge them for that act.
- o The leadership of this federation knows that it will be defeated in any National Congress of the federation. Whether that is a Special National Congress or an ordinary national congress. It can't have a Congress because it will lose.

o So it must try to ensure that by the time it gets to a Congress it can win. o That is the reason for these expulsion hearings here today.

But underneath that, is a profound political division.

- o It is a division between those who recognise the political bankruptcy of the ANC / SACP government and those who don't.
- o Between those who support the interests of the working class, as our Constitution requires us to do, and those who are prepared to sacrifice those interests for a class alliance.

Now we are clear about the real reason for these proceedings, let's look at what you have said are our crimes. This CEC wrote to us on February 11 this year and said this:

In particular, the CEC records that many of NUMSA's decisions, declarations and resolutions which emanated from its Special Congress in December 2013, contradict the decisions of the Federation or are intended to act against the interests of the Federation. These include, but are not limited to:

– The decision to call on COSATU to break its alliance with the ANC

– The decision to organise a march to Cosatu House to coincide with the 1st CEC in February 2014;

– The decision to hold back on paying affiliation fees to COSATU until the special national congress is held;

– The decision to cease to pay our contribution into the COSATU/SACP levy;

– The decision to extend our scope of operation

I will respond to each of these one by one in detail.

But before we look at the details of the 'charges' we need to comment on this process. We have always said that we don't believe that we can receive a fair hearing in this forum. We are sad to say that we now have proof of that:

o In its letter to us of 11 February, in which we received the 5 'charges', this CEC said that "it had formed a preliminary view that NUMSA should be suspended or expelled from its affiliation of COSATU because NUMSA has in the recent past acted against the interests of the Federation, and implicitly threatens to continue to do so in the future."

o At the POPCRU CEC, the President of Cosatu said this week: "On the meeting of the 7th of November, constitutionally we will be listening to the response by the union that has been found guilty. They have been found guilty of violating the constitution of the federation. They must only explain why Cosatu should not suspend or expel them.

Sometime between 11th February and 4th November we moved from "preliminary view" to "guilty as charged". We are not aware of any constitutional structure that took that decision.

This whole process is a sham.

Firstly, the decision to call on COSATU to break its alliance with the ANC

This is the charge which shows the current Cosatu leadership in its true colours. You are accusing us of raising political debate in our federation. You are accusing us of trying to influence our federation.

If this was a crime, we would have to plead guilty. In fact we have been guilty of this since 1985, when this federation was founded. We have always raised political debate in the federation. A federation of political debate is a healthy federation.

So if this is a crime in the federation of the Cosatu NOBs, it is clearly a different kind of federation from the one of Barayi and Gomomo. What kind of a federation will it be? A federation in which affiliates cannot start a debate. And yet there is a Cosatu policy position which says that we must review the alliance from time to time. If an affiliate cannot trigger such a discussion in the federation, where is the review going to come from? If it can't come from the affiliates, the only place it can come from is the Cosatu NOBs themselves.

This charge takes the democratic, politically vibrant federation of Barayi and Gomomo and seeks to turn it into an army commanded by Cosatu Head Office. We cannot have a form of democracy which prevents debate on new issues and new analysis on the basis that we already have a decision. This is not a correct application of Clause 2.3 of the Cosatu Constitution. We have seen this before in the history of the world. We have seen societies in which all debate is suppressed unless it is initiated by the leaders. We have called this by its proper political name – Stalinism.

Meanwhile, unlike the federation, we as Numsa have been faithfully carrying out this resolution of the 6th Congress: "While COSATU should remain committed to the alliance, such a commitment, must be coupled with a vigorous defence of the federation's political independence. Partners must fearlessly but constructively criticize each other."

When NUMSA took the resolution in December 2013, it did so in the full knowledge that COSATU was in alliance with the ANC and SACP. That is why the resolution is worded as it is:

"As NUMSA, we should call on COSATU to break from the Alliance".

We are calling on our federation to change its policy. That is not just a right as an affiliate. That is our revolutionary duty. We did exactly the same in 1993. The only difference in 1993 was that we weren't threatened with expulsion for doing so. In 1993 the debate was handled properly, by leaders who were interested in democratic debate leading to unity in action. The debate took place in the only forum that is entitled to make and change policy – the National Congress.

That is why we have been calling for a Special National Congress – so that we can pursue the debate in the proper structure. You, the Cosatu leadership which is now seeking to expel us, are the ones who have prevented this from happening. You have stifled debate. We will return to this issue later.

Now I will explain to you why our Special Congress took the decision that it did on the Alliance.

It's really very straightforward. The Cosatu constitution has a section called "Aims and Objectives". Clause 1.4. The first objective, at the top of the list, is to "fight for worker rights by securing social and economic justice for all workers". It's not an accident that this is at the top of the list. It is because it is our most fundamental objective, our most sacred duty. If we fail to do this, we have no reason to exist.

Our Special Congress resolved that it is impossible to continue to be loyal to this primary objective whilst remaining in the Alliance. Why did we resolve this?

- If we go back to June 2012, the Numsa 9th National Congress in Durban was critical of the ANC / SACP government.

- *But we called for our members to swell the ranks of the ANC and SACP.*

- At that time we believed that we could struggle successfully for working class leadership.

- After that Congress and before our Special Congress in December 2013 there were 4 key developments which caused us to change our position fundamentally.

The first was that the ANC adopted the neoliberal NDP

- The problem with the NDP is not a technical one:

- *It is not full of errors or in need of adjustment and editing.*

- On the contrary, it is a very competent and detailed document.

- The problem is that it is the programme of our class enemy:

- *It is a programme to continue to feed profit at the expense of the working class and the poor.*

- It is a strategic plan that will benefit white monopoly capital, imperialism and the comprador black capitalist class, not us.

- Both the NDP and Gear have replaced the Freedom Charter:

- *The Freedom Charter gave the ANC its liberation character. It is a militant, popular programme which challenged property relations in South Africa*

- The NDP is a neoliberal programme which entrenches existing property relations and attacks the working class and the poor in the interests of mining and finance capital.

The second is that the ANC leadership has abandoned democracy

- *The ANC leadership demonstrated without doubt, at Mangaung, that they will not allow anybody else to challenge their direction.*

- We saw it clearly on the issue of nationalisation.

- The Policy Conference which preceded the Mangaung Conference had a clear majority in favour of nationalisation.
- That majority decision was stolen by the ANC leadership. Without any debate in the ANC or the Alliance, that leadership invented support for the NDP
- The NDP focuses on reducing the role of the state rather than increasing it.

We can see the threat to Cosatu's militancy and independence being played out in front of our eyes here today

- Cosatu has become consumed by internal battles between two forces:
- *Those who continue to support the ANC and SACP, with its neoliberal agenda*
- And those who, despite their understanding of the ANC as a multi-class organisation, consciously and consistently fight for an independent, militant federation which stands for the interests of the working class before any other.
- For the first time the Cosatu tradition of independence and militancy is threatened by a leadership grouping which continues to prioritise support for the ANC / SACP government at any cost.
- At a crucial point in the history of the South African class struggle, the most consistent voice of the working class and the poor over the last 25 years has been silenced.
- This silencing has been a deliberate act of the ANC / SACP leadership

And then what must be the most decisive of all: the massacre of our fellow workers at Marikana and in the Western Cape

- Both at Marikana and in the farmworkers strike in the Western Cape, the armed forces of the state intervened in support of the owners of capital against striking workers.
- In both instances the result was the murder of workers whose only crime was to refuse to sell their

labour for less than a living wage. Their struggle came from the government's failure to break the backbone of the apartheid colonial wage which is about super-exploitation of Black and African labour.

- Both instances were treated by the ANC / SACP government like earthquakes or volcanoes – as natural disasters. Tragedies to be regretted but not apologised for.

What the Americans would call "collateral damage".

- We saw them for what they were: slaughter of the working class on behalf of international capital.
- They showed what the paid ANC servants of global capital would do in order to earn the right to their share of its profits.

In short

This is the manner in which the ANC / SACP leadership has attacked the working class in the last 18 months:

- 1.They have adopted the NDP - a guiding strategy for all government activity that is a direct attack on the lives and living conditions of the working class and the poor. By doing so they are maintaining the dominance of the accumulation of white minority capital and a tiny white population
 - 2.They have destroyed the possibility of challenging their policy by eliminating internal democracy
 - 3.They have fragmented and muted the most powerful representative of the working class and the poor - Cosatu
 - 4.They have assassinated workers in order to restore order and please their masters
- There has been no Alliance progress on the issues of the organised working class: the ANC / SACP government continues to pass anti- working class laws such as e tolls, the Employment Tax Incentive Bill and regulation as opposed to banning of labour broking

Cosatu continues to blindly adhere to the alliance, without the balance sheet required by Cosatu policy. Numsa followed policy and did a balance sheet.

– The 6th Congress empowered the CEC to review from time to time the workings of the alliance. This has not happened.

– Congress has agreed that balance sheets must be carried out before elections. These have not been carried out

– Numsa did its own balance sheet in line with the Congress Resolutions

The Alliance is dysfunctional and captured by rightwing forces

The Alliance is dysfunctional, in crisis, paralysed and dominated by infighting and factionalism. It has been captured by rightwing forces. As a result:

– The Freedom Charter, which we understood as the minimum platform of the Alliance, has been completely abandoned in favour of rightwing and neo-liberal policies such as the National Development Plan (NDP).

– Those who are perceived to be against neo-liberalism or to be advocates of policies in favour of the working class and the poor are seen as problematic, isolated or purged.

– There exists little common understanding within the Alliance of the real objectives of the National Democratic Revolution.

The Alliance does not lead struggle

Although there are protests everywhere and every day in the country, the Alliance is not an instrument in the hands of these struggling masses, nor does it provide leadership to these struggles, which are largely leaderless struggles. The reality is that there is a political vacuum and the working class is on its own.

The Alliance is just for elections

The Alliance operates only during election periods. It is used to rubber stamp neo-liberal policies of the

ANC and not as a centre of power that debates policy issues and implementation. It is our experience that the working class is being used by the leader of the Alliance – the African National Congress – as voting fodder.

The ANC is the only strategic centre

The ANC has resisted the reconfiguration of the Alliance into a strategic political centre where issues of policy, deployments into government and programmes are jointly decided upon by all Alliance components. Our strategy of swelling the ranks has not worked and all resolutions of COSATU congresses in relation to how the Alliance should function have not been implemented by the leaders of the Alliance.

In practice the Alliance is still in the hands of one alliance partner, the ANC. The ANC is the centre and implements government programmes and policies alone, with little or no consultation with other components of the Alliance. It has made it very clear that it has no intention of allowing this situation to change. As evidence of this, the last alliance summit still failed to make fundamental changes to the NDP and had no significant impact in changing policies in favour of the working class and the poor.

This is a common development in post-colonial countries

The treatment of labour as a junior partner within the Alliance is not uniquely a South African phenomenon. In many post-colonial and post-revolutionary situations, liberation and revolutionary movements have turned on labour movements that fought alongside them, suppressed them, marginalised them, split them, robbed them of their independence or denied them any meaningful role in politics and policy-making.

There is no chance of winning back the Alliance or the SACP

There is no chance of winning back the Alliance to what it was originally formed for, which was to drive a revolutionary programme for fundamental transformation of the country, with the Freedom

Charter as the minimum platform to transform the South African economy.

The South African Communist Party (SACP) leadership has become embedded in the state and is failing to act as the vanguard of the working class. The chance of winning it back onto the path of working class struggle for working class power is very remote.

The working class needs a political organisation

For the struggle for socialism, the working class needs a political organisation committed in theory and practice to socialism.

We concluded that the NDR is off track

- Our NDR is a struggle to end national, gender and class oppression and exploitation
- If we want to meet the needs of all the people, the white racist and colonial capitalist economic foundation of SA must be destroyed; this is the only basis for real national unity and democracy in SA.
- The full and radical implementation of the Freedom Charter is the best way to achieve this change, as the COSATU 9th Congress emphasised
- The goals of the NDR can only be achieved by democratic forces, led by the working class, ***dismantling white monopoly capitalist state power, and constructing popular state power and securing ownership and control of national wealth as Engels put it.***
- A deal was done before 1994 – that we will only have political power without economic power.
- The NDR is off track

The result is that the ANC / SACP cannot represent any national interest

- It does not come from incompetence or inefficiency on the part of the ANC and SACP leadership.
- It comes from a class fact. The leadership of the ANC and SACP is protecting the interests of a sec-

tion of the capitalist class against the interests of the working class and of the nation as a whole:

- *Some of them are completely co-opted and are accumulating at the expense of the working class.*
- How do you expect them to support nationalisation when they own shares in the very companies that will be nationalised?
- The ANC and SACP leadership represent the material interests of an elite which has made an alliance with the capitalists of the Minerals / Energy / Finance complex – the mines, the banks and the financial institutions.
- In electing Cyril Ramaphosa as Deputy President, we argue that this alliance was consummated
- That is why the ANC cannot represent any national interest

The Alliance is class alliance. What brings us together is the minimum programme – the Freedom Charter. The ANC has abandoned the FC. If there is no Freedom Charter, there is no alliance. The Cosatu leadership fails to recognise this. So Numsa did a balance sheet of progress in relation to the demands of the Freedom Charter. The reaction of the Cosatu leaders to this discussion of Numsa is a shallow understanding of what the alliance is. The working class in is alliance with other classes. We must always ask whether this is in the interests of the working class?

So we also did a balance sheet of progress in relation to the Freedom Charter

Let's remember what the Freedom Charter says:

- 1.The People Shall Govern!
- 2.All National Groups Shall have Equal Rights!
- 3.The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!
- 4.The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It!
- 5.All Shall be Equal Before the Law!
- 6.There Shall be Work and Security!

7.The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!

8.All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!

9.There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!

10.There Shall be Peace and Friendship!

"Democracy would be quite useless to the proletariat if it were not immediately utilised as a means of accomplishing further measures directly attacking private ownership and securing the existence of the proletariat...Once the first radical onslaught upon private ownership has been made, the proletariat will be compelled to go further, and more and more to concentrate in the hands of the State all capital, all agriculture, all industry, all transport, and all means of exchange"—Engels, Principles of Communism.

The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!

What Actually Happened After 1995?

- In 1995, the Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality stood at 0.64 but it increased to 0.68 by 2008
- The share of in national income was 56% in 1995 but it had declined to 51% in 2009, i.e. there has been reverse redistribution from the poor to the rich
- Approximately 20% of South Africans earned less than R800 a month in 2002, the situation is worse for Africans. By 2007, approximately 71% of African female-headed households earned less than R800 a month
- In the Budget Speech 2010, the Minister of Finance noted that in South Africa "income inequality is among the highest in the world; and half of our population survives on 8% of national income".
- The poor's children remain trapped in inferior education with wholly inadequate infrastructure. Indeed 70% of (matriculation) exam passes are ac-

counted for by just 11% of schools, the former white, coloured, and Asian schools.

- Among Africans 55% live in dwellings with less than 3 rooms and 21% live in 1-room dwellings, whereas at least 50% of White households lives in dwellings with no less than 4 rooms.
- The life expectancy of South Africans was the highest in 1992, at 62 years. Ever since then life expectancy fell to 50 years in 2006.
- The life expectancy of a white South African now stands at 71 years and that of a black South African stands at 48 years. **Whites therefore expect to live 23 years more than blacks.** This is due to inequality of access to quality health services.

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole

What Actually Happened After 1995

- The financial sector: Dominated by 4 large privately owned banks (ABSA, Nedbank, FNB and Standard Bank). ABSA is 56% foreign-owned, Standard Bank is at least 40% foreign owned. The Reserve Bank privately owned and has foreign ownership.
- SASOL is about 30% foreign-owned and Arcelor-Mittal is 65% foreign owned.
- The pharmaceuticals sector:is Dominated by foreign-owned Aspen, Adcock-Ingram, Sanofi, Pfizer, Novartis, etc. have all significant foreign-ownership.
- Telecommunications: The Thintana Telkom Deal in 1997 (Malaysians and Americans), which led to massive job losses in Telkom from 67 000 to 25 000, has left the country poorer and in a worse socio-economic position.
- The construction sector is also monopolised, dominated by four players: Murray & Roberts, WBHO, Aveng and Group 5, with foreign ownership.

•The cement sector is also dominated by 4 players (PPC, Alpha, Lafarge and Natal Portland).

And there's more that actually happened after 1995

•The Forestry sector is also monopolised by two major players, SAPPI and MONDI, with the state, through SAFCOL, playing a minor role.

•Machinery and equipment is a diverse sector: The major equipment players are Caterpillar, John Deere/Bell, Komatsu, Manitou SA and Thyssen-Krupp, all foreign.

•The wholesale and retail trade sector is a monopoly industry, dominated by two firms: Shoprite and Pick 'n Pay, which constitute 66% of the market share. Massmart was 60% foreign-owned even before Walmart, Shoprite is 35%, Truworths is 50%, Foschini is 40%, JD Group is 40%, The state does not play any role in this sector.

•Mining is a monopolised sector too, in all its varied aspects because of the various minerals under it:

•Iron-ore, so crucial to steel production is dominated by Kumba Iron-Ore, which is majority foreign-owned.

•Manganese production is dominated by Samancor, which is a joint venture of foreign-owned mining houses,

•Chrome production: Samancor Chrome dominates, is majority foreign-owned entity,

• Vanadium production is controlled by Vanchem also foreign owned,

• Coal production is majority owned and controlled by foreign companies, etc..

• In short all minerals in South Africa are majority foreign-owned and controlled.

All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the wellbeing of the people

What Actually Happened After 1995?

• The manufacturing sector declined from 20% of national production in 1995 to 15% of national production in 2010. This is evidence of de-industrialization.

• **Between 1995–2008, the manufacturing sector lost 350 000 jobs and an additional 271 000 jobs were lost in 2009–2012.** The policies of the past 19 years have thus failed to promote labour-intensive industrialization. In 2009 alone we lost 1 million jobs in the whole economy!

• Total trade deficit is R9.5 billion in January 2013

• Television, Radio and Communication Equipment: **431% deficit**

• Radio, Television, Clocks and Watches: **397% deficit**

• Machinery and Equipment: **120% deficit**

•**The removal of exchange controls also facilitated the outflow of capital** in the form of delisting of South African conglomerates from JSE to the London Stock Exchange: Gencor, Liberty Life, Anglo-American, De Beers, Old Mutual, SA Breweries, Investec and Didata etc.

• Because of such large outflow of domestic resources, South Africa's dependence on short-term capital flows to finance its expenditures has increased. There has been a **rapid rise in South Africa's foreign debt from \$25 billion in 1994 to \$132 billion in 2012**, with relatively little increase in real productive investment in the private sector.

• The structure of the economy remains mineral-dependent and is now finance-led: Petrochemicals, mining and Basic Iron and Steel make up 69% of total exports, and are highly capital and energy intensive. This has not changed since 1970.

And there is more on what happened After 1995

• Nationally, 7 foundries have closed because of neoliberal refusal to ban exportation of scrap metal and to impose export tax on minerals

- It is not a secret that SASOL, Arcelor-Mittal. No control to assist the well-being of the people.
- The mines are creaming off profits: For example ferro-chrome industry is dying because chrome ore is exported
- Cement companies and construction firms are charging collusion prices. No control to assist well-being of the people
- Food processors and retailers, collude to charge high prices. No control to assist the well-being of the people
- Companies that have suffered because of continued neo-liberal approach of National Treasury in the Vaal:
- *Iscor: Ever since its privatisation and unbundling, is engaged in never-ending retrenchments*
- Tosa: Tube-makers of South Africa, has shut down
- Vikor: shut down, steel and engineering
- Brodericks: shut down, steel and engineering
- Mercy Ferguson : shut down, tractor manufacturers

Other affiliates have rejected the Alliance and have not been threatened with similar sanction

We will offer 3 examples of this:

- Numsa itself in 1993 resolved to canvass Cosatu and its affiliates to support our position that we break with the Alliance and to form a Workers Party. Cosatu affiliates engaged with this debate in the Federation's National Congress and it is common cause that Numsa lost that debate in Cosatu, yet no strong arm tactics were ever applied to deal with Numsa's democratically arrived at decision
- SASBO applied to become an affiliate of COSATU and is now an affiliate. Its constitution specifies that it "shall not belong to or support any political party". It does not contribute to the COSATU Political Fund. The leadership of Cosatu at that

time were prioritising unity of the working class. WE can't say the same of the current leadership.

- On March 9 2011 Samwu issued a public press statement which directly confronted the status of the Federation in the tripartite alliance.

*o It listed the failures of the ANC, saying amongst other things: **Cosatu has failed to secure a pact with the ANC. This has meant that many of the issues that concern the working class have not been incorporated into the manifesto. The manifesto continues to provide for the needs of capitalists. We fear that the dire straits of working class communities will continue to be ignored in the aftermath of the elections***

o It then recorded that the union resolved: "In the spirit of Samwu's commitment to support the ANC in the forthcoming elections, we find it impossible to convince our members and the community to do this until the issues mentioned above are resolved. We thus call upon the ANC leadership to intervene urgently to address our concerns."

Other affiliates violate Federation policy without consequence

- The foundations of the macro-economic strategy of the NDP violate Cosatu macro-economic policies of the Congresses of the last 20 years, yet many affiliates accept the NDP as a basis to engage.

- The President of the Num, on a fundamental issue of Federation policy, said: "We don't believe nationalisation is the panacea to all our problems. We tell those who call for it that they're only playing with the aspirations of people and their frustrations, using a populist agenda rather than being real". [1] But Cosatu policy is clearly and absolutely in favour of nationalization:

The 9th Congress resolved that "Government must:

- 1.(Re)nationalise key industries that used to belong to the state, beginning with SASOL;

2. Pass legislation to allow state takeover of industries that are either closed or abandoned by owners or financially troubled. This must be done through direct involvement of workers affected; and

3. Return to the Freedom Charter demands for nationalisation of the monopoly industries like the mines and the banks.

The 10th Congress resolved that:

"The role and features of our developmental state must include:

o Active state-led interventions in the economy – including an expansionary macroeconomic policy, active industrial strategy, the nationalisation of strategic industries...."

– Popcru has openly opposed Cosatu policy and campaigning.

o In commenting on Cosatu's etoll campaign, Comrade Theledi said: "Popcru believes the federation in this instance is calling on citizens to resort to anarchy...We have witnessed in the recent past protesters torching buildings and cars in order to register their discontent, and we believe this call by Cosatu will be deemed as encouragement by those who want to perpetuate criminality through protests."

o Is this supposed to be a lesson in democratic centralism from Popcru? We thought the purpose of democratic centralism is that we can act in a united way. The Popcru General Secretary clearly thinks it is good democratic centralist practice to sabotage Cosatu campaigns by openly opposing them.

And then there is Num and nationalisation

Cosatu has been very clear about nationalisation

– 9th Congress

o a)"We must bring back the fundamental thrust of the Freedom Charter and the RDP on nationalisation of key and strategic industries.

o b) Government must return to the Freedom Charter demands for the nationalisation monopoly industries like mines and the banks

o c) To campaign within the Alliance and society at large for the nationalisation of economic assets in key economic sectors such as minerals, telecommunications, petrochemical, etc.

– 10th Congress:

o "the Freedom Charter propagates state ownership of the commanding heights of the economy and control of the private sector for the benefit of the people"

o called for the developmental state to engage in "the nationalisation of strategic industries, expropriation of land for the land-hungry"

– NUM:

o The NUM Central Committee resolved that the intensification of the legislation (MPRDA) is indeed in conformity with the Freedom Charter call for the mines to be nationalized.

o "NUM's view is that there are different models of nationalization and that the choice is always informed by the needs of the affected governments, looking at some of the known models below, it can be divided into full-scale nationalization or strategic funds/equity by government.... NUM does not support a blanket/wholesale nationalization but prefers the model on "strategic fund/strategic equity". [2]

There was no outcry when Num came out with this position. There was no call for them to be expelled for refusing to follow Cosatu policy.

The second issue which the CEC letter of February raised was the decision to organise a march to Cosatu House to coincide with the 1st CEC in February 2014

Workers must be able to protest without fear of expulsion

– Where there is oppression by a minority, there will be protest. Where the federation acts outside its constitution, it must expect that workers will not only use constitutional meetings to express their grievances.

– The federation of Elijah Barayi would not propose that where workers have grievances with the Federation and they propose to raise those grievances by way of peaceful protest and in terms of their right to freedom of association, this would render them liable to expulsion from the Federation.

– We have also noted that the same Cosatu NOBs who are seeking to expel us for this are at the same time organising their faction of Cosatu to attack us. So the Cosatu

President took the opportunity of Popcru's Central Executive Committee meeting to say this:

"This federation is today fighting a tendency where unions deliberately work to weaken each other through poaching and openly destroy each other even to an extent of having others helping opposition unions in the same sector. This is in our view a clear agenda of destroying

Cosatu...I have no doubt that Popcru is standing firm in defence of Cosatu.....We are not going to wait for a special congress before we expose lies."

Comrade Sdumo, you wouldn't have to wait for a Special National Congress if you had carried out your constitutional duty and called it at the end of 2013 when the 9 unions sent you their request.

The march never took place

In practice no march actually took place. So you want to expel us for deciding to do something which we never actually did. While you sit there in flagrant violation of the constitution. Who is the one who should be expelled?

The decision to hold back on paying affiliation fees to COSATU until the special national congress is held

Numsa is in good standing and there has been no threat of expulsion of the many other affiliates who have not been in good standing in the past

– Again, in practice Numsa is in good standing and has remained in good standing.

– None of the many others who have failed to be in good standing during Cosatu's history have been threatened with expulsion

The decision to cease to pay its contribution into the COSATU/SACP levy

Firstly, Numsa is fully paid up. In fact, you can see from this Cosatu report that at the end of last year was one of only 6 affiliates who were fully paid up. Of the other 13 affiliates, some were in arrears by more than a year:

– Satawu started the year owing R152,254 and ended it owing R324,584.17 having paid nothing for the entire year

– Popcru has failed to pay the R63,527.33 which it has owed from 2012

We have not heard any proposals to expel or suspend these affiliates

Secondly, this is a levy, not affiliation fees

– Affiliation fees are a basis of membership of the Federation; a levy is a form of taxation

– The failure of an affiliate to pay a levy means they have a debt. It cannot affect their standing as an affiliate in the Federation.

Thirdly, how can we be expected to fund an organization which threatens to destroy us?

Look at what the SACP has been saying about us:

The GS of the SACP has this to say:

– "there is a small, but lingering, phenomenon in the trade union movement that of wanting to deliberately cause strain and divide the labour movement from the SACP and the ANC. We must intensify ideological work to expose and defeat this phenomenon within the ranks of COSATU and the progressive trade union movement."

SACP 2nd Deputy GS said:

– "It's time for Numsa rank and file workers to take back their union from the leadership clique around Irvin Jim, from all his tenderpreneurs and parasites who are leaching off worker retirement funds".

Is it really reasonable to expect us to continue to financially support an organization which has vowed to defeat us, called our leadership criminals and urged our membership to overthrow that leadership?

Now we come to the last of the 5 issues identified by the CEC in your letter to us: the decision to extend our scope

On this one, we must be clear from the beginning. This is not the reason for our expulsion, even though we expect those of you who support our expulsion to focus on it. We know the reason for our expulsion. It is that we are attacking the status quo. The status quo, as we have explained, is against the working class. Those who seek our expulsion support that status quo.

This is a co-ordinated agenda between ANC and SACP with their friends in the Cosatu leadership to deal with Numsa because we reject their failure to implement the Freedom Charter and to fundamentally restructure the economy. Those who serve in the leading ANC and SACP structures, like Sidumo, must discipline the federation to toe the line. This is the real reason for this attempt to expel us. We will prove this by showing you how all of the crimes that we are alleged to have committed have been and are being committed by almost every other affiliate, even now as we speak.

As trade unionists, we know about selective discipline. The bosses often try to use it against us. They hand pick the shop stewards they want to discipline, even though those ones they pick have done nothing different from all the other workers. We are in the same position. Only this time it is our federation which has taken a tip from the bosses and is using their selective discipline tactic against one of their own affiliates.

Firstly, we know that we are in fact the ones who are carrying out federation policy on supply chain organizing and progressive demarcation.

Supply chain organising is supported

At the 8th Congress, we adopted an organisational resolution called "7 Principles for Demarcation". It said this:

1. "Demarcation must take into account conflicting needs. As far as possible, it must support...

– Protection for vulnerable workers through solidarity with workers in more strategic jobs or in jobs connected in the supply chain.....

– Continuous membership if the employer hives off activities, for instance by outsourcing or privatisation"

Supply chain organising and value chain organising are different words for the same thing. This is a clear mandate to recognise the need for value chain organising, which is the subject of Numsa's resolution.

Progressive demarcation is supported

The need for progressive demarcation across inter-related industries has for many years been recognised by the Federation. This notion has been applied to suggested mergers between SAFPU, MUSA and PAWE to introduce a comprehensive entertainment union, or indeed the merger integration of FAWU and SAPPWU and DENOSA/ SADNU

Value chain organising already exists and is being used by a number of affiliates and new unions which are a threat to affiliates

Recruiting and organising along value chains has been reflected in the constitutions and practices of many COSATU affiliates:

1. NUM has implemented this on the mines since its inception and it further opened its scope to merge with CAWU. It further opened its scope cleverly because it inserted in its constitution "con-

struction and all auxiliary services" – what are auxiliary services if they are not the value chain? They claimed they did this only in order to assist

CAWU, the "auxiliary services" are nothing to do with CAWU.

2.NEHAWU has implemented this since its inception hence its President is a cleaner from a hospital who is not a SATAWU member but a NEHAWU member

3.SACTWU has organised along a value chain in its recruitment in clothing retail

4.FAWU organises workers who are sub-contracted to fill hired supermarket shelves by food manufacturers; FAWU has confirmed both in previous CEC and in a letter to Cosatu that they have indeed opened their scope. As has Saccawu in 2005.

5.Most of the newly registered unions, both independent and AMCU, are organising along value chains and have registered themselves as general unions.

We have merged along value chain lines internationally

We have come together internationally for exactly the same objective reasons that we must do so locally. The organisation of production has changed. That is why textile, mining and metal are all in one international federation, InustriAll, which merged in 2008. How can Cosatu affiliates accept the need for value chain organising internationally whilst opposing it so vigorously locally that they want to expel us from the federation? It doesn't seem logical.

That is how we know that there is another reason hiding behind this excuse.

Cosatu itself recognizes the need for changing the way we organize

Cosatu 10th Congress Resolution acknowledges the problem: the changes that have taken place in the workplace require new and innovative ways of recruiting workers into Cosatu affiliates

Cosatu 10th Congress resolved to move to mergers: we agreed to conduct audits to see overlaps within the Federation with a view to merge unions who organise within the same industries. The congress realised that this is a common problem. It's not a Numsa problem. It's a Cosatu problem. Why must Numsa alone be expelled for a problem that belongs to the whole of Cosatu?

We must defend the interests of our vulnerable members. We have concentrations of vulnerable workers in these situations:

Core and non-core: Employers use the concept of "non-core" to deal with the strength of the union. NUMSA members have rejected management's division of workers into "core" and "non-core" and organise every worker in workplaces that are in our sectors whether they are in cleaning, security, catering, health services or any other service that is provided in support of activities in our existing sectors.

Subcontracting: Workers are employed in one workplace by different sub-contractors and service providers. Another undesirable consequence of outsourcing is the emergence of many unions within a single workplace and the creation of multi-bargaining forums in a single establishment

Dictation of OEMs: Primary employers and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) presently dictate to component companies and providers of outsourced services in terms of pricing. This leads to the cheapening of the labour of those who work in outsourced services and the entry of labour brokers.

There appears to be no sense of urgency in the COSATU CEC on cross sectoral solidarity (either within or between unions). As a result of this failure very vulnerable workers are denied basic organisational rights.

Instead of the COSATU CEC responding with threats of suspension against Numsa, it should be commissioning research to understand the restructuring of the economy and its impact on the world

of work in the sectors it organises in. This is what would be in the best interests of workers.

This is urgent

Workers will move and indeed are moving to unions where they think their issues are being heard and there is a program of solidarity with their struggles. COSATU unions are all under threat from the new found confidence of workers who have gone to these new unions.

The Cosatu NOBs have failed to act

The February 2013 CEC discussed poaching & mergers. The discussion recognised widespread poaching between unions. The meeting asked the NOB's to meet Num and Numsa in this regard. In addition the NOB's were asked to develop a program to take forward the merger related work as per the resolution of the 11th Congress in 2012.

There have been attempts by NOBs, but Satawu and Num did not cooperate

The solution is a comprehensive review not simple handovers

- Unions cannot, and do not, simply hand over members to other unions.
- There needs to be a comprehensive review.
- That is the job of the federation.
- Cosatu must act on the resolutions we have already passed. It must urgently develop a model on how we develop solidarity in one workplace with many unions.
- This is why we passed our resolution on organising along value chains. It is about the unity and strength of workers.

Other affiliates organize across sectors and compete with one another and there is no sanction from the federation

- Different affiliates organise in the same constituency. DENOSA, NEHAWU and SADNU all organising nurses is an example. FAWU described in the CEC how it was losing members to SACCAWU.

– In 1995, this Central Executive Committee approved the affiliation of Popcru, the Institute of Public Servants (IPS) and SASBO. These unions were allowed to affiliate, even though they had members in the same sectors as existing affiliates

– To date the local government & public administration merger has not taken place. Instead COSATU has allowed affiliation of a number of public sector unions which organise in the same scope, without merging them

– Airchefs: Direct counter organising. Nothing to do with transport. Saccawu organised from 80s. satawu intervened. Total workforce about 500

Almost all constitutions of affiliates overlap in scope and to date the federation has not addressed this. Here is a list of affiliates that organise in the same scope as per the records of COSATU:

- 1.SACCAWU and SATAWU both cover toll gates, cleaning services, sports clubs, parking garages and security services
- 2.SASBO & SACCAWU both cover financial institutions
- 3.SASBO & SATAWU both cover Road Accident
- 4.Numsa & Ceppwawu cover plastics, rubber and batteries
- 5.Num & Ceppwawu cover quarrying
- 6.Ceppwawu, FAWU, SACCAWU all cover distribution (i.e. Transportation) of goods, creating an overlap with SATAWU
- 7.SACTWU & SACCAWU cover clothing retail
- 8.FAWU & SATAWU cover cold storage
- 9.CWU & SATAWU cover call centres (SATAWU sees transport call centres as part of support functions allowed for in its constitution) Both unions also cover courier sector
- 10.Ceppwawu, NUM & SAMWU and Numsa cover generating, transmission and distribution of electric power

11. Denosa, Pawusa, SASAWU, SADNU & NEHAWU all make provision for nurses (either exclusively nurses, or as part of the health sector)	28. SASAWU covers the Caledon Tunnel Authority. SATAWU covers transport infrastructure
12. NEHAWU's constitution excludes educators (covered by SADTU) but it does have tertiary educators in its ranks	29. SATAWU covers all public transport, SAMWU covers public transport under local authorities
13. SACCAWU & SACTWU both cover clothing, knitting & textile manufacture	30. SACCAWU, SACTWU & SATAWU all cover laundry and dry cleaning
14. SACCAWU & SACTWU both cover clothing & textile retail	31. Another from Valli Moosa
15. SACTWU & FAWU both cover farming as it relates to clothing and textile	32. Satawu has taken workers within the Saccawu scope to the point of a strike
16. Ceppwawu & SACCAWU both cover publishing	There are many overlaps in scope that have led to conflict amongst affiliates
17. Ceppwawu & FAWU both cover manufacture of livestock food, household oils & fats	These examples are from COSATU's records. This document was produced by Cosatu. It went to the CEC of February 2014 and is available on the Cosatu website.
18. FAWU & SAMWU cover fresh produce markets	1. NUM vs SATAWU in the security sector on the mines: NUM argues these workers service the mines. SATAWU argues they are security sector
19. NEHAWU covers all parastatals, creating an overlap with all other affiliates organising parastatals including Numsa, SATAWU & NUM	2. NUM vs NEHAWU in mine hospitals in NW: NUM argued these workers service the mines. NEHAWU argued they are health workers and therefore in their scope. The NW Provincial Congress of July 2012 resolved that the members must be handed over from NEHAWU to NUM
20. Numsa & NUM cover processing of metals (smelters), metal work and steel construction	3. NEHAWU vs SATAWU in ACSA: ACSA workers went across from SATAWU, after complaining about service. SATAWU's views these workers as transport workers,
21. SAMWU & NEHAWU cover the voluntary sector & day hospitals	NEHAWU argues they are state employees and therefore fall in their scope
22. SATAWU covers funeral undertakings & Ceppwawu organises them due to the link with manufacturing from wood (coffin manufacture)	4. NUM vs Numsa in Eskom: Both unions are recognised by the company and sit on the same negotiating forum. Numsa's presence in the company pre-dates the formation of COSATU. Numsa has always explained that its members refuse to move to NUM
23. Numsa & SATAWU both cover ship repair	5. NUM vs Numsa in the smelters: Both unions argue that these workers are covered by their constitution (see detail of this in Annexure 2)
24. FAWU & NUM cover salt mining	
25. SACCAWU & Numsa cover manufacturing of metal jewellery	
26. FAWU & SACCAWU both cover food processing and manufacturing, tearooms, hospitality & catering	
27. SAMWU covers local government traffic officials, NEHAWU covers provincial traffic officials and POPCRU covers both	

6.SATAWU vs SACCAWU in Sun City: SATAWU is currently disputing the move of cleaners and security guards to SACCAWU. SACCAWU argues the workers fall within their scope and that the workers moved voluntarily after complaining about service

7.Numsa vs SATAWU in SAA Technical & Transnet Rail Engineering in Western Cape: SATAWU argues these companies have always been organised by the union and fit into aviation and rail value chains, as well as existing collective bargaining arrangements. Numsa argues their scope covers them and that workers have requested to join the union

8.Numsa vs Ceppwawu in a chemical company in the Free State. Both claimed the factory was within their scope

9.Numsa vs Ceppwawu regarding petrol pump attendants in KZN

10.Ceppwawu vs SACTWU in furniture manufacturing companies in KZN: Ceppwawu argues the primary component is wood, SACTWU argues it is fabric

11.SACCAWU vs SACTWU regarding the organising of a bottle store in Durban

12.NEHAWU vs SATAWU: regarding cleaners in the Higher Education institutions in Western Cape

13.Numsa vs SATAWU: regarding Transnet members in Eastern Cape

14.Historically, the most serious case is that of FAWU vs SACCAWU in Irvin & Johnson, which tragically lead to the death of a worker in 1997

COSATU has to review its traditional demarcation of scopes because it does not exist in terms of the practices of affiliates and in terms of the changes in the economy locally and globally

We have a detailed list showing that the vast majority of affiliates have amended their scope to infringe on others

We have a list of instances demonstrating that the vast majority of Cosatu affiliates have extended their scope at one time or another in a manner that infringes on the interests of another affiliate.

For example

SACTWU

- o amended its constitution in 2009
- o expanded its scope to include: retail, agriculture and farming

Nehawu:

- o Nehawu has not changed its scope, but since its launch it has always organised on a value chain.
- o Our understanding is that Nehawu is a union that is supposed to organise in health (nurses, doctors, old age home workers) education (lecturers in FET colleges and universities; teachers in adult learning centres) and allied (social development, private welfare (old age)
- o In fact it organises along its value chains. So, for example, it organises cleaners in health and general assistants in education.
- o It will be interesting for Cosatu to research – where does the president of Nehawu come from? Are you part of a value chain. In order to be consistent, perhaps you expel yourself before you surgically remove us?
- o It is so painful, so desperate. Nehawu wants to expel Numsa for behaving exactly like Nehawu.

NUM

- o In the 2002 constitution of Num the scope was listed as follows: mining, construction & energy
- o In 2005 Gwede Mantashe signed the changes to the constitution which listed the scope as mining, construction & energy but also added allied to their scope. Under allied, metal was listed as part of the scope.
- o In 2010 the constitution signed by Frans Baleni reflected the same scope as that listed in 2005 un-

der Mantashe. It still had metal listed under allied. Metal work is defined like this:

Metal work: which includes the manufacture to specifications for installation in specified buildings and *manufacturing of stocks (re-inforcing steel), the fixing of steel ceilings, metal windows, metal doors, builders smith work, metal frames, metal stairs, and architectural metalwork and the manufacture and or fixing of drawn metal-work and sheet and extruded metal* whether or not the fixing in a building or structure is done by person making or preparing the article used.

Workers are approaching us and asking us to organize them. We are not poaching

o NUMSA is not poaching members from other unions – workers are approaching of their own accord.

o Some have come to us because they have been purged from their union.

o In Eastern Cape the Chairperson of the Province and the Chair of Aviation of the Province of Satawu were expelled from Satawu without a hearing. They were accused of being NTM recruiters. Their constituents gave them a mandate to look for a union because they were not serviced. They asked to join Numsa.

o In Mpumalanga, the Num leadership was purged because they supported Oupa Komane in the battle for the General Secretary position with Frans Baleni.

The membership was dissatisfied with Num because they were not represented. They were thinking of joining Amcu. We successfully diverted them from Amcu into Numsa. This kept them within the federation.

o Some have come to us because they were tired of decisions being made in Head Office over the heads of the workers on the ground.

o Metrorail workers in Western Cape complained that they were not being serviced. o They had agreed to take a strike the previous year because the company had unilaterally changed the working conditions of guards.

o On the day the strike was due to start, the Deputy General Secretary instructed them to abandon it.

o An agreement had been signed in 2013 that no Metrorail worker can refer a case without the consent of the DGS.

o Some have come to us because their union refused to take up their grievances

o Chuma Security in Western Cape was deducting provident fund monies and not paying them over to the Fund. The union failed to take up their grievance.

o Management at Transnet Engineering in Uitenhage was appointing friends and relatives to positions. The union tried to stop the organiser from pursuing the issue. All the shop stewards were suspended. They told Satawu's Regional Secretary to bring the national leadership of Cosatu, Satawu and Numsa to address them. The leadership of Satawu never came.

o Workers at Nquka port had a long-standing problem with inconsistent application of manning levels. Their union walked out of negotiations. Transnet applied new levels unilaterally. Workers visited Numsa offices. They pursued the Numsa organiser in the middle of the night because they were being dismissed for an unprotected strike and their union was not assisting them. As a result of Numsa's support, 66 out of the 68 suspended workers are back at work.

o Transnet workers in Bloemfontein had grievances over unilateral change of shifts. The Satawu General Secretary visited the workers and could not solve the problem. They joined Numsa and we resolved the problem.

o Transnet workers in Mpumalanga had grievances with Satawu and left to join the NTM. Numsa has

recruited more than 200 workers from NTM, bringing them back into the federation.

o We have recruited from the NTM throughout the country. We have also recruited hundreds of workers from Utatu Sarhwa from Transnet and Prasa.

o Workers see the quality service which Numsa delivers. It makes them want to join us That's the nature of a trade union. Why should we be condemned for that?

In the past we helped each other

o Where Cosatu happened to find members not being happy in a fellow affiliate, that union used to service those workers. At an appropriate time they would return them when the servicing issues have been resolved.

o This is because there were no vendettas. It was before we called each other "the enemy within"

o How do we now organise workers for the NUM which calls us the enemy within?

o There is a huge gap between Nehawu and Numsa. We don't know of any situation where we have encroached on Nehawu. Yet it is Nehawu that says we must be surgically removed.

There are false accusations of poaching and cross-sectoral recruiting in construction

o Construction project engineering is within our scope.

o Construction projects have many components that cut across a number of sectors, including Engineering.

o An example is a mega project such as the Medupi Power station

o In addition to NUM and Numsa, other Cosatu unions are also organizing such as Ceppwawu and Satawu.

o Num is alleging that we are organising beyond our scope because they are failing to draw a distinction between construction in general and engineering in the build project in particular.

There are also false accusations of poaching and cross-sectoral recruiting in energy

o Energy is within our scope

o In terms of supply chain, Numsa has as much vested interest in Eskom as NUM.

o On the one hand, the coal mines supply Eskom

o On the other hand, the steel industry in south Africa has a long history of supplying components and installation for its infrastructure and builds.

o Similarly, both steel industries and the mining sector are energy intensive users. So they both have a direct interest in energy.

The real story of Eskom

I want to spend a few moments looking at the real history of organising in Eskom, as an example of how complicated that kind of history can be.

– In 1981 Mawu put together a plan to build the union and make political gains for socialism and capture the country's economic heart by including power stations and coal fields in its organizing strategy alongside steel plants.

– Mawu progressed relatively quickly to organize the steel sector and moved aggressively onto organizing Eskom power plants but faced similar problems to NUM in gaining access to the mines.

– When Anglo American realized the significance of Mawu's advance in the coal sector, it dropped its opposition to NUM, allowing NUM to rapidly gain control of the sector.

– So we can argue that in fact our organizing in Eskom helped to build the NUM.

?- Mawu and then Numsa continued to grow its presence in Eskom and was well organized, with an established company council in Eskom by the time Eskom set up the national bargaining forum in the 1980s.

Energy is central to industrial growth

– Numsa has long held that energy is central to industrial growth. We have historically championed

the call for industrial led development, where South Africa benefits from beneficiation of its raw materials, creating a stronger more diversified economic base.

– Numsa participated in the National Electrification Forum in 1993 to further the position that in addition to meeting needs of those disadvantaged by apartheid, electrification could stimulate growth in the manufacturing sector.

Also in 1993, Numsa took up a government appointed seat in the Electricity Council, as it moved to a tripartite structure which controlled Eskom. The union's motivation was to ensure worker and union participation in decision making. We were hoping to push back on privatization of state enterprises and make them more accountable to people rather than monopolistic capitalist interests. NUM also had a seat on the Council.

Numsa has an interest in the Supply Chain

In terms of supply chain, Numsa has as much vested interest in Eskom as NUM.

– In so far as the coal mines supply Eskom, the steel industry in south Africa has a long history of supplying components and installation for its infrastructure and builds.

– Similarly, both steel industries and the mining sector are energy intensive users and thus have a direct interest in energy.

For all these reasons Numsa is right to contest the current demarcation

Numsa's interest has been widely acknowledged

– The energy sector is clearly a changing sector and Numsa's interest in the sector has been widely acknowledged by Cosatu.

o As early as 1997 there is reference to Numsa together with NUM and SAMWU being tasked with taking forward a labour position under Cosatu on the electricity sector. Samwu was there because of the role of municipalities in distributing electricity.

o This acknowledgement has been continuous up to the present time. For example, from the Cosatu Congress Secretariat report in 2012:

"For example, shifting to renewable energy could create thousands of jobs but government's reliance on the private sector to do so is problematic. NUMSA has rejected the notion of drawing Independent Power Producers into the generation and delivery of electricity to our people because private interest is about profit maximization rather than the meeting of social needs, in this case the provision of affordable electricity for the mass of our people. For this reason NUMSA's call is for a publicly-owned and democratically controlled renewable energy sector made up largely of parastatals and cooperatives." [3]

There must be a consistent position on poaching amongst all the affiliates. At the moment others poach our members

– The 10th Congress of Cosatu took note of "The culture of poaching internally within the affiliates of the Federation". It doesn't say it is a culture of Numsa. It says it is a culture of Cosatu.

– Numsa estimates that NUM membership in our sectors is more than 3,000, including in 5 smelters.

– Num has organised our members in Rotec, which repairs motors for Eskom.

The LRA provides for Freedom of Association. We cannot force workers to join a different union.

o There is no requirement in the LRA that a trade union must confine its membership to employees in a particular sector or sectors of the economy or a particular geographical region.

o Let's take the example of Eskom.

o *We have been to Eskom to advise the workers there of Cosatu's decision that they must belong to NUM.*

- o They simply refused. They have always refused.
- o They are Numsa members and they wish to remain Numsa members.
- o As a working class organization, we believe more than others that workers are independent human beings who must be respected. We cannot move them from one organization to another against their will as though they were animals being moved from one farm to another.

Now that I have responded to the so-called 'charges' against Numsa, I will turn to our charges against the leadership of the federation

Our first charge is that you have violated the constitution

You have refused to call a Cosatu Special National Congress

- o You, Sdumo Dlamini, President of Cosatu, have violated Clause 3.3.2.1. which instructs you that: "The President must call a special NC if...not less than 1/3 of the affiliates in good standing submit a written request to the General Secretary for the attention of the President calling for the meeting"
- o You, the majority of the Cosatu CEC, have breached the same clause when you made a decision which you had no power to make - whether or not a Special National Congress must be called
- o You, Sdumo Dlamini, acted unlawfully and unconstitutionally when you noted the CEC's decision, knowing that it was unlawful
- o You, National Office Bearers of Cosatu, acted unlawfully and unconstitutionally when you suspended the General Secretary without a vote. Your unlawfulness was corrected by the High Court, at great expense to workers who pay Cosatu affiliation fees.
- o You, National Office Bearers of Cosatu, have violated Clause 9.6.1 of the Cosatu Constitution which says:

The President, First Deputy President, Second Deputy President and Treasurer must vacate their seats during their term of office if they cease to be a member of an affiliate.

o Zingiswa Losi ceased to be a member of an affiliate. She resigned from Numsa. Whatever the truth about her suspiciously rapid recruitment by another affiliate, she ceased to be a member of Numsa before she joined. She is therefore not eligible to remain as a Cosatu NOB.

Our second charge is that you have acted in bad faith in the process of seeking to expel Numsa

You have ulterior motives for trying to expel us

- o You are attempting to expel Numsa in order to avoid our challenge on your unconstitutional behaviour
- o If we are suspended or expelled, you will do your best to prevent us from continuing to challenge the decision to refuse to call a Special National Congress.

This is the motivation behind the letter of 11 February 2014.

You have withheld information and failed to give reasons for your so-called charges

- o Cosatu's letter on 11th February was like a charge sheet without any detail of the offences. There were no accompanying reasons, documentation or information on what formed the basis of the charges in the letter. The so-called charges even said that they "include but are not limited to" what ius listed, leaving us to answer phantom charges which we had no way of knowing.
- o Yet Cosatu demanded a comprehensive response to the charges by February 20.
- o Numsa requested these details on February 13 and gave a deadline of Feb 15. We requested the details again on February 20 and February 21. Some

details were finally forthcoming later on February 21.

o NUMSA has throughout the last few weeks maintained that it is entitled to protection under clause 14.2 of the constitution. This includes the right to be given full and comprehensive reasons for the allegations.

o We have not received any answer to our 59 page document setting out reasons why we should not be expelled. We therefore are unaware of which of the items which we are accused of are still outstanding.

You have given us unreasonable deadlines

o The CEC letter of February 11 gave Numsa 10 days to respond to vague and unknown charges

o The CEC of February 25 gave Numsa 7 days to respond to allegations that had taken Cosatu 3 months to formulate and detail. This was despite Numsa's request for an equivalent period of 3 months for to answer.

You have failed in your duty to unify the working class

The Preamble to the Cosatu Constitution identifies the following task, amongst others:

combat the divisions amongst the workers of South Africa and unite them into strong and confident working class formations.

The Cosatu NOBs and the CEC have been violating that mandate as they sew division amongst Cosatu affiliates.

o When the President of Cosatu went to the Popcruc CEC and pledged his support for the dismissal of Numsa, he had forgotten his duty to unify.

o When the 2nd Deputy President spoke at the Num Central Committee, she said to Numsa:

"Don't enforce your resolutions on us. If you can't adhere you must leave. If you can't fit because you have your own constitution, form your own church but don't poison the congregation". She too had forgotten her duty to unify.

You have tried to suppress the legitimate rights of autonomy for affiliates

o NUMSA, like every other affiliate, has a right to self-determination as an autonomous organisation.

o That right has been and is being suppressed

o That is a denial of our rights as a democratic, worker controlled union. It means that you expect NUMSA to force upon its members Federation policies. Its members must accept those policies without debate, for fear of reprisal. This is directly in conflict with the principles of worker control and autonomy of affiliates which are at the heart of the historical traditions of democratic practices in Cosatu

o You have tried to prevent debate on progressive issues purely because they raise new debate on existing political postures of the Federation. This does not belong in the democratic traditions of our federation.

o If we do not have these rights, what would be the point of Clause 2.3 of the Constitution referring to affiliates as "autonomous bodies governed by their own constitutions". Affiliates would simply amount to a flock of sheep led by the federation and alliance partners.

You have selectively quoted Numsa Resolutions

o NUMSA continues to strive for unity and cohesion in the Federation

o For example, in its final Declaration, Numsa's Special National Congress specifically warned itself and Numsa membership: "We must guard against any splinters in COSATU and the fragmentation of the federation".

o Mysteriously, these parts of our resolutions (around guarding against splinters and engagement of affiliates in order to resolve disputes and differences) do not appear to be considered by any of Cosatu's correspondence or by those affiliates who are seeking to expel us.

You have failed to defend Numsa as an affiliate

o We have been subjected to a sustained campaign of vilification as we have been attacked and labelled by leaders of the ANC, SACP and Cosatu affiliates. Here are just a few examples:

o In January 2013, NEHAWU GS said Numsa ***represents a rightwing version of work-erism and also an ultra-left current of work-erism - which carries delusions about a trade union movement leading a socialist revolution.*** At the same time he accused us of ***flirting with the DA leader.***

o In March 2013, the ANC Deputy SG published in an open letter that: ***Numsa has always driven a populist, short-term vision for our country, a constraint we have lived with in the strategic alliance we have forged with the Congress of South African Trade Unions, where Numsa is an important ally.***

o In the same month, the Deputy GS of the SACP accused the NUMSA GS of ***reductionist economism*** and called him ***pseudo-Marxist, pseudo-militant*** and ***underlying opportunist***.

o In April, a NUM press statement accused the Numsa General Secretary of ***cheap populism***. Num also said:

"Numsa says the ideological orientation or religious affiliation shall not be a condition for denying or preventing people from joining its United Front. This is written in black and white. This means that Numsa was likely to have EFF, Boko Haram and AWB in its United Front."

o During all these attacks the Cosatu NOBs have not raised even a finger to protect us.

o Why does Cosatu not require evidence of such accusations and protect affiliates who are attacked by others. There is selective justice here.

You have allowed outside political forces to interfere in Cosatu

o The SACP 2012 Congress Political Report clearly says that the SACP will intervene inside the Federation to "isolate and defeat" the "lingering irritation". All of a sudden, the independence of the Federation is thrown out of the window.

o There has been no response from the Cosatu NOBs.

o The SACP also charged us with what it called "business unionism". o Again there has been no response from the Cosatu NOBs.

o We can see that the SACP is supporting your faction. That is what makes you willing to sacrifice the independence of the federation.

o The only conclusion we can draw is that it is because you are furthering the aims of the organisations on whose leading bodies you sit – the ANC and SACP.

You have failed to circulate our document

You have been unable to confirm that you have circulated our 59 page response to the allegations against us. The best you can say is that you sent it to affiliates' email addresses.

There is a creeping culture of suppressing democracy

o It is becoming a common practice that workers control, open debate and criticism and the right to differ in the union are suppressed.

o Trying to exercise the right to support different leaders in the federation leads to mass dismissals of shop stewards, office bearers and activists, with impunity. They are purged.

o There are unions who have dismissed a whole province of shop stewards. o This is not workers control. It is bureaucratic control

o It is this bureaucratic control that you will now exercise when you dismiss us from the federation. Instead of mobilising workers control and calling the special congress so that workers can exercise

control over the federation, you choose to manufacture majorities amongst the bureaucrats in the CEC.

o It is this bureaucratic control that Cedric Gina and Sdumo Dlamini exercised when they discussed the fake report that claimed to come from the intelligence service and alleged that Vavi and I were CIA spies.

o The very same Cedric Gina claims openly to be working with the Cosatu President to form a rival union to Numsa.

o We know that the purges will continue as you remove us surgically from Cosatu and support the new so-called union to take our place.

Finally let us look at the United Front and the Movement for Socialism

Even though these do not form part of the 5 so-called charges, we know that there are those who believe that these initiatives are against Cosatu policy. We want to explain to you how wrong you are:

There have been numerous resolutions to build the United Front since the 6th Congress:

- COSATU should initiate a broad popular movement for transformation around common struggles on issues facing the working class..... It should be seen as a home for popular mass formations that currently lack a common agenda and programme (6th Congress)

– COSATU willembark on a campaign, incorporating like-minded institutions in civil society, to:

o Publicise and resist the GEAR elements of subsidy cuts, privatisation, labour market flexibility, etc

o Develop a macro-economic policy, based on RDP principles, which has as its key objective, socio-economic transformation;

o Reject high interest rates

o Support our policies as outlined in the Social Equity document;

o Advance COSATU's vision on the transformation of the public service

o Defend jobs and for job creation (6th Congress)

– COSATU should initiate talks with a broad range of progressive social movements in an attempt to strengthen the hand of the working class and communities as a whole, provide leadership, and bring them into our fold....Differences in tactical approach should not distract the Federation from its key mission of uniting the working class, defending it and deepening democracy (8th Congress)

– Cosatu should form coalitions with all forces committed to the objectives of the Jobs and Poverty Campaign (9th Congress)

– The working class must mobilise society and all progressive forces against the current macro-economic framework...We must bring back the fundamental thrust of the Freedom

Charter and the RDP on nationalisation of key and strategic industries (9th Congress)

– We are committed to rebuild a broad coalition of social forces united by the common objective to build a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa. Our desire is to mobilize as broad a section of our society behind the task of defending and consolidating democracy and to build a just and equal society (10th Congress)

Despite these resolutions, to this day the United Front has not been built by Cosatu leadership. We have followed the mandates from successive Cosatu congresses. We have taken a lead, as Cosatu's largest affiliate, in putting the federation's resolutions into practice.

There have been Cosatu Resolutions on the Movement for Socialism as well

There have been resolutions calling on Cosatu to take forward the struggle for socialism:

– The Resolution on 'The Struggle for Socialism' called for us to "move towards a conference of the left". (6th Congress)

– The Resolution on Emerging Social Movements said: "The Federation should pursue our resolution on the conference of the left to plan for and fight against global capital, privatisation, war mongering imperialistic powers, etc". (8th Congress)

– A Resolution called on the SACP to: "unite the progressive left formations, including left-wing political formations committed towards a radical transformation and socialism." (9th Congress)

This culminated in a call for a movement towards socialism

– The call for "A popular movement towards socialism, located within a restructured

Alliance and involving a range of mass movements, (which) must be formed to assert the leadership of the working class in the NDR." (9th Congress)

We have seen that the Alliance is and has always been dysfunctional and therefore cannot provide a location for such a movement. We have taken the initiative, as the federation's largest affiliate, in pursuing the resolution for a popular movement towards socialism.

Finally we must clarify that Numsa will remain a trade union

• The union resolved that it will remain a union; it will not turn itself into a political party

• We also resolved that we will be a catalyst for building the united front and the movement for socialism.

• As a trade union in the manufacturing sector, we cannot represent and defend our members if we fail to protest against policies that put our members out of work.

• The congress was also consistent about fighting to become a union which improves its service to its members. So it adopted a service charter.

So, in conclusion, we have reviewed the so-called charges against us, as far as we know what they are, and we have shown that at the bottom of them all is one thing: you, the Cosatu leadership, remain loyal to the ANC, SACP alliance, despite all the evidence that this loyalty is misplaced. In fact you are more loyal to this class alliance than you are to your working class brothers and sisters.

You want to expel us because we constantly remind you how you are failing to protect the interests of the working class.

We want to make one thing clear to you: inside or outside Cosatu, we will not stop mobilising the working class on the road to socialism. We will not give you any peace as we expose the miserable failure of the class alliance you are entangled in and how it compromises your ability to lead the working class.

A luta continua

source

The enormous potential of Podemos

NEAL MICHIELS ·

Neal Michiels

Last weekend, all these documents were presented in assemblies in Madrid on the occasion of the "citizens' assembly" of Podemos, presented as the founding assembly of a new political party, with no less than 8,000 people present. From October 20 to 26, members vote by Internet for the adoption of three texts: political, organizational and ethical. Then it will be a question of choosing the members of the Citizens' Council, the leading body of Podemos. The candidates will campaign again for a week before an election by Internet. I will not write here a detailed report of the two intensive days of the Citizens' Assembly, but rather give an overview of the political, organizational and ethical project of Podemos that is under discussion, as well as of the potential of this formation to govern and to take power in the Spanish state. We will see that at this level the organizational question is decisive.

The political project

Let us start by mentioning the resolutions that were put to the vote this weekend alongside the political, organizational and ethical documents. The five subjects that had the most support on Internet and that were adopted at the assembly by the members of Podemos covered education, health, housing, the fight against corruption and an audit of the debt. These are themes that are a good reflection of the general agreement with the political line established by the team of Pablo Iglesias, which emphasizes opposition to austerity and the reconquest of "common sense" by the population. Because they correspond to glaring social reality, these demands should be able to mobilize a large part of the electorate in the Spanish state, much broader than the activists and sympathizers who already identify with the Left. But there is a populist approach

which puts to one side more controversial issues such as the autonomy of the communities [1] and which generates multiple problems with its patriotic accent, the defence of "medium-sized enterprises", etc. We will not address these problems here because the discussions over the weekend were more than dominated by organizational issues.

The organizational structure

The most important discussion was scheduled for Sunday morning. It was the culmination of intense discussions, widely publicized in the media, of the documents "Claro que Podemos" of the Iglesias team and "Sumando Podemos" bringing together proposals from several origins, whose most well-known figures are the MEPs Pablo Enchenique, Teresa Rodriguez and Lola Sanchez. The importance of the organizational document demonstrates the profound aspiration of a significant number of activists in the local circles of Podemos: before you can develop and defend a political project, you need democratic structures within the organization.

The project of the Iglesias team, with a general secretary and the limitation of the power of the circles, made people angry and generated a very broad resistance. This team, through the voice of Monedero, tried to present any contestation calling for more democracy as an injurious attack orchestrated by Izquierda Anticapitalista, Spanish section of the Fourth International, which had been at the origin of this project along with several independent personalities. On Sunday morning, Iglesias's team had to accept and recognize that the contestation was much broader than expected, extending to roughly half of the 8,000 participants in the hall and, more importantly, to the majority of the most active circles.

For lack of time, many alternative proposals could not be combined. Thus, alongside the document "Sumando Podemos", already bringing together several proposals, there were dozens of other alternative documents. When Teresa Rodriguez and Pablo Enchenique went to the podium to defend their document, they said that they could be brief: "everything has already been said" by other groups. Indeed, the majority of alternative documents and the majority of circles also defend more power for the circles, a more democratic and permanent constitutional process, local and intermediate structures between the circles and the leadership and a plural leadership with a team of spokespersons rather than one general secretary.

The choice is between a presidential and plebiscitary structure and a model of *empoderamiento* (empowerment) of people. The organizational model and the political discourse of Iglesias could perhaps win elections by mobilizing votes and getting supporters to stick up posters. But while the "efficiency" brandished by Iglesias as an argument to defend his proposals stops at the formation of a government, the alternative documents "Sumando Podemos" (organizational) and "Construyendo Pueblo" (political) raised the fact that the taking of power is not limited to governing.

For Rodriguez, self-organization and "people power" are fundamental for taking power: "For us, winning the elections and taking forward the process of citizens' self-organization are part of the same process. We will need to mobilize citizens to win elections and we will need it when we win elections, in order to govern. Can anyone doubt that the markets will put us under pressure when we win the elections, that the caste will be opposed to the loss of its privileges? ". So the document that is being relegated by Iglesias into the corner of the "dreamers" claims to be not only more democratic but also more effective, if the goal is to take power and change society.

The atomized vote by Internet in which a lot more people than the activists in the circles will participate this week, will no doubt be overwhelmingly in

favour of the Iglesias line, thanks to his popularity. Especially since he had indicated that if his proposal was not accepted, he would no longer take on any responsibilities. But nevertheless the citizens' assembly demonstrated powerfully that the majority of activists will not settle for a centralized and plebiscitary structure. The statement of "Claro que Podemos" that it was the "most democratic organizational proposal in Spanish history" is hardly convincing. A broad current for more democracy has been born through this process of establishing a new political force.

The ethical document

The "ethics document" was the least important of the three documents. There had still been time enough for a certain unification of the organizational and political proposals, but this had not proved possible for the ethical document. The ethical document of "Claro que Podemos", however, is not innocent. The presentation - very demagogic, in the manner of a public meeting - by Monedero on Saturday morning did not forget to mention the most important aspect: the prohibition of "double membership". "Out of Podemos, out of our ranks!" This slogan was not only directed at potential opportunists coming from the traditional parties to join a political party with the wind in its sails. It was also aimed at the activists of Izquierda Anticapitalista. With the adoption of this ethical document, the activists of this formation, who were committed from the beginning to building Podemos, would be excluded automatically from posts of responsibility in the new party. The "Claro que Podemos" team accepts only one organized tendency: its own.

In conclusion, the potential for Podemos is enormous. The mobilizations of the *indignados* (15M), the movements for defending public education ("Marea verde") and health ("Marea blanca") and against evictions, the "marches for dignity" in every corner of the Spanish state and the struggle for the right to abortion have found a political expression in the new Podemos party. It is a political project

that is capable of mobilizing a majority of the population. But the organizational form that the project is likely to take after this week's vote is an enormous contradiction, contrary even to the spirit of 15M. However, for a broad current from the circles, the constitutional assembly is not over and the

struggle for a democratic and "people power" project continues. This is the condition for being able to discuss politics and breaking with capitalism. *Sí, se puede!*" ("Yes we can!")

October 24, 2014, Madrid

www.lcr-lagauche.org

BRITAIN:

Why is the British state so undemocratic

PIERS MOSTYN ·

This movement represents something new in the recent politics of the British state: mass action for democracy in continuity with Chartism, the suffragettes and the radicalisations following both world wars.

Those tempted by current promises of devolution need reminding that the political forces making them led the 1980s assault on local government democracy. Centred on left Labour administrations running Liverpool, Lambeth and the Greater London Council, this was the last major fight over state democracy. All subsequent Labour leaderships are the rotten fruit of this tree.

A relentless attack on civil liberties has kept the defence of basic rights against state oppression centre stage since the Thatcher era. And there have been campaigns calling for a democratic renewal – like Charter 88.

But unlike most of them, the 2014 Yes campaign was mass, inclusive and activist in character – with a 97% voter registration and 85% turn-out. For all its strengths, Charter 88 and its successors tended to be top down and abstract, ending up focussed on a shift of power from one branch of the state (the executive) to another (the judiciary).

The grossly undemocratic character of the British state has its roots in the partial character of England's seventeenth century revolution. The nascent bourgeoisie stabilised its position by evolving a powerful state. The developing industrial capitalist economy was welded on to a monarchy, an unelected parliamentary second chamber and an unwritten constitution – bolstered by union with Scotland, the occupation of Ireland and a growing empire. The trappings of global power have more recently been entrenched through nuclear weapons, military and intelligence co-operation

with the USA and a permanent UN Security Council seat – all carrying profoundly undemocratic baggage.

House of Lords reform has been on the agenda for over a century, during which Labour has been in government five times. The electoral system is still saddled by the anti-democratic first past the post system and a Catholic head of state remains a constitutional impossibility.

Archaic constitution

Yet, despite widespread acceptance that Britain's archaic constitution is over-ripe for reform, it hasn't happened. The ruling class is loath to meddle with the nexus of ideology and institutions on which its hegemony has rested for so long. And there is simply no consensus as to what might replace it. The frenzied talk of a new "constitutional settlement" is a sham. This is the last thing any significant section of the establishment wants. The Scottish independence movement has exposed a potential weak point in this log-jam.

Although the new democratic impulse is firmly rooted in Scotland and its working class, there are the seedlings of similar consciousness elsewhere in the "United" Kingdom. Anger at the "democratic deficit" helped fuel the anti-war movement (hence the slogan "not in our name"), the student revolt against the tuition fee hike, campaigns against Academies and "Free Schools" and many anti-austerity struggles. However, radical alienation from the status quo has also been to the right, as the growth of UKIP shows.

The referendum has thrown up a crisis of legitimacy for Labour, not just the British state. 60 Labour MPs were bussed into Glasgow and major trade unions used their apparatuses (in defiance of or

without consulting their Scottish memberships) in a bid to shore up the union. Yet every single Glasgow constituency (a pre-eminently "Labour city") voted yes by a majority. As tens of thousands of Scottish members tear up their party cards – the need for accountability and democracy within the labour movement itself is posed.

Left Unity is well placed to be at the heart of a rejuvenation of the left, based on an appeal to today's youth for radical democratic change. The Scottish Yes vote showed the potential, with votes for 16 and 17 year olds – 70% of whom were pro-Yes. The popular resonance of comedian Russell Brand's calls for revolution are another example. His radical democratic propaganda in support of the Yes vote got half a million hits on YouTube.

In tandem with the struggles against austerity, war and racism, a fight is required for democracy, accountability and transparency to ensure that decisions are made in the interests of and accountable to the majority. Proportional representation would be an essential first step.

The abolition of the monarchy, the Lords and the Corporation of the City of London; votes for 16 year olds and prisoners; positive action for women in politics; local democracy and regional devolution with substance; trade union rights; civil liberties; radical reform of media control and accountability; Britain out of NATO and off the UN Security Council; handing over Gibraltar and the Falklands/Malvinas to Spain and Argentina; and (not least) Irish, Scottish and Welsh self-determination are demands that should also be on the table

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HONG KONG

Is the Umbrella Movement Planned and Funded by the US Government?

AU LOONG-YU ·

The Chinese media has accused the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement of being planned and funded by the US. It has alleged that amongst both the trio who first suggested the Occupy Central movement last year and amongst the pan-democrats are those who have accepted funds or have participated in the activities of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a funding agency which is sponsored by the US Congress. Indeed many of the Pan-democrat leaders have always been Pro-America or Pro-Britain (although after the handover in 1997 they have been more implicit than explicit) and therefore hold views and practices that I have never shared. However are these pan-democrats really the leaders of the Umbrella movement? It is generally known that they are not. Rather it is the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) and the secondary school students' organisation Scholarism who have led the movement, and even their leadership roles only lasted for a short time.

From the very beginning, due to their weaknesses, the main pan-democrat leaders were never the ones who called for Occupy Central. It was left to the trio to make the call, although even they were hesitant and so their actual plan was never realised. While an earlier occupation, which might be viewed as a rehearsal, was launched on July 2, it was the HKFS which planned and led it. It then continued its offensive and called for the class boycott on 22nd September that directly led to the umbrella movement. Although on 28th September Benny Tai – a

law scholar who is one of the trio – officially announced the beginning of Occupy Central, this was only in the light of the actions of the students, and by this time the Occupy Central trio, not to mention the pan-democrats, had already lost credibility. Then after the 28th September, even HKFS has not been able to lead the movement as it has been transformed into a movement where countless individuals act freely, not directed by any groups. Although the mainstream pan-democrats still provide some logistical support, it is very small; they do not really want to engage in this movement and, even if they did want to, the fact is that they would not be able to. To think that proving that some pan-democrats have received NED funding is equal to proving that the umbrella movement is influenced, funded or planned by the US government only makes this slander more contemptible.

The HKFS has never needed to receive any funding from outsiders, simply due to the fact that it has huge reserve as all Hong Kong university students are compulsory due paying members of student unions. Although a Communist Party newspaper has claimed that Scholarism's Joshua Wong has received NED funding, this has been denied and the newspaper has been unable to produce evidence. What is more laughable is that the newspaper published a photo of Joshua Wong meeting with Anson Chan (the former Chief Executive of the SAR government who has since been attacked by the Pro-Beijing media an agent of the US and UK) and certain white people as "evidence" of "colluding with the foreign enemy". However if they had first checked the activities of the NED in Hong Kong before they published it they would not have made this mistake. On September 5 2004, the English language newspaper The Standard reported that

the NED through another organisation, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), had funded technical assistance and training for several political parties including the Democratic Party, the DAB and the Liberal Party (the latter two are both pro-Beijing parties). On September 7, the Economic Journal reported that both the Liberal Party and the DAB denied that they had received US funding, but acknowledged that they had attended at related seminars several times. If merely meeting up with Anson Chan and certain white persons amounts to "colluding with the foreign enemy", is the DAB not therefore also a "US agent"?

US funds also support China's public institutions

Earlier in the same year, on March 3, newspaper Ming Pao Daily had already reported that a report submitted by the US Congress General Accounting Office (GAO) to the House of Representatives showed that over the last five years the US government had spent a total of \$39 million on funding China's democracy programs. This report can still be found online today. Although these US public funds are subsidising Mainland and Hong Kong civil society organisations, according to this report, "Several of the State's grants support work to be undertaken in cooperation with Chinese government entities and/or with academics, consulting firms and nongovernmental organizations in China. For example, one project includes support for working with the Supreme People's Court, the National People's Congress and other counterparts to promote criminal defense reforms in China; another project funds a partnership between an American university and a legal reform consulting firm operating in China to help develop China's system for providing legal aid in rural communities." [1]

However funding is not limited to that directly from the US. As everybody knows, various international bodies such as the UN Commission on Human Rights, the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations Development

Programme, not to mention the so called purely financial assistance of World Bank aid programs have all provided subsidies to various Chinese government and public institutions. The US is an important source of funding of these international institutions and the GAO is also obliged to report these international bodies' China projects. The United Nations Development Programme, for example, has funded Chinese institutions engaged in electoral system and criminal law improvement projects. Meanwhile, between 1999 and 2006 the Asian Development Bank also provided funds of US\$3.55 million to relevant Chinese institutions for similar projects. While some might say that these reports only show one side of the story, as the Chinese government has not released any information it is largely responsible for any information imbalance.

US private funds

The mainland media does sometimes disclose some relevant news however. On 23rd February 2004, the Economic Observer reported that in 2002 British scholar Anthony Saich had served as an advocate for a Tsinghua-Harvard joint training programme for senior officials to provide management training to the new generation of Chinese officials. Prior to this he had served as the Ford Foundation's Chief Representative in China.

Unlike the NED, the Ford Foundation is a foundation which mainly relies on private donations. According to mainland mouthpieces, this private funding also constitutes US forces interfering in China's internal affairs. In reality, much of the US private funding is used to help the Chinese government engage in counterfeiting civil society, while the real civil society receives minimum funding. As Chinese University of Hong Kong sociology professor Anthony Spires explains, China welcomes the funds from US foundations for health care, education and research, but not the rapid social change that grassroots NGOs could deliver:

"Major US foundations tend to award large grants to established organizations either controlled by

the Chinese government or under its influence rather than independent or grassroots NGOs." Government-organized NGOs, or so-called GONGOS, "can serve as tools for domestic control of new social forces while also attracting foreign funds for programs the Chinese government itself is unwilling to support." [2]

Chinese officials have been developing cosy relations with the Western and Japanese ruling elites and tycoons throughout the era of market reform, and have, therefore, decided that restoring capitalism in China is a better option for them. The only difference between Chinese capitalism and Western capitalism is that the Chinese ruling class prefers an open dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the party's leading cadres at its core, and does away with any pretence of "government by consent". The CCP's plan for the Hong Kong political reform

package amounts to the same thing. Mr. C.Y. Leung, the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong government, in explaining why Hong Kong people cannot have genuine universal suffrage said that this "would allow the city government to follow more business-friendly policies... if it's entirely a numbers game and numeric representation, then obviously you would be talking to half of the people in Hong Kong who earn less than \$1,800 a month. Then you would end up with that kind of politics and policies." However it is precisely the kind of naked crony capitalism that he wants to maintain, rather than any imagery "foreign intervention", which is responsible for the fact that Hong Kong people, in their hundreds of thousands, are now occupying the streets.

Translated by Bai Ruixue

SYRIA/KURDISTAN

On Kobanê, Rojava and the Iraq-Syria wars

KAMRAN MATIN ·

Karman Matin, professor of international affairs in Sussex University in England told about himself: "I was born in Iran to a Kurdish family. I experienced the Iranian revolution as a young adult. My political consciousness was formed by that experience, which also entailed a period of Kurdish autonomy in the Kurdish region of Iran. My exposure to Kurdish national liberation is also dating back from that period. In terms of academic background, I have studied development studies for my first degree and then done a Masters and Phd in International Relations here at Sussex. Currently I'm working on a paper on the lineages of the current crisis in the Middle East, with a focus on Iraq and Syria where it's most explosive. I'm hoping my research for this paper will provide partial basis for a larger project on the Kurdish national liberation movement." Our interview with Matin is as follows:

Using your research on that paper, can you give context and historical background on Rojava and how it's been under attack?

Karman Matin – The project has been dormant there for a while. Kurdish nationalism has a long history there, just like other parts of Kurdistan. After the protests in Syria turned into a civil war as a result of Assad regime's repression of protests, the Syrian forces withdrew from a number of Kurdish-inhabited areas, which allowed for Kurdish forces and PYD to establish a kind of Kurdish self-administration in this area, in the form of three cantons, in Efrîn, Cizîrê, and Kobanê. It heavily emphasizes grassroots participation, gen-

der egalitarian approach, and increased women's participation in all levels of social, political, and public life. It's very ecologically conscious, and inclusive in its reach to different linguistic and ethnic groups living in that region-and there are lots of them, although in relatively small numbers. What's distinctive is that the whole notion of democratic autonomy is rejectionist of the traditional idea of nation-statism. It tries to address the so-called national question as part of the wider question of radical democracy. Although it emphasizes right of self-determination, it does not limit the realization of this right to the idea of a nation-state.

Can you say a little about the attacks on Rojava over the last few years from Al-Nusra and now ISIS or Daesh? Where have these attacks been coming from?

The Syrian army withdrew from this region and PYD established its cantons. The Turkish government was alarmed and all reports suggest that it encouraged and supplied radical Islamist forces within Syrian opposition to target these cantons and the Kurdish forces very early on. This continued and reached a climax with the rise to prominence of ISIS or IS, which has been constantly attacking Kurdish forces. Kobanê has been under attack for more than 18 months, in fact. After the advance of ISIS in Iraq, they intensified their attacks on Kobanê. Kobanê is in the middle of a vast territory controlled by ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Without it, ISIS would have a much less continuous controlled territory. But probably once [the attack on Kobanê] started, it turned into a highly symbolic point given ISIS' rapid victory in other places. Not capturing it seemed very demoralizing and embarrassing for IS. In their media releases, you can also see that they are treating and talking about the Kurds and PKK using the word "murtad," which in

Islamic discourse refers to Muslims who have left Islam.

I wonder if you could comment on the U.S. provision to Kobanê. What kind of agenda do you think the U.S. is pursuing?

I think the provision of arms was imposed on the U.S. because of the confusion of its strategy, which according to Obama didn't exist well into this month. I think ISIS, the U.S., and Turkey all expected Kobanê to fall quickly. As it did not fall and days went by, the U.S. administration was increasingly embarrassed by its inaction. It was pressured by its critics at home, the Republicans and others. In this peculiar circumstance where world media was able to produce live coverage. Daily Telegraph had live coverage of Kobanê. And hence, at some point, the U.S. was almost forced into this intervention. But it could also be seen as a way for the U.S. to pressure Turkey to take a more active role in the coalition. Turkey, knowing what the U.S. wanted, tried to use Kobanê as an instrument for dictating certain terms on the U.S. Airdropping weapons and aid finally pressurized Turkey into a 180 degree turnabout in their policy by saying "we can do it without you, so you shouldn't overplay your hand." All in all, the U.S. is not left with many options. It's a difficult argument to sell not to engage PYD at some level. And what can come out of it is by no means predetermined and depends on the balance of forces, the particular aims the U.S. might define in negotiations with PYD, and what the PYD can and will put to them. So unlike many on the left, I don't think the U.S. has a kind of grand strategy. I think it's a very precarious situation the U.S. is in, with Qatar and Saudi and Turkey each having their own aims and agenda. Without them, it would be highly problematic for the U.S. to be engaged and without being engaged, the Iraqi government would likely fall, and that would make a mockery of U.S. foreign policy since the invasion of Iraq. I think the U.S. is in quite a difficult position and its reaching out to the Kurds doesn't necessarily mean conspiracy.

Speaking of Iraq, can you comment on the attack on Shengal (Sinjar) and on ISIS' emergence in Iraq, their seizure of arms? What factors made this possible?

I think the attack wasn't unexpected. The poor way in which it was defended by KRG, the so-called peshmerga forces, had to do with KRG's naïve optimism about ISIS being essentially concerned with central Iraqi state and not having any particular appetite to attack Kurdish region. Once the attack came, they retreated and it was only the YPG who came and rescued the Êzidî (Yezidi) civilians. Anyone knowing a little about ISIS ideology and project would expect them to attack a non-Muslim minority right next door to them.

Can you talk about the current situation in South Kurdistan now?

Militarily, their defense is more effective. Politically, because of the poor performance of KDP forces, the rival party PUK is now politically on the offensive and trying to score political points by highlighting the poor performance of KDP forces especially in Shengal area. KDP has been generally very quiet and passive with respect to the war in Kobanê. Although now they claim they have been lobbying Turkey for help, publicly they did very little until last few days.

What about Turkey? Can you talk about the state of the peace process, renewed military activity, and the political situation there?

The reality is the peace process seemed to never have been taken seriously by the Turkish side. There were certain reforms, but the real issues were never addressed - for example, the infamous terror law that is the basis of arrest and detention of thousands of Kurdish political activists and others. There was no change in the prison situation of Öcalan, which PKK had demanded. So there weren't really many concrete and important steps from the Turkish side. Now neither side has declared it dead. At least officially both sides seem to be still kind of committed to it. I think PKK will be much more assertive in its demands from now on,

especially if Kobanê manages to decisively defeat IS. That will certainly strengthen their position. Especially if they and PKK manage to maintain some form of diplomatic line with the U.S., which makes a lot of European states more amenable to removing PKK from their list of terrorist organizations. That would again have impacts on PKK's negotiation position. All in all, I think PKK is in a stronger position than a month ago in relation to the peace talks. But the AKP a history of political maneuvering in the approach to elections. One election is underway next summer, for the general assembly, which AKP sees as the opportunity to get the required majority or reform the constitution to allow a more powerful presidency, which is now occupied by Erdogan himself. So in a way he needs the Kurdish vote. One would imagine the PKK and BDP, the official legal Kurdish party in Turkey, would read the AKP's hand here and act accordingly.

Can you say a little bit about the role of the solidarity protests in Turkey, attempts to cross the border, as well as the explosion of protests across tens of cities and their brutal suppression? How do you analyze that?

Well, there is a long history of such acts of solidarity. When Öcalan was captured in '99 there was widespread protest in Iranian Kurdistan, for example, in which more than 12 people were killed in one of the Kurdish cities. So ordinary Kurds have a strong sense of solidarity with fellow Kurds elsewhere. It's mostly the circumstances that might limit the expression of such solidarity. And with modern means of communication, organizing events and demos of this kind is much easier than before.

Could you talk about the projects in Rojhilat [East Kurdistan, in Iran]? Could you give more details on that, as it's under-discussed?

PKK's sister party, PJAK, announced a new movement called KODAR, Democratic Society in the East. This was described not as a political party but

as a movement, which seems to be similar to Rojava canton system: a radical bottom-up form of democracy with widespread participation of women and subaltern classes as the basis. The difference is in Rojava there are territories controlled by PYD. In Rojhilat. It's simply a concept, a concept which they seek a gradual propagation of. This has the advantage of not directly attacking the existing state form, and therefore having a chance of being an interlocutor of the Iranian state. In fact, PJAK have issued statements and letters to the Iranian state proposing negotiations and a peaceful solution of the Kurdish question. The situation over there is a bit different, because unlike Syria where PYD was the leading and hegemonic force and still is, in Iranian Kurdistan and Iraqi Kurdistan, that's not the case. So it is a bit more complex than Turkey and the Syrian case. In Iran the non-PKK parties probably are all in all more progressive and radical than KDP and PUK in Iraqi Kurdistan. [These parties] might technically be more at ease with PJAK and PKK, but there are also serious differences between them.

Could you comment generally on the potential right now for the spread of radical political projects? Kobanê has become a flash-point of resistance, showing the possibility of the survival of another way of life in the Middle East. What do you see as the possibility for radical democratic autonomy spreading in the Middle East in general?

If the Syrian experience survives the current onslaught by ISIS, I think it will have a very strong potential for being a model of democratic experience in the region. In a region that is ravaged by sectarian and ethnic conflict, the very formulation of that kind of project from a local force with considerable constituency is very important. But I also have no doubt that regional actors, Turkey in particular, will do everything they can to undermine it. While there is lots of potential, there is no automaticity. In the end, it ultimately depends on the wider balance of forces in the region: the PKK's relation with the Turkish state, the PKK and PYD's

relation with KRG, and most immediately, whether the PYD in Syria can withstand IS assaults. At the moment, a successful defense of Kobanê is very crucial.

You mentioned sectarian conflicts. Can you say a little more about the origin of these kinds of sectarian divisions, in the Iraq War or in Syria?

The colonial states which were established in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire deliberately recruited the state elite from minorities in order to keep them weak enough not to challenge the colonial rulers, and strong enough to maintain internal order. In Iraq, the British made the Sunni minority the dominant power and in Syria France made the Alawi minority the dominant power. Once the colonial powers left, those minorities had already a lot of political and economic investment to defend through violence. That violence always appeared to have an ethnic and religious element from the start. Nonetheless, the open ethnic sectarian conflict was never of the kind that we see today; after all, people saw the state, rather than the ethnic identity of the state men, as the target of their discontent.

The Iraq war was the turning point because facing the insurgency from disempowered Sunni Arabs, the U.S. deliberately deployed and manipulated sectarianism—for example, by letting the Shia militia religiously cleanse many parts of Baghdad and different parts of Iraq. Much of the manpower of ISIS is not actually ISIS; it's actually ordinary Arab Sunnis in the region who hate the central state, in this case Iraq or, in Syria, Assad. And once they do find themselves joining the ISIS, there is very little way back, because then the other side indiscriminately attacks those areas, as for example Shia militia do in Iraq at the moment. People join IS not because they are extreme Salafis, but because there are real objective grievances that translate to support for ISIS. Once that support is expressed, you burn the bridges and it's difficult to get out. I don't think the social support of IS is very big. Its cadre is very small. But it finds itself in a large area where the population is so hateful of the other side that they find themselves on IS' side rather than be on the side of the central state.

DIHA

CLIMATE CHANGE

The IPCC sounds the alarm

DANIEL TANURO ·

A palpable concern

The evaluation made in this fifth report is not fundamentally different from the previous ones, but the level of precision of the warning is more important, some zones of uncertainty are becoming clearer and the anxiety of the authors appear more than ever.

The expression "virtually certain" (with a more than 99% chance) is used more and more to describe a level of probability of this or of that phenomenon. The increased melting of the permafrost and the continuation of a rise of sea levels during several centuries, for instance, are now considered as "virtually certain" even if there is a drastic reduction of emissions.

Behind the "objective" scientific style of the report, we see that the IPCC sounds the alarm. The concern of the experts is palpable. It appears also through the fact that the summary for policy makers contains a section on the increased risks of "abrupt or irreversible changes" beyond 2100. For example, we read that "the threshold for the loss of the Greenland ice sheet over a millennium or more, and an associated sea-level rise of up to 7 m, is greater than about 1°C (low confidence) but less than about 4°C (medium confidence) of global warming with respect to pre-industrial temperatures." Limiting the temperature rise to 2°C in the long term, does not completely eliminate the risks of a very deep change of the "ecosystem of Earth" [3] ...

Fossil fuels, the main culprits

The media often points to the fact that methane gas is produced by ruminants or they mention the CO₂

emissions due to deforestation. This information is only a part of the truth and the IPCC puts the record straight: "the CO₂ emissions due to the burning of fossil fuels and industrial processes have contributed to a level of 78% of global greenhouse gas emissions, with the same percentage from 2000 until 2010". The graph showing the amount of the different gasses between 1970 and 2010 confirms that this is the main problem: the use of coal, oil and natural gas as energy sources (see below, source: IPCC)

This conclusion is decisive, in order to work on solutions. The IPCC experts made a synthesis of the existing literature on models of "mitigation" of global warming. They describe eight different scenarios, depending on the level at which the atmospheric concentration of the greenhouse gasses will be stabilized by the end of this century. For each scenario, a table gives the necessary reductions of emissions to be realized between 2050 and 2100 and the probability of the temperature rise to stay below a certain level during this century in comparison with the pre-industrial period (1,5°, 2°, 3°, 4°C). For each scenario it is the reduction of CO₂ from the burning of fossil fuels that plays the central role.

Scenarios: between nightmare and revolution

The least restrictive scenario is the one in which emissions continue to rise at more or less the current rate. In this case, the probability of going beyond a 4°C rise, is "more likely than unlikely". The list of unending social and ecological catastrophes is nothing less than a nightmare. On human health, for instance, the report states that "the combination of high temperature and humidity in some areas for parts of the year is expected to compromise common human activities, including growing food and

working outdoors (high confidence)". The productivity of agriculture and fisheries will be severely affected. The decline of biodiversity will accelerate.

At the other extreme of possibilities, a small number of studies consider a stabilization of the atmospheric concentration at 430ppm of CO₂eq [4]. But this is the current level, which means that the effort necessary in this scenario will be extremely restrictive and even colossal: in 2050, global emissions will have to be diminished by 70 to 95 % (in comparison with the 2010 level); in 2100, they will have to be diminished by 110% to 120 % [5]. The text of the summary for policy makers does not explain this further.

This scenario implies a revolutionary reorientation of all areas of life. But this is the only scenario which offers the possibility to avoid global warming above 1,5°C – and this is precisely the objective which numerous scientists (including the president of the IPCC!) consider necessary.

The report concentrates in fact on the following two scenarios: stabilization at 450 ppm and stabilization at 500 ppm. According to the conditions considered, those scenarios indicate respectively the maximum 2°C as a "likely" (more than 66% probability), "more likely than unlikely", or "as likely than not". To stay beneath a 1,5°C rise can in the end only be seen in the framework of a stabilization at 450 ppm, but its chances are very slim ("more unlikely than likely").

A gigantic difficulty

These scenarios leave a (small) margin for an increase of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere (in order to burn a small quantity of fossil fuels for a limited amount of time). But the constraints will have to be severe. In the case of a stabilization at 450 ppm for instance, world emissions have to decrease by 42 to 57 % from now to 2050 et by 78 to 118 % in 2100 (in comparison with 2010). In 2050, the amount of energy produced with zero carbon or with a weak intensity in carbon, must have increased by 90% on a worldwide scale [6]. Knowing

that 78 % of emissions are caused by CO₂ from the burning of fossil fuels and this combustion represents 80% of the energy used by humanity, it shows the magnitude of the difficulty.

There is of course the technical dimension of this difficulty, which we are not describing here. But there are in the first place the social and the political dimensions. The report insists on a just distribution of the effort amongst countries (related to their historical responsibilities), on the sharing of technologies, on the necessity of international collaboration, on the importance of combining the fight against climate change and the fight against poverty, on the ethical imperatives of this combination and on the challenge posed for the human species... These are crucial points which potentially go against the logic of neoliberalism. No report from the IPCC has previously delivered this kind of message with such strength.

"Devalue the assets"

At the same time, there is a difficulty which is social but on which the summary for policy makers has rather little to say; although it is very important. At a certain point we read the following: "Mitigation policy could devalue fossil fuel assets and reduce revenues for fossil fuel exporters, but differences between regions and fuels exist (high confidence). Most mitigation scenarios are associated with reduced revenues from coal and oil trade for major exporters (high confidence)."

These two little sentences refer to a very important issue: in order not to go beyond 2°C of warming, 80% of the current known stocks of fossil fuels should stay in the soil and should never be extracted. BUT these stocks are part of the assets of the oil companies and of the (ruling families) producing States. To write that " a policy of mitigation COULD DEVALUE fossil fuel assets" is a euphemism. In reality, a real mitigation policy implies the simple destruction of the large part of such capital.

The leaders of the fossil energy sector clearly feel the danger. That is why they have massively fi-

nanced the "climate deniers" and this strategy gave them some more time. But in the long run, it is highly improbable that the lies of these charlatans can block the unsettling scientific evidence presented by the IPCC. That is why the stress is put more and more on the search for mitigation policies which are compatible – we should be "realistic" – with maintaining the profits of the bosses in the coal, oil and natural gas sectors.

Attack capital

Capture and geological sequestration of carbon (CCS) takes a strategic position and the report by the IPCC attaches much importance to it. But we must understand, in order not to be confused when the media focus on "the good news" that remaining below the 2°C will reduce growth by only 0,06%. And this figure is mentioned in the report...

But it also says that this was calculated in the hypothesis of a massive capture and sequestration of carbon. According to the report, the energy transition we will need from now until 2030 will cost several hundreds of billions of dollars per year on a global scale. This seems a reassuring amount ... But without CCS, the costs of the transition would increase by ... 138% or even 200%.

However, the role of fossil fuels is only one aspect of a much larger question: what is at stake is the logic of accumulation. It seems a truism to say that unlimited growth is impossible on a limited world. In order to reduce radically the emissions from now until 2050 and knowing that those emissions will mainly be caused in the first place by energy conversion, we have to reduce the final consumption of energy and we have to realize this in such a way that it questions the "ever more". In short: we must reduce material production and transportation.

This is possible without harming the quality of life (on the contrary, while increasing it) if we abolish all useless and harmful production, the programmed obsolescence, the ridiculous amount of transportation of goods and of people in the framework of globalisation, etc. This is possible without

destroying jobs (on the contrary, creating jobs) if we share work, wealth, knowledge and technologies ...

But each of those hypotheses brings us to the same conclusion: we have to attack capital as such.

The majority of researchers who create mitigation models do not take this possibility into account. For them, accumulation is part of the landscape, or even of the laws of nature. And most of them, therefore, include also in their strategies the expansion of nuclear energy and the massive burning of biomass. These are the false solutions for accumulation. The summary for policy makers mentions certain risks of those technologies (especially the competition between food production and biomass). But the IPCC only compiles existing studies and is therefore dependent on them.

More than an ecological struggle

The coming Paris summit (COP21) at the end of 2015 is supposed to deliver a climate agreement. The IPCC report will put everyone's responsibilities squarely in front of them. This will be an important factor. But the governments do not take into account the anticapitalist hypothesis. The contours of the catastrophe are becoming more certain, more clear and more frightening, while hundreds of millions of poor people are already the first victims of global warming... In the best case, these governments will only be capable of concocting a climate agreement behind our backs which will be insufficient at an ecological level, unjust at the social level and dangerous at the technical level. Recent decisions by the European Union show this danger clearly.

Another road can only be taken as the result of a social mobilisation. Because there is more at stake than just ecological questions: the human challenge is fundamental, it is about the choice of society and of civilisation which will determine all the others. The opponent is formidable. We can only make him recede through the collective action of all the oppressed and exploited. From now on, we should use

the alarm launched by the IPCC, to build the largest front possible in favour of a social and ecological al-

ternative, in other words: ecosocialism.

November 2 2014

USA

Two Years after the CTU Strike: "Reform" Plague Still Spreads

ROBERT BARTLETT ·

The CTU strike confronted the attack on public education championed nationally by Arne Duncan, Obama's Secretary of Education, and the national forces in favor of privatization, from the hedge fund-backed Democrats for Education Reform to billionaires like Bill Gates and Eli Broad. Still, the strike amounted to only one battle in a continuing war against public education. What has happened in the intervening two years, and what are the prospects for the next year as the CTU prepares for the expiration of its contract in June 2015?

A central goal of the "education reformers" has been to privatize public education by closing public schools and replacing them with privately run, publicly financed charter schools. In Chicago this process began in earnest in 2004 when the Board of Education, under then CEO Arne Duncan, adopted the Commercial Club of Chicago's Renaissance 2010 Plan to close and replace "failing" public schools. By 2010, 80 public schools had been closed or "turned around" (a process in which the entire staff, from the principal to the lunch ladies, are fired) and replaced with 100 new schools, 70 of which are charter schools. In 2012, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) spokeswoman Becky Carroll (now head of Rahm Emanuel's Super PAC) announced the intention to create another 100 new schools in the next five years.

Less than a year after the CTU strike, the unelected CPS Board of Education closed 49 more schools and turned around five public schools in the largest number of school closings in one year, affecting 46,000 students. The justification was ostensibly fi-

nancial, as the board claimed that underutilized schools were draining money from an underfunded district and the consolidation of schools would save money that could be used to bolster the programs at receiving schools and across the district. A detailed analysis by the CTU research department shows that much of the money allocated to the receiving schools was spent on ancillary expenses like paying for the "Safe Passage" program that was established to protect students who are now forced to walk further to their receiving schools, often across gang boundaries.

Other promised improvements, such as libraries in each receiving school, were unfulfilled as 38% of the receiving schools are without the funding to pay for librarians. The alleged reallocation of resources turned out to be coupled with a reduction in funds for all public schools in the district, including the receiving schools, as the board went to a new "per pupil" funding formula that led to cuts of hundreds of teachers across the district and increases in class sizes. This new funding formula increased the amount of money going to charter schools by 12%, while money to neighborhood high schools was cut by 14%. Over 70% of CPS schools lost more than \$100,000. At the same time CPS has spent or budgeted almost \$200 million for the expansion of selective enrollment high schools located on the predominantly white north side of the city.

Black Education Gutted

The 2013 school closings mirrored previous closings in that they disproportionately affected Black and Latino communities, contributing to further destabilization of already impoverished neighborhoods. Of the closed schools, 71% had a majority

Black teaching staff and 90% had majority Black students. Fully 25% of closed schools had both a majority of Black students and staff, while only 2% of schools with a minority Black student body were closed, according to the above-cited CTU report on school closings (see footnote 3). As a result African-American educators in Chicago as a percentage of the workforce have fallen from 41% in 2000 to 25% today.

The pattern of CPS actions to starve neighborhood schools in the poorest communities, while simultaneously building newer, better financed charter schools in those same communities, pushes students to enroll in the charters and further exacerbates the decline in the neighborhood schools. As a result neighborhoods like the west side community of Austin have no neighborhood high schools, while charter schools have a clear field to recruit.

Another example is the placement of Noble Street College Prep, a campus of the politically connected Noble Street Network of Charter Schools, directly across the street from Prosser High School. Prosser performs better than the CPS average in test scores on the PSAT, has a 20% higher graduation rate, and also sends a higher proportion of its graduates to college. It seems that Prosser is being set up to fail as it competes with the new \$20 million Noble Street campus. (Rahm Emanuel is a big supporter of Noble, which also has a campus named for billionaire Republican candidate for governor, Bruce Rauner.)

In fact, immediately after the strike, Emanuel warned that up to 200 schools would have to be closed. The mayor's threats did not go unchallenged, and the CTU led a campaign to link parents, communities, and educators in combined opposition to the CPS plan. Over 20,000 people attended hearings to oppose the closings, the largest number of people ever to do so. The union and its allies led two separate but concurrent three-day marches, starting on the Black south and west sides of the city and passing many of the schools slated to be closed. These marches gave graphic evidence of the lack of investment in neighborhoods littered with

buildings that are boarded up and faced with demolition.

Still, the Board voted to close 49 schools and turn around five more. Three years earlier, when the board had threatened to close 22 schools, they faced opposition, backed down and six schools were saved. In contrast, in 2013 the Board spared only four schools which they had proposed to be closed, and one proposed for turnaround. Why the difference?

The level of community opposition to the closings was much higher in 2013 than in 2010, but as the stated reasons for school closings had changed from poor academic performance to the need to consolidate in the face of "underutilized" classrooms, the tactics of the board and mayor seemed to gain new intransigence, as they sought to impose a demoralizing loss of jobs on the CTU and an in-your-face to CTU's community allies.

The major driver of the decision to close or turnaround over 50 schools was, first, to punish the CTU and their community allies in the wake of their successful strike; and second, to continue the privatization of education and to erode the union's strength by driving more students into the expanding network of non-union charter schools. The unspoken message seemed to be that resistance is futile.

Political Polarization

The effect of both the 2012 strike and the 2013 struggle around school closings has been to increasingly isolate "Mayor One Percent" Rahm Emanuel, as public opinion polls show an increasing polarization in the city. A year ago 41% of poll respondents sided with the CTU while 19% supported Rahm; today the percentage of those supporting the CTU has grown to 62% while Rahm now has 23% support. In the Black community fully 79% support the union and only 9% support the mayor.

On charters versus neighborhood schools, the policy of the mayor is opposed by 72% and only sup-

ported by 18% of voters. The trend is once again even more pronounced in the Black community, with 83% opposed to closing neighborhood schools and funneling more money into charter expansion. Even more tellingly, 80% of parents of CPS students oppose his policy, including 63% of white respondents. These numbers show the extent to which the message of the CTU and their community allies has resonated with the public in Chicago.

The CTU and its allies have successfully framed the discussion around the need to have quality schools in all neighborhoods, pointing to the shift of resources from neighborhood schools to selective enrollment schools concentrated on the whiter north side and the expansion of funding to charters, which are demonstrably corrupt and politically connected—in the case of the United Neighborhood Organization (UNO) schools—or under investigation by the FBI (the Concept Schools, run by the Gulen organization).

While Rahm's support is low in much of Chicago, many parents trust teachers and their union, whom they believe have their children's best interests at heart. This led to the possibility that Karen Lewis of the CTU would run for mayor against Emanuel in the February 2015 election. Polls taken in August 2014 show that in a head to head matchup between Rahm and Karen, she had a 43% to 38% lead.

The sentiment among those who oppose Emanuel's policies is that someone needs to run against him, and Karen was the person who could best catalyze that opposition and articulate the dissatisfaction with his policies. In early September, a training for Lewis petitioners brought out 400-500 people largely from a Facebook posting, showing that there is a sentiment that can engage people in mundane, but necessary, activities. There is enthusiasm present that an inspiring campaign run could generate.

It is virtually unprecedented that a union leader could challenge a sitting politician with as much national financial backing as his \$8.3 million campaign fund shows. Such a campaign would have

posed a myriad of questions and possibilities. What would be the thrust of the campaign? Could it help build the movement in Chicago against corporate policies? Could she win?

All those possibilities were in the air until her sudden hospitalization and surgery for a serious illness led to her decision not to run, announced October 13, a month before the deadline for filing petitions. This is a bitter pill for teachers and parents in Chicago and poses new questions for how the union and their allies will push their agenda in the February election and beyond.

The CTU strike and the movement that Karen represents shook the status quo and opened up the door for a revitalized movement of the African Americans and Latinos who make up 62% of Chicago's population. In the years since Harold Washington won election as the first Black mayor of Chicago (serving from 1983 until his death in office in 1987) the political organizations that propelled Harold to run and led to his victory have declined in numbers and influence. In the wake of their decline Daley and Emanuel have had no trouble keeping minority aldermen in their pockets.

The issues of race and class that the strike and the school closings fights raised resonated with members of those communities and threaten to break the docility of the political forces in the Black and Latino communities allied to the Democratic machine. While the effects of education reform have struck hardest in those communities, even white parents have opposed the Mayor's policies. In the wealthy Lincoln Park neighborhood parents have opposed a proposal to spend millions on an expansion of their elementary school, saying that the money would be better spent in poor neighborhoods.

Leading up to the strike and afterwards, parent organizations like Raise Your Hand, 19th Ward Parents, and Parents 4 Teachers—all predominantly white—vocally opposed the mayor's policies and spoke out for adequate resources for all Chicago schools. The closing and starving of schools in the

poorest neighborhoods contrasts sharply with the doling out of tax revenues, siphoned from the schools through Tax Increment Financing (TIF) zones, to wealthy entities like the Chicago Board of Trade, a luxury car dealership, \$55 million to help finance a basketball arena, money to Hyatt Hotels, Walmart, and \$60 million to build a new selective enrollment high school.

Broadening the Issues

A campaign by Karen Lewis could have pointed out the inequities between how the system treats the wealthy and the working class. Her exploratory campaign took up the demand of increased access to affordable housing, raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and raising tax revenue from the wealthy to pay for needed social services, as well as the campaign for an elected representative school board.

These demands by themselves are not revolutionary, but they are beyond the ability of the Democratic Party to grant, even if it weren't engaged in a brutal campaign to slash pensions and healthcare for public workers. A successful challenge to the status quo would have to articulate the needs of Chicago's communities, and consciously work to build those movements, if Chicago's political landscape is to change in any meaningful way. With Karen out of the mayoral race, the work to build collaboration between the organizations and community groups involved in those fights will have to proceed in the absence of a citywide unifying political campaign.

The threat of a Lewis campaign made the Mayor take a series of positions to try to lessen the backlash against him. He now calls for raising the minimum wage in Chicago to \$13 an hour through a committee that he stacked and which includes his labor allies. Rahm also proposes expanding the pre-school program by 2,700 students (CTU and SEIU HCII as part of the Bright Futures Chicago Coalition call for universal full-day pre-school) and he has recently called for free tuition to Chicago

City Colleges for high school graduates with a 3.0 grade point average.

Rahm has tried to diffuse the animosity of the police and firefighters, who had been without a contract for two years, by settling with them, and he symbolically called for no further charter expansions for one year. These handouts serve the purpose of mending fences with the labor movement and dampening the CTU and community criticisms of his education policy. It was reported on October 4th that Rahm has gotten \$275,000 in donations from labor unions in the last quarter and he is a featured speaker at SEIU local 73's local convention in October.

It will be difficult for the balance of power in the city council to change drastically as there are only 7 out of 50 aldermen who don't vote with the Mayor, but an activist campaign that mobilizes people poses challenges to the Democratic Party and increases the opportunities for truly independent politics to emerge in Chicago. Interestingly, one of the byproducts of the increased level of CTU activism has been the individual decisions of at least five CTU teachers and allies to run campaigns for the city council. While these candidates all face entrenched incumbents and Rahm's Super PAC, they speak to an awakened willingness to challenge the status quo.

A potentially important step in the development of independent politics is the founding of an independent political organization titled "United Working Families" [not to be confused with the Working Families Party in New York state — ed.]. Its sponsoring organizations include CTU, SEIU local Health Care Illinois Indiana, Action Now, and Grassroots Independent Action. While this new independent electoral group is promising, its small number of founding organizations shows CTU's political isolation from the rest of the labor leadership, much of whom have already begun lining up behind Emanuel.

This contrasts to 56% of union family members who say they support Karen Lewis and only 31%

support Rahm. A campaign that clearly articulates the needs and demands of union and working people poses a challenge to the leaders of the Chicago Federation of Labor and an opening for the newly formed United Working Families to attract individual union members.

One measure of the strength of United Working Families will be its ability to place a non-binding referendum on the February ballot for an elected school board. This ambitious goal will require petitioning in all 50 wards, as it will not be a citywide referendum. This campaign will require a huge amount of work and the construction of organizations across the city, and if successful could continue to build organized pressure in the coming years against mayoral control and for democratic control of Chicago's schools.

The current CTU contract, which expires in June of 2015, contains an option to extend for a 4th year,

but the expectation is that teachers will want to test their power against the mayor. In the absence of a campaign by Karen, it will be much harder to articulate the aspirations of the vast majority of city residents for equity and democracy.

The challenge to the education reformers that the CTU strike emblemized will be taken up again in the coming contract campaign, but the broadening of that to a more political expression of working-class politics will take place without a naturally unifying, charismatic candidate like Karen Lewis. CTU will need to utilize the elected school board campaign, as well as other issue campaigns and the aldermanic campaigns across the city, to continue to build public support to defend public education and the public services that Chicago's families deserve.

October 23, 2014

Against the Current

Of the class struggle and the things we eat

ESTHER VIVAS ·

If we look closely we see how today's agricultural model is determined by the interests of capital, by the interests of large companies (the agroindustrial sector and supermarkets), which seek to profit from something as essential as food. The capitalist system, in its race to transform needs into commodities, rights into privileges, making food, and especially food products of quality, into a luxury. Just as it has made housing only accessible to those who can afford it, and the same fate awaits our health and education systems.

Although it is not only the logic of capital that impacts on food, the invisible hand of patriarchy also pulling the strings of this system. If not how is it that those who produce the most food, women, are the most hungry? Do not forget that between 60% and 80% of food production in the South, according to the FAO, is in the hands of women, however you are, paradoxically, it is women who suffer most from hunger, 60% globally. Women work the land, but do not have access to land ownership, means of production or agricultural credit. This not about being ideological, but to make it clear to all who consider the idea of "eating well" is, as they say in France, a thing of the "bobos, the "bohemian bourgeois", that nothing could be further from the reality.

If we answer the initial questions, the data confirms this. Do the rich and poor eat the same? No. Does our income determines our diet? Indeed. A study of Spain's Platform of People Affected by Mortgages has put this in black and white: 45% of those who have been evicted have difficulty buying enough

food to eat. Income puts limits on what we buy: it decreases consumption of beef and fish and in relation to the pre-crisis period, the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables. In contrast, there's been an increase in the purchase of less nutritious products, highly processed and high in calories, such as packaged sweets: cookies, chocolates, pastries and cakes. Our social class, education and purchasing power determines what we eat.

So, today, who is overweight? In general, those who have less eat worse. Looking at the map of the Spanish peninsula it is clear: the regions with the highest poverty rates, such as Andalucía, Canarias, Castilla-La Mancha and Extremadura, have the highest population that is overweight. In the US, people with higher obesity problems are African American and Latino communities. The crisis only accentuates the difference between food for the rich and food for the poor.

Questioning the dominant agricultural model and fighting for an alternative that places at its core people's needs and respect for the land, is to get to the heart of the class struggle. The Agricultural Workers' Union (Sindicato de Obreros del Campo, SOC) in Andalusia, led by Cañamero Diego and Juan Manuel Sánchez Gordillo, neither easily classifiable as "petty bourgeois", are clear about it. Their work is to defend of a living countryside, land to the tiller, in favour of organic farming, for another model of consumption. This is a "fight" in defense of "nobodies", the oppressed.

To fight for food that is local, healthy and campesino is the most subversive battle there is.

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Translation by Revolting Europe.*

SLOVENIA

Crisis and class-struggle in Slovenia: the growing momentum of socialist politics

JAŠA LATEGANO ·

After the collapse of Yugoslav socialism, two fractions of the bourgeoisie emerged. The 'transitional-left' national bourgeoisie, that played the key role in 'gradualist' transition between 1992 and 2004, and the more radical, 'neoliberal' comprador bourgeoisie, which shifted the restructuring of society to the more typical European 'shock doctrine' of privatization, flexibilisation and deregulation. Despite the bankruptcy of Marxist theory and socialist political struggle, after a decade of marginalization on behalf of the national bourgeoisie, and another decade of outright demonization from the comprador bourgeoisie, several civil initiatives formed over the past ten years. As the socio-economic situation worsened, a space was once again created for a radical critique of capitalism as an inhuman system of accumulation, tending towards a global totality. Though most of these initiatives were partial in their political struggles as well as their methods of struggle, forming, disintegrating and re-emerging with every new particular struggle, a handful managed to form more permanent, organized structures and coalitions.

One such coalition, the United Left, brought together three newly formed political parties – the Democratic Labor Party, the Initiative for Democratic Socialism and the Party for Sustainable Development in Slovenia – and a fourth block, made of civil initiatives from the 2012-13 uprisings. The UL, despite having been formed no sooner

than April 2014, gained unexpected victories in the European elections (5.9%) and made a breakthrough into the Slovenian parliament (6%) in the elections of June 2014. Many Marxist intellectuals simply disregarded these electoral victories, particularly the latter, as a naïve attempt at obtaining socialist goals within the confines of bourgeois politics. It is the intention of this article to provide an overview of the socio-economic and political developments in Slovenia over the past two decades, to give readers a context on the basis of which to better understand the importance of the socialist movement gaining ground, even if it is at this point relatively small ground.

The United Left: a pyrrhic electoral victory?

The latest parliamentary election in Slovenia, taking place on July 13th this year, adequately reflected a double political crisis on the national level. On the one hand, the mass protests that shook the country between the winter of 2012 and the summer of 2014, resulted in the people's rejection of the repetitive cycling of political power between the conservative Slovenian Democratic Party and the nominally "left" Social Democrats or technocratic liberal parties, the two "alternatives" that have driven policy making and dominant media discourse over the past decade – almost half of Slovenia's existence as an independent state. On the other hand, this rejection resulted in nothing in particular. The demands of the protests of 2012 and 2013 were largely morally oriented and negatively defined, mainly calling for an end to corruption in politics, government finance ("the banks") and the public sector, particularly the public healthcare system.

Although many civil initiatives formed in this period, few of them were capable of articulating the crisis of capitalism in general terms, opting instead to focus on particular areas, such as public education and public healthcare. Furthermore, these particular areas were mostly treated as mystified entities, plagued by "corruption", "greed" and "moral bankruptcy", rather than concrete focal points for organized political struggle towards a common goal of radically changing society. There are several reasons for this, some of which I shall discuss later on, so at this point I will only state that, in the conscience of the people who were actually in the streets, the protests were to a large extent nothing more than a defensive cry of the middle class, whose economic and social comfort was being uprooted by the crisis.

Thus, the people demanded a stop to changes for the worse, and that things become okay again – and this is precisely what the leading party of the last election promised. Led by Miro Cerar, the new Prime Minister of Slovenia, SMC (Stranka Mira Cerarja, literally The Party of Miro Cerar) led a widely ambiguous electoral campaign, directed at conservative as well as liberal voters. With the complete absence of a concrete political program, it was the personal profile of Cerar as a man of liberal policies but conservative/Christian personal values, as a calm academic with an ideologically neutral, technocratic approach to the country's economic concerns, and his magical promise to stop fooling around and make things right again, that got his party the second largest victory by percentage (at 34.6%) and the largest by the number of seats in the National assembly (36 out of 90), in the history of independent Slovenia. Again, the reasons for this phenomenon can be identified and discussed. Let me propose, for now, that the nature of Cerar's government will necessarily be unstable, as his wide and ambiguous promises inevitably transform, one by one, into concrete disappointments beyond his control.

The second and far more important phenomenon of the last elections was the entrance of the socialist

United Left (UL) into parliament, where the opposition party now occupies 6 seats, thanks to support from 6% of the voting population. [1] Their campaign, headed by the slogan for a change in political program, not only faces!, attracted a large percentage of the young urban population (second only to the leading SMC), as well as many left-leaning intellectuals. While it is true that, like the protests of 2012-13, the main shift occurred in the conscience of the urban middle classes, the UL is constituted by some of the only civil initiatives that were capable of identifying in the current economic and social situation of Slovenia a structural crisis of capitalism on a global scale, and addressing it as such. To understand the significance of this partial electoral victory, we must take a look at the activities of these civil initiatives, especially the Initiative for Democratic Socialism, over the past two years, as well as the Marxist "think-tanks" and academic movements that preceded them.

Despite the program of the UL being what one could call radical-reformist, rather than militant-revolutionary, including policies such as an immediate halt to the ongoing privatization of state-owned industry and infrastructure and limiting the income-gap between the lowest and highest income classes to 1/5 with progressive taxation, calling the entrance of this party into parliament a pyrrhic victory would be a naïve understatement. Pyrrhic victory was the term often used by Marxist critics to describe, quite appropriately, the significance that electoral victories of parties such as New Labor in the United Kingdom had for the labor movement in the 90s. It was meant to emphasize the structural nature of the dominance of capital in today's society, and particularly the fact that capital mainly dominates outside of the parliament, in the material productive and reproductive spheres of society. Thus, victorious labor parties, no matter how true to their aims, would have little or no power to change the actual social order, likely causing more damage than improvement to their electorate. However, in the case of Slovenia, this term applies much more to the dominant SMC, due to its ambi-

guity, dependence on support from both liberal and conservative populations and thus inevitable fate of disappointment, than to the United Left's entrance into the parliamentary arena.

Before recounting the uprisings of 2012-13 and the formation of progressive political groups, many of which now constitute the United Left, it is important also to understand the economic and political situation of Slovenia since the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the transition to a market economy.

The national bourgeoisie: "Liberal democracy" and capitalist primitive accumulation

The neoliberal counter-revolution that crushed labor movements around the world from the 1970s onward gained new ground after the collapse of (nominally) socialist economies in the East. Most post-socialist societies were exposed to relentless, uncompromising and fast-paced expropriation and capitalist subjugation by economic and non-economic shock doctrines, usually imposed by the cooperation between local comprador-bourgeois governments and international financial institutions, such as the IMF and ECB. This extra-economic violence used to establish conditions for new capitalist expansion is yet another example of Marx's concept of primitive accumulation serving as a convincing point of departure for a critical analysis of ongoing social processes.

Slovenia is somewhat known for taking a so-called gradualist approach to this transition, though this is an oversimplification that often conceals the real nature of the processes involved. Although the standard formula of privatization, deregulation and flexibilisation was applied much more gradually than in other post-socialist societies, this was by no means a generous decision made by the bourgeoisie, but the result of intense class-struggle, which only intensified in the first years of transition. A wave of mass strikes and protests in the late 80s and early 90s resulted in a politically strengthened labor movement, organized above all into strong, relatively centralized and politically conscious unions. With the organizational power of the

unions, the working class managed to establish a kind of social dialogue with the state, resulting in the preservation of most of the welfare state systems (free public healthcare, education, daycare etc.), state ownership over major firms and infrastructure, significant government share in the Slovenian banking system, and above all relative stability on the artificially rigid and regulated labor market.

As already mentioned, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and Slovenian independence led to the emergence of two elites: a national bourgeoisie and a comprador bourgeoisie. The aforementioned social dialogue was tied only to the former fraction, embodied in the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, the ruling political party for the first half of the history of Slovenian independence. Emerging as the leading parliamentary party in 1992, the liberal democrats led the Slovenian government for 3 consecutive mandates, with only short pauses of small-scale political crises and affairs in between. A major part of what is often referred to as the "transitional left" (together with its main coalitional partner, the Social Democrats), Liberal Democracy was the political force that oversaw the transformation of Slovenian nominally socialist society and its integration into the European capitalist system until 2004.

The liberal democrats were far more than a political party, having a significant say in social reproduction as well. Liberal democracy was a political force, organized not only on positions of formal power in bourgeois institutions, but also and perhaps more significantly in social cliques, ranging from the editorial boards of alternative as well as mainstream media to prominent intellectuals within the academic sphere. Indeed, reforming the educational system on all levels happened under the supervision of liberal-democrat ministers (one of which was among the original 31 signatories of the Bologna Declaration of 1999) and with the initiative of prominent intellectuals (among which, interestingly enough, one also finds internationally known philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek, who

continued to actively support the political careers of many prominent liberals up to the recent past). It was the policy-making of the liberal democrats that created today's pluralist – and secular – educational system. Going into further detail would take us well beyond the boundaries of this article, so I will conclude this section with two statements. Firstly, Liberal Democracy as a political and social force had a hegemonic role in transforming Slovenian society at more than its economic level. Secondly, Liberal Democracy was the ideological force that directed the shift of the Slovenian intellectual and cultural left from socialism to liberalism.

The comprador bourgeoisie: the eurozone and the shock doctrine

It is easy to see why the transitional period of 1990 – 2004 had no room for Marxist critique or socialist political action. Slovenia experienced, in contrast to 1980s Yugoslavia, a decade of relative political and economic stability. The regular political dialogue between organized labor and the state meant that the former saw no need for militant action or large-scale strategies. Since the standard of living in this period not only did not deteriorate, but often increased, along with the development and accessibility of the institutions of the socialist welfare state that were largely preserved (education, healthcare, daycare, etc.), the unions, much like elsewhere in the Western world, functioned as part of the bourgeois state apparatus, ensuring the 'healthy integration' of the working class into the capitalist system. Furthermore, socialist discourse gradually gained a negative connotation, until anything that could be associated with socialism or Marxism in any form, theoretical, scientific or practical, was usually labeled as continuity of the 'old regime' and quickly marginalized. This was done particularly actively by the conservative bourgeoisie that was to take over from the transitional left in 2004.

On May 1st in 2004, less than a decade and a half after its triumph in declaring independence,

Slovenia joined the European Union. In the same year, it also joined NATO and a year earlier it had signed the infamous Vilnius letter, declaring its support of the invasion of Iraq. There had been quite a strong civil initiative against such maneuvers, and the events themselves were met with much criticism. Shortly after this Labor Day European integration, the October 2004 parliamentary elections saw the first ever defeat of Liberal Democracy and the rise to power of the far-right Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS). This represented more than an aesthetic change in parliament; it marked the defeat of the transitional left and the victory of a political force that was much more prepared to play the role of comprador bourgeoisie, working largely according to the interest of large-scale global and European capital. The defeat of the national bourgeoisie and the victory of the comprador bourgeoisie brought several consequences.

The political orientation of SDS was strongly conservative – having ties with the Catholic Church and often advocating homophobia, racism, nationalism and confessional religious education in primary and secondary schools – and has since escalated to a proto-fascist movement. Its economic policies, appropriately to its role in the post-transitional development of Slovenian society, were strongly neoliberal from the outset. The comprador bourgeoisie underwent the project of fiscal consolidations until Slovenia became the first post-socialist country to meet the Maastricht criteria. In 2007, still under the same government, Slovenia joined the eurozone. Like the transitional left before it, the neoliberal, comprador bourgeoisie set about transforming society to fit its needs. It began deconstructing the liberal cliques and academic circles, attacking the public education system and gradually establishing a network of private universities, which had the double function of reproducing the dominant ideology of 'human capital', the 'knowledge economy' and free market thriving through 'small business', on the one hand, and 'human re-

source' reproduction for the leading conservative parties, particularly SDS.

In this period, the coalition lead by SDS also took several measures intended to weaken the representatives of the working class. Laws were passed that allowed very small and marginal trade unions to emerge and legally have a status of 'representative unions', which weakened the larger unions that had played an important role in the 'social dialogue' of the 1990s. As opposed to the larger unions, that covered entire economic sectors and included tens or even hundreds of thousands of workers, these small unions were organized at the level of professions, sometimes having as few as 100 members. This in itself caused the fragmentation of the working class, as well as allowing SDS to form its own unions.

After having destroyed the transitional 'social dialogue' and discarded the "gradualism" of the transitional left, the comprador bourgeoisie saw the 2008 eurozone crisis as an opportunity to take a radical turn and begin actively destroying the achievements of the labor movement. In the 2008 parliamentary election, the conservative SDS was overtaken by the "center-left" Social Democrats, once a coalitional partner of Liberal Democracy. This made little difference in macroeconomic policy: the comprador bourgeoisie had established the new socio-economic order and initiated the game of neoliberal restructuring of society. Incidentally, the Social Democratic government ended after losing a confidence vote in September 2011, catapulting SDS back into power via premature elections in February 2012. By the time this left-right political cycle was established, the Slovenian success story was revealed to have been a mere illusion, poverty and unemployment became real issues in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and the gradualist transition had been replaced by restrictive fiscal and monetary policies, austerity measures and fully European shock doctrines.

The technocratic neoliberal restructuring went further than redundancies, cuts in public sector wages, lower state expenditures for pensions and lower la-

bor compensation for the young and elderly. The once universally accessible and deliberately unprofitable institutions of the socialist welfare state were being implicitly or explicitly destroyed or privatized, commercialized and commodified. The last SDS government of 2012, which was exceptionally brutal in its policies, was challenged with mass uprisings in Slovenia's larger cities. The scale of these demonstrations exceeded anything that had been seen since the early days of transition. It is in these uprisings of 2012 and 2013, which prematurely ended the SDS government, that groups such as the Initiative for Democratic Socialism played the important role of articulating the manifold crises sweeping across Slovenian society as a general crisis of capitalism.

The socialist offensive: 'disillusionment' with socio-economic elites

These shock doctrines put organized labor into a difficult position. Although the unions were capable of stopping all major neoliberal reforms, such as large-scale privatization of the higher education system and the implementation of a uniform tax rate, the crisis and austerity policies of the neoliberal bourgeoisie place them into an exclusively defensive position. The role of the unions in preserving the historically achieved standards of the labor movement had been, and still remains, immensely important, but due to their role of integrating the working class into the capitalist system and the social dialogue that they were based on, they are incapable of doing more than preserving the existing social order. The political action of the unions was soon limited to technical battles over legislation that rarely included mass mobilization (though when strikes and mass demonstrations do come into question, they have yet to disappoint). Furthermore, they are more and more often met with criticism of being 'overly political', despite the direct opposite being true. In any case, it eventually became obvious that the existing forms of organized labor were incapable of forming, much less carrying out a political strategy of a socialist offen-

sive, aimed at radically transforming the very roots of society.

These strategies eventually began emerging in theoretical form within various student and academic struggles and marginal Marxist groupings. The Institute for Labor Studies, formerly known as the Workers' and Punks' University, played an important role in producing critical analyses of capitalist society and developing consistent readings and understanding of Marxist critique of political economy. When the crisis of 2008 broke out and civil initiatives of a more practical orientation began to form, in was think-tanks such as the Institute for Labor Studies that often gave them the theoretical tools needed to articulate political strategies in general terms and recognize the problems of poverty, unemployment and underemployment that so many people now faced as symptoms of a structural crisis of the capitalist system as a whole. Many member of the Institute for Labor Studies later formed the Initiative for Democratic Socialism, one of the parties in the United Left coalition.

These organizations emerged, in part, out of the struggles fought by student and academic initiatives against the neoliberal restructuring of public universities and the commodification of higher education in general. An important event that defined much later development was the 2011 occupation of the Faculty of Arts, part of the University of Ljubljana. One important group that emerged from the months of conflict with the academic authorities was the student organization Iskra (literally, Spark). Formed in 2012, the students of Iskra challenged not only the intense austerity measures of the SDS government, but also the technocratic higher-education policies of the post-2013 uprisings government. The ministry for education at the time was being run by the Social Democrats, who were met with bitter socialist criticism in a several month long campaign against their proposed new higher education bill. Through this particular struggle, Iskra managed not only to articulate a (tactically implicit) Marxist critique of capitalism itself, but also to form a wide, if temporary coali-

tion with most of the organized civil society, as well as many of the largest unions in the country. Ending its campaign with a mass protest in April 2014, Iskra was the first self-organized civil initiative to bring 2000 people out into the streets of Ljubljana and manage to retain the momentum created through a concrete political action, translating it into general critique.

Bringing Marxist critique into public discourse and making it accessible even to the educated, middle-class population was a much more tedious and difficult task as it may seem. Whereas Marxism and its political variations were gradually marginalized throughout the 90s by the transitional left, under the neoliberal comprador bourgeoisie socialist theory and practice was directly demonized. The paranoia of a communist conspiracy, spread among the electorate of SDS via party propaganda, soon became a means of mobilizing the masses through fear. This is one of the tactics that the comprador bourgeoisie constantly used and reused to gain support in times of elections. Even today, SDS, now in opposition, attributes the imprisonment of its leader (in reality on the basis of corruption during his affair, as prime minister, of accepting bribery for a large purchase of military equipment) to 'communist puppeteers' controlling the supreme court.

But Slovenian civil society has been politically active for around a decade now. The question is no longer 'when will the people wake up', but rather how soon will the various socialist forces reach a level of political maturity to be able to organize both the dissatisfied lower-middle classes and the highly oppressed working classes with a coherent political strategy leading towards a common goal. Today, we are facing mass privatization of state-owned firms, which has already begun, and the spread of socialist politics to the working class, particularly its younger sections, facing one of the highest percentages of precarious labor in Europe, is only a matter of time. Before the crisis of 2008, it seemed as if the triumph of neoliberal capitalism was inevitable and potentially eternal. Only a few years ago, the very presence of any signifier denot-

ing Marxism or socialism in public discourse was unimaginable, yet today a socialist coalition sits in parliament and an ever growing array of civil orga-

nizations are already creating a basis on which a radical transformation of all aspects of society can begin to occur.

PALESTINE SOLIDARITY AND MASS MOBILIZATION

A tipping point?

ALAN SEARS ·

Events this summer have certainly confirmed Barghouti's analysis. The brutal Israeli assault on Gaza, combined with the use of repressive force against Palestinians on the West Bank and those who are citizens of Israel, has pushed larger numbers to question the Israeli claim that even the most naked aggression is actually self-defence. Many have begun to see through the consistent media bias in favour of Israel and the hard-line support for Israel demonstrated by many governments including the Harper Tories in Canada.

Record numbers—150,000 by some reports—rallied in London against the most recent Israeli assault on Gaza.

While the surge in Israeli aggression has pushed people to raise questions, we could not reach this tipping point without the determined, patient and strategic work of the BDS movement in opening up space for a different way of understanding the politics of apartheid and occupation.

The BDS movement was launched in July 2005 with a call from over 175 Palestinian civil society organizations for a global campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israeli institutions and to support fundamental Palestinian rights under international law. Specifically, the BDS campaign focussed on three rights: an end to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, full equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel and the right of return for Palestinian refugees uprooted from their homes and communities.

The BDS movement has made considerable headway over the subsequent nine years, building an international base of activists, winning some impor-

tant victories and creating openings for Palestinian perspectives and experiences to be heard despite the attempts of Israel advocacy groups to silence such expression. It is now on the threshold of becoming a genuine mass movement as the anti-apartheid in South Africa campaign did in the 1980s.

South Africa solidarity

The global anti-apartheid solidarity movement of the 1980s was so successful that it seems almost obvious looking back. A successful mass movement actually shifts the way people think about an issue, sometimes so completely that it is hard to imagine there was another side. But the anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s did not come out of nowhere and sweep everyone onside. It was produced by long-term patient work against the stream to accumulate core activists and develop a movement around the idea that if apartheid was wrong, people around the world had a responsibility to act in solidarity.

It took perhaps 20 years for the campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against South African apartheid to reach mass movement scale in the early 1980s in Canada. Joanne Naiman was involved in the anti-apartheid movement in Toronto when it was just "a few of us standing in front of liquor stores or Loblaw's [grocery stores]." She was committed to the work even if she found it hard to believe that the movement could win. "The truth is that I never really believed apartheid would end or that our tactics would bring real change."

In the late 1970s and 1980s the movement broadened into a mass movement, driven forward by the increasing mobilization of black South Africans and building on long-term international solidarity work. I remember when I arrived at the University

of Windsor in 1988, the campus reverberated with the politics of anti-apartheid.

The faculty union was in the midst of great debates leading up to the decision to endorse pension fund divestment from corporations operating in South Africa. Students were pushing the university to divest, leading to a large walkout from classes and a campus rally of thousands. Trade unions on and off campus were allied with the anti-apartheid movement by that point, as were many student unions. Mainstream media, labour press and student papers covered the movement.

When Omar Barghouti refers to the "South Africa moment" for the Palestine solidarity movement for BDS, he is inviting us to think on this scale. Often throughout the history of the 20th century, a key liberation struggle became the signal movement for a broad movement that galvanized many into activism. At various times, struggles in Algeria, South Africa and Vietnam played that role.

This does not mean that they were the only important issue globally, but that they attracted the critical mass of activists that cracked open the seemingly impregnable foundations of exploitation and oppression. Palestine solidarity is becoming such a signal movement at the present time.

Towards a mass movement

There are already important signs that the BDS movement is reaching a new threshold. A number of university student unions have already endorsed BDS, as has the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario, an organization of affiliated student unions. In March 2014, students at the University of Windsor voted in a referendum that their student union should endorse BDS.

Consumer boycotts are beginning to have a real impact on Israeli exports to Europe. Academic organizations like the American Studies Association have supported BDS. The campaign to support Steven Salaita, an American professor denied his job because of tweets about Gaza, has been deep and wide. In the UK, the Palestine Solidarity movement

mobilized massive demonstrations in the summer of 2014. More mainstream media coverage of Palestinian experiences and perspective is appearing, even if the preponderant balance of reports still tilt heavily towards Israeli perspectives

To continue this momentum towards a mass movement, BDS organizations need to mobilize a lot of activists who can think strategically, argue convincingly and build effective mobilizations that engage others. At the early stages of movements against the stream, a great deal of the work is often carried by a small core of activists who are deeply committed and knowledgeable. Becoming a mass movement means figuring ways to engage broader layers of people who are drawn towards Palestine solidarity, actively inviting them in and providing them with the opportunities to develop their confidence and abilities.

As a result of the Israeli assault on Palestine over the summer of 2014, every campus will have a small layer of students this fall who feel drawn to the cause of justice for Palestinians. Every trade union and community organization will have some members who feel the Israeli state has committed a profound injustice. In these same settings, a much larger number of people will be troubled by these events, even if they have not yet decided it is time to act.

The smaller layer already considering active solidarity will develop into activists only if they are invited into the movement and offered the opportunity to develop their own knowledge, confidence and abilities. If this does not happen while the memory of this summer is fresh, they might not make the transition into activism. Unfortunately, this is a political moment in which it is hard to become an activist, as movements are fairly small and most people are dedicating their energy just to getting by in these difficult times. It is not safe to assume that activists who want to be involved will find us.

This is also an important time to address the large numbers of people who are troubled by the events of the past summer and pushed to think about the

politics of Palestine/Israel. It is a moment to be confident and creative in terms of educating outwards. Many people have simply not had the opportunity to hear about Palestinian experiences and realities, given the character of coverage in the mainstream media, the pro-Israel alignment of governments and the silencing strategy of Israel advocacy groups. This is a time to be inviting people to panels, film showings and debates where there is lots of opportunity for discussion.

Finally, it is a time for audacious alliance-building in the move to pass more BDS resolutions in broad-based democratic organizations such as student unions, trade unions and community organizations. This alliance-building needs to be patient, as it often takes a longer-term strategy with a number of steps to win organizations over to BDS.

The first motion that is feasible in a specific organization might be simply to call for an investigation into the situation of Palestinians and questions of complicity. A careful read of every organization and many discussions with potential allies will help determine what is possible at the moment.

The best kind of motions do not stop at formal adhesion to BDS, but commit organizations to active investigation and member engagement around the issue. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers, for example, has sent delegations of union members to see the situation in Palestine with their own eyes and report back, while also making ties with equivalent trade unions in Palestine.

The politics of solidarity

This active movement building can build on the solid political experience of the BDS campaign to date. There are three keystones to the movement that are crucial for ongoing success. First, the call for BDS originated with Palestinian organizations, not as a substitute for their own mobilization but as a support to it. The BDS movement will be most effective if it recognizes the leadership of Palestinians in the movement and the centrality of Palestinian rights.

This commitment to Palestinian leadership in no way restricts participation in international solidarity activism, but recognizes that this work is there to support the movement of the Palestinian people themselves. This commitment was clear in the large and sustained Gaza solidarity mobilizations around the globe and across Canada in the summer of 2014, including those in Toronto organized by the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA) with Palestine House and other allies.

Secondly, the movement has sought to build solidarity on a firm foundation of challenging oppression and injustice. This means building feminism, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, class justice politics, queer liberation and struggles against islamophobia and anti-semitism right into foundations of the movement. It is on this basis that we can build effective alliances, recognizing that the oppression of Palestinians is one link in the chain of a global system of inequality.

This foundation is clear in the work of Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) aimed at exposing pinkwashing strategies that attempt to hide the oppression of Palestinians behind an image of Israel as cosmopolitan and gay-positive. QuAIA has worked with others to link this anti-pinkwashing work with worker solidarity, for example, at Labour Day in Toronto 2014.

Finally, the movement needs to be strategically supple and thoughtful. The overall goal of the BDS movement is victory, not glorious defeat in which a small number of activists take a pure and principled stand and lose badly. Victories most often come with focussed local campaigns around clear international BDS targets where activists can make a clear and compelling case for those new to the issue, such as the Sodastream boycott organized by CAIA.

This orientation towards victory means building a movement that can learn through serious reflection on both its successes and failures. It means having the confidence that even organizations where it might seem impossible to pass a BDS motion right

now can be convinced with a thoughtful approach over time. The careful work of alliance-building in trade unions as practiced by CAIA and Labour for Palestine meant that prominent labour leaders such as Marie Clark Walker (Vice President of the Canadian Labour Congress) and Sid Ryan (President of the Ontario Federation of Labour) spoke out at recent Gaza solidarity mobilizations.

The confidence to believe victory is possible comes from the conviction that the Palestinian case for justice is powerful and from identifying our victo-

ries to date, that remind us that BDS is winnable. The complicity of governments, corporations and academic organizations in the Israeli oppression of Palestinians creates a responsibility to act so injustice is not done in our name. The challenge for the movement is to find effective and creative ways to make our case as we build alliances with others fighting injustice and to persuade mass-based organizations to actively join the BDS campaign to exert ever greater pressure on the Israeli state.

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FEATURES

In-depth analysis from International Viewpoint's Features section



 SERIES : BRETTON WOODS, THE WORLD BANK AND THE IMF: 70TH ANNIVERSARY (PART 12)

Theoretical lies of the World Bank

ÉRIC TOUSSAINT · 24 November 2014

In the early years of its existence, the Bank was not much given to reflecting upon the type of political economy that might best be applied to the developing countries. There were several reasons for this: first, it was not among the Bank's priorities at the time. In 1957, the majority of the loans made by the Bank (52.7%) still went to the industrialised countries [3]. Secondly, the theoretical framework of the Bank's economists and directors was of a neo-classical bent. Now neo-classical theory did not assign any particular place to the developing countries [4]. Finally, it was not until 1960 that the Bank came up with a specific instrument for granting low-interest loans to the developing countries, with the creation of the International Development Association (IDA).

However, the fact that the Bank had no ideas of its own did not prevent it from criticising others. Indeed, in 1949, it criticised a report by a United Nations' commission on employment and economics, which argued for public investment in heavy industry in the developing countries. The Bank declared that the governments of the developing countries had enough to do in establishing a good infrastructure, and should leave the responsibility for heavy industry to local and foreign private initiative [5].

According to World Bank historians Mason and Asher, the Bank's position stemmed from the belief that public and private sectors should play different roles. The public should ensure the planned development of an adequate infrastructure: railways, roads, power stations, ports and communications

in general. The private sector should deal with agriculture, industry, trade, and personal and financial services as it is held to be more effective than the public sector in these areas [6]. What this really meant was that anything which might prove profitable should be handed over to the private sector. On the other hand, providing the infrastructure should fall to the public sector, since the costs needed to be met by society, to help out the private sector. In other words, the World Bank recommended privatisation of profits combined with the socialisation of the cost of anything which was not directly profitable.

An ethnocentric and conservative vision of the world

The World Bank's vision is marked by several conservative prejudices. In the reports and speeches of the first 15 years of its existence, there are regular references to backward and under-developed countries. The Bank sees the reasons for under-development from an ethnocentric point of view. In the World Bank's 8th Annual Report, we read that: "There are many and complex reasons why these areas have not been more developed. Many cultures, for instance, have placed a low value on material advance and, indeed, some have regarded it as incompatible with more desirable objectives of society and the individual..." [7]. One of the causes of backwardness identified in the Report is the lack of desire or absence of will to make material progress and to modernise society. Hindus' deep respect for cows becomes shorthand for the inherent backwardness of India. As for Africa, World Bank president Eugene Black declared in 1961: " Even today the bulk of Africa's more than 200 millions are only beginning to enter world society " [8]... The reactionary nature

of World Bank vision has by no means been attenuated by the passing years. In the Global Development Report of 1987, the Bank wrote: "In his Principles of Political Economy (1848), John Stuart Mill mentioned the advantages of 'foreign trade'. Over a century later, his observations are as pertinent as they were in 1848. Here is what Mill had to say about the indirect advantages of trade: "A people may be in the quiescent, indolent, uncultivated state, with all their tastes either fully satisfied or entirely undeveloped, and they may fail to put forth the whole of their productive energies for want of any sufficient object of desire. The opening of a foreign trade, by making them acquainted with new objects, or tempting them by the easier acquisition of things which they had not previously thought attainable, sometimes works a sort of industrial revolution in a country whose resources were previously undeveloped for want of energy and ambition in the people: inducing those who were satisfied with scanty comforts and little work to work harder for the gratification of their new tastes, and even to save and accumulate capital, for the still more complete satisfaction of those tastes at a future time." [9]

The massive return of the neo-conservatives in the administration achieved by G. W. Bush (2001-2008) exacerbated its deeply materialistic and reactionary tendencies. The appointment of Paul Wolfowitz, one of the leading neo-cons, to the presidency of the Bank in 2005, has further entrenched this orientation.

Growth and development planning (in both industrialised and developing economies) is given remarkable importance in World Bank documents and the literature of the time dealing with development issues from the 1950s until the 1970s. Until the end of the '70s, planning was considered important for several reasons: first, planning emerged during the prolonged depression of the 1930s as a response to the chaos resulting from *laissez-faire* policies; secondly, the reconstruction of Europe and Japan had to be organised; thirdly, this was still part of the thirty years of continuous economic

growth that followed the Second World War and had to be managed and planned for; fourthly, the success, real or supposed, of Soviet planning undoubtedly exercised a great fascination, even for the sworn enemies of the so-called "Communist bloc". The idea of planning was completely rejected from the early '80s, when neo-liberal ideologies and policies came back with a vengeance.

Another major preoccupation in the early days which was rejected after the 1980s was the decision by several Latin American countries to resort to import substitution and the possibility that other newly independent countries might follow their example.

Let us briefly review some of the economists whose work had a direct influence on and in the Bank.

The HOS model (Heckscher – Ohlin – Samuelson)

Ricardo's theory of comparative advantages gained force in the 1930s through the studies of Swedish economists, Heckscher and Ohlin, later joined by Samuelson. It is the synthesis produced by the latter that is known as the HOS model. The HOS model raises the issue of factors of production – these factors are work, land and capital – and claims that each country has an interest in specialising in the production and export of goods which make greatest use of that country's most abundant production factor – which will also be the cheapest. Free trade would then make it possible to balance out what the factors earn among all the countries taking part in free trade agreements. The abundant factor, which would be exported, would grow scarcer and thus more costly; the rare factor, which would be imported, would increase and its price would fall. This system of specialisation would bring about optimal distribution of factors in a now homogenous market. This model would enable all economies to aim for maximal integration in the global market with positive outcome for all the trading partners. Various studies carried out later, especially those by Paul Krugman [10], to test the HOS model have shown it to be inaccurate.

The Five Stages of Economic Growth according to Walt W. Rostow

In 1960, Walt W. Rostow [11] postulated five stages of development in a book entitled *The Stages of Economic Growth: a Non-Communist Manifesto* [12]. He claimed that all countries fell into one of the five categories and that they can only follow this route.

The first stage is traditional society characterised by the predominance of agricultural activity. Technical progress is nil, there is practically no growth in productivity and minds are not ready for change.

Next, in the stage before take-off, exchanges and techniques begin to emerge, people's mentalities become less fatalistic and savings rates increase. In fact, this is how European societies evolved from the 15th to the early 18th century.

The third stage is take-off, a crucial stage corresponding to a quality leap, with significant increase in savings and investment rates and a move towards cumulative growth [13].

The fourth stage is the "march towards maturity", where technical progress takes over in all fields of activity and production is diversified.

Finally, the fifth stage coincides with the era of mass consumerism [14].

Walt W. Rostow claimed that at the take-off stage, an influx of external capital (in the form of foreign investments or credit) was indispensable.

Rostow's model is marred by over-simplification. He presents the stage of development reached by the USA after the Second World War both as the goal to aim for and the model to reproduce. Similarly, he considers that the British take-off model, with the agricultural revolution followed by the industrial revolution, should be reproduced elsewhere. He thus completely ignores the historical reality of other countries. There is no reason why each country should go through the five stages he describes.

Insufficient savings and the need to resort to external funding

In neo-classical terms, savings should precede investment and are insufficient in the developing countries. This means that the shortage of savings is seen as a fundamental factor explaining why development is blocked. An influx of external funding is required. Paul Samuelson, in *Economics* [15], took the history of US indebtedness in the 19th and 20th centuries as a basis for determining four different stages leading to prosperity: young borrowing nation in debt (from the War of Independence in 1776 to the Civil War of 1865); mature indebted nation (from 1873 to 1914); new lending nation (from the first to Second World Wars); mature lending nation (1960s). Samuelson and his emulators slapped the model of US economic development from the late 18th century until the Second World War onto one hundred or so countries which made up the Third World after 1945, as though it were possible for all those countries to quite simply imitate the experience of the United States [16].

As for the need to resort to foreign capital (in the form of loans and foreign investments), an associate of Walt W. Rostow's, Paul Rosenstein-Rodan, found the following formula: "Foreign capital will be a pure addition to domestic capital formation, i.e. it will all be invested; the investment will be productive or 'businesslike' and result in increased production. The main function of foreign capital inflow is to increase the rate of domestic capital formation up to a level which could then be maintained without any further aid" [17]. This statement contradicts the facts. It is not true that foreign capital enhance the formation of national capital and is all invested. A large part of foreign capital rapidly leaves the country where it was temporarily directed, as capital flight and repatriation of profits.

Paul Rosenstein-Rodan, who was the assistant director of the Economics Department of the World Bank between 1946 and 1952, made another monumental error in predicting the dates when various countries would reach self-sustained growth. He

reckoned that Colombia would reach that stage by 1965, Yugoslavia by 1966, Argentina and Mexico between 1965 and 1975, India in the early 1970s, Pakistan three or four years after India, and the Philippines after 1975. What nonsense that has proved to be!

Note that this notion of self-sustained growth is commonly used by the World Bank. The definition given by Dragoslav Avramović, then director of the Economics Department, in 1964, was as follows: "Self-sustained growth is defined to mean a rate of income increase of, say, 5% p.a. financed out of domestically generated funds and out of foreign capital which flows into the country..." [18].

Development planning as envisaged by the World Bank and US academia amounts to pseudo-scientific deception based on mathematical equations. It is supposed to give legitimacy and credibility to the intention to make the developing countries dependent on obtaining external capital. There follows an example, advanced in all seriousness by Max Millikan and Walt W. Rostow in 1957: "If the initial rate of domestic investment in a country is 5 per cent of national income, if foreign capital is supplied at a constant rate equal to one-third the initial level of domestic investment, if 25 per cent of all additions to income are saved and reinvested, if the capital-output ratio is 3 and if interest and dividend service on foreign loans and private investment are paid at the rate of 6 per cent per year, the country will be able to discontinue net foreign borrowing after fourteen years and sustain a 3 per cent rate of growth out of its own resources" [19]. More nonsense!

Chenery and Strout's double deficit model

In the mid-1960s, the economist Hollis Chenery, later to become Chief Economist and Vice-President of the World Bank [20], and his colleague Alan Strout, drew up a new model called the "double deficit model" [21]. Chenery and Strout laid emphasis on two constraints: first, insufficient internal savings, and then insufficient foreign currency. Charles Oman and Ganeshan Wignaraja sum-

marised the Chenery – Strout model as follows: "Essentially, the double deficit model hypothesises that while in the very first stages of industrial growth insufficient savings can constitute the main constraint on the rate of formation of domestic capital, once industrialisation is up and running, the main constraint may no longer be domestic savings per se, but rather the availability of currency required to import equipment, intermediary goods and perhaps even the raw materials used as industrial input. The currency deficit can thus exceed the savings deficit as the main constraint on development." [22] To resolve this double deficit, Chenery and Strout propose a simple solution: borrow foreign currency and/or procure it by increasing exports.

The Chenery – Strout model is highly mathematical. It was the "in thing" at the time. For its supporters, it had the advantage of conferring an air of scientific credibility upon a policy whose main aims were, firstly, to incite the developing countries to resort to massive external borrowing and foreign investments, and secondly, to subject their development to a dependency on exports. At the time, the model came under criticism from several quarters. Suffice it to quote that of Keith Griffin and Jean Luc Enos, who claimed that resorting to external inflow would further limit local savings: "Yet as long as the cost of aid (e.g. the rate of interest on foreign loans) is less than the incremental output-capital ratio, it will 'pay' a country to borrow as much as possible and substitute foreign for domestic savings. In other words, given a target rate of growth in the developing country, foreign aid will permit higher consumption, and domestic savings will simply be a residual, that is, the difference between desired investment and the amount of foreign aid available. Thus the foundations of models of the Chenery-Strout type are weak, since one would expect, on theoretical grounds, to find an inverse association between foreign aid and domestic savings" [23].

The wish to incite the developing countries to resort to external aid seen as a means of

influencing them

Bilateral aid and World Bank policies are directly related to the political objectives pursued by the USA in its foreign affairs.

Hollis Chenery maintained that "The main objective of foreign assistance, as of many other tools of foreign policy, is to produce the kind of political and economic environment in the world in which the United States can best pursue its own social goals" [24].

In a book entitled *The Emerging Nations : their Growth and United States Policy*, Max Millikan [25] and Donald Blackmer, both colleagues of Walt W. Rostow's, clearly described in 1961 certain objectives of US foreign policy: "It is in the interest of the United States to see emerging from the transition process nations with certain characteristics. First, they must be able to maintain their independence, especially of powers hostile or potentially hostile to the United States (...) Fourth, they must accept the principle of an open society whose members are encouraged to exchange ideas, goods, values, and experiences with the rest of the world ; this implies as well that their governments must be willing to cooperate in the measures of international economic, political and social control necessary to the functioning of an interdependent world community". [26] Under the leadership of the USA, of course.

Later in the book, it is explicitly shown how aid is used as a lever to orient the policies of the beneficiary countries: "For capital assistance to have the maximum leverage in persuading the underdeveloped countries to follow a course consistent with American and free-world interests the amounts offered must be large enough and the terms flexible enough to persuade the recipient that the game is worth the effort. This means that we must invest substantially larger resources in our economic development programs than we have done in our past". [27]

The volume of loans to developing countries increased at a growing pace throughout the 1960s

and 1970s, as the consequence of a deliberate policy on the part of the USA, the governments of other industrialised countries and the Bretton Woods institutions, whose aim was to influence the policies of countries in the South.

Priority on exports

In one of their main contributions, Chenery and Strout claimed that resorting to import substitution is an acceptable method of reducing the deficit in foreign currency [28]. They later abandoned this position, when maintaining import substitution policies as practised by certain developing countries became one of the main criticisms levelled by the Bank, the IMF, the OECD and the governments of the major industrialised countries.

This is how other studies by economists directly associated with the World Bank turned to measuring the effective rates of protection of economies and the resulting bias in terms of utilisation of productive resources and of profitability of investments. They favoured redirecting strategies towards exports, abandoning protectionist tariffs, and, more generally, a price-fixing policy more closely related to market mechanisms. Bela Balassa, Jagdish Bhagwati and Anne Krueger [29] systematised this approach and their analyses were to leave their mark on the international institutions and become the theoretical justification for opening up trade during the 1980s and 1990s. Anne Krueger [30] wrote: "A regime promoting exports can free a country's economy from the Keynesian yoke of under-employment since, unlike a regime of import substitution, the effective demand for its products on international markets may be virtually infinite, and thus it can always get closer to full employment, unless there is a world recession. A small export-oriented economy will be able to sell whatever quantity of goods it may produce. In other words, the country's only constraint will be its capacity to supply the goods." [31]. More eyewash.

The trickle-down effect

The trickle-down effect is a trivial metaphor which has guided the actions of the World Bank from the

outset. The idea is simple: the positive effects of growth trickle down, starting from the top, where they benefit the wealthy, until eventually at the bottom a little also reaches the poor. This means that it is in the interests of the poor that growth should be as strong as possible, if they are to be able to lap up the drops. Indeed, if growth is weak, the rich will keep a larger part than when growth is strong.

What are the effects of this on the World Bank's conduct? Growth should be encouraged at all costs so that there is something left for the poor at the end of the cycle. Any policy which holds back growth for the sake of (even partial) redistribution of wealth or for the sake of protecting the environment reduces the trickle-down effect and harms the poor. In practice, the actions of the World Bank's directors are conducted in line with this metaphor, whatever the more sophisticated discourse of certain experts. Moreover the World Bank's historians devote about twenty pages to discussions of the trickle-down³¹ theory and acknowledge that "This belief justified persistent efforts to persuade borrowers of the advantages of discipline, sacrifice, and trust in the market, and therefore of the need to hold the line against political temptation" [32]. They maintain that the belief gradually fell into disrepute from 1970, due to cutting remarks from an impressive number of researchers concerning the situation in both the United States and the developing countries [33]. Nevertheless, the historians note that in practice, this did not have much effect [34], particularly since, from 1982 on, trickle-down theory made a triumphant comeback at the World Bank [35]. Obviously the trickle-down issue is inseparable from that of inequality, which will be discussed in the next section.

The question of inequality in the distribution of income

From 1973 on, the World Bank began to examine the question of inequality in the distribution of income in the developing countries as a factor affecting the chances of development. The economics team under the direction of Hollis Chenery gave the matter considerable thought. The major World

Bank book on the subject, published in 1974, was co-ordinated by Chenery himself and entitled *Redistribution with Growth* [36]. Chenery was aware that the type of growth induced by the Bank's loans policy would generate increased inequality. The World Bank's main worry was clearly expressed by McNamara on several occasions: if we do not reduce inequality and poverty, there will be repeated outbursts of social unrest which will harm the interests of the free world, under the leadership of the United States.

Chenery did not share Simon Kuznet's point of view [37], that after a necessary phase of increased inequality during economic take-off, things would subsequently improve. The World Bank was firmly convinced of the need for increased inequality. This is borne out by the words of the president of the World Bank, Eugene Black, in April 1961: "Inequalities in income are a necessary by-product of economic growth (which) makes it possible for people to escape a life of poverty" [38]. Yet empirical studies carried out by the World Bank in Chenery's day disproved Kuznets' claims. [39]

However, after Chenery's departure in 1982 and his replacement by Anne Krueger, the World Bank completely abandoned its relative concern about increasing or maintaining inequality to the extent that it decided not to publish relevant data in the *World Development Report*. Anne Krueger did not hesitate to adopt Kuznets' argument, making the rise of inequality a condition for take-off of growth, on the grounds that the savings of the rich were likely to feed into investments. Not until François Bourguignon became chief economist in 2003 did the Bank's show any real renewal of interest in this question [40]. In 2006, the World Bank's *World Development Report* subtitled *Equity and development* again refers to inequality as a hindrance to development [41]. At best, this approach is considered to be good marketing by J. Wolfensohn (president of the World Bank from 1996 to 2005) and his successor, Paul Wolfowitz.

Translated by Vicki Briault

CADTM

 SERIES : BRETTON WOODS, THE WORLD BANK AND THE IMF: 70TH ANNIVERSARY (PART 11)

The World Bank and the IMF in Indonesia: an emblematic interference

ÉRIC TOUSSAINT · 5 November 2014

In 1997, Indonesia was hit hard by the Southeast Asian crisis. The prescribed remedies of the World Bank and the IMF worsened the economic situation and brought about social disasters. The Tsunami drama changed nothing for the Bank and the IMF. The creditors maintained their pressure for repayment of Indonesian debts and imposed an additional dose of neo-liberal adjustment.

In 1947, the Bank granted a 195 million dollar loan to the Netherlands – the second loan in the Bank's history. Two weeks before the loan was approved, the Netherlands launched its offensive against the Indonesian nationalists who were demanding independence. In the next two years, as many as 145,000 Dutch occupying troops were sent into the country: it was a large-scale operation that could hardly go unnoticed. Within the United Nations and in the US, criticism was voiced concerning Dutch policy in Indonesia and the World Bank's involvement. The Bank replied that the loan had been granted to the Dutch government for spending within the Netherlands. The critics objected in their turn that since money is fungible by nature, it was easy for the Dutch government to use the Bank loan to support its military effort in Indonesia. [1]

The US put pressure on the Netherlands, giving it 400 million dollars under the Marshall Plan so that it could grant independence to Indonesia. The US objective was to open a new field of trade and investment for its companies. On 27 December 1949, the transfer of sovereignty was signed. Indonesia became a Republic and the nationalist Sukarno was elected President. He set about maintaining a balance between the various factions in the country,

while amassing personal power. In 1955, following the first elections, Sukarno decided to collaborate with the Communist Party (PKI) in order to establish his legitimacy. The PKI won 16% of the votes and Sukarno's party, the PNI, 25%.

In external affairs, Sukarno made skilful use of the two opposing blocs in the Cold War, and there too, he managed to maintain an equilibrium until 1963, when the US, exasperated by the USSR's assistance to Indonesia, explicitly asked him to choose his camp. The IMF played the role of intermediary by proposing financial assistance strictly conditioned by terms of close co-operation. In March 1963, negotiations for loans got underway with the US, the IMF and the member states of the OECD, but everything went haywire in September 1963 when the British proclaimed the Federation of Malaysia without any outside consultation. Sukarno saw it as a destabilizing manoeuvre and retaliated by nationalizing the British companies, which led to the cancellation of the agreements with the IMF. Despite everything, the UN endorsed the creation of Malaysia, and Sukarno, unable to prevail, walked out of the UN in 1965.

At the height of the Cold War, Sukarno nationalized all foreign private companies (except the oil companies). Indonesia left the IMF and the World Bank in August 1965 and decided to manage its affairs without them. On 30 September 1965, General Mohamed Suharto staged a military coup, supported by Washington. As chief of the armed forces, he launched a massive repression against the leftist parties, making the PKI his prime target: between 500,000 and 1 million civilians were assassinated simply for being members or sympathizers of the PKI. In March 1966, Suharto finally forced Sukarno

to make an official transfer of power. Six days later, the US government announced that it was opening a line of credit for Indonesia amounting to 8.2 million dollars so that it could buy American rice. [2] On 13 April 1966, Indonesia joined the World Bank. [3] In 1966, US President Lyndon B Johnson went to visit US troops in Vietnam and insisted, in one of his speeches, on the Indonesian model. [4] This model, "the New Order" of the Suharto era, regularly used terror and assassination, and in effect aligned its policy on that of the United States.

The World Bank and Suharto's dictatorship

When Robert McNamara became president of the World Bank in April 1968, he observed that Indonesia (with Mao's China) was the only highly populated country with which the Bank did not have an important relationship. It was necessary to make up for lost time and his first trip abroad as World Bank president was to Indonesia in June 1968. He felt quite at home there: the dictator Suharto had already surrounded himself with economists trained in the US, courtesy of the Ford Foundation. [5]

Relations between them were idyllic: "He (McNamara) and President Suharto admired each other". [6] "While they were engaged in daily policy discussion, the Bank and the government acted like a couple of old cronies". [7] "Indonesia was the presidentially designated jewel in the Bank's operational crown". [8]

Moreover, the historians of the Bank admit that: "President Suharto (he had assumed the office in 1967) was a general, and his government, in good part, was a government of generals, many of whom were corrupt". [9]

Indonesia officially rejoined the ranks of the IMF in February 1967 and the rewards were not long in coming: the Western countries immediately granted aid of 174 million dollars in order to absorb the effects of the Indonesian crisis. Thereafter, in the early 1970s, the good relations between Indonesia, the US and the financial institutions took the form of a substantial debt reduction.

Indeed, at the end of 1966, 534 million dollars should have been repaid as debt servicing (interest, principal and arrears), a sum which represented 69 % of the estimated earnings from export. Without a re-scheduling, debt servicing would have destroyed the effect of financial assistance. The Western creditor countries accepted a long-term moratorium [10] until 1971 on repayment of the principal and interests on the debt contracted before 1966. However, the effects of the moratorium were only temporary and, in 1971, repayments were supposed to start again. Consequently, the creditors signed the most favourable agreement ever granted at that time to a Third World country [11]: the pre-1966 debt (contracted under Sukarno) must be repaid in 30 annual instalments over a period extending between 1970 and 1999. The creditors agreed that Indonesian repayments would not exceed 6% of the earnings from export. [12] This operation had the effect of cancelling 50% of the debt. [13]

This reduction of debt was coupled with a reprehensible complacency regarding corruption. As soon as the World Bank returned to Indonesia to support the military dictatorship, its representatives became aware of the extent of the corruption. But Robert McNamara and the enormous Bank staff who settled in permanently in Djakarta [14] decided not to make it a cause for divorce. Thus they were clearly accomplices.

Bernard Bell, who headed the Bank resident staff in Indonesia, recalls the question of the enormous misappropriation of funds caused by high-level government corruption. On 11 February 1972 he described this corruption to Robert McNamara, as "unacceptable to small but potentially vigorous elements of the public". And that was only the beginning. Indeed, the global Report on Corruption 2004 by Transparency International estimated embezzlement by Suharto and his entourage at 15 to 35 billion dollars. The World Bank itself nurtured the corruption since one of its own reports mentioned that 20 to 30% of the budgets related to development funds were misappropriated. [15] The

Bank continued its loans while knowing perfectly well that they were likely to be diverted.

The Pertamina affair

During the 1970s, oil incomes exploded, and so did the diversion of funds by corrupt generals for their own benefit. In 1975, a major crisis came to a head between the US and Indonesia. Ironically, the invasion and annexation of East Timor by Indonesia that year had nothing to do with this.

The Indonesian generals had developed the public oil company Pertamina so successfully that in February 1975 it had become the largest Asian company (Japan not included). The Pertamina conglomerate not only extracted and refined hydrocarbons, but it also possessed a chain of hotels and numerous oil tankers. Pertamina improved the country's harbour infrastructures, and built roads and hospitals. This public company was active in the field of insurance with offices in Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Singapore and Tokyo. It played a key part in a strategy of industrialization by import substitution. This was less and less to the liking of the US, and naturally, to the World Bank. To put it bluntly, Pertamina was an obstacle to the development of the large US oil companies. Consequently, the US found it advisable to weaken and even dismantle Pertamina. Under pressure, Suharto bowed to its demands during the summer of 1975. Robert McNamara wrote to him: "I applaud the comprehensive and systematic way in which you have moved to re-establish appropriate priorities". [16] As a consolation prize, Robert McNamara added that he would see to it that the World Bank increased its loans.

It was only during his last visit to Indonesia on 15 May 1979 that Robert McNamara privately spoke his mind: "It was also necessary to maintain the emphasis on reducing corruption. Outside Indonesia, this was much talked about and the world had the impression, rightly or wrongly, that it was greater than in any but perhaps one other country... It was like a cancer eating away at society". [17]

However, at the end of 1980, the World Bank was still supporting Suharto's Indonesia to such an extent that it granted a loan without respecting (imposing) the usual conditions. A similar situation can be seen 9 years later when the Bank, anxious to maintain good relations with China, failed to take its distance after the repression of the Chinese spring of 1989. [18]

The Bank's silence regarding the annexation of East Timor

Thirty years after Indonesia's invasion of Timor, certain US archives were made public. Undisputedly they establish what had long been suspected: in December 1975, Indonesia invaded East Timor with the connivance of the American, British and Australian governments, with the result that the country would undergo twenty-four years of bloody occupation and systematic violations of human rights. According to these documents, as early as March 1975, the State Department, then headed by Henry Kissinger, aware of Indonesia's preparations for invasion, estimated that the US "has considerable interests in Indonesia and none in Timor". When he learned about the special operations leading up to the invasion, Henry Kissinger asked his colleagues: "Can I trust you to keep quiet about this?" His fear was that Congress would decree an embargo on arms deliveries to Indonesia, Washington's ally in the Cold War. [19] One can well understand that during this time, the World Bank neither made any allusion to, nor criticized the invasion and the annexation of East Timor! Submission to the interests of the US and its allies, the UK and Australia, and complicity regarding the dictatorship were constant components of the Bank's behaviour.

The World Bank's support for the transmigration programme [20]

The World Bank actively collaborated in the sinister transmigration project, certain facets of which constitute crimes against humanity. This project concerned the displacement – in certain cases, forced – of millions of people from the islands of

Java and Sumatra to other islands of the archipelago and dispossession of the indigenous people of these islands.

The World Bank, especially during the fifteen years of the programme's heyday (1974-1989), was its principal source of external financing. The historians recognize this responsibility of the Bank: "During the middle and later 1970's, the Bank, as well, supported and assisted the government's controversial program of official and subsidized transmigration of families from Java to the outer islands". [21] This contribution was not only restricted to financial and technical support. The Bank also supported the project politically.

Between 1950 and 1974, the government displaced 664,000 people within the framework of the transmigration programme. However, from 1974 on, with the World Bank's support, 3.5 million people were displaced and assisted, and approximately 3.5 million people migrated on their own initiative. The World Bank directly contributed to displacements and relocations. Due to its loans it was possible, on the one hand, to almost totally cover the "official" migrations of 2.3 million people, and on the other hand to "catalyze" the relocation of some 2 million people transmigrating spontaneously.

Although the World Bank qualified this transmigration as "the biggest programme in the world for voluntary relocation", it soon appeared that the programme was also used to rid Java of undesirable inhabitants. Thus, in the principal Javanese cities, "nonconformists", elderly people, sick people (including those with leprosy), beggars and vagrants were forced either to disappear into the countryside (where their chances of survival were slim) or to transmigrate. In the latter case, they were herded into army trucks during the night and brought to "transit camps" where they were given training for their relocation. [22] Marriage was an obligatory criterion for selection: the authorities organized forced marriages of single people before their departure. One should note that the World Bank played a large role in recruitment operations for homeless people and political prisoners in order

to send them to the remotest and least desirable transmigration sites.

The transmigration projects most heavily supported by the World Bank were those involving private domestic or foreign firms likely to promote foreign trade and attract more ambitious transnational investments (particularly projects for industrial plantations).

Unrestricted foreign exploitation of the resources of the outer islands was pursued for the benefit of the central government and firms operating in the country, but to the detriment of the local populations who saw a great portion of their habitat and their means of subsistence destroyed forever. The lands of the outer islands were regarded as "empty" because the natives who lived there for millennia did not have ownership certificates. These lands were then declared to be "at the State's service" and were forcefully confiscated, most often without compensation. In fact the World Bank supported the government in its acts of expropriating land belonging to indigenous people, although it never acknowledged it officially.

The people of the transmigration programme inherited land that was not reserved for forest concessions and that was generally far from productive. For the government officials appointed to locate the sites to be cleared, it did not matter whether they were cultivable or not. Their job was to fill up a chart with information relating to site access, the number of hectares to be cleared and the number of families that could possibly be located there.

The forest – a vital resource for the native dwellers – gradually disappeared due to the operations of forestry companies and commercial plantations on the one hand, and government teams entrusted with clearing the areas intended for agriculture and the installation of migrants, on the other. In addition, mining companies (see the case of the American mining company Freeport McMoran) [23] destroyed complete mountainsides and daily poured tons of industrial waste into the rivers, pol-

luting them beyond recovery. These rivers being the only source of water for native dwellers, major medical disasters occurred. Oil extraction along the coasts also caused great damage to the marine fauna and flora, another source of food for the indigenous populations.

The real culprits in this matter were those who devised, carried out and financed the project. Primarily they were the Indonesian authorities and the international institutions (the World Bank first and foremost), as well as certain Western governments (the US, the UK, Germany and Israel, for example) and the national and foreign companies involved in the project's materialization. Among the devastating effects of the project: development and proliferation of intensive operations for the exploitation of natural resources; a rapid increase in the surface areas intended for commercial plantations as a result of programmes financed by international loans. These loans were always conditioned by the opening up of markets at all levels - removal of tariff barriers, attraction of foreign capital, priority on monocultures for export, liberalization and privatization of the goods and services distribution sectors, etc.

At the end of 1980, vociferous criticism increased, as much inside as outside the archipelago, accusing the World Bank of having taken part in a project of geopolitical domination typified by social and ecological blunders and infringing human rights in the course of its procedures. [24] The World Bank indeed played a major part in this project with harmful and irreversible consequences: control of the indigenous populations of the outer islands and violation of their right to land ownership; the exorbitant cost of displacements (7,000 dollars per family according to World Bank estimates) [25] in relation to the results achieved, because according to a 1986 World Bank study, 50% of the displaced families lived below the poverty level and 20% below subsistence level; persistent problems of density in Java; massive deforestation of the outer islands, etc.

The World Bank, accused on all sides, decided to cease financing the installation of new transmigra-

tion sites and the costs of transmigration travel. Nevertheless, it concentrated its loans on the reinforcement of already existing villages [26] and on maintenance of the commercial plantations, thus only partially renouncing its participation in the programme.

The World Bank obviously denied all the allegations brought by observers. In 1994, it decided to carry out an internal evaluation study [27] of the projects it financed, in order to determine its eventual responsibilities. In this report, the World Bank accepted a very small share of responsibility, stating that the project in Sumatra "had negative and probably irreversible effects" on the Kubu, a nomadic people whose survival relied on fallow cultivation, hunting and gathering in the forest. The audit admits that "although the existence of Kubu in the zones of the project was known since the project was planned, few initiatives were carried out to avoid problems".

The loans of the World Bank for the transmigration programme correspond in all respects to the constitution of an odious debt: they were contracted by a despotic regime, which used them for repression and not for the well-being of the population. Consequently, this debt is null and void: it must be cancelled. But it should not stop there. The transmigration project supported by the World Bank implied the forced displacement of certain populations. The World Bank cannot simply claim that it was not aware of this. It was also an accomplice to the violation of the rights of the indigenous people who lived in the zones colonized by the transmigration project. These very serious acts should not go unpunished.

The crisis of 1997-1998 in Indonesia and its consequences

From the 1980s, and especially during the first half of the 1990s, the World Bank and the IMF got the Indonesian government to agree to free circulation of capital. This had the effect of placing Indonesia (like the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia and South Korea) at the mercy of international speculation.

In the IMF's annual report for the year 1997, one can read the compliments it pays to the Indonesian authorities: "the administrators congratulated the authorities for Indonesia's economic results during the previous years, particularly the appreciable reduction of poverty and the improvement of many social indicators (...)." [28] Further on, the administrators of the IMF compliment the Indonesian authorities for "the importance attached to maintaining free circulation of capital" [29] while earlier in the document they themselves point out the risks: "powerful entries of capital posed important challenges for the authorities". They continue their analysis by praising the authorities, implying that they are capable of controlling the situation: "the flexibility with which the authorities adapted the proportioning of economic measures according to the evolution of the situation was one of the ingredients of their success and will remain an essential tool for taking up these challenges".

In 1997, a massive economic and financial crisis broke out in Southeast Asia. After its appearance in Thailand in February 1997, it spread to Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines by July 1997. These four countries, described previously by the IMF, the World Bank and the private banks as role-models by reason of their opening up to the world market, their low rate of inflation and high growth rate, were now unable to resist the onslaughts of speculators. Between 2 July 1997 and 8 January 1998, the Indonesian rupee was depreciated by 229% in relation to the US dollar.

After having been praised to the skies by the World Bank and the IMF, the Indonesian authorities were now strongly criticized for leaving too much of power in the hands of the State; a State which, in addition, would have been wrong in accepting that the private financial and industrial institutions were overly involved in debt and speculation.

Southeast Asia's crisis of 1997 dealt a hard blow to Indonesia. In the space of less than a year, foreign capital was withdrawn from the country. Mass unemployment set in. At the end of 1998, according to government statistics, 50% of the population lived

below the poverty line, estimated in Indonesia at \$0.55 per day for cities and \$0.40 for the countryside.

The IMF imposed its "shock" measures to resolve the crisis of 1997. They worsened the situation, particularly by causing the bankruptcy of a large section of the banking sector and of many entrepreneurs. The IMF and the World Bank pressed the government to transform the private debt of the banks into a public debt. The Indonesian public debt, which accounted for 23% of the Gross National Product (GNP) before the crisis (1997) literally exploded as a consequence of the policies imposed by the IMF and the Bank. In 2000, the public debt amounted to 93% of the GNP.

On the other hand, real wages plunged: whereas there had been an increase of 46% between 1990 and 1996, they lost 25.1% of their value in 1998. [30]

The population directly suffered the effects of these measures and started protesting vigorously. On 5 May 1998, within the framework of the agreements signed with the IMF, Suharto eliminated the subsidies on basic commodities so that the price of kerosene, electricity and petrol increased by 70 %. This intensified the huge popular mobilization that had begun several months before. Fifteen days later, deserted by Washington and denounced by the people, Suharto was forced to step down, bringing an end to a dictatorial regime of 32 years.

Today, the largest portion of the State budget is devoted to repayment of the debt. In 1999 and 2000, 50% and 40% respectively were devoted to debt servicing. In 2004, the figure was close to 28%. According to the projections of the Indonesian Finance Minister, repayment of the external public debt has continue to increase in 2006 and reached a peak in 2008, remaining at a high level thereafter. [31]

After the drama of the tsunami, resulting in the death of 150,000 people in the Indonesian province of Aceh, the World Bank and the governments of the creditor countries had promised to show gen-

erosity. The reality is quite different: financial aid, at first turned into a mega media event, has been provided in a chaotic and transitory way. While this show was being made to offer financial resources for reconstruction, the creditors in the Paris Club (who in addition direct the World Bank and the IMF), decided to deduct late-payment interest from the portion of debt servicing which was not made in 2005. [32] The moratorium granted by the Paris Club is thus only a show of generosity, since the States that accept it will make their populations pay, right down to the last cent. The Indonesian government, under pressure from its creditors, imposed a steep increase (+29 %) on the price of fuel on 1 March 2005, which occasioned deep popular discontent. The tax revenue resulting from this rise was intended mainly for replenishing the budget deficit and repaying the debt. [33]

As for human development, many indicators are particularly worrying:

Share of population living with less than \$2 per day	52.4 %
Life expectancy at birth	66.6 years
Infant mortality rate (under 5 years of age)	45 per 1,000
Share of childbirth assisted by qualified personnel	64 %
Share of population suffering from malnutrition	6 %
Share of population without access to a water supply installation	22 %
Net rate of school attendance at the primary level	92 %
Children completing 5 school years (% of pupils who started the 1st year)	89 %
Literacy rate of adults (over 15 years of age)	87.9 %

Source : UNDP, World Report on Human Development 2004

By way of conclusion

The 1965 military *coup d'État* deprived the Indonesian people of the possibility of determining their own future. Yet with the Bandung Conference in 1955, Indonesia had begun to affirm itself on the international scene. It was the threat of seeing one of the most populous countries on earth playing a key role in establishing a new world order that led the United States and the Bretton Woods institutions to provide active support for the Suharto dictatorship.

These institutions based their choice on political and geo-strategic factors. Their financial support enabled Suharto to carry out policies that went counter to human rights. Suharto served the interests of the major Western powers in the region and enabled transnational corporations based in the industrialized countries to draw liberally on Indonesia's natural resources. The World Bank and the IMF were active accomplices in these policies. The local ruling class supported Suharto and did not seek to invest in the development of the country. It preferred to abet the plundering of Indonesia's natural resources by transnational corporations.

Starting from the crisis in 1997, IMF-imposed measures aggravated the economic situation and brought about a sharp increase in the internal and external public debt. The historical balance sheet of the IMF's and World Bank's role in Indonesia is an unqualified disaster. In consequence, the claims they hold against this country must be cancelled in full. Moreover, the World Bank and the IMF must be brought to account for their complicity in the Suharto regime and for projects such as transmigration, which in many respects constitute a crime against humanity.

The bilateral debts are in the hands of countries that directly backed the Suharto dictatorship, so they too must be cancelled. The same applies to debts owed to foreign private companies that played a part in the corruption of the Indonesian regime, the pillaging of the country's natural resources and the exploitation of its workers.

A review of Indonesia's debt shows a totally negative result in the matter of human development. Between 1970 and 2003, Indonesia received 139 billion US dollars in the form of loans intended for the authorities and it has refunded 164 billion. Yet Indonesia's external public debt has increased twenty-fold. [34] Between 1970 and 2003, total

debt repayment represents 46 times the amount of the initial debt stock. Since 1985, Indonesia has refunded annually more than it has received in the form of loans. This is irrefutable proof that the debt system is a fatal mechanism for extracting the country's wealth.

CADTM

KURDISTAN

The Kurdish Question, the PKK and the tasks of the radical Left

FLORIAN WILDE · 3 November 2014

"It wasn't the Americans who saved us. It was God and the PKK."

August 2014: Terrorist militias under the leadership of the Islamic State (IS) storm a region in northern Iraq near the Syrian border inhabited by the Yazidis, a millennia-old monotheistic ethno-religious Kurdish minority. Divisions of the Peshmerga, the region's armed forces, flee from the advancing IS troops without firing a shot. The Yazidis beg the Peshmerga to at least leave them their weapons so as to give them a chance at defending themselves, but the Peshmerga refuse. Tens of thousands of Yazidis are forced to flee into the nearby mountains. Those who stay behind are subjected to brutal, genocidal acts: thousands killed, hundreds buried alive, and countless acts of rape, kidnapping and enslavement are perpetuated against Yazidi women. To add insult to injury, IS fighters ransack and destroy ancient Yazidi holy sites.

But even those who were able to flee faced the possibility of a looming humanitarian catastrophe. The fleeing Yazidis were surrounded by the IS and trapped in the mountains with little food or water under conditions of extreme heat. Abandoned by the rest of the world, it seemed as if they had little choice but to wait for death - that is, until unexpected reinforcements arrived: divisions of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) break through IS lines in northern Syria, while guerilla fighters from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) advance from the north and fighters from their

Iranian sister organisation, the PJAK (Party of Free Life of Kurdistan), from the east. The Kurdish fighters manage to establish an escape corridor, through which tens of thousands pass into liberated Kurdish areas of northern Syria. It is only days after their escape that the US bombing campaign and accompanying Peshmerga offensive begins. Surviving Yazidis repeatedly insisted to western journalists that "it wasn't the Americans who saved us. It was God and the PKK."

The northern Syrian Kurds came to the Yazidis' assistance despite having to defend themselves from the IS on their home territory as well. The north Syrian Kurds in question are forces under the command of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), a sister organisation of the PKK. PYD forces joined the struggle against Bashar al-Assad at the outset of the Syrian revolution and expelled his troops from the northern parts of the country. Following this victory they declared themselves neutral in the ongoing civil war and restricted themselves to defending their territory. It was here on this territory that the Kurds began building a self-organised and democratic form of self-governance called "Rojava" that is stunningly unique in the world today.

In Rojava one finds a parliament with set quotas mandating the participation and inclusion of women in parliament and all levels of government, with similar rules for ethnic and religious minorities. To defend the region the Kurds established the non-partisan and non-sectarian defence units of the YPG, which also include large independent women's divisions - establishing an island of hope toward self-organisation and emancipation in the middle of the nightmare that is the Syrian civil war. This island of hope, however, was threatened from

the onset: Turkey closed its borders in an attempt to starve the Kurdish self-government. Ankara also supported the Islamist terror group ISIS, the predecessor to the IS, which attacked the Kurdish regions from the south.

The IS acquired extensive caches of weapons from the fleeing Iraqi army after they overtook Mosul, a city of over one million in northern Iraq, including heavy weaponry originally purchased from the US. These weapons were immediately dispatched to Syria to be used in a major offensive against Kobanê, a centre of the Kurdish self-government, in July 2014. The YPG, militarily out-gunned and out-matched, prepared for a desperate fight-back. But, once again, assistance came from outside: people all across the Kurdish parts of Turkey donated money, food and medicine to support besieged Kobanê. Thousands set up camp along the border to destroy the border fence in a provocative act of civil disobedience and thereby broke through the Turkish blockade. The PKK sent hundreds of its guerilla fighters down from the mountains to join the struggle in Kobanê, and volunteers from all over Kurdistan as well as members of left-wing Turkish political parties joined them. This impressive show of solidarity was successful: the offensive of the IS was stopped, Kobanê has still not fallen, and the democratic experiment of Rojava could live on. But at the time of this writing, Kobanê is once again under threat: the IS began a renewed offensive against the city at the end of September. IS terrorists have managed to slip into the city and engage in house-to-house fighting with YPG units. After long delays, the US decided to "support" Kurdish forces by bombing IS positions.

The Kurdish liberation movement – a historical overview

The IS' offensive in Syria and Iraq has thrust the Kurdish question into the limelight of world politics for the first time in years, as well as highlighted the contradictions manifest in the West's attitude toward it. Western allies like Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have at the very least tolerated (and perhaps even supported) the rise of the IS for quite

some time, while historically the US, EU and thus Germany have treated the PKK – the single most effective and successful force currently fighting the IS – as a terrorist organisation.

The Kurdish people are the largest ethnic group without a state in the world. Their national interests went ignored by the major imperialist powers during the re-division of the Middle East after World War I, leaving up to 18 million Kurds living in Turkey, between five and seven million in Iran, five million Iraq and two million in Iran today.

The 20th century history of the Kurds is a history of oppression and resistance. The century witnessed multiple uprisings for national independence, democratic freedoms and cultural self-determination. In fact, an independent Kurdish state with loyalties to the Soviet Union emerged in Iran after World War II. After being defeated by Persian troops, left-wing Kurdish groups continued their armed struggle – first against the dictatorship of the Shah, and later against the clerical regime of the mullahs. Iraq, however, remained the centre of the Kurdish resistance movement for many years. This movement consisted primarily of two different parties leading the struggle against Saddam Hussein and for an independent Kurdistan: the traditionalist and conservative Democratic Party of Kurdistan (KDP), and the ideologically somewhat more progressive Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). As history would have it, however, the Kurdish freedom fighters who would later come to be known as the Peshmerga quickly became the playthings of various foreign powers. For example, during the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988, Iraq supported the Iranian Kurds while Iran armed the Iraqi Kurds; at the same time, the US supported its then-ally Saddam Hussein in his bloody suppression of the (Iraqi) Kurdish uprising. It was in the small Kurdish city of Halabja that, for the first time since World War II, German poison gas was once again implicated in mass killings – German corporations had sold Saddam the chemicals used in the massacre.

This constellation shifted in 1990, at the outset of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. With the outbreak of the first Gulf War, Iraqi Kurds suddenly became potential allies of the US. The US established a no-fly zone across northern Iraq in the 1990s in return for their participation in the war, under the protection of which Kurdish fighters were able to expel Iraqi soldiers from the territory. The Kurds also fought on the side of the US in the second Gulf War in 2003, and were rewarded with an autonomous region following Saddam's fall. This region was under control of the KDP and PUK, but only encompassed part of the Kurdish-populated areas of Iraq. The PKK was also able to establish guerilla bases for their struggle against the Turkish state here as well.

Kurdish uprisings continued to occur in Turkey itself as well. Oppression of Kurds is particularly severe in Turkey, due primarily to the fact that their existence as a separate ethnic and cultural group clashes with the vision of a unitary ethnic Turkish state as projected by the founder of modern Turkey, Atatürk. Kurds were forbidden from speaking their own language, using Kurdish names or even writing the letters W and X, which exist in the Kurdish, but not Turkish, language. Following a series of large student- and labour-led movements in the 1970s, Turkey became host to a plethora of large, left-wing parties, including the PKK, founded in 1978 by a group of left-wing activists centred around Abdullah Öcalan. The party adopted a Marxist-Leninist political programme and oriented itself towards armed revolution with the aim of establishing an independent, socialist Kurdistan. The PKK was forced into exile with many other leftist groups in Turkey in 1980, after right-wing military officers enacted a coup and unleashed a wave of savage repression against the Turkish left.

The PKK found refuge in the Lebanese training camps of the Palestinian popular liberation front, PFLP, and fought with them against the Israeli invasion in 1982. The PKK began its own bloody guerilla war in the Turkish part of Kurdistan in 1984 and began establishing mass support amongst

the Kurdish population. This mass support allowed the PKK to initiate its own "Kurdish intifada" in the early 1990s, culminating in a series of mass uprisings. Internationally, however, the PKK was often the subject of criticism from the left due to its authoritarian leadership style, which including the killing of internal opponents, and strong nationalist sentiments. Öcalan himself was kidnapped by Turkish secret services (most likely with the assistance of the Mossad) on 15 February 1999, and has been imprisoned on the island of Imrali ever since. In response to his arrest, tens of thousands of Kurds launched protests all over the world. In Switzerland the army had to be called up to protect UN buildings from Kurdish demonstrators. In Germany, Kurdish demonstrators organized a whole series of marches and occupations of public buildings. An attempt to occupy the Israeli embassy ended in the fatal shooting of four Kurdish protesters, for which no Mossad agents were ever prosecuted.

The PKK ban in Germany

By the time of Öcalan's arrest the PKK had already been banned in Germany for six years. In the early 1990s the PKK with its 15,000 members constituted one of the strongest left-wing groups in Germany and organised numerous demonstrations and political actions against the brutal oppression faced by Kurds in Turkey and the continuing sales of German weaponry to its NATO partner. PKK supporters engaged in militant actions like highway blockades, self-immolations and attacks on Turkish travel agencies and the offices of Turkish fascist groups based in Germany. The German state banned the PKK in 1993 with the intention of assisting Turkey against one of its strongest opponent; equally significant, however, was the wave of racist and anti-immigrant hysteria gripping Germany at the time. The campaign to ban the PKK, the so-called "Terror-Kurds", was much more significant than the legal action taken against other left-wing groups by the German state, for it amounted to a de facto ban on political activity for

one of Germany's largest immigrant communities. The US and EU soon followed, placing the PKK on their respective "terror lists". To this day, simply displaying a PKK symbol at a political demonstration is enough to provoke German police to attack and disperse it. There have been 4,500 legal proceedings related to PKK activities since 2004 alone. Since 1996, over 100 PKK functionaries have been penalised, some sentenced to prison. As late as October of this year, the German Foreign Ministry described the PKK as being equally as dangerous as the Islamic state. In the same report, the ministry emphasised the continued mobilisational capacity of the PKK: according to the Foreign Ministry, the PKK has 14,000 members and a mobilisable periphery of roughly 50,000 additional Kurds and sympathisers. This strength was reflected in the demonstrations in the first half of October, which saw thousands of Kurds take to the streets, demanding solidarity with Kobanê, an end to the PKK ban and Öcalan's release.

The changing nature of the PKK

Öcalan's arrest was followed by a phase of critical self-reflection and new perspectives within the Kurdish movement. The PKK, animated by the realisation that a state alone is no guarantee of democracy and freedom, abandoned demands for an independent state, advocating a form of "democratic confederalism" in its place. This confederalism would, in practice, mean an association of local democratic structures of self-organisation and self-governance within the existing states. Feminist and ecological demands began to receive more attention within the party. Öcalan's recent political writing exhibit clear influences from both the Zapatistas as well as the North American anarchist Murray Bookchin. Within Turkey itself, the PKK contributed to building a broad alliance with various Turkish left parties, as well as the women's and LGBT movements. The alliance's presidential candidate, Selahattin Demirtas, received nearly 10% of the vote in the August 2014 election, uniting the Kurdish Left, the "old" Turkish Left and the new

generation of activists from the Gezi Park movement.

Led by the PKK and its sister organisations, Kurdistan has witnessed the emergence of numerous grassroots movements for democracy, education, gender equality and social justice. These form the left-wing alternative within the Kurdish movement to the corrupt and pro-imperialist KDP and PUK. These two parties seek an independent state in northern Iraq and enjoy Western backing; in return, the West expects unrestricted access to oil fields in the area as well as political marginalisation of the PKK and its allies. There is strong evidence indicating that the leadership of the northern Iraqi Kurds intentionally withdrew its troops and abandoned the Yazidis to the IS in order to force the West's hand to intervene and provide weaponry to the Kurdish resistance. Whether the abandonment was intentional or not, the desired effect was achieved, as the Peshmerga have now begun to receive weapons from the West. What the conservative Kurdish groups did not expect, however, was the PKK's determined intervention on behalf of the Yazidis and the widespread support and sympathy this generated within the Kurdish population. Thousands of Yazidis joined the PKK and YPG and are now setting up their own self-defence units. These units desperately need modern weaponry but will not be receiving it from the West, for whom the PKK and YPG remain little more than "terrorists".

In response to this unanswered need, a host of German radical left groups (Neue Antikapitalistische Organisation [NAO], Antifaschistische Revolutionäre Aktion Berlin [ARAB] and Perspektive Kurdistan) have launched the "Weapons for the YPG" campaign. They managed to collect over €40,000 in a matter of weeks. A similar initiative started by the Danish left-wing party Eenhedslisten sent over €7,000 to the PYD.

With civil disobedience against the PKK ban

The desperate need for weapons notwithstanding, it would be wrong for the radical left to support the West's arming of the Iraqi Kurdish organisations

KPD and PUK. Western assistance to these Kurds is intended to stabilise and consolidate the influence of imperialist powers in the region – precisely the imperialist powers that enabled the rise of the IS in the first place. It is highly possible that the same weapons currently being used against the IS will soon be turned against the PKK. Rather than get caught up in a debate about the merits of Western support, the Western and the German left in particular should start a powerful campaign against the PKK ban. A repeal of the ban would constitute direct assistance to the most important leftist formation in the Middle East and thus a blow against imperialist interests. Given the nearly 800,000 Kurds currently living in Germany, there is no question that the left could mobilize around the issue successfully.

Moreover, a repeal of the PKK ban is politically feasible: even conservative media outlets are beginning to acknowledge the contradiction between the West's fight against IS on the one hand, and its suppression of the PKK on the other. The radical left should organise demonstrations against the ban and openly display the banned flags and symbols of the PKK. These would be concrete, visible signs of anti-imperialist solidarity with the progressive and democratic movements in the Middle East.

Glossary:

IS (Islamic State): reactionary Salafist organisation pursuing the establishment of a theocratic Islamic state in Syria and Iraq via military means. The group was known as ISIS until June 2014.

Yazidis: religious minority in northern Iraq, northern Syria and southeast Turkey. Most of the

800,000 adherents speak Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish).

KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party): Traditionalist and conservative Kurdish political party in Iraq, led by the Barzani clan.

Peshmerga: Armed forces of the Kurdistan Regional Government in semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan.

PJAK (Party of Free Life of Kurdistan): Kurdish guerilla organisation based in Iran, sister organisation of the PKK.

PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party): Left-wing underground Turkish organisation based in Turkey, listed as "terrorist organization" by the EU, USA, UK, Canada, Australia and others.

PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan): Social democratic Kurdish political party in Iraq, led by the Talabani clan.

PYD (Democratic Union Party): Kurdish political party in Syria, sister party of the PKK. In the course of the Syrian civil war, the PYD established a self-organised democratic system of governance in a semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan ("Rojava").

YPG (People's Protection Units): Kurdish militia in Syria with political ties to the PKK and PYD.

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Translation by Loren Balhorn.