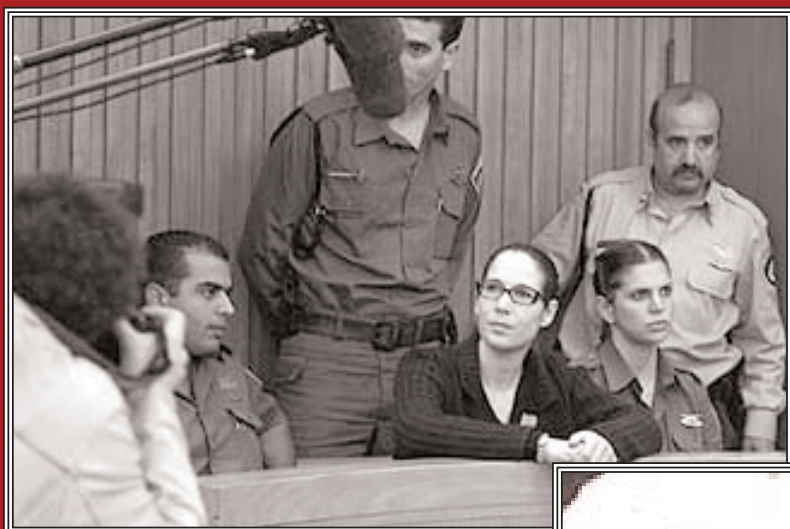




INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

News and analysis from the Fourth International

IV379 - June 2006



Israel - Normality and separation
Latin America - New Challenges
France - Social and political crisis



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Israel - Latin America - France

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Iraq

Occupation, civil war and the call for withdrawal

Gilbert Achcar

Susan Weissman: Gilbert Achcar teaches political science at the University of Paris and also works in Berlin. He contributes to various publications including *Le Monde Diplomatique* and *Monthly Review*. His recent books are *The Clash of Barbarisms*, with a new edition coming out this year from Saqi books and Boulder Paradigm Publishers; *Eastern Cauldron* and *The Israeli Dilemma*. He has also published (with Stephen R. Shalom), in the current *New Politics*, an article on withdrawal from Iraq, which reacts to Representative John Murtha's position that called for immediate withdrawal but actually was about "redeployment." Gilbert, have you updated your position since then?

Gilbert Achcar: The longer the U.S. troops stay in Iraq, the worse the situation becomes. The situation is continuously deteriorating: In the last weeks we have seen again new stages in this deterioration, which are really very worrying. For people to say "Well, the U.S. troops should stay to prevent a civil war" is completely absurd.

On the one hand, we are steadily moving toward that kind of civil war because of the presence of the U.S. troops, and the timeline here is quite, quite clear. On the other hand, Rumsfeld himself said, "Well, if there is a civil war we won't intervene" -so what are U.S. troops for in that country?

SW: In effect the Bush Administration has been saying there's not yet a civil war, while [former Prime Minister Ayad] Allawi has said there is a civil war-can you just tell us, is there a semantic fine line here? Is there a civil war going on, or something building up?

GA: I've been saying for quite a long while now that in Iraq you've got low-intensity civil war. Recently the same formula has been used by the present prime minister of Iraq, Jaafari, whom the United States is trying to kick out.

Yes, this formula's accurate: What you've got there is not a full-fledged civil war-fortunately, because that would really be an absolute disaster. But there is a low-intensity civil war, and it's increasing in intensity. The presence of U.S. troops doesn't prevent it from unfolding, but is actually a main factor in fueling it.

The way the U.S. representative on the ground, Ambassador Khalilzad, has been behaving in the last year or so, is also very much part of what I am saying. He has been throwing oil on the fire continuously, trying

to play one community against another, trying to get alliances and counter-alliances, trying to break other factions. He is interfering very, very heavily in the political situation, and not as some kind of honest broker, but as someone applying a very classical recipe of divide and rule.

That's what Washington has been left with as the means to keep its control over the situation in Iraq ever since it lost the electoral battles.

SW: President Bush went on the road to try to sell his message on the war and rather than what I guess was expected-announcing a timed withdrawal to appease public opinion-he said "We're going to stay the course," and "We'll still be in Iraq after I leave office in 2008,." Does this announcement by Bush surprise you? Is there any alternative?

GA: First of all, it's not surprising that Bush says that. He means that U.S. troops won't leave Iraq as long as he's the president. And well, that's quite logical because he hasn't invaded that country just to withdraw from it after what has happened, after everything that has been spent there-not to mention of course the human cost, and here I'm speaking only of the American human cost. Of course the Iraqi human cost is much much higher.

If George W. Bush has led this invasion of Iraq it was to get control of the country and to stay there in the long run. That's why they are building bases, which are not built for the short time, but built and conceived as if they would be bases for a very long period. They went in Iraq quoting the examples of Germany and Japan after 1945 And that was the idea-to stay there for a very long time, let's say, at least until there is no more oil underground; getting control of that country

for obvious economic and strategic reasons. Control over oil is an absolutely key weapon for world hegemony, and that's what this administration is very much obsessed with.

SW: We know that the Bush administration has scaled back from some of its most grandiose goals in the region, given the situation on the ground, but Seymour Hersh has written an article in the *New Yorker* a couple of months ago, saying we're going to switch to more of an air war, presumably to ease U.S. opposition so that fewer troops come home maimed and killed. Will Washington come up with some kind of plan to redeploy or pull out temporarily?

GA: Pulling out temporarily is not something likely to happen.

SW: Could they redeploy to the borders as Congressman John Murtha suggested?

GA: No, the idea of some Democrats and others is that the United States should redeploy and keep intervening militarily in the situation, mainly through air bases.

On the one hand that wouldn't improve the situation in Iraq; and on the other hand air wars, as you know, lead to the largest number of civilian casualties. That would be an even more selfish way of trying to control the area than what is happening now. And in a sense, it's even worse than what is happening.

SW: There's this sense that if the United States were to leave-now that the Ba'athists and Shi'ite militants are more organized than they were before, and that there's even splits within them with more radical elements within each sector, including the jihadists-that if there were even just redeployment or planned withdrawal, it would encourage them and all hell would break loose. And

Spoof iPod adverts attack the war



there's even the notion that maybe Turkey would invade, maybe Kuwait would try to reclaim...can you give us a kind of scenario of what you think could happen?

GA: One could imagine and draw all kinds of apocalyptic scenarios, but there is apocalypse now, we are in the midst of it. And of course, it could get worse...but it is getting worse. It is getting worse day after day. And it has been proved very very obviously, very factually, that the longer the U.S. troops stay in that country the worse it is getting.

No one can dispute that since day one of the invasion up until now the situation has steadily worsened-look at all the figures, it's absolutely terrible. The idea that the United States should stay there even longer to prevent it from deteriorating is completely absurd. It's clear, it has been tried and tried and over-tried, and the conclusion is clear, the U.S. troops should get out of that country if that country is ever to recover.

Now, I'm not saying that it'll be paradise as soon as U.S. troops get out, that's not the point. We, the antiwar movement, were the people who were saying that if the invasion took place, it would lead to chaos. We were saying that during all the long period before the invasion. The invasion took place, and exactly what we predicted happened. It led to a chaotic situation, a very dangerous situation.

So now, the same people who were telling us "No, there won't be chaos, it'll be wonderful, U.S. troops will be welcomed with wreaths of flowers," and you would have some kind of new Switzerland in Iraq in a matter of a couple of years-the same people now say "Oh, the U.S. troops should not leave, because otherwise there will be chaos." This is ridiculous.

SW: There's also the position within the movement that the United States should provide a kind of Marshall Plan to repay for all of the damage, including the damage from the sanctions. What do you think is a viable position for the antiwar movement?

GA: The antiwar movement should, in my view, be organized, as it has been until now, around the central demand of "Out Now." This is more and more striking a real chord in public opinion. What we could call the "passive antiwar movement" that is reflected in the polls has increased tremendously in the

recent period-you know that better than I do. But the organized antiwar movement has not been up to the task since the peak we reached on February 15, 2003.

After this huge, unprecedented, international, really truly mass mobilization, the movement lost impetus, you had a lot of confusion, and that of course was not helped by the kind of images coming from Iraq, unfortunately.

During the war in Vietnam, one factor in the mobilizations was how the images of oppressed Vietnamese, victims of the U.S. aggression, touched people's hearts. Antiwar demonstrators carried those pictures in the demonstrations.

The dominant images sent out from Iraq were images (of the resistance) the media chose to highlight-decapitation and other barbaric acts. This did not help to organize antiwar sentiment.

There was also the very complex situation on the ground. It is true that it's not such an easy situation to understand and to grasp.

❖ Gilbert Achcar lived in Lebanon for many years before moving to France where he teaches politics and international relations at the University of Paris. He is a frequent contributor to "Le Monde Diplomatique" and is the author of several books on contemporary politics, notably "The Clash of Barbarisms: September 11 and the Making of the New World Disorder" and, most recently, "Eastern Cauldron", both published by Monthly Review Press.

Another spoon



Israel

The drive to normality and separation

Michel Warschawski

There are 120 members in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament. The main loser is definitely the Likud which collapsed from 40 MKs to 11. Even if one takes into consideration the strengthening of the far-right, which almost doubled its votes (from 12 to 21), the Israeli Right suffered a major defeat, at the expense of the Center, which doubled the number of its deputies: Kadima got 28 and the anonymous list of the Pensioners - the surprise of the elections - got seven.

The Labor Party succeeded in limiting the damages provoked by the creation of Kadima and the departure of many of its leaders, and lost only 10% of its representatives: 20 MKs instead of 22. The weakening of Meretz, which has been a continuous phenomenon since 1999, didn't stop: its representation passed from six MKs to four.

The fundamentalist parties (Shas and Yahadut HaTora) raised their MKs from 16 to 19, which confirms their stable social basis among the Jewish public. Despite a high abstention (almost 45%), the Arab lists strengthened their representation in the Israeli parliament: from eight to ten MKs.

Less than two third of the Israeli electorate made the effort to vote. This figure indicates the first major characteristic of the Israeli election: an unquestionable lack of passion and a relative lack of interest. The election campaign which ended a few days ago was the most boring since 1969, and the results confirm that the Israeli public is tired of internal confrontations and ultra-nationalist rhetoric. The success of acting prime-minister Ehud Olmert's Kadima party is the direct product of the Israeli public aspiration to a mainstream politics, both on the political and the social levels.

A relative success for Kadima

The 28 seats of Kadima makes it the biggest party in the new Knesset, and its leader, Ehud Olmert, the next Prime Minister. However, the success of Kadima is relative. Two months ago, the public opinion polls were predicting 45 seats to Kadima! With the departure of Ariel Sharon, started a process of erosion, and one can agree with the evaluation of several Israeli analysts who said yesterday night that if the elections

would have been a month later, the Labor Party may have won the elections.

For, despite the treason of Shimon Peres and many other Labor leaders who decided to join Kadima and despite a racist campaign against the Moroccan background of Amir Peretz, its young and combative new leader, the Labor Party managed to more or less keep its score of 2003, and become the second largest group in the new parliament.

The success of Kadima and the collapse of the Likud are the direct result of the aspiration of the Israeli population's to normalization and its reluctance to follow hard-liners. The 32 seats of the Right represent the hard-line quarter of the Israeli people, whilst the 34 seats of the Labor Party, Meretz and the 3 Arab lists, represent the peace-oriented quarter. Half of the Israeli public is motivated neither by the Greater Israel nor by peace, but by a strong aspiration to separation, whether through negotiations or unilaterally imposed on the Palestinians.

Ehud Olmert - and Ariel Sharon before him - understood the general Israeli tiredness of the "permanent preventive war" discourse of Netanyahu and the Right in general. He knew that a "centrist" position would be popular, and did his best to develop the sense of a break with the status-quo, identified with the perpetuation of the conflict, independently of the Palestinian position and deeds.

"We will fix borders between us and the Palestinians", "We will hasten separation", "we will continue the process of unilateral separation" were the main electoral slogans of Kadima, to which the Likud could only answer: "Olmert endangers Israel, we need a strong leader against Hamas!"-precisely the kind of language most of the Israelis are tired of.

No to ultra-liberalism

Normalization for Israeli voters is not only separation from the Palestinians, but also a reverse of the savage neo-liberal economic policies implemented in the last decade by Netanyahu... and Olmert, which brought a quarter of the population under the poverty line. The success of the pensioners list is living proof that many Israeli citizens refuse an economic policy which ignores the basic needs of the great majority of the population. The success of Shas, which conducted its campaign on socio-economical issues and strengthened substantially its vote, is further evidence that the Israeli public expect that the new government will initiate a radical turn towards the millions of new poor in Israel.

Amir Peretz deserves the credit of "socializing" the campaign. From the moment the former General Secretary of the

תנועת קדימה ביהוד-מונטסון ובקעת אונו



Kadima poster cashes in on the memory of Sharon

Histadrut was elected as the leader of the Labor Party, and declared war on the neo-liberal economics, all the candidates were obliged to at least pay lip service to social reforms, including even Ehud Olmert who replaced Netanyahu as Minister of Finance and continued his criminal policy.

The relatively good result of the Labor Party is definitely connected to the "social campaign" led by Amir Peretz, and his credibility as someone challenging "Netanyahu" economics. The Labor leader is now demanding the Finances portfolio in the next government, in order to guarantee a "better distribution of national resources".

Despite last-moment "social" commitments by Kadima leaders, it is hard to believe that Ehud Olmert, who, as Finance Minister implemented the brutal neo-liberal economic policy, and is well-known for his personal relations with the corporate elites, will permit putting the economy in the hands of someone whom he has already described as a "dangerous populist". Someone who the economic editor of Ha'aretz describes as a communist.

The vote of the Palestinian minority

Despite the fact that almost half of the Palestinian voters didn't participate in the elections, the three "Arab lists" succeeded to increase their representation by 25%. If the rate of Palestinian participation would have been the same as among the Jewish public, the number of independent Palestinian MKs may have been 12, i.e. 10% of the Israeli parliament.

The main winner is the Arab United List, composed of moderate Islamists and nationalist notables with four MKs. The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, led by the Israeli Communist Party (Hadash), and the National Democratic Alliance (Balad) both received three MKs each.

Although the general assessment is that since the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the Arab representatives have been unable to use the Knesset to improve their catastrophic situation, this result shows that the majority of the Palestinian minority in Israel is, in fact, interested in asserting its national existence

and its political and social aspirations through its own independent national representatives. Such a demonstration is particularly important at a time when the racist far-right has strengthened its representation in the Knesset and, when public anti-Arab discourse is considered more acceptable than at any time in the past.

Thirty years after Land Day (30th March), the hard won achievements of the Palestinians between 1980 - 1996 to combat discrimination, seem mainly to have vanished.

The new government

Ehud Olmert has plenty of options with whom to form a new coalition, based on his strong parliamentary majority. Almost every Jewish party has announced its will to be part of the new coalition, from the far-right "Israel is our Home" party of Avigdor Lieberman, described as 'fascist' by former Meretz minister Yossi Sarid, to the left wing Meretz party.

This government will have two main objectives: to (slightly) improve the living conditions of the majority of the Israeli population and to continue the process of unilateral redeployment in the West Bank. These two objectives are widely supported among the Israeli public and in the new Knesset.

The main question is whether Ehud Olmert will have the determination to confront those who oppose these policies: on the one hand the big Israeli corporations, the World Bank and the captains of the Israeli economic establishment who are the hard core of his own party, and, on the other hand, the right-wing parties who, despite their defeat, are still able to mobilize hundred of thousands of demonstrators against any change which may reduce Israeli control in the Occupied Territories.

Unlike Ariel Sharon, who was ready to confront any kind of external pressure, Ehud Olmert is known as a politician whom it easy to put pressure. In other words, the new government, which may include many parties with contradictory agendas, will be an arena for strong confrontation, on political as well as socio-economic issues. Those who expected that Israel was about to enter a new period of stability are dead wrong.

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

Israel

The witch-hunting of Tali Fahima

Lin Calozin-Dovrat

Tali Fahima (centre, glasses)
on trial in Israel's High Court



On March 18, 2004, Ha'yir Weekly, a major Tel-Aviv weekend paper (Ha'aretz Group), published an interview with a certain Tali Fahima - a young woman age 28 working as a secretary in a respectable law firm in Tel-Aviv - in which she stated strongly her positions against the Israeli assassination policy.

The article recounts Fahima's meeting with Zachariah Zbeidi, chief of Jenin's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and her willingness to protect him from the Israeli military's attempts on his life. In the third paragraph, Rona Segal writes: "The difficulty in labeling Tali Fahima, a single woman living by her own, transcends the demarcation lines of political affiliation. Besides being curious, stubborn and extremely individualistic, Fahima defines herself also as a 'News Freak'."

Having no former political experience, the lack of any political affiliation on Fahima's part was a puzzling fact for both journalists and the General Security Services (GSS). It seemed nobody knew what to make of this woman, originating from a very modest Mizrahi (Jewish-Arab) family from the impoverished southern Israeli town of Kiryat-Gat, voting for the Likud party in the last general elections, and acting on her own.

Fahima has paid since a heavy personal price for the public's difficulty to grasp her actions and motives - in mid September she was put in a four-month administrative detention, after being interrogated intensively by the GSS for 28 days. Seemingly, the interrogation did not yield enough evidence to justify persecution. However, the public, with the aid of massive press coverage, had its say - Fahima, people say, is either a traitor or a lunatic, or even better, both.

Segal was the first to acknowledge the journalistic value of the story. She included no theories or assumptions as to what drove this woman to travel to Jenin, and the portrait she fashioned could have been read in multiple ways. However, the framing of the story had its share in generating the impression that Fahima is Zbeidi's lover, a juicy item the GSS promoted in its future

news releases ('leaks'), after Fahima's first and second arrests.

Fahima's frontal picture, holding the teddy bear Zbeidi sent her bearing the inscription I Love You, while wearing a lawyer type blouse and glasses, added a touch of kinkiness to the editor's secondary headline: "Two years ago Tali Fahima still voted Likud and advocated for a military solution to the conflict. Now, she considers acting as a human shield to Al-Aqsa Brigades' chief in the Jenin area, the wanted Zachariah Zbeidi, who had escaped three "elimination" attempts. What's her story?"

Although Fahima's refutation of the romantic hypotheses is mentioned, the article itself contains numerous implicit question marks. "The difficulty in labeling Tali Fahima", is immediately followed by "a single woman living by her own", and is in great proximity to the term "News Freak".

The image of a deranged lonely woman echoes that of a female witch, still a highly relevant gender paradigm in a traditional society such as the Israeli one. This is soon corroborated by a quotation of Zbeidi, cited by Fahima, at the occasion of their first meeting: "I've already seen crazy [abnormal] people, but you're a really crazy one. I did not believe you would come."

Further down, when Fahima recounts her first meeting with Zachariah's wife and child, Segal asks: "And didn't you fear she would show signs of jealousy?" The two archetypical images, that of the lover and that of the deranged outcast are intertwined, at times simply following one another, and at other times combined into one figure - that of the female traitor.

In an article dating from Fahima's first arrest period (1 June 2004, Walla portal, Ha'aretz

Group), Offer Aderet reminds the male Israeli reader that "research in the news archives, reveals that Fahima is not "our" first girl to be cuddled up in the laps of Tanzim's dandies out in the open country of Judea and Samaria."

According to Aderet, this curious phenomenon has a short history, which includes both the cases of Angelica Yossefov (serving time for assisting terrorist acts) and Neta Golan, founder of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). When referring to Yossefov, a new immigrant from one of the Muslim states of the former USSR, he writes: "The bottom line is, being an immigrant, she didn't know that what was customary in her native country - relationships between a Jewish girl and a Muslim - is an utter taboo in Israel."

During their weekly demonstrations, Women in Black testify to often having sexist remarks thrown at them, such as 'Arabs' Whores' or 'Arafat's bitches'. 'Arabs lover' is a habitual pejorative idiom in Hebrew for someone holding leftist positions. The clear-cut equation between 'leftist woman', 'Arab lover', 'whore' and 'deranged' is not limited to a certain discourse, but well shared by many.

As Aderet puts it: "Some questions are remained unsolved - what makes a young handsome girl risk her life, break the law, and socialize with wanted armed man with "Jewish blood on their hands"? Is it an adventurous impulse? Sexual attraction? Romanticism? Political positions? Or maybe mere madness?" The assumption that stepping out of the community's harsh norms might have to do with political positions, is way down the list and is followed by the much more 'reasonable' hypothesis, according to Aderet, that the woman in question simply manifests a mental illness.

Four out of the five optional explanations for Fahima's acts are clearly suggesting irrational behavior patterns. In the first sentence quoted, Aderet marks a reservation when putting the possessive pronoun within inverted commas ("our" first girl); as if to imply that the possession is not expressing his own paradigm, but the doxa, the common opinion, according to which Jewish women are Jewish man's property.

By doing so, he only confirms that his presumed audience is a Jewish man, and that he shares his conceptions about gender, being well settled within the boundaries of the common rhetorical position concerning the subject, known in rhetoric as *topos*. For the orator, *topos* is a highly valuable notion - it allows him to recognize the community's moral 'conglomerates' and in so doing, to be able to use them effectively on his audience.

In the case of the Female Traitor figure, we can clearly see how mentioning only two or three of the female topical characteristics will necessarily deploy the rest of them, as if a logical induction was made: unmarried woman + holding leftist opinions and/or having a friendly relationship with a male leader of the Palestinian resistance = sexual traitor.

From a rhetorical point of view, the beauty of the *topoi* (plural *topos*) resides in their half common half logical nature, which enables them to be an extremely useful, transparent and economical tool of persuasion. To rely on the racist *topos* of national/religious purity of sexual and emotional relationships, apparently a different one - that of the deranged outcast woman - is automatically evoked. The figure of the Female Traitor is ready for use. No wonder then, that the ethos of a woman who may choose to defy her own national community's codes after deliberation is not widely spread, or even easily recognized, to say the least. Mainly not if she is acting alone.

The first encounter between Fahima and the GSS took place before she approached the media, and apparently, even before she intended to visit Jenin. In several interviews, Fahima mentions that being interested in the conflict, and realizing she cannot rely on Israeli media to objectively deliver the different aspects of the story, she started contacting surfers from Arab states through the internet.

Some of these contacts developed into friendly telephone conversations. After exceptionally sizeable telephone bills were received, she was summoned to the local police station for a preliminary GSS interrogation. At the time, Fahima believed that the fact that she was not taking part in any institutionalized political activity saved her from being further harassed by the GSS.

Quoted in Segal's article, she said: "He [the GSS agent] interrogated me briefly, asked me why I converse with so many Arabs and if I belonged to any group. I told him I wasn't, and he left me alone." She was soon to get a shock, as the GSS decided in May to bring her in for a long interrogation, after she spent two weeks in Jenin.

In a Y-NET 9Yedeot Ahronot's internet website) article (R. Ben-Tzur, 29 May 2004) the police representative at court, officer Fadlon, is quoted as saying that "Fahima was already warned few months ago, after being caught while staying in A area [Palestinian controlled area, according to the Oslo agreement partition]. She was bailed on the condition that she committed herself to avoid going to Jenin again."

The entry of either Jewish or Palestinian citizens of Israel into area A has been forbidden by the Military regime in the OPT since early in the current Intifada. However, two magistrate's court verdicts have upheld that being a felony under the military law, it cannot be tried in a State's civil courts. That may explain why the police are not keen on performing arrests on these grounds.

Israeli citizens usually enter area A for various reasons - shopping or business (less so these days), visiting Palestinian acquaintances and family members, or showing support for the Palestinian cause. Members of NGO's and political or humanitarian associations, as well as activists in peace movements, go there on a daily basis, often in small groups. They may find it difficult to pass a military checkpoint, and, in the worse cases, have even been detained and arrested for 24 hours. When brought to court they may be fined, and denied entry to specific locations by a judge's decision.

Other political activists have been interrogated by the GSS following a period of intense political activity. However, Fahima's case is a rarity, considering the vivid interest the GSS manifested in her since the very

beginning of her political quest. Although Fahima raised money for a humanitarian project in Jenin, and was arrested the first time after she completed some preparations necessary for the enactment of a pedagogical centre there, acting alone accredited Fahima with no lesser dubious reactions on behalf of affiliated leftist activists.

Leftist Knesset members were not eager to back her up, and even radical peace activists were suspicious of her motives. In personal conversations I held with several experienced activists after her arrests, they raised questions that would have been considered extremely improper in similar cases if an unfamiliar affiliated person were in trouble. The lack of a political group's designation to be added to her name seemed to draw a shadow over all her actions, that otherwise would have been considered bold and even noble in accordance with activists' norms. That she was either a GSS undercover agent or simply a deranged woman with a sexual complex was suggested more than once.

Politics is to be done in groups. Highly dominant and individualistic activists are awaited to form their own groups, but not to simply act by themselves. Nevertheless, the ethical-political model of western societies as set in Kant's "What is Enlightenment?" stresses the value of individual responsibility within the political realm. In the age of Aufklärung, each and every one of us is requested to step out of her/his "state of self-imposed tutelage" and "to use one's own intelligence without the help of a leader."

The essence of the political aspect of human condition is then displaced from the sociological realm to that of the highly intimate (though universal) response to an ideal and categorical concept of maturity. Political activity, the management of the polis affairs, was always considered to be the most noble one, but modernity alters its essence - now it stems from a different origin - that of the subject's advent.

This commencement is an event as fabulous as the birth of Athena from Zeus's head, since it is the subject itself who generates his own delivery. If the commitment to act as a political agent finds its essential foundation in the notion of subjectivity, then the ethical maturity first translates itself to an individual act. Surprisingly and somewhat inconsistent with the widely accepted Kantian-Modern model, individuals are expected to fulfill

their political subjectivity only in the frame of a recognized institution and under the supervision of their respective group's opinions and norms.

For intellectuals, it is still extremely difficult to be heard if they are not holding a University chair, or working as journalists. The party political model may have been broadened to include movements, associations and the more capitalistic NGO's model (where individuals are being paid for their political work), but sociologically speaking, the proper political expression and activism outline keeps some significant tribal features; in order to gain the right to express oneself publicly, a personal name of an agent in the political sphere must be followed by the academic institution or the NGO she works for, or the political group he's affiliated with.

The reception codes vary from one political group to another, but these are obviously not limited to the publicized regulations or even to the recognized norms, as explicitly conceptualized by the subjects that consider themselves 'group members'. Payrolled institutions, such as associations, Universities, political parties and NGO's, state clearly their 'membership conditions', whilst movements and civil society's voluntary associations tend to have much more loose formal regulations as to who may or not gain membership.

Ta'ayush (Arab-Jewish partnership), inspired by the post-modern model proposed by the alter-globalization movements, insists on not having a membership apparatus. Whoever takes part in the movement's activities, is a Ta'ayush movement activist. Membership cannot be either gained or lost, because it's the sheer result of initiating, planning and participating in action. This existentialist type model, cannot however escape the essential problem of "who is active within the group". Can just anybody take part in whatever group based on this model? Principles and reality seem to manifest certain discrepancies, as multi-cultural and discursive sensitivities become more and more relevant to the conceptualization of social actual reality.

All political formats as we know it manifest implicit acceptance codes, whose role is to ensure that 'strangers' do not dilute the ideological, discursive and 'tribal' elements that bind the original group members. In a

humorous passage recounting her adventures in the Israeli leftist movements and events such as Ta'ayush and The Activism Festival (Israeli Social Forum), Dorit Pankar writes (Mi'Tzad Sheni, vol. 2, January 2003, AIC): "Apparently, in order to be a member in these organizations I need to change my whole world and to well prepare my homework before coming to class. In every such group there are 'Entry Exams', so I decided to withdraw from all these associations, because I was not capable of fulfilling their demands."

Tali Fahima, growing up in the peripheral impoverished town of Kiryat Gat, being of a Jewish-Arab descent, and having no political experience beforehand (i.e. not having on her record a more or less loose membership in a political group) had absolutely no symbolic or actual access to the Tel-Aviv based pronouncedly Ashkenazi and middle classed leftist groups. In personal conversations I had with her before her arrest, she told me that she attended, on several occasions, panels organized by leftist oriented associations, because she was eager to learn more about the conflict. However, she added, she did not feel that what had been said in these events was appealing to her, or could have possibly answer her more essential troubling questions.

Journalists, media consumers and activists felt that the unaffiliated Fahima, coming from nowhere, is not "expressing herself politically enough." Fahima was exposed to extensive press coverage, and some of her utterances were not only extremely political, but conveyed some very popular leftist positions. In an interview she gave to the local southern paper Kol Ha'Darom (4.6.04), she answered Amir Shoan who asked her whether she understands at all the Israeli side of the conflict:

"Surely. I put my Israeli identity in the front, but I'm the proof that the State is not democratic. When I was released I told them [the GSS] that they are a terrorist organization. An occupying State is not democratic. I know they had suspicions against me, but it is illegitimate to keep me incarcerated for the sake of an interrogation. Someone up there got nervous because I could, as a civilian, reach Zbeidi.

There's clearly a policy on behalf of the Defense Ministry to cut off the contact to the civil population, not wanting us to know

what they do there." The article closes with Fahima saying: "I came to help a friend. Leave the [affair of the] State of Israel and the Palestinians aside. In my opinion a friend of mine was in immanent danger, and I came to help him."

On another occasion (Oren Huberman, Nana portal, 2.6.04), when talking about the fear she sensed on her first meeting with Zbeidi, the journalist asks her: "Isn't that an expensive price to pay for the satisfaction of curiosity?" Fahima's answer, somehow, does not utterly coincide with the proper political discourse: "There is no too high a price for knowing the truth." Privileging values as friendship and the passion to reach the truth, is far from being bon ton, and might be considered by political activists to be "apolitical". It may remind us that a very famous philosopher had paid with his life because he preferred his love for the truth to his love for the polis. Fahima may not be as well instructed as Socrates was, and may not be as wise or eloquent. But she sure shares with "the Divine" the willingness to pay a price for her love for the truth.

These kind of figures inspire other people to follow them. Not many perhaps, not the masses. Yet, it is clear that besides all the scorn, suspicion and confusion Fahima evokes, there are people who already recognized in her the potential for being a future leader. To judge from her ethos, as it was portrayed through her media appearances, it does not seem Fahima is ready to play the role of guiding other people in the quest for truth, friendship and mutual respect. They say prisons do a good job in shaping leaders.

We can only hope that Fahima will be consistent with her disgust of ready-made concepts, and will join others in their search for a more sharing and truth loving model of leadership, less tribal and above all, more feminist than the ones we've known so far.

This article first appeared in News from Within, journal of the Alternative Information Centre, Jerusalem.

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Latin America

Marcos in Atenco

Resistance and Revolution

Phil Hearse

On no continent is neoliberalism so widely rejected as in Latin America, and nowhere has the resurgence of the Left been so powerful. The election of Evo Morales in Bolivia and the evolution of the Hugo Chávez government in Venezuela are hugely ideologically important. Whatever the direction and eventual outcome of these governments, they have already done an enormously important thing - given an arithmetic content to the algebraic formula that 'another world is possible'; the only possible one, socialism.

Even the election of moderate centre-left governments, like those of Lula in Brazil, Bachelet in Chile and Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay are the product of a long period of struggle against neoliberalism and the right.

The huge Latin American panorama of struggle has given rise to new debates about revolutionary strategy - debates which the left has not been used to having for some time. How can this enormous generation of struggle, the rejection of neoliberalism and the rise of the Left be consolidated into permanent socialist gains, the power of the popular masses and the defeat of capitalism?

Continent wide tactics are useless and Latin American societies are enormously diverse. There is no "one strategy fits all" solution. However there are common elements in the development of these societies and certain common elements in revolutionary strategy as well.

There are a number of crucial questions, the answers to which will act as crucial guidelines for a revolutionary alternative. They include:

- 1) What is the nature of these societies and their relationship with imperialism?
- 2) What is the nature of the ruling class?
- 3) What is the character of the 'revolutionary subject'? What is the (potential) alliance of

popular forces which might be mobilised into an alliance to make a revolutionary breakthrough?

4) What are the key steps needed to make an anti-capitalist transition and a break with the capitalist state and imperialism?

Each of the countries of Latin America is oppressed by imperialism. Semi-industrialisation in Brazil and Argentina means that the countries can no longer be considered as having all the classic characteristics of semi-colonies, ie being providers solely of raw materials and consumers of manufactures from the imperialist centres.

Nonetheless, none of them, not even a giant economy like Brazil, is an autonomous centre for the accumulation of finance capital at the same level as the imperialist countries or a centre for multinational corporations which bestride and exploit the world.

The proof of the pudding was the debt crisis; in the worst years of the crisis in the 1980s and 1990s, a huge tribute of capital flowed out of the exploited countries towards the imperialist centres. Brazil and Argentina were of course in the former category, with a decade of economic progress destroyed in the 1980s by the debt crisis.

If all the countries of Latin America are dominated by imperialism, then they have a super-rich ruling class which is

hand-in-hand with the imperialist bourgeoisie. This has created some of the most unequal societies on earth; in Mexico and Brazil the rich are rich by international standards and the poor are poor by the same standards.

The idea that there can be any kind of "anti-imperialist alliance" with any sector of the bourgeoisie whatever is tremendously far-fetched. At best there can be alliances around democratic objectives and only conjunctural national interests.

In his theory of permanent revolution Trotsky proposed that the working class had to lead the struggle for the national and democratic tasks of the revolution, that is to say unfulfilled tasks of the bourgeois revolution. Trotsky differed with the Stalinists in seeing the national democratic revolution as a phase of an uninterrupted ('permanent') revolutionary process, which would be carried out by an alliance of the working class and the peasantry, under the political leadership of the working class itself. There would be no Chinese wall between the national and democratic tasks and the socialist tasks, and the whole process would require the dictatorship of the working class (and the peasantry).

Insofar as we need to modify Trotsky's theory, which after all was elaborated mainly between 1905 and 1928, it can only be in

the direction of stressing the interaction and inter-relatedness of the national democratic tasks and the socialist tasks. To put it another way, to achieve real democracy and real national independence requires a complete break with imperialism and the oligarchy.

For example, for Bolivia to achieve real national independence means taking control of its own resources, ie the gas, the oil and of course the water. That means inroads into the rights of private property, in other words tasks of the socialist revolution. Equally, radical democracy at a national level cannot be achieved other than by breaking the grip of the oligarchy who ensure their control of the political process by corruption and violence. Democratic questions are directly interlinked with the issue of working class power.

The same considerations directly relate to the land struggle. The advent of (often US-controlled) agribusiness swivels the enemy from being simply local landlords, a subsector of the domestic bourgeoisie, to directly a struggle against transnational capitalist corporations. The fight against imperialism is one and the same as the struggle against the local oligarchy.

Revolutionary subject

The enormous growth of the cities, the development of agribusiness and semi-industrialisation in the major



countries has significantly changed the revolutionary subject. This is summed up in the governmental slogan of nearly all of the Mexican militant left - "un gobierno obrero, campesino, indigena y popular"; a workers, peasants, indigenous and popular government. This crystallises what we can expect a revolutionary alliance in most of Latin America to be like.

Since the formulation of the "workers and peasants government" formula in the 1920s, the growth of the informal sector in the cities, the barrio or favela dwellers, has been dramatic. Most of the urban poor are not regularly employed, but get by through street trading, small businesses, crime etc. The urban poor are a vital part of the base of the Bolivarian movement in Venezuela and of course of the mass movement which eventually brought Evo Morales and the MAS to power in Bolivia. The key demands of these people revolve around the basic questions of the provision of the basics of life - clean water, proper housing, sanitation, education and of course freedom from the violence and paternalistic manipulation by the state - ie democracy.

A new and positive feature of the Latin American movement has been the emergence of indigenous movements, the most well-known example being the Zapatistas in Mexico and sections of the movement in Bolivia. However there is a difference between the indigenous movement in those two countries. Subcommandante Marcos and the Zapatistas pose the solution to the demands of the indigenous people as being part of a transformation of Mexico nationwide, which Marcos tends to pose as "democratisation" (not socialism).

Felipe Quispe ("El Mallku"), key leader of the indigenous people of El Alto in Bolivia, tends to project an Andean indigenous federation which

might involve succession from existing Latin American countries. In Quispe's case, this idea sits in contradictory unity with his ideas about working class power in Bolivia.

One central feature cannot be avoided by the Latin American left - machismo and its opposite, women's liberation. While the leaders of the social movements in the barrios are disproportionately women, the violence against and super-exploitation of women on the most machismo of continents is incredible; from the daily subjugation of women as the most exploited workers in an often suffocating paternalistic family to the ghastly mass murder of women in Guatemala. A more stable integration of women's liberation into the strategy of the Latin American left would unleash tremendous new forces and energies into the struggle.

The Question of Power

For the Left, the decisive issue is how to integrate all these questions - of democracy, land reform, the destruction of the oligarchy, an end to economic robbery of the elite and imperialism, the basics of life for the urban poor and liberation for indigenous people and women - into a coherent overarching strategy for the popular masses to conquer power. The 'centre-left' - forces like the PT in Brazil, the Frente Amplio in Uruguay and the PRD of Manuel Lopez Obrador in Mexico - do not of course agree with this way of posing the question. For them it is about getting more justice within the system, and we have seen what this means in Uruguay and Brazil - abject capitulation to neoliberalism.

This poses a first question and problem - that of class independence, creating political parties of the popular masses, led politically by the working class, independent of bourgeois nationalist and populist forces. Building a broad class struggle party on a national basis is a task

which Subcommandante Marcos and the Zapatistas have avoided confronting. However, the 'Other Campaign' - a bold and audacious attempt to move out of their Chiapas mountain redoubts and unify the Mexican social movements indicates a renewed strategic thinking which - objectively - points in the direction of a new 'party' of the oppressed. How far this will go has yet to be seen.

The need for a strategy of conquering power, linked to that of class independence, is shown by the events between 2001 and 2004 in Argentina. Here a mass uprising overthrew the de la Rúa government in December 2001, unleashing a political crisis which saw huge sections of the poor and the middle classes mobilised in self-organised action committees and picaderos for more than a year.

But eventually this pre-revolutionary movement just petered out, precisely because there was no mass militant socialist party, capable of melding the rebellious forces in a coherent revolutionary national direction. As James Petras' excellent dissection of the Argentinian debacle points out:

"What clearly was lacking was a unified political organization (party, movement or combination of both) with roots in the popular neighborhoods which was capable of creating representative organs to promote class-consciousness and point toward taking state power. As massive and sustained as was the initial rebellious period (December 2001-July 2002) no such political party or movement emerged - instead a multiplicity of localized groups with different agendas soon fell to quarreling over an elusive "hegemony" - driving millions of possible supporters toward local face-to-face groups devoid of any political perspective."

The events in Argentina show the bankruptcy of the theory of refusing to take state power, an

idea put forward by Subcommandante Marcos (and rendered more profound by the academic Jon Holloway [1]). Refusing to challenge the bourgeoisie and the right wing for state power is linked to the refusal to build a workers political party. It leads, at best, to 'movementism from below', a continual opposition and protest, but with no idea of how to establish a global alternative and how to break the right, the oligarchy and their grip on state power.

How does the idea of the popular masses taking state power shape up to developments in Venezuela and Bolivia? In Venezuela the bourgeoisie have lost, or partially lost, control of the government but are still the economically ruling class - linked parasitically to the nationalised oil industry.

On the other hand, there is a tremendous development of popular self-organisation from below in the barrios and in the countryside; in addition substantial social progress has been made through the social 'missions', funded by oil revenues. However the poor remain legion in Venezuela and the solution to their problems will not be found outside of a radical redistribution of wealth, which means breaking the power and wealth of the oligarchy.

But in the context of a tremendous political polarisation in which the whole of the bourgeoisie and a big majority of the middle classes are against Chávez, this unstable equilibrium between the bourgeoisie and the masses, mediated by Chávez, cannot continue for ever. Sooner or later there will be a gigantic confrontation and the Bolivarian movement and the Chávez, leadership will have to make a choice. Depending on the loyalty of key army officers is useless.

With the threats of the right and imperialism the consolidation of popular committees into a national network of popular

Latin America

New Challenges to Imperialism

James Cockcroft

power is crucial. This must involve the arming of the popular sectors and the building of a popular militia.

There are important signs that polarisation is deepening rapidly. In Merida right-wing students have organised prolonged riots. The recent national congress of the progressive union federation, the UNT, split between left and right and did not conclude its business or elect a new leadership. These are straws in the wind and it would be stupid to ignore the gathering storm clouds. Imperialism and the bourgeoisie want Chávez out, and there is now a race between revolution and counter-revolution.

In Bolivia Evo Morales has moved decisively to clip the wings of the multinational corporations by nationalising the oil and gas. But this does not amount to expropriation, but in effect a significant hike in the taxes Bolivia charges the corporations. Even so his move is massively unpopular with imperialism and the right.

The exact direction in which the Morales government will go is unknown. In the medium term, Morales and his team will have to make their choice - between the oligarchy and imperialism on the one hand and the self-organised masses on the other. The example of Lula and the fate of the Brazilian PT is eloquent. If you try to avoid the question of power, you will end up either defeated or capitulating.

This article is based on a talk given at the 24 June 2006 Socialist Resistance day school on Latin America.

❖ Phil Hearse, a veteran revolutionary socialist in Britain, writes for Socialist Resistance.

NOTES

[1] On this debate see The Debate on Power at Marxsite

More than 25 years of neoliberalism in Latin America have undermined the region's local industry, small farms, and employment opportunities. The resulting gradual economic genocide has generated humiliating poverty for three-fourths of Latin Americans, downward mobility for shrinking intermediate classes, last-ditch fight-backs by dwindling ranks of organized labor, and waves of internal and external migration.

It has also produced a new wave of social movements and leftward electoral swings. There are, to be sure, strong counter-tendencies, including attempts to destabilize governments; counter-revolutionary plots and mobilizations; more repression and paramilitary terrorism; and accelerating violence against women, gays, transsexuals, ethnic minorities, nonconformist youth, journalists, and human rights groups.

What is at stake in Latin America is nothing less than national sovereignty and control of basic resources, including oil, gas, water, low-wage labor, biodiversity, schools, hospitals, housing, transportation, pensions, banks, and industries. The social movements are protesting the privatization of nature, the commodification of life, and the pillage imposed by neoliberal globalization, together with the illegitimate, unpayable foreign debts passed down from the dictatorships.

The presidential electoral shift from the "hard neoliberal" right to the "soft neoliberal" center is exemplified in the elections of Lula in Brazil, Néstor Kirchner in Argentina, Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay, Michelle Bachelet in Chile, even Nicanor Duarte in Paraguay who initially backed MERCOSUR, South America's alternative to FTAA that recently has incorporated Venezuela.

Similar electoral shifts are expected in upcoming elections in Peru, Mexico, Ecuador, a few

smaller nations of the Caribbean Basin, and possibly even Colombia. Candidates routinely pledge not to implement free-market fundamentalism and the FTAA, even though after being elected these politicians give life support to the moribund neoliberal economic model, and in some respects strengthen it.

This is in part due to the last few decades' weakening of the state by privatization schemes, free trade pacts, and foreign debt burdens, leaving governments vulnerable to what amounts to foreign capital blackmail. That is a major reason why social movements target the IMF, World Bank, FTAA, and WTO, in addition to US and European imperialisms (Spain having passed the United States in Latin American investments).

The space for a more "humane" neoliberalism or bourgeois nationalism has disappeared. That is why Bolivia's Evo Morales and Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, while on many issues cooperating with the other recently elected presidents, reject their "soft neoliberalism" approach, advocating instead revolutionary changes based on state support for the demands of the social movements.

Morales calls for a "communitarian socialism based on reciprocity and solidarity," while Chávez emphasizes the need to internationalize the revolution and create "a new socialism for the 21st century"

Teachers march in Oaxaca



because "another world is not possible within capitalism."

A striking new element of today's social movements is their increased resistance to co-optation, their growing numbers of impoverished participants and their tactical inventiveness. Traditional class structures and modes of struggle today are barely recognizable because of neoliberalism's slashing of state social programs and use of "flexible labor" leading to the collapse of the minimum wage, immiseration of the masses, rising unemployment, and for even well educated professionals "precariousness" of work and "over-exploitation." The lines dividing social classes and social movements have become blurred.

For the indigenous peoples of Latin America, neoliberalism exists as "merely" the latest wrinkle in 500 years of genocidal subjection and enduring resistance. In this sense, they are aware of certain historic realities, such as the continuity of colonialism/imperialism; ecological destruction; the creation and perpetuation of an unpayable debt as a tool for dominating a people; and the routine use of kidnappings, disappearances, torture, and violence against women.

Women have borne the brunt of the economic suffering under neoliberalism, not to mention the stepped-up violence of everyday life. Protests about the escalated

abuse of women and the sex trade (now an even larger economy than narco-trafficking) have become a focus of not only feminist movements like the World March of Women, but of social movements in general.

Examples of female leadership range from the Zapatista comandantas to the Argentine piqueteras (unemployed people blocking busy intersections) and Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Especially noteworthy are the women who led the nationwide outpouring to save President Hugo Chávez's life during the two-day reign of Pedro Carmona ("Pedro El Breve") after the US-sponsored military coup of April 11, 2002, and the Bolivian workers, street vendors, and heads of households of El Alto who have organized defense-and-struggle committees.

The role of peasants and small farmers, in spite of increased repression, has become prominent. In most cases, the multi-ethnic "peasantry" constitutes a new inexpensive, flexible, and migrant labor force. Whether Andean coca cultivators or landless workers like Brazil's Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem-Terra (MST, part of the Via Campesina, a network of peasant movements in 87 countries), the rural masses have mobilized, even in the cities.

A new labor militancy has also arisen against transnational corporations and corrupted trade-union bosses (called *charros* in Mexico). Independent trade-union confederations like Mexico's Authentic Labor Front (FAT) or split-offs from old confederations like the National Union of Workers (UNT) in Venezuela and Mexico are springing up everywhere. In Chile, "Workers Collectives" have begun to fill the virtual void of trade unions left by the still not completely dismantled state-terrorist Pinochet dictatorship.

As importantly, workers' struggles are being internationalized, linking up campaigns such as that of Coca Cola workers in Guatemala, Colombia, and India, as well as the unionization fights in the maquiladoras (low-wage assembly plants) of Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. Latin American workers have occupied so many factories abandoned by their owners and made them productive again that in late 2005, Venezuela hosted a continental congress for workers of recuperated factories.

There is also a growing recognition among Latin American peoples of the need to form alliances and to internationalize their struggles. Examples of the new internationalism, besides those already mentioned, include the Continental Campaign against the FTAA sponsored by the Continental Social Alliance and the campaign for the demilitarization of Latin America that Mexico's Zapatistas began in Chiapas in 2003 and which currently links up with the international campaign to close the more than 700 US military bases in 130 countries. The Zapatistas' "Other Campaign," initiated in 2006, also has a very internationalist perspective.

Socialism is of growing interest in Latin America. Public opinion polls in Venezuela and Brazil show more than half of each nation's population favoring socialism, a word rarely heard in countries like Chile and Mexico; but there is a growing debate about the kinds of socialisms that should be sought.

There already exists a process of initiating what might be called "two, three, many socialisms," starting with the Cuban Revolution of 1959. As the famed Peruvian Marxist José Carlos Mariátegui (d. 1930) wrote, Latin Americans do not want a replica of European socialism, but instead want one

based on their own reality, in Peru's case the indigenous peoples.

Thus, Cuba's socialism is distinctly Cuban, Venezuela's is rooted in the ideas of Simón Bolívar, Bolivia's is based on indigenous traditions, and Ecuador's indigenous leader Blanca Chancoso suggests "a plurinational, pluricultural state that we can build together." And the Zapatistas (who do not speak of socialism) advocate a system where all power comes from below, as in their autonomous "juntas of good government" in Chiapas.

The debates show Latin America's multiple socialist perspectives to share four characteristics:

- (1) Human-values driven, seeking an end to patriarchy, racism, sexism, class exploitation, and genocide, based on values of love (as in the works of Ché and José Martí), respect for others, and social justice;
- (2) Participatory, without Stalinist-type authoritarianism, but with multiple-level planning, worker-controlled enterprises, and "politics instead of politicking" (in the words of Fidel Castro), rooted in using the state and people's participation from below instead of "party-ocracy" or "vanguardism";
- (3) Internationalist, planning both home markets and international ones, defending peoples against neoliberalism and imperialist interventions, and building veto-free inter-state organizations to promote peace and human rights; and
- (4) Pro-sovereignty of nation-states in defense of the principles of non-intervention, non-aggression, and self-determination, including new states created to link up many peoples (as in Bolivia and Venezuela) and ones aspiring to true "national independence" through unification into a Latin American state or confederation

(as in Martí's concept of "Our America" and Bolívar's "Gran Patria").

Critical to the future of humanity and the planet will be the speed with which transitions away from neoliberal capitalism occur and the frequency of breaks, or ruptures, with capitalism. Ultimately, there can be no saving of humanity without a swiftly expanded practice of internationalism, already given new life by recent developments in Latin America and the alter-globalization movement. Internationalism is a process of human solidarity and exchange of experiences, learning from "the other." People in what Martí called "the belly of the beast," that is, the United States, have a chance to make a critical difference.

All will depend on how much unity and internationalism can be built among the social movements and among different governments in the face of imperialism's stepped-up pressures. Debates about Latin American socialisms, even among the supporters of the Zapatista "Other Campaign," are based on the principle of creating ecologically responsible states of "people's power," where the people (or in Zapatista language, those of below) are, in the words of Venezuela's new Constitution, the "protagonists." All agree on the overarching goal: to liberate humanity, celebrate life, honor death, and save the planet.

This article will soon be published in LiP magazine.

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Strategy of tension in Mexico?

"Teachers killed" in Oaxaca police attack, says union

Several people were killed, according to local union leaders, when thousands of state and federal police attacked the encampment (plantón) of striking schoolteachers in the central square of the Mexican city Oaxaca on 14 June. The attack was a desperate move by Oaxaca state Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortíz to crush the more than 50,000 striking schoolteachers, who have been leading a massive movement calling for Ruiz Ortíz of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to resign.

But it also fits in with what increasingly looks like a 'strategy of tension' stoked up by Mexican President Vicente Fox ahead of the July 2 presidential election. This strategy has involved the violent attack on San Salvador Atenco, and similar attacks on striking copper miners and citizens of the Isla Mujeres, protesting against the establishment on their island of a rubbish dump for the garbage from nearby tourist resort Cancun.

Several thousand police attacked the teachers' encampment at 4.40am firing tear gas and brutally beating strikers. According to the teachers' union SNTE police carried away several bodies of people shot dead, which has led to the confusion about the number of fatalities, with the Red Cross at one point reporting 11 dead, while the national teachers' union now puts the figure at three or four. While the police wrecked the encampment and set part of it on fire, there is no guarantee they can hold the zócalo (central square) against a massive and popular movement.

The five-week old strike is much more than a dispute over teachers' pay. The Oaxaca Section XXII of the National Education Workers' Union (SNTE) has attracted massive support for its demands, which include equal pay throughout a state which is divided into three salary zones based on the supposed cost of living. The

teachers are also demanding an increase for students receiving grants, which now amount to 450 pesos per month. That's \$40 US dollars. They're demanding decent schools, classroom supplies, and government funding for uniforms which are out of reach of so many poor families that the children stay at home.

The SNTE has skilfully contrasted the lack of resources for education in Oaxaca with the evident corruption of the PRI state government. Ruiz Ortíz has spent millions of pesos on unnecessary building works in the central city area, widely seen as a scam to siphon money to his business cronies. Moreover, strikers allege that some 900,000 pesos has disappeared into PRI funds. More than 800 local communities representing Oaxaca's many ethnicities have supported the SNTE struggle, linking it to their own demands, repudiating violence, assassination, the holding of political prisoners, repression of the press and the heavy hand of political bosses ("caciques"). Teachers in Mexico, who are generally very badly paid but highly popular in their local communities, have long been a centre of militancy and the social movements.

Following the violence on 4 May during the police attack on Atenco, the subsequent violence and rapes committed against prisoners following the Atenco raid, the repression of the Isla



Mujeres protests and the attacks on the striking miners, there is no doubt a generalised pattern of repression, a 'strategy of tension', is emerging. Two things probably determine this - the July 2nd presidential election and the 'Other Campaign', propelled by the Zapatistas (EZLN).

The candidate of Vicente Fox's National Action Party (PAN), Felipe Calderon, is running neck and neck with Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, candidate of the centre-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). A 15 June opinion poll result showed that Lopez Obrador has regained the lead, and has about 35% compared with Calderon's 32%. Mexico's business elite and the political right are waging a hugely alarmist campaign against the politically very moderate PRD, alleging the country is becoming 'ungovernable' and a PRD government would worsen this. TV images of running fights

between protestors and police obviously contribute to the atmosphere of fear that Fox and the PAN (but also the PRI) are trying to generate.

At the same time, many militant social movements and political groupings have participated - more or less critically - in the EZLN's 'Other Campaign' which aims to create a broader alliance of social movements on an all-Mexico level. The attack on Atenco was clearly designed to coincide with the visit of Subcommandante Marcos as part of the Other Campaign tour, and was constructed around a giant provocation - preventing flower sellers setting up stalls on a piece of land owned by Wal-Mart - which was clearly planned in advance. Marcos and the EZLN are the other part of the climate of fear that the right wing media is trying to generate.



Mexico

Mega March replies to police violence

Hundreds of thousands marched into Oaxaca, Friday 16 June, to support striking teachers whose encampment was brutally attacked by police on Wednesday. The march went to the Zocalo (central square), already retaken by the demonstrators on Thursday.

Led by section 22 of the SNTE teachers union, the march was supported by students from the university of Oaxaca, local health and university workers and numerous other union, popular and left wing organisations -including a contingent from the Frente en Defensa de la Tierra in San Salvador Atenco and other supporters of the EZLN's 'Other Campaign'.

The principal demand of the demonstrators was the resignation of state governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz of the right-wing Institutional Revolutionary Party, widely accused of corruption.

Organisers put the numbers marching at 300,000, the police said 70,000 and the governor's office said 15,000. Last Wednesday's attack on the Oaxaca is the latest in a series of brutal actions by paramilitary police against striking copper miners, residents of Atenco and communities in Isla Mujeres that are trying to prevent their island becoming a rubbish dump for the trash from Cancun. Two were killed in Atenco and two copper miners also died.

These actions, directly organised by the national intelligence committee chaired by President Vicente Fox, are widely seen as trying to create a 'strategy of tension' - a climate of fear aimed at discrediting the



Oaxaca teachers greet release of their comrades

EZLN's 'Other campaign' and ensuring a right-wing victory in the July 2 presidential election. (Recent opinion polls put Felipe Calderon, candidate of Fox's right-wing National Action Party (PAN) slightly behind Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, candidate of the centre-left PRD.)

After negotiations the state government released 10 teachers arrested on Wednesday and suspended the arrest orders on 25 leading union activists. Negotiations on the teachers pay and other demands are continuing.

Earlier reports of deaths among the teachers on Wednesday have not been confirmed. But according an eyewitness report posted on Narco News, June 17, "One of the unconfirmed dead was a child from the town of

Villa Alta. Names of the dead and injured were not released for family security reasons, and true numbers remain a secret. Gossip is everywhere, including the assertion that URO has the bodies under lock and key in a morgue. Although the names of the wounded, including police, have been made public, the names of the alleged dead and their numbers have not.

"According to the leader of Section 22, Enrique Rueda Pacheco, 20 teachers were arrested, and eight "disappeared". According to Noticias on June 15, Pacheco said that two teachers and two children were killed. Between 30 and 100 were wounded from both teacher and police sides of the fight, according to various unofficial sources."

Mega march repudiates Ruiz Ortiz and paramilitary police violence



New IIRE pamphlet

Change the world without taking power?...

or

...Take power to change the world?

Change the World without taking power?...or... Take Power to change the world?



The International Institute for Study and Research (IIRE) has collated a number of documents on the debate about changing the world without taking power. Authors include John Holloway, Daniel Bensaid and Alex Callinicos. Click on the pdf logo on this webpage to download...

...and in our next article we publish one of the contributions from Daniel Bensaid - "On a Recent Book by John Holloway".

Marxism

On a Recent Book by John Holloway

From the new IIRE pamphlet

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Can we speak of a libertarian current, as if this continuous thread were unrolling throughout contemporary history, as if it were possible to tie a sufficient number of affinities to it to make what holds it together win out over what divides it? Such a current, if in fact it exists, is indeed characterised by a considerable theoretical eclecticism, and crosscut by strategic orientations that not only diverge but also often contradict each other. We can nonetheless maintain the hypothesis that there is a libertarian 'tone' or 'sensibility' that is broader than anarchism as a specifically defined political position. It is thus possible to speak of a libertarian communism (exemplified notably by Daniel Guérin), a libertarian messianism (Walter Benjamin), a libertarian Marxism (Michael Löwy and Miguel Abensour), and even a 'libertarian Leninism' whose especial source is State and Revolution.

This 'family resemblance' (often torn apart and stitched back together) is not enough to found a coherent genealogy. We can instead refer to 'libertarian moments' registered in very different situations and drawing their inspiration from quite distinct theoretical sources. We can distinguish three key moments in rough outline:

- ❖ A constituent (or classic) moment exemplified by the trio Stirner/Proudhon/Bakunin. The *Ego and Its Own* (Stirner) and *The Philosophy of Poverty* (Proudhon) were published in the mid-1840s. During those same years Bakunin's thought was shaped over the course of a long and winding journey that took him from Berlin to Brussels by way of Paris. This was the watershed moment in which the period of post-revolutionary reaction drew to a close and the uprisings of 1848 were brewing. The modern state was taking shape. A new consciousness of individuality was discovering the chains of modernity in the pain of romanticism. An unprecedented social movement was stirring up the depths of a people that was being fractured and divided by the eruption of class struggle. In this transition, between 'already-no-longer' and 'not-yet', different forms of libertarian thought were flirting with blooming utopias and romantic ambivalences. A dual movement was being sketched out of breaking with and being pulled towards the liberal tradition. Daniel Cohn-Bendit's identification with a 'liberal-libertarian' orientation follows in the footsteps of this formative ambiguity.

- ❖ An anti-institutional or anti-bureaucratic moment, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The experience of

parliamentarianism and mass trade unionism was revealing at that time 'the professional dangers of power' and the bureaucratisation threatening the labour movement. The diagnosis can be found in Rosa Luxemburg's work as well as in Robert Michels' classic book on Political Parties (1910); [1] in the revolutionary syndicalism of Georges Sorel and Fernand Pelloutier; and equally in the critical fulgurations of Gustav Landauer. We also find traces of it in Péguy's *Cahiers de la Quinzaine* [2] or in Labriola's Italian Marxism.

- ❖ A third, post-Stalinist moment responds to the great disillusionment of the tragic century of extremes. A neo-libertarian current, more diffuse but more influential than the direct heirs of classical anarchism, is confusedly emerging. It constitutes a state of mind, a 'mood', rather than a well-defined orientation. It is engaging with the aspirations (and weaknesses) of the renescent social movements. The themes of authors like Toni Negri and John Holloway [3] are thus much more inspired by Foucault and Deleuze than by historic 19th-century sources, of which classic anarchism itself scarcely exercises its right to make a critical inventory. [4]

Amidst these 'moments' we can find ferrymen (like Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch and Karl Korsch) who initiate the transition and critical transmission of the revolutionary heritage, 'rubbing against the grain' of the Stalinist glaciation.

The contemporary resurgence and metamorphoses of libertarian currents are easily explained:



- ❖ by the depth of the defeats and disappointments experienced since the 1930s, and by the heightened consciousness of the dangers that threaten a politics of emancipation from within;

- ❖ by the deepening of the process of individualisation and the emergence of an 'individualism without individuality', anticipated in the controversy between Stirner and Marx; and

- ❖ by the steadily fiercer forms of resistance to the disciplinary contrivances and procedures of bio-political control on the part of those who are being subjected to a subjectivity mutilated by market reification.

In this context, in spite of the profound disagreements that we will expound in this article, we are glad to grant Negri and Holloway's contributions the merit of relaunching a much-needed strategic debate in the movements of resistance to imperial globalisation, after a sinister quarter-century in which this kind of debate had withered away, while those who refused to surrender to the (un)reason of the triumphant market swung back and forth between a rhetoric of resistance without any horizon of expectation and the fetishist expectation of some miraculous event. We have taken up elsewhere the critique of Negri and his evolution. [5] Here we will begin a discussion with John Holloway, whose recent book bears a title that is a programme in itself and has already provoked lively debates in both the English-speaking world and Latin America.

Statism as original sin

In the beginning was the scream. John Holloway's approach starts from imperative of unconditional resistance: we scream! It is a cry not only of rage, but also of hope. We let out a scream, a scream against, a negative scream, the Zapatistas' scream in Chiapas - 'Ya Basta! Enough of this!' - a scream of refusal to submit, of dissent. 'The aim of this book', Holloway announces from the start, 'is to strengthen negativity, to take the side of the fly in the web, to make the scream more

strident. [6] What has brought the Zapatistas (whose experience haunts Holloway's disquisition throughout) together with others 'is not a positive common class composition but rather the community of their negative struggle against capitalism'. [7] Holloway is thus describing a struggle whose aim is to negate the inhumanity that has been imposed on us, in order to recapture a subjectivity that is immanent in negativity itself. We have no need of a promise of a happy end to justify our rejection of the world as it is. Like Foucault, Holloway wants stay connected with the million, multiple forms of resistance, which are irreducible to the binary relation between capital and labour.

Yet this way of taking sides by crying out is not enough. It is also necessary to be able to give an account of the great disillusionment of the last century. Why did all those cries, those millions of cries, repeated millions of times over, not only leave capital's despotic order standing but even leave it more arrogant than ever? Holloway thinks he has the answer. The worm was in the apple; that is, the (theoretical) vice was originally nestled inside the emancipatory virtue: statism was gnawing away at most variants of the workers' movement from the beginning. Changing the world by means of the state thus constituted in his eyes the dominant paradigm of revolutionary thought, which was subjected from the 19th century on to an instrumental, functional vision of the state. The illusion that society could be changed by means of the state flowed (Holloway says) from a certain idea of state sovereignty. But we have ended up learning that 'we cannot change the world through the state', which only constitutes 'a node in a web of power relations'. [8] This state must not be confused in fact with power. All it does is define the division between citizens and non-citizens (the foreigner, the excluded, Gabriel Tarde's man 'rejected by the world' or Arendt's pariah). The state is thus very precisely what the word suggests: 'a bulwark against change, against the flow of doing', or in other words 'the embodiment of identity'. [9] It is not a thing that can be laid hold of in order to turn it against those who have controlled it until now, but rather a social form, or, more accurately, a process of formation of social relations: 'a process of statification of social conflict'. [10] Claiming to struggle by means of the state thus leads inevitably to defeating oneself. Stalin's 'statist strategies' thus do not for Holloway constitute in any sense a betrayal of Bolshevism's revolutionary spirit, but its complete fulfilment: 'the logical outcome of a state-centred concept of social change'. [11] The Zapatista challenge by contrast consists of saving the revolution from the collapse of the statist illusion and at the same time from the collapse of the illusion of power.

Before we go any further in reading Holloway's book, it is already apparent:

❖ That he has reduced the luxuriant history of the workers' movement, its experiences and controversies to a single line of march of statism through the ages, as if very different theoretical and strategic conceptions had not been constantly battling with each other. He thus presents an imaginary Zapatismo as something absolutely innovative, haughtily ignoring the fact that the actually existing Zapatista discourse bears within it, albeit without knowing it, a number of older themes.

❖ By his account the dominant paradigm of revolutionary thought consists of a functionalist statism. We could accept that - only by swallowing the very dubious assumption that the majoritarian ideology of social democracy (symbolised by Noskes and other Eberts) and the bureaucratic Stalinist orthodoxy can both be subsumed under the elastic heading of 'revolutionary thought'. This is taking very little account of an abundant critical literature on the question of the state, which ranges from Lenin and Gramsci to contemporary polemics [12] by way of contributions that are impossible to ignore (whether one agrees with them or not) like those of Poulantzas and Altvater.

❖ Finally, reducing the whole history of the revolutionary movement to the genealogy of a 'theoretical deviation' makes it possible to hover over real history with a flap of angelic wings, but at the risk of endorsing the reactionary thesis (from François Furet to Gérard Courtois) of an unbroken continuity from the October Revolution to the Stalinist counter-revolution - its 'logical outcome!' - incidentally without subjecting Stalinism to any serious analysis. David Rousset, Pierre Naville, Moshe Lewin, Mikail Guefter (not to speak of Trotsky or Hannah Arendt, or even of Lefort or Castoriadis), are far more serious on this point.

The vicious circle of fetishism, or, how to get out of it?

The other source of the revolutionary movement's strategic divagations relates in Holloway's account to the abandonment (or forgetting) of the critique of fetishism that Marx introduced in the first volume of Capital. On this subject Holloway provides a useful, though sometimes quite sketchy, reminder. Capital is nothing other than past activity (dead labour) congealed in the form of property. Thinking in terms of property comes down however to thinking of property as a thing, in the terms of fetishism itself, which means in fact accepting the terms of domination. The problem does not derive from the fact that the capitalists own the means of production: 'Our struggle',

Holloway insists, 'is not the struggle to make ours the property of the means of production, but to dissolve both property and means of production: to recover or, better, create the conscious and confident sociality of the flow of doing.' [13]

But how can the vicious circle of fetishism be broken? The concept, says Holloway, refers to the unbearable horror constituted by the self-negation of the act. He thinks that Capital is devoted above all to developing the critique of this self-negation. The concept of fetishism contains in concentrated form the critique of bourgeois society (its 'enchanted ... world' [14] and of bourgeois theory (political economy), and at the same time lays bare the reasons for their relative stability: the infernal whirligig that turns objects (money, machines, commodities) into subjects and subjects into objects. This fetishism worms its way into all the pores of society to the point that the more urgent and necessary revolutionary change appears, the more impossible it seems to become. Holloway sums this up in a deliberately disquieting turn of phrase: 'the urgent impossibility of revolution'. [15]

This presentation of fetishism draws on several different sources: Lukács' account of reification, Horkheimer's account of instrumental rationality, Adorno's account of the circle of identity, and Marcuse's account of one-dimensional man. The concept of fetishism expresses for Holloway the power of capital exploding in our deepest selves like a missile shooting out a thousand coloured rockets. This is why the problem of revolution is not the problem of 'them' - the enemy, the adversary with a thousand faces - but first of all our problem, the problem that 'we', this 'we' fragmented by fetishism, constitute for ourselves.

The fetish, this 'real illusion', in fact enmeshes us in its toils and subjugates us. It makes the status of critique itself problematic: if social relationships are fetishised, how can we criticise them? And who, what superior and privileged beings, are the critics? In short, is critique itself still possible?

These are the questions, according to Holloway, that the notion of a vanguard, of an 'imputed' class consciousness (imputed by whom?), or the expectation of a redemptive event (the revolutionary crisis), claimed to answer. These solutions lead ineluctably to the problematic of a healthy subject or a champion of justice fighting against a sick society: a virtuous knight who could be incarnated in a 'working-class hero' or vanguard party.

This is a 'hard' conception of fetishism, which therefore leads to an insoluble double dilemma:

Is revolution conceivable? Is criticism still possible? How can we escape from this 'fetishisation of fetishism'? Who are we then to wield the corrosive power of critique? 'We are not God. We are not ... transcendent!' [16] And how can we avoid the dead end of a subaltern critique that remains under the ascendancy of the fetish that it is claiming to overthrow, inasmuch as negation implies subordination to what it negates?

Holloway puts forward several solutions:

- ❖ The reformist response, which concludes that the world cannot be radically transformed; we must content ourselves with rearranging it and fixing it around the edges. Today postmodernist rhetoric accompanies this form of resignation with its lesser chamber music.

- ❖ The traditional revolutionary response, which ignores the subtleties and marvels of fetishism and clings to the good old binary antagonism between capital and labour, so as to content itself with a change of ownership at the summit of the state: the bourgeois state simply becomes proletarian.

- ❖ A third way, which would consist by contrast of looking for hope in the very nature of capitalism and in its 'ubiquitous [or pluriform] power', to which a 'ubiquitous [or pluriform] resistance' is an appropriate response. [17]

Holloway believes that he can escape in this way from the system's circularity and deadly trap, by adopting a soft version of fetishism, understood not as a state of affairs but as a dynamic and contradictory process of fetishisation. He thinks this process is in fact pregnant with its contrary: the 'anti-fetishisation' of forms of resistance immanent to fetishism itself. We are not mere objectified victims of capital, but actual or potential antagonistic subjects: 'Our existence-against-capital' is thus 'the inevitable constant negation of our existence-in-capital'. [18]

Capitalism should be understood above all as separation from the subject and from the object, and modernity as the unhappy consciousness of this divorce. Within the problematic of fetishism the subject of capitalism is not the capitalist himself but the value that is valorised and becomes autonomous. Capitalists are nothing more than loyal agents of capital and of its impersonal despotism. But then for a functionalist Marxism capitalism appears as a closed, internally consistent system without any possible exit, at least until the arrival of the *deus ex machina*, the great miraculous moment of revolutionary upheaval. For Holloway by contrast the weakness of capitalism consists in the fact that capital 'is dependent on labour in a way in which labour

is not dependent upon capital': the 'insubordination of labour is thus the axis on which the constitution of capital as capital turns'. In the relationship of reciprocal but asymmetrical dependency between capital and labour, labour is thus capable of freeing itself from its opposite while capital is not. [19]

Holloway thus draws his inspiration from the autonomist theses previously put forward by Mario Tronti, which reversed the terms of the dilemma by presenting capital's role as purely reactive to the creative initiative of labour. In this perspective labour, as the active element of capital, always determines capitalist development by means of class struggle. Tronti presented his approach as 'a Copernican revolution within Marxism'. [20] While beguiled by this idea, Holloway still has reservations about a theory of autonomy that tends to renounce the work of negation (and in Negri's case to renounce any dialectic in favour of ontology) and to treat the industrial working class as a positive, mythical subject (just as Negri treats the multitude in his last book). A radical inversion should not content itself with transferring capital's subjectivity to labour, Holloway says, but should rather understand subjectivity as a negation, not as a positive affirmation.

To conclude (provisionally) on this point, we should acknowledge the service John Holloway has done in putting the question of fetishism and reification back in the heart of the strategic enigma. We need nonetheless to note the limited novelty of his argument. While the 'orthodox Marxism' of the Stalinist period (including Althusser) had in fact discarded the critique of fetishism, its red thread had nevertheless never been broken: starting from Lukács, we can follow it through the works of the authors who belonged to what Ernst Bloch called 'the warm current of Marxism': Roman Rosdolsky, Jakubowski, Ernest Mandel, Henri Lefèbvre (in his *Critique of Everyday Life*), Lucien Goldmann, Jean-Marie Vincent (whose *Fétichisme et Société* dates back to 1973!), [21] and more recently Stavros Tombazos and Alain Bihr. [22]

Emphasising the close connection between the processes of fetishisation and anti-fetishisation, Holloway, after many detours, brings us once more to the contradiction of the social relationship that manifests itself in class struggle. Like Chairman Mao, he makes clear nonetheless that since the terms of the contradiction are not symmetrical, the pole of labour forms its dynamic, determinant element. It's a bit like the boy who wrapped his arm around his head in order to grab his nose. We may note however that Holloway's stress on the process of 'defetishisation' at work within fetishisation enables him to

relativise ('defetishise'?) the question of property, which he declares without any further ado to be soluble in 'the flow of doing'. [23]

Questioning the status of his own critique, Holloway fails to escape from the paradox of the sceptic who doubts everything except his own doubt. The legitimacy of his own critique thus continues to hang on the question 'in whose name' and 'from which (partisan?) standpoint' he proclaims this dogmatic doubt (ironically underscored in the book by Holloway's refusal to bring it to a full stop). In short, 'Who are we, we who criticise?': [24] privileged, marginal people, decentred intellectuals, deserters from the system? Implicitly an intellectual elite, a kind of vanguard, Holloway admits. For once the choice has been made to dispense with or relativise class struggle, the role of the free-floating intellectual paradoxically emerges reinforced. We then quickly fail back once more into the - Kautskyist rather than Leninist - idea of science being brought by the intelligentsia 'into the proletarian class struggle from without' (by intellectuals in possession of scientific knowledge), rather than Lenin's idea of 'class political consciousness' (not science!) brought 'from outside the economic struggle' (not from outside the class struggle) by a party (not by a scientific intelligentsia). [25]

Decidedly, taking fetishism seriously does not make it easier to dispose of the old question of the vanguard, whatever word you use for it. After all, isn't Zapatismo still a kind of vanguard (and Holloway its prophet)?

'The Urgent Impossibility of Revolution'

Holloway proposes to return to the concept of revolution 'as a question, not as an answer'. [26] What's at stake in revolutionary change is no longer 'taking power' for Holloway but the very existence of power: 'The problem of the traditional concept of revolution is perhaps not that it aimed too high, but that it aimed too low'. [27] In fact, 'The only way in which revolution can now be imagined is not as the conquest of power but as the dissolution of power.' This and nothing else is what the Zapatistas, frequently cited as a reference point, mean when they declare that they want to create a world of humanity and dignity, 'but without taking power'. Holloway admits that this approach may not seem very realistic. While the experiences that inspire him have not aimed at taking power, neither have they - so far - succeeded in changing the world. Holloway simply (dogmatically?) asserts that there is no other way.

This certainty, however peremptory it may be, hardly brings us much further. How to

change the world without taking power? The book's author confides in us.

At the end of the book, as at the beginning, we do not know. The Leninists know, or used to know. We do not. Revolutionary change is more desperately urgent than ever, but we do not know any more what revolution means.... [O]ur not-knowing is ... the not-knowing of those who understand that not-knowing is part of the revolutionary process. We have lost all certainty, but the openness of uncertainty is central to revolution. 'Asking we walk', say the Zapatistas. We ask not only because we do not know the way ...but also because asking the way is part of the revolutionary process itself. [28]

So here we are at the heart of the debate. On the threshold of the new millennium, we no longer know what future revolutions will be like. But we know that capitalism will not be eternal, and that we urgently need to cast it off before it crushes us. This is the first meaning of the idea of revolution: it expresses the recurrent aspiration of the oppressed to their liberation. We also know - after the political revolutions that gave birth to the modern nation-state, and after the trials of 1848, the Commune and the defeated revolutions of the 20th century - that the revolution will be social or it will not be. This is the second meaning that the word revolution has taken on, since the Communist Manifesto. But on the other hand, after a cycle of mostly painful experiments, we have difficulty imagining the strategic form of revolutions to come. It is this third meaning of the word that escapes our grasp. This is not terribly new: nobody had planned the Paris Commune, soviet power or the Catalan Council of Militias. These forms of revolutionary power, 'found at last', were born of the struggle itself and from the subterranean memory of previous experiences.

Have so many beliefs and certainties vanished in mid-career since the Russian Revolution? Let us concede this (although I am not so sure of the reality of these certainties now so generously attributed to the credulous revolutionaries of yesteryear). This is no reason to forget the (often dearly paid) lessons of past defeats and the negative evidence of past setbacks. Those who thought they could ignore state power and its conquest have often been its victims: they didn't want to take power, so power took them. And those who thought they could dodge it, avoid it, get around it, invest it or circumvent it without taking it have too often been thrashed by it. The process-like force of 'defetishisation' has not been enough to save them.

Even 'Leninists' (which ones?), Holloway says, no longer know (how to change the

world). But did they ever, beginning with Lenin himself, claim to possess this doctrinaire knowledge that Holloway attributes to them? History is more complicated than that. In politics there can only be one kind of strategic knowledge: a conditional, hypothetical kind of knowledge, 'a strategic hypothesis' drawn from past experiences and serving as a plumb line, in the absence of which action disperses without attaining any results. The necessity of a hypothesis in no way prevents us from knowing that future experiences will always have their share of unprecedented, unexpected aspects, obliging us to correct it constantly. Renouncing any claim to dogmatic knowledge is thus not a sufficient reason to start from scratch and ignore the past, as long as we guard against the conformism that always threatens tradition (even revolutionary tradition). While waiting for new founding experiences, it would in fact be imprudent to frivolously forget what two centuries of struggles - from June 1848 to the Chilean and Indonesian counter-revolutions, by way of the Russian Revolution, the German tragedy and the Spanish Civil War - have so painfully taught us.

Until today there has never been a case of relations of domination not being torn asunder under the shock of revolutionary crises: strategic time is not the smooth time of the minute hand of a clock, but a jagged time whose pace is set by sudden accelerations and abrupt decelerations. At these critical moments forms of dual power have always emerged, posing the question 'who will beat whom'. In the end no crisis has ever turned out well from the point of view of the oppressed without resolute intervention by a political force (whether you call it a party or a movement) carrying a project forward and capable of taking decisions and decisive initiatives.

We have lost our certainties, Holloway repeats like the hero played by Yves Montand in a bad movie (*Les Routes du Sud*, with a script by Jorge Semprun). No doubt we must learn to do without them. But wherever there is a struggle (whose outcome is uncertain by definition) there is a clash of opposing wills and convictions, which are not certainties but guides to action, subject to the always-possible falsifications of practice. We must say yes to the 'openness to uncertainty' that Holloway demands, but no to a leap into a strategic void!

In the depths of this void the only possible outcome of the crisis is the event itself, but an event without actors, a purely mythical event, cut off from its historical conditions, which pulls loose from the realm of political struggle only to tumble into the domain of theology. This is what Holloway calls to

mind when he invites his readers to think 'of an anti-politics of events rather than a politics of organisation'. [29] The transition from a politics of organisation to an anti-politics of the event can find its way, he says, by means of the experiences of May '68, the Zapatista rebellion or the wave of demonstrations against capitalist globalisation. These 'events are flashes against fetishism, festivals of the non-subordinate, carnivals of the oppressed'. [30] Is carnival the form, found at long last, of the post-modern revolution?

Remembrance of subjects past

Will it be a revolution - a carnival - without actors? Holloway reproaches 'identity politics' with the 'fixation of identities': the appeal to what one is supposed to 'be' always in his eyes implies a crystallisation of identity, whereas there are no grounds for distinguishing between good and bad identities. Identities only take on meaning in a specific situation and in a transitory way: claiming a Jewish identity did not have the same significance in Nazi Germany that it does today in Israel. Referring to a lovely text in which Sub-Commandante Marcos champions the multiplicity of overlapping and superimposed identities under the anonymity of the famous ski-mask, Holloway goes so far as to present Zapatismo as an 'explicitly anti-identitarian' movement. [31] The crystallisation of identity by contrast is for him the antithesis of reciprocal recognition, community, friendship and love, and a form of selfish solipsism. While identification and classificatory definition are weapons in the disciplinary arsenal of power, the dialectic expresses the deeper meaning of non-identity: 'We, the non-identical, fight against this identification. The struggle against capital is the struggle against identification. It is not the struggle for an alternative identity.' [32] Identifying comes down to thinking based on being, while thinking based on doing and acting is identifying and denying identification in one and the same movement. [33] Holloway's critique thus presents itself as an 'an assault on identity', [34] a refusal to let oneself be defined, classified and identified. We are not what they think, and the world is not what they claim.

What point is there then in continuing to say 'we'? What can this royal 'we' in fact refer to? It cannot designate any great transcendental subject (Humanity, Woman, or the Proletariat). Defining the working class would mean reducing it to the status of an object of capital and stripping it of its subjectivity. The quest for a positive subject must thus be renounced: 'Class, like the state, like money, like capital, must be understood as process. Capitalism is the ever renewed generation of class, the ever renewed classification of people.' [35] The approach is

hardly new (for those of us who have never looked for a substance in the concept of class struggle, but only for a relation). It is this process of 'formation', always begun anew and always incomplete, that E.P. Thompson brilliantly studied in his book on the English working class.

But Holloway goes further. While the working class can constitute a sociological notion, there does not for him exist any such thing as a revolutionary class. Our 'struggle is not to establish a new identity or composition, but to intensify anti-identity. The crisis of identity is a liberation': [36] it will free a plurality of forms of resistance and a multiplicity of screams. This multiplicity cannot be subordinated to the a priori unity of a mythical Proletariat; for from the standpoint of doing and acting we are this that and many other things as well, depending on the situation and the shifting conjuncture. Do all identifications, however fluid and variable, play an equivalent role in determining the terms and stakes of the struggle? Holloway fails to ask (himself) the question. Taking his distance from Negri's fetishism of the multitude, he expresses fear only when the unresolved strategic enigma breaks through: he worries that emphasising multiplicity while forgetting the underlying unity of the relationships of power can lead to a loss of political perspective, to the point that emancipation then becomes inconceivable. So, noted.

The spectre of anti-power

In order to get out of this impasse and solve the strategic enigma posed by the sphinx of capital, Holloway's last word is 'anti-power': 'This book is an exploration of the absurd and shadowy world of anti-power.' [37] He uses the distinction developed by Negri between 'power-to' ('potentia') and 'power-over' ('potestas') for his own purposes. The goal he advocates is to free power-to from power-over, doing from work, and subjectivity from objectification. If power-over sometimes comes 'out of the barrel of a gun', this he thinks is not the case with power-to. The very notion of anti-power still depends on power-over. Yet the struggle to liberate power-to is not the struggle to construct a counter-power, but rather an anti-power, something that is radically different from power-over. Concepts of revolution that focus on the taking of power are typically centred on the notion of counter-power.

Thus the revolutionary movement has too often been constructed 'as a mirror image of power, army against army, party against party'. Holloway defines anti-power by contrast as 'the dissolution of power-over' in the interest of 'the emancipation of power-to'. [38] What is Holloway's strategic conclusion (or anti-strategic conclusion, if

strategy as well is too closely linked to power-over)? 'It should now be clear that power cannot be taken, for the simple reason that power is not possessed by any particular person or institution' but rather lies 'in the fragmentation of social relations'. [39] Having reached this sublime height, Holloway contentedly contemplates the volume of dirty water being bailed out of the bathtub, but he worries about how many babies are being thrown out with it. The perspective of power to the oppressed has indeed given way to an indefinable, ungraspable anti-power, about which we are told only that it is everywhere and nowhere, like the centre of Pascale's circumference. Does the spectre of anti-power thus haunt the bewitched world of capitalist globalisation? It is on the contrary very much to be feared that the multiplication of 'anti's' (the anti-power of an anti-revolution made with an anti-strategy) might in the end be no more than a paltry rhetorical stratagem, whose ultimate result is to disarm the oppressed (theoretically and practically) without for all that breaking the iron grasp of capital and its domination.

An imaginary Zapatismo

Philosophically, Holloway finds in Deleuze and Foucault's works a representation of power as a 'multiplicity of relationships of forces', rather than as a binary relationship. This ramified power can be distinguished from the state based on sovereign prerogatives and its apparatuses of domination. The approach is hardly a new one. As early as the 1970s, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* and *History of Sexuality Volume One* influenced certain critical reinterpretations of Marx. [40] Holloway's problematic, often close to Negri's, nonetheless diverges from it when he reproaches Negri with limiting himself to a radical democratic theory founded on the counterposition of constituent power to institutionalised power: a still binary logic of a clash of titans between the monolithic might of capital (Empire with a capital letter) and the monolithic might of the Multitude (also with a capital letter).

Holloway's main reference point is the Zapatista experience, whose theoretical spokesperson he appoints himself. His Zapatismo seems however to be imaginary, or even mythical, inasmuch as it takes hardly any account of the real contradictions of the political situation, the real difficulties and obstacles that the Zapatistas have encountered since the uprising of 1 January 1994. Limiting himself to the level of discourse, Holloway does not even try to identify the reasons for the Zapatistas' failure to develop an urban base.

The innovative character of Zapatista communications and thought are undeniable. In his lovely book *The Zapatista Spark* Jérôme Baschet analyses the Zapatistas' contributions with sensitivity and subtlety, without trying to deny their uncertainties and contradictions. [41] Holloway by contrast tends to take their rhetoric literally.

Limiting ourselves to the issues of power and counter-power, civil society and the vanguard, there can scarcely be any doubt that the Chiapas uprising of 1 January 1994 ('the moment when the critical forces were once more set in motion', says Baschet) should be seen as part of the renewal of resistance to neoliberal globalisation that has since become unmistakable, from Seattle to Genoa by way of Porto Alegre. This moment is also a strategic 'ground zero', a moment of critical reflection, stocktaking and questioning, in the aftermath of the 'short twentieth century' and the Cold War (presented by Marcos as a sort of third world war). In this particular transitional situation, the Zapatista spokespeople insist that 'Zapatismo does not exist' (Marcos) and that it has 'neither a line nor recipes'. They say they do not want to capture the state or even take power, but that they aspire to 'to something only a bit more difficult: a new world'. What we need to take is ourselves, Holloway translates. Yet the Zapatistas do reaffirm the necessity of a 'new revolution': there can be no change without a break. This is thus the hypothesis that Holloway has developed of a revolution without taking power. Looking at the Zapatistas' formulations more closely however, they are more complex and ambiguous than they first seem. One can see in them first of all a form of self-criticism of the armed movements of the 1960s and '70s, of military verticalism, of the readiness to give orders to social movements, and of caudilloist deformations. At this level Marcos' texts and the EZLN communiqués mark a salutary turning point, renewing the hidden tradition of 'socialism from below' and popular self-emancipation.

The goal is not to take power for oneself (the party, army or vanguard) but rather to contribute to turning power over to the people, while emphasising the difference between the state apparatuses strictly speaking and relationships of power that are more deeply embedded in social relations (beginning with the social division of labour among individuals, between the sexes, between intellectual and manual workers, etc.). At a second, tactical level, the Zapatista discourse on power points to a discursive strategy. Conscious as they are that the conditions for overthrowing the central government and ruling class are far from being met on the scale of a country with a 3000-kilometre-long border with the American imperial giant, the Zapatistas

choose not to want what they cannot achieve in any event. This is making a virtue of necessity so as to position themselves for a war of attrition and a lasting duality of power, at least on a regional scale.

At a third, strategic level, the Zapatista discourse comes down to denying the importance of the question of power in order simply to demand the organisation of civil society. This theoretical position reproduces for them the dichotomy between civil society (social movements) and political (particularly electoral) institutions. Civil society is in their eyes dedicated to acting as pressure (lobbying) groups on institutions that civil society is resigned to being unable to change.

Situated in not very favourable national, regional and international relationships of forces, the Zapatista discourse plays on all these different registers, while the Zapatistas' practice navigates skilfully among all the rocks. This is absolutely legitimate - as long as we do not take pronouncements that are founded on strategic calculations, while claiming to rise above them, too literally. The Zapatistas themselves know full well that they are playing for time; they can relativise the question of power in their communiqués, but they do know that the actually existing power of the Mexican bourgeoisie and army, and even the 'Northern colossus', will not fail to crush the indigenous rebellion in Chiapas if they get the chance, just as the US and Colombian state are now trying to crush the Colombian guerrillas. By painting a quasi-angelic picture of Zapatismo, at the cost of taking his distance from any concrete history or politics, Holloway is sustaining dangerous illusions. Not only does the Stalinist counter-revolution play no role in his balance sheet of the twentieth century, but also, in his work as in François Furet's, all history results from correct or incorrect ideas. He thus allows himself a balance sheet in which all the books are already closed, since in his eyes both experiences have failed, the reformist experience as well as the revolutionary. The verdict is to say the least hasty, wholesale (and crude), as if there existed only two symmetrical experiences, two competing and equally failed approaches; and as if the Stalinist regime (and its other avatars) resulted from the 'revolutionary experience' rather than the Thermidorian counter-revolution. This strange historic logic would make it just as possible to proclaim that the French Revolution has failed, the American Revolution has failed, etc. [42]

We will have to dare to go far beyond ideology and plunge into the depths of historical experience in order to pick up once more the thread of a strategic debate that has been buried under the sheer weight of

accumulated defeats. On the threshold of a world that is in some ways wholly new to us, in which the new straddles the old, it is better to acknowledge what we do not know and stay open to new experiences to come than to theorise our powerlessness by minimising the obstacles that lie ahead.

❖ Daniel Bensaïd is one of France's most prominent Marxist philosophers and has written extensively. He is a leading member of the LCR (French section of the Fourth International).

NOTES

[1] Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, trans. by Eden Paul [et al.], New York: Free Press, 1987.

[2] See Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia*, London: Athlone, 1992.

[3] See in particular Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000, and John Holloway, *Change the World without Taking Power*, London: Pluto Press, 2002 (Spanish translation: *Cambiar el Mundo sin Tomar el Poder*, Buenos Aires: Herramienta, 2002).

[4] It is in fact striking in this respect to observe how much more respectful (and even ceremonious) and how much less critical this tendency is of its heritage than heterodox neo-Marxism is when it turns 'back to Marx'.

[5] See Daniel Bensaïd, *La Discordance des temps*, Paris: Editions de la Passion, 1995; *Résistances: Essai de Taupologie Générale*, Paris: Fayard, 2001; articles in *ContreTemps* no. 2 and the Italian journal *Erre* no. 1 (on the notion of the multitude); and finally a contribution that will be published by Verso in an English-language anthology.

[6] Citations from John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power*, London: Pluto Press, 2002, p. 8.

[7] Holloway 2002, p. 164.

[8] Holloway 2002, p. 19.

[9] Holloway 2002, p. 73.

[10] Holloway 2002, p. 94.

[11] Holloway 2002, p. 96.

[12] See the debates published in *ContreTemps* no. 3.

[13] Holloway 2002, p. 210.

[14] Holloway 2002, p. 54, quoting Marx 1966, p. 830.

[15] Holloway 2002, p. 74.

[16] Holloway 2002, p. 140.

[17] Holloway 2002, p. 76.

[18] Holloway 2002, p. 90.

[19] Holloway 2002, p. 182.

[20] Holloway hardly ventures at all to examine this Copernican revolution critically. Yet a quarter of a century later an evaluation is possible, if only to avoid repeating the same theoretical illusions and the same practical errors while dressing up the same discourse in new terminological clothes. See on this subject Maria Turchetto's contribution on 'the disconcerting trajectory of Italian autonomism' in *Dictionnaire Marx Contemporain*,

Jacques Bidet and Eustache Kouvélikis eds., Paris: PUF, 2001; and Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*, London: Pluto Press, 2002.

[21] Jean-Marie Vincent, *Fétichisme et Société*, Paris: Anthropos, 1973.

[22] Stavros Tombazos, *Les Temps du Capital*, Paris: Cahiers des Saisons, 1976; Alain Bihr, *La Reproduction du Capital* (2 vols.), Lausanne: Page 2, 2001.

[23] Holloway 2002, p. 210.

[24] Holloway 2002, p. 140.

[25] V.I. Lenin, 'What Is to Be Done?: Burning Questions of Our Movement', in *Collected Works* vol. 5, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1961, pp. 384, 422; and see Daniel Bensaïd, 'Leaps! Leaps! Leaps!', in *International Socialism* no. 95, Summer 2002.

[26] Holloway 2002, p. 139.

[27] Holloway 2002, p. 20.

[28] Holloway 2002, p. 215.

[29] Holloway 2002, p. 214.

[30] Holloway 2002, p. 215.

[31] Holloway 2002, p. 64.

[32] Holloway 2002, p. 100.

[33] Holloway 2002, p. 102.

[34] Holloway 2002, p. 106.

[35] Holloway 2002, p. 142.

[36] Holloway 2002, p. 212.

[37] Holloway 2002, p. 38.

[38] Holloway 2002, p. 37.

[39] Holloway 2002, p. 72.

[40] This was the case with many books including one of my own, with the significant title *La Révolution et le Pouvoir* ('The Revolution and Power', Paris: Stock, 1976), whose introductory note (which some comrades held against me) read, 'The first proletarian revolution gave its response to the problem of the state. Its degeneration has left us with the problem of power. The state must be destroyed and its machinery broken. Power must be pulled apart in its institutions and its underground anchorages. How can the struggle through which the proletariat constitutes itself as a ruling class contribute to this process, despite the apparent contradiction? We must once more take up the analysis of the crystallisations of power within capitalist society, trace their resurgence within the bureaucratic counter-revolution, and look in the struggle of the exploited classes for the tendencies that can enable the socialisation and withering away of power to win out over the statification of society.'

[41] Jérôme Baschet, *L'Étincelle Zapatiste: Insurrection Indienne et Résistance Planétaire*, Paris: Denoël, 2002.

[42] See Atilio Boron's article 'La Selva y la Polis', *OSAL* (Buenos Aires), June 2001, and Isidro Cruz Bernal's article in *Socialismo o Barbarie* (Buenos Aires), no. 11, May 2002. While expressing their sympathy and solidarity with the Zapatista resistance, they warn against the temptation to base a new model on it while masking its theoretical and strategic impasses.

France

A Major Social and Political Crisis

Laurent Carasso

France has just experienced the third confrontation with the government in less than a year. The country had already seen political confrontation on a large scale with the mobilization against the adoption of the European Constitutional Treaty in the spring of 2005. Already at that time a powerful strike movement had mobilized high school students which was followed by severe repression.

In the autumn, after several spectacular strikes in the Marseilles region, in particular the strike of the seafarers of the SNCM (National Corsica-Mediterranean Company), the revolt of youth in the poor suburbs made its mark on the country and even on Europe: weeks of riots, hundreds of vehicles burned in many towns and cities all over the country by young people who were exasperated by discrimination, social injustice, and racism.

This new trial of strength against the First Employment Contract (CPE) once again illustrated extreme instability, a relationship of forces between the classes where, in spite of the defeat in 2003-2004 and social question, a big majority of workers and youth still reject as strongly as ever pro-employer and liberal policies.

The French Right suffers from a growing lack of a social base. It was rejected at the ballot box in the regional and European elections of 2004 and in the referendum of 2005 and severely shaken by street demonstrations and strikes in 2003 and during the movement against the CPE.

These blows have led to crisis and internal division, which have weakened its capacity to respond to such confrontations. This paralysis is showing itself again today, after the withdrawal of the CPE, and on an

unprecedented scale, with the political-financial Clearstream scandal, which is having a ravaging effect on the little political credibility that the Chiraquian majority still has

The mobilisation of youth against the CPE led to a social and political crisis that continued for several weeks, with open divisions and paralysis of the Right and with the social liberal Left obliged to follow to the end the demands of the movements.

Student youth has just experienced the longest and deepest mobilization since May 1968, marked by exceptional combativeness and by unity and democratic aspirations which found expression in a remarkable process of self-organization.

Over and above the activity of the main student union (the National union of Students of France - UNEF), from February onwards there developed, from the universities that were on strike, a national coordinating committee which was capable of meeting week after week, leading the movement and effecting the link-up between workers and the movement of the youth.

It gave this movement a precise political content and demands which, around the demand for "unconditional withdrawal of



the CPE" progressively broadened out to challenge the New Employment Contract (CNE) and job insecurity, leading to confrontation between the government which was putting forward this project and to the demand for the resignation of this government.

As the movement matured along the way, it was able at the same time to deepen its own basis and, around the battle for the withdrawal of the CPE, impose unity on the trade union and political leadership of the Left.

1) The CPE: an objective of the employers and a pawn in the political game

From the beginning of the year 2006 a trial of strength was joined against the government, a trial of strength of which student youth made up the backbone.

By integrating the CPE into its draft law on "equal opportunities", the Villepin government intended to prolong the offensive that was unleashed from the summer of 2005 by the promulgation of decrees undermining several provisions of the Labour Code, and by the implementation of the CNE.

The CNE is a contract which makes it possible in companies with less than 20 workers to impose on newly hired workers a "trial period" of two years, during which the employer can terminate the contract without any reason and without having to follow the legal procedures for sacking workers. This offensive continued with the privatizations that were carried out at the SNCM, at the Marseilles Transport Authority (RTM), at

EDF and GDF (the state electricity and gas companies). This aggressive political course of the government expressed both a further step in the implementation of the basic objectives of the right wing majority, corresponding to the demands of liberalism, and another point to be scored by Villepin in his rivalry with Sarkozy for the 2007 presidential election.

Since it was elected in 2002, the Right has known that it has been facing a paradox: the victory of Chirac (more than 80 % of the vote, against Le Pen) and the vague blue horizon which followed at the legislative elections, were the result of a massive loss of confidence in social democracy and its liberal policies, of a rejection which led to Jospin being absent from the second round of the presidential election.

And it was the implementation of policies that were just as and even more liberal that had already led in 2003 to the biggest strike movement since 1995, then to the electoral rejection of the Right in 2004 and of liberalism as a whole in the 2005 referendum. Demagoguery on law and order was, as in the rest of Europe, the corollary of policies of social regression. The social crisis that it led to drove the youth of the suburbs to express their anger and their revolt a few months later.

As in the rest of Europe, successive governments prepared their own electoral defeats by methodically applying the liberal recipes that were dictated by capital, generating a succession of social

and political crises, reducing still further the real difference between the programmes of social democracy and those of the traditional Right. The SPD-CDU government in Germany is an example of this, and also an example of the shrinking of their social base that happens to the traditional parties because of the implementation of such policies. Thus, the project in France of the CNE and the CPE coincides with identical projects of the German and Spanish governments.

At bottom, the CPE is not therefore an isolated French initiative, but really corresponds to the orientations of the liberal European governments, who are concerned with undermining all the protections that workers can still derive from work contracts. Frontally attacking young people, it was the second prelude, after the CNE, to the march towards a single contract removing the protection which is a present given by the CDI (Contract of Unlimited Duration).

The objective is obviously important, because the employers know that it is urgent to fundamentally change the rules of employment, relying on high levels of unemployment, in particular among young people. The coming years will make it necessary for the employers to hire workers on a massive scale to compensate for the retirement of the baby-boom generation. Although it intends to take full advantage of this demographic phenomenon to further increase productivity and reduce the number of jobs, hundreds of thousands of new workers will nevertheless be necessary. It will be less easy then to impose a

new worsening of working conditions.

But Villepin's obstinacy during this crisis cannot simply be understood in terms of the employers' objectives. On the political terrain, Villepin also intended to make the CPE a new pawn in his battle for hegemony over the Right, against Sarkozy.

After the state of emergency decreed by the Prime Minister last November against the youth of the poor suburbs, it was important for him to once again show firmness and ability to impose social defeats, and thus to re-conquer the ranks of the UMP by conducting an offensive policy. As a result, after the decrees of last summer, we had recourse to an emergency parliamentary procedures (a single exchange between the National Assembly and the Senate) and to the "49.3" (a procedure which cuts short debate and avoids a battle around amendments by engaging confidence in the government) for the promulgation the CPE.

Paradoxically it is this stubbornness to try and prove himself as the leader of the majority that led to Villepin's political downfall, discredited by the legitimacy of the youth movement. In the eyes of millions of youth and workers, the government's loss of credibility developed at the same rhythm as the social and political crisis.

Isolated along with Villepin in his own majority, Chirac tried to save his prime minister at the beginning of April by giving back the initiative to the

National Assembly with his institutional imbroglio of "promulgation without implementation". But in fact by doing so he gave carte blanche to Sarkozy, the leader of the parliamentary majority, who was able to appear as providing a way out of the crisis that Villepin had been incapable of finding.

Chirac and Villepin were obliged to follow the proposal of the UMP group and make the CPE disappear from the law for "equal opportunities". Even though this scandalous law was maintained (it includes several reactionary measures such as apprenticeship at 14, and working at nights and on Sundays for young people) this choice correctly appeared as a victory, a retreat on the part of the government, the first such retreat since the re-election of Chirac.

The fight back against the CPE resulted in a 90-day long tidal wave of mobilization of young people and by majority support for their fight among the population as a whole.

It is a whole generation of young people which went through the experience, during three months, of a militant mass movement, of democracy within the strike, of self-organization, of street initiatives, of confrontation with the political representatives of the state. The massive presence of young women among the high school and university students at every level is an obvious indication, not only of the mass character of the movement, but also of its democratic forms of organization under the control of general assemblies.

Faced with such a movement, the government tried everything: outrageous propaganda by the media supporting the CPE, which reminded us of the vain efforts employed a few months earlier to promote the European constitution; division by trying to oppose the "youth of the faculties" to the "youth of the neighbourhoods"; and finally police repression that was frontal and violent, aiming to discourage and intimidate, in particular, the high school students of the suburbs and the city neighborhoods.

2) The trade union front, its unity, its limits, and the battle for the general strike

Unlike in 2003 and 2004, from January 2006 onwards all the trade union leaderships were united around the central demand of the movement: "withdrawal of the CPE". This unity, which was maintained in particular by the strength of the youth movement, is one of the elements which enabled the creation of a stronger and stronger relationship of forces among workers.

The strength of the student movement, joined by the high school movement at the beginning of March, the massive character of the refusal of job insecurity and liberalism among workers, were such that popular support constantly grew throughout the month of March, with a growing number of strikers and of workers' participation in demonstrations, bearing witness to the level of refusal of liberal policies and in particular of growing job insecurity.

It is also this continuing political consciousness, which has been affirmed on several occasions over recent years, that explains the policies of trade union leaderships like those of the CFDT, the CFTC, the CGC, and UNSA, which in contrast with their previous tactics firmly maintained the united trade union front until the withdrawal of the CPE. The electoral losses suffered by the CFDT in several sectors led it to be more prudent, all the more so as the government's arrogance didn't give it anything on which to base a policy of negotiations.

On the one hand, the workers were involved during the three months of the youth movement, with a growing level of participation in demonstrations and of the number of workplaces where strike calls were made, but without that being prolonged by ongoing strikes in workplaces or sectors. That can be explained by two elements: Both in 1995 and in 2003, the sectors that went out on strike did so as much on the central issue (the Juppé Plan against the health service in 1995, the pension reform in 2003) as on the particular attacks that were conducted, against the rail workers in 1995 and against teachers in 2003. Sectors could have come out on strike in the same conditions, for example, against the privatization of GDF, or in other sectors around wage demands, but this absence of a dynamic is also related to the balance sheet of 2003, to the consciousness of how difficult it is to make the government back down through the mobilization of a single sector. Similarly, in October, the movement of the seafarers and workers of the

SNCM and the powerful demonstration of October 4 did not have any follow up.

The trade union leaderships did not push in a direction that could have restored confidence to workers, that would have enabled them to think that the generalization of struggles was possible by starting from demands around employment or wages which would pose concretely the question of the extension of the movement and would push in the direction of "all together!" during the month of March. They accompanied the movement in a united way, while limiting its objective (unconditional withdrawal of the CPE), by national days of action, but they refused to extend the platform to the CNE and to job insecurity or to engage in the building of an ongoing general strike in both the public and private sectors.

In contrast, the multiplication of road blocks and occupations of public buildings was the form that was taken by the joining together of youth and workers. Once again the trade union leadership had pursued a policy whose aim was to avoid putting the government into crisis, to avoid a confrontation through street demonstrations and strikes.

The FSU (teachers' federation) and Solidaires, who were associated for the first time with the national trade union front, did not play a particular role in this movement, except by demanding that the front should be opened up to the student coordinating committee, and for Solidaires by the constancy of its advocacy of an ongoing general

strike, which, however, it did not manage to concretize on the ground.

The dynamic of the movement came from the audacity of the youth, from their initiatives, from their willingness to address the workers and their organizations. The leaderships of the trade union confederations only acted under the pressure of the movement itself, under the pressure of workers too, but without any plan, without any policy of generalization. They were not up to the level of the possibilities of the discontent that existed.

3) The political Left and the movement

The traditional left also played the game of unity, accompanying the struggle while taking care to avoid confrontation. In the movement, the Socialist Party tried to play its card of being an alternative government...for 2007. It was able to support the movement to the hilt - even to participate in its launching at the beginning, through the MJS (the PS's youth organization) and the leaderships of UNEF and the UNL (school students' union), by supporting the central demand, but trying at every turn to keep the mobilization on the rails of a movement putting forward a single demand, putting forward at every moment the institutional levers (the role of the Assembly, the Constitutional Council) in order to avoid the political development of a confrontation in an extra-parliamentary framework.

The central slogan of Francois Hollande, First Secretary of the

PS was ; "the electors will remember in 2007". Similarly, certain prominent leaders of the PS tried to make themselves heard by the MEDEF (the main employers' organization) by making their own alternative proposals to the CPE (other contracts specifically for young people), whereas the movement was moving forward towards a simple slogan: "no second-rate contracts for young people".

That is why, in the final weeks before the withdrawal of the CPE, we saw a big and growing gap between the slogans of the movement and the interventions of the PS, behind the unanimity for the withdrawal of the CPE. When the movement put forward the refusal of second-rate contracts and the demand for the resignation of Villepin and the government, the PS tried to maintain its own direction, even though the spokesperson of UNEF had quite a different discourse.

The Communist Party played on the same note as the PS, refusing to give the movement the character of a political confrontation with the government ("there is no question of demanding Villepin's resignation..."), but this party demonstrated, for the first time on such a scale, its weakness in the youth movement (as shown by the absence of its members from the national coordinating committee) and especially its clear refusal to push towards a political crisis, to push forward the movement of the street.

The PC, PS, the Greens, and other components of the traditional Left therefore

concentrated until the end of March on calling on Chirac as a recourse against Villepin “so as not to open a political crisis”, taking care to remain within the strictest institutional framework.

The LCR and the JCR developed an intense political activity over several weeks, as was shown by the place occupied by our young comrades in the movement and the LCR ‘s place in demonstrations and political initiatives, as well as the role of our members in developing the mobilization among workers.

Its axes of intervention were developing the perspective of building a broad movement towards a general strike against job insecurity and unemployment, and the systematization of blockades, starting from the example of the development of the student and high school student movement, into which the JCR and the young militants of the LCR threw all their forces: to base ourselves on this development and on mobilization and confrontation in order to put forward the political demand for the departure of this illegitimate government, of this Right which has been disavowed three times in elections and twice more by the three million demonstrators who came into the street on March 28 and April 4. In the student movement the JCR members and young members of the LCR developed the axes of self-organization and the organization of an ongoing general strike in the universities and high schools, and these comrades took a real political place at every level of the movement.

To the political forces of the workers movement and of the Left, the LCR proposed a united front in the framework of the “Riposte” collective which brought together all the political forces of the Left. But apart from joint communiqués, the LCR ran up against the refusal at national level of joint initiatives in the form of meetings. Such initiatives were organized in several towns and cities, making it possible both to confront the forces of the Left with the demands of the movement and for the LCR to put forward our own proposals.

Among these proposals were:

- ❖ the refusal of specific contracts for young people, the demand for the recognition of a full-time CDI as the only job contract, the banning of sackings and the demand for maintaining job contracts, the creation of hundreds of thousands of necessary jobs, in particular in the health service, education, the post office... the provision of an autonomy allowance of €800 for young people, the right to professional training, including during people’s working lives, organized during working hours and remunerated accordingly.

Obviously, all these elements are linked to the overall anti-capitalist coherence of the LCR’s proposals concerning public services, wages, and the sharing out of wealth, proposals that are outlined in the emergency plan that it has just brought out as a pamphlet.

The LCR was the only political force to demand loud and clear the departure of Villepin, Sarkozy, and Chirac, relying on

the massive rejection of the government among the young people and the workers who were mobilized.

Political Crisis and New Attacks

The state of decay of this government is continuing after the confrontation over the CPE. The corrosive character of the social crisis is once more taking on the dimensions of a political crisis with the Clearstream affair. This politico-financial scandal is continuing, at the time of writing this article, to produce its effects. The affair started from a sadly banal business of accounts in a company for financial transfers which is based in Luxemburg, accounts whose holders included, among others, leaders of the Socialist Party and the UMP. Clearly part of Chirac’s apparatus tried to use this affair to discredit Sarkozy within the UMP.

The scandal, which also involves leaders of former public enterprises like EADS, is once again hitting Chirac and Villepin. This new crisis, which the Right cannot manage to bring under control, reveals once again the decadence not only of the Right but of the institutional system of the Fifth Republic.

A political system based on the personal power on the President of the Republic (who is elected by universal suffrage), it has exacerbated the hyper-centralization of French political life, its concentration on the government and the President, leaving little space for parliamentary life and even less to local institutions. Having survived May 1968 and many

crises, this system has now run out of steam.

But during the crisis the attacks continue. After the proposal for the privatization of French Gas (GDF) in the form of a fusion with the Suez investment bank, there is a new blow against democratic freedom: parliament has just adopted another of Sarkozy’s disgraceful laws, the CESEDA “for chosen immigration”, in fact for disposable immigration, rendering even more precarious the living conditions of hundreds of thousands of immigrants.

The victory against the CPE might already seem long ago!

All these social and political mobilizations that we have experienced pose again and again in a very sharp way a clear demand: we need a perspective that corresponds to the size, the power, and the radical nature of this movement. What is needed to correspond to these movements is a fighting Left that breaks with the meanderings of the Left that runs the affairs of capitalism, an anti-capitalist force. The new generation which entered into battle over the last few weeks can be the cement for this force.

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Germany

Take off without a left wing?

Manuel Kellner

The congress of the Party for Jobs and Social Justice- Electoral Alternative (WASG) on April 29 marked a turning-point in its short history. The fusion with the Left Party-PDS (L.PDS) in order to create together a broad left party is something that has been decided and will very probably happen in July 2007. We should note that this broad left party already exists for many people who are not in the habit of studying political information with a magnifying glass, because of the existence of a joint parliamentary group between the WASG and the L.PDS in the Bundestag (it has 54 MPs, of whom 12 are from the WASG). But it was above all the attitude of the new party towards social-liberal policies - and therefore its electoral tactics - that divided the congress.

Two of the WASG's state-level federations - those of Berlin and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania - have in fact decided to take advantage of the regional elections to condemn the policies of the regional governments that are made up of the SPD and the L.PDS. They had announced autonomous lists of candidates, which were therefore in competition with the L.PDS.

The motive for the autonomous lists is clear: it is a revolt against the policies of the L.PDS, which governs jointly, as a junior partner, with the SPD, applying neo-liberal policies, policies of privatisations and anti-social austerity.

Especially in Berlin, these policies are spectacularly aggressive. For example the Berlin region has left the association of public sector employers so as to be able more easily to impose the recourse to unpaid labour and a fall in real wages.

What seems paradoxical is that within the WASG everyone, or almost everyone, criticises these policies (that is the case with Oscar Lafontaine himself). But the majority do so while denouncing as a sacrilege the idea of autonomous lists and accepting the idea of administrative measures against those who advocate them.

For their part, the "rebels" stress that they want a big common party, a big left party, but that they want it to be a credible party, which does not align itself in practice with the established neo-liberal political consensus. Others again, although they consider that standing candidates in competition with the L.PDS smacks of adventurism, do not accept that the federal leadership (the German Republic is a federation) should impose its point of view on federation by administrative measures.

A "normalisation?"

At the national congress on April 29 the motion ruling out any recourse to administrative measures against the WASG federations of Berlin and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, supported by among others our comrade Thies Gleiss (who is a member of the federal leadership of the WASG), was rejected by a narrow majority of congress delegates. Congress therefore supported the majority of the federal leadership in its readiness to try everything, including administrative measures, against the two rebel federations.

A big campaign was waged against "sectarians" who dared to "put in question" the creation of this new left party which is wished for by millions of people. This campaign was accompanied by a witch hunt against Trotskyists ...

The majority in the congress was narrowly won by the authority of Oscar Lafontaine, who intervened three times in the debate without officially having the right to speak (he was not a delegate) and by his threat, made shortly before the congress, to split the WASG if the leadership did not win a majority on this point. And the leaders of the L.PDS, especially the bosses of its apparatus like Bodo Ramelow and Dietmar Bartsch, repeated again and again: 'you have to discipline your rebel federations'!

A few days after the congress, the leadership of the WASG decided to remove the leaderships of the federations of Berlin and Mecklenburg - West Pomerania and replace them by commissars. The Bundestag member Huseyin Aydin played this role in Berlin and his first act was to withdraw the announcement of the Berlin WASG candidacy.

Right to his face, the delegates at the congress of the Berlin federation of the



WASG reaffirmed their readiness to stand in the regional elections in Berlin in September 2006. Huseyin Aydin therefore declared that it wasn't a congress but a "discussion forum". The conflict is of course political. But there are also legal proceedings on both sides and no one knows what the courts are going to decide.

This way of acting by the leadership of WASG, which is already largely dominated by the apparatus of the L.PDS, is being repeated in other regions and cities. All over the country they are trying to isolate, remove from any position and marginalise "the evil spirits". Already disappointment is developing and members who have a strong anti neo-liberal, anti-capitalist and/or anti-bureaucratic identity are resigning and leaving the party. Others are beginning to organize tendencies.

Liberal Offensive

These quarrels within the left are now taking place in a political and social context that is marked by the liberal offensive. The government of the grand coalition (CDU/CSU-SPD) presided over by chancellor Angela Merkel is pursuing the same policies as the SPD-Green government of Gerhard Schroeder. The "Hartz IV" law against the unemployed - which led to big mobilizations - is going to be made worse, because it is said to be "too expensive". The conditions of the unemployed are going to be even worse as a result of the new law.

What is more, the governmental majority has just decided on a sizeable increase in tax revenue which will affect almost exclusively the workers and the poor, although the whole thing is crowned by a wealth tax which is at the most cosmetic. At the core of these measures there is the increase in VAT to 19%, which represents far and away the bulk of new tax revenue.

The trade unions are not ready to mobilise against this government. The majority of the members of their leaderships still consider that "their party" (the SPD) has remained in government and that therefore they have to stay quiet, even though the SPD is nothing more than the junior partner of the conservatives. On the social level the trade union movement remains on the defensive.

The congress of the DGB trade union federation, which started on May 22nd, took place under the slogan “the dignity of the human being is our criterion”. And its president, Michael Sommer, referring to the millions of unemployed, of casual workers, and of poor exploited workers, said just before the congress: “Even although the situation is difficult, for trade union militants that is not a reason to give up. Together we are fighting for a better world, a more just world, so that human beings can live and work in dignity. So that dignity is not just a word, but that it is lived”.

Yes, but... The German trade unions, which are known for their legendary organizational strength, are in a terrible crisis. After German reunification, in other words the absorption of the GDR by the Federal Republic in 1991, there were more than 11 million trade union members (the 8 million of the DGB complemented by the members of the unions of the ex-GDR). Ten years later, at the end of 2000, there were no more than 7.9 million. Today there are no more than 6.8 million members of the unions that form part of the DGB. In this framework by far the strongest unions are IG-Metall with 35.1% of the DGB’s members, followed by Ver.di (the big union of public and private services) with 34.8%. Each of them has just come out of a social conflict and they have concluded new collective bargaining agreements.

IG-Metall, taking advantage of the present economic mini-boom, won a 3% wage increase and defended, more or less, the gain that is represented by rest and recreational pauses in the working day. Ver.di “won” agreement that unpaid labour should be less widespread than public sector employers wanted, through actions that were often more dynamic, creating important experiences of collective struggle for many public sector workers,. Although the movement in the two sectors took place at the same time, nothing was done to link them up together. What is more, the leaderships fled from the possibility of joint actions as the devil flees from holy water, because that would have carried the risk of a movement that would be generalised, indeed - horror of horrors! - “politicised”.

On June 3rd in Berlin there was a demonstration against the Merkel government and its “reforms against us”. This initiative was launched by part of the social and community movements, as well as by socialist and revolutionary militants - our comrades of the RSB were particularly involved in it. The initiative was taken up by ATTAC Germany, by the WASG, and by the L.PDS, as well as the Left Party group in the Bundestag, who associated themselves with the appeal. From the beginning the small coordinating committee of militant trade

unionist called on people to take part in the demonstration. The leader of Ver.di, Frank Bsirske, agreed to speak to the demonstrators. But... the trade union leaderships did not call for the demonstration. The importance of this demonstration therefore depended, as in November 2003, on the echo the appeal had among Berliners and the population of the region around Berlin, and also on the ability of militant trade unionists to mobilise tens of thousands of workers.

Anti-capitalists of the L.PDS and the WASG

On June 3rd twenty thousand demonstrated in the streets of Berlin, fewer than would have been possible with the active support of the unions. The demonstrators represented a broad layer of the trade unions, and especially IG Metall and ver.di, as well as organisations of students, peace activists, migrants and the unemployed. Police encroached on the demonstration seriously; many were hurt indiscriminately.

It was important for the future of the new left party. A “cold climate” is favourable to the forces of opportunistic adaptation within the political Left. A climate of revolt and mobilisation will be favourable to the “rebels” who do not accept the implementation of neo-liberalism and anti-social austerity in practice, decorated with anti-neo-liberalism in Sunday speeches.

The years 2004 and 2005 were marked by a crisis of the SPD. The regional elections in 2006 have shown that this crisis has not deepened and that the “new Left” WASG-L.PDS has not continued its electoral dynamic in the regions of the West, and that it is in danger of falling back into the “ghetto” of before. The exasperation of the working class electorate has been expressed more by abstention than by voting to the left of the SPD and the Greens. In order to relaunch hope hundreds of thousands, if not millions, will have to take to the streets. But if the new force on the political Left appears increasingly to be part of this apathetic political world that governs us under the orders of big capital, then it will be despair that is likely to dominate.

In May an “anti-capitalist appeal” appeared. Coming from personalities and left currents within the L.PDS (Kommunistische Plattform, Marxistisches Forum, Geraer Dialog/Linker Dialog) it was signed by 500 people, including members of the WASG. It was widely distributed on the Internet and as a pamphlet. Its initiators called a meeting on June 10th in Berlin, which around 80 activists attended.

On May 20th in Kassel, right in the geographical centre of Germany, there took



Police attack demonstrators, 3 June

place “the conference of the left opposition in the WASG”. 250 people took part, of whom about 50 were mobilised by the rebel majority of the Berlin WASG. The conference adopted a declaration condemning the administrative measures taking against the regional federations of Berlin and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, demanding the building of a new left party that would be broad and credible, run democratically by its members and linked to social movements and to struggles in the workplaces, the universities, schools, and neighbourhoods, giving priority to extra parliamentary work and using elected positions to encourage the mobilization and the self-organization of those below, rejecting substitutionalism and especially a policy of governing together of the SPD, and explaining that according to the programmer of the WASG, participation in government is only acceptable if this government leads to real substantial gains for the workers and marginalized layers.

This congress launched the basis of a network of all those who want to fight for consistent anti-neo-liberal politics, defending the interests of workers and marginalized layers, while conducting and popularising a debate on an alternative to capitalism, on a “socialism of the 21st century”.

To this end the congress supported the association SALZ e.V (Social, Work, Life and Future), close to the WASG but independent, open to socialist and Marxist ideas, as well as the virtual presences <http://www.linkezeitung.de/> and <http://www.linkspartei-debatte.de/>, and called for the co-organisation of a broad common conference in the autumn, together with the forces of the “anti-capitalist appeal”, which for their part are mainly based in the east of Germany.

❖ Manuel Kellner writes for 'Sozialistische Zeitung' ('SoZ') and is a member of the coordinating committee of the isl.

Scotland

New Platform in the Scottish Socialist Party

Below we publish the text of the founding statement of the SSP-United Left platform in the Scottish Socialist Party. The platform includes most of the former members of the International Socialist Movement with which the Fourth International had fraternal relations and which dissolved in March this year, as well as many young members and some older activists who had never been in the ISM.

This is not a time to rage, but a time to reason. Not to fight within ourselves, but to unite behind the fight for a better world. A time to keep our heads, and hold fast to our principles.

We are a substantial group of Scottish Socialist Party activists from across Scotland and across the party, who have a number of concerns with the current direction of our party.

The SSP, since its inception, has been a beacon of hope to the workers movement in Scotland and internationally. In establishing the SSP, we achieved the impossible - uniting the left into a working, fighting political party with a radical agenda and strong, innovative ideas for campaigning and recruiting.

Working together in this unprecedented way, we made real gains, not just electorally, but at a grassroots level. We can, if we unite as a strong socialist party, create a generational change in society, putting socialist ideas back on the mainstream agenda, and engendering further, deep-rooted change. This is no small matter, given the domination of free market ideology and the pessimism and disillusionment this has bred in two, even three generations. We must always remember that the enemy is without, not within.

But we are deeply concerned that the party's community activism, socialist education and internal unity have failed to match our electoral success. We

are concerned that individuals, branches and even regions are susceptible to external interpretations of the SSP's internal politics, created via the media. We want our elected representatives to be wholly accountable to the party, putting the collective interests of the party before individual concerns.

We are concerned by a growing culture of indifference, even hostility, to our commitment to gender equality. Finally, we are committed to a united and non-sectarian Left, and in favour of a transitional approach to socialism, where no struggle, whether based in a community, workplace, or around a gender or race issue, can be ignored. We actively support and participate in all such work.

It is with all this in mind that we feel now is the time to launch an open, democratic, pro-SSP network, open to SSP members and informed by the following points:

Building the SSP

Our network is for activists whose aim is to support, promote and build the SSP as a broad, outward-looking socialist party, working within communities and workplaces, trades unions and colleges, in the streets and on the march, as the party that fights for peace, justice and socialism.

We seek the transformation of society through workers' democratic control of the means of production. We understand that the dismantling of the UK

state, and the creation of a Scottish, socialist republic, is an essential part of this process.

Accountability and Participation

Our network aims to build a grassroots leadership of the SSP. We believe in participative democracy, where activity and engagement are encouraged and supported, and where democratic decisions are made by active participants.

Instrumental to this is the SSP's constitution, which we recognise and whose sovereignty we defend. We will campaign within the SSP for full accountability of all elected representatives and bodies, including the commitment to take the average wage of a skilled worker.

Gender Equality

Our network is committed to the principles of equal representation and gender equality at all levels of the party and remain dedicated to the hard-won, ground-breaking policy of 50:50, which facilitates the participation in socialist politics of women who might otherwise, through poverty and shouldering the burden of family care, notably working-class and ethnic minority women, be excluded.

Self-organisation

Our network values and encourages self-organisation amongst oppressed and marginalised groups, and recognises and celebrates these groups' contribution to the



political development of our movement. Self-organisation is essential to raising the consciousness and confidence of those whose voices may not otherwise be heard.

Education

Our network will promote socialist education within the network itself and in the SSP, using progressive and inclusive educational techniques, to encourage critical thought and thinkers throughout the party.

Our Network

Our network is built on the principles of openness, inclusiveness, equality and respect, where all contributions are valued and comradely debate is welcomed.

We are a grassroots, bottom-up organisation and as such, promote participatory meeting techniques, where all members are encouraged to speak up and have their say, without fear of being ridiculed, intimidated or shouted down.

We, the undersigned, invite comrades who share our principles and ethos to join us and raise an SSP standard for all socialists to rally round.

First signatories

Alfred Archer, Maryhill East...
...Lisa Young, Baillieston

Total: 147 Signatories

Britain

Two victories for the Campaign against Climate Change

Terry Conway

Britain's Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant

Britain's largest trade union has affiliated to the Campaign against Climate Change (CCC), reflecting alarm across the labour movement at the Labour government's plans to replace its aging nuclear submarines and power stations. It was the second major advance made by the Campaign in the same month: More than 350 people packed into the Campaign against Climate Change national conference on June 3 to discuss stepping up action against the devastation facing humanity unless we act now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The 1.3 million strong union for local government workers, UNISON, voted at its national conference to campaign against a new generation of nuclear power stations in Britain. It affiliated to both CCC and Stop Climate Chaos, an alliance of CCC and other NGOs.

The decision followed controversial statements by the two leading Labour party ministers. Speaking in Parliament, Prime Minister Tony Blair advocated nuclear power as a solution for Britain and "many other countries around the world", although Blair is an aggressive opponent of Iran's nuclear power programme. Finance minister Gordon Brown fanned the flames at his major annual speech, at London's Mansion House.

Brown declared Labour's long term commitment to replace Trident, Britain's aging nuclear submarine fleet. A huge wave of protest is sweeping across the labour movement, demanding that the Trident budget be spent on public services. Most British people oppose the replacement, which is estimated to cost £25 billion.

Earlier in June the CCC conference brought together existing activists together with those wanting to get involved. Much of the traditional left was absent - though Respect supporters, including members of the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Resistance were present in significant numbers.

There is widespread acceptance in Britain that urgent action is needed now to prevent the planet reaching a fatal point of no return.



The state-owned BBC TV company has just run a "climate chaos" season fronted by veteran natural history broadcaster David Attenborough.

New stories around global warming appear in much of the press on a very regular basis. Indeed, it could seem that the battle has finally been won in many places - except one rather key player: the Presidential incumbent of the US White House.

What is now much more the focus of debate - including amongst activists - is what strategies to adopt in this situation.

The new Conservative party leader David Cameron is parading his green credentials. This is part of an increasing push for green capitalism which was also reflected at the conference itself. The radical left urgently needs to push environmental issues in general, and climate change in particular, up the agenda.

We should expose the lie that it is possible to address the issue of climate change merely through technical fixes while, of course, supporting the introduction of alternative renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. We need a major reduction in the fossil fuel burn. We need to tackle head on the lie that nuclear power is part of the solution - as Attenborough argued in his programme and as New Labour heads, Blair and Brown, are increasingly set on.

Most crucially we need to win the argument that capitalism cannot solve the problem which it has created, the problem of

destroying the environment in its relentless search for greater and greater profits.

At the CCC conference, former Labour environment minister Michael Meacher, tore into the Blair government in an angry speech argued that "big business is not the solution; big business is the cause of the problem".

Meacher also condemned Blair's support for nuclear power over renewable energy and support from the expansion of air travel and criticised Brown's tax on SUVs as inadequate. He spoke of the need for a "New world energy order".

Green Party MEP Caroline Lucas was right to argue that activists need to go beyond frightening people with the horrors that climate change will bring, but also need to present a credible version of a low carbon future.

Both gave militant speeches and both are sincere in their support for the campaign and the need for urgent action now. But criticising big business as Meacher did is not enough - the profit motive also operates for small businesses too. The Green Party puts much of its faith in "localisation" which challenges a system which uses vast quantities of carbon dioxide to fly food across the globe, but places too much confidence in a localised version of capitalism - an impossible utopia.

In her speech Lucas made a side-swipe at Marxists by bracketing together Adam Smith and Karl Marx as advocates of growth - and therefore part of the problem.



Climate change demo December 2005, London

While some individuals and currents have advocated a “productivist” road while quoting Marx as their source, not only do Marx and Engels writing show a concern for the environment but there is a long history of Marxist writing and activism on the subject, much of which has been buried by the legacy of Stalinism, like so much else.

Marx’s economics distinguishes between “use values” and “exchange values”. This provides an essential tool for environmentalists. The problem is not simply a question of “growth” posed as a neutral category, but whether that growth is socially useful and (even where it is) what its environmental and other costs will be.

Another key issue for the campaign, which Lucas alluded to in her comments about developing a positive vision, is how to motivate people and convince them that mass action can make a difference.

For the campaign, the next major target is to ensure that the demonstration on November 4, just before the next round of International Climate talks starts in Nairobi, is even bigger than last year’s showing of 10,000.

This time round in Britain there will not only be the Campaign against Climate Change itself, which organised the successful event in 2005, but the Stop Climate Chaos umbrella group.

Stop Climate Chaos brings together a whole range of NGOs from Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace to Christian Aid and Oxfam and is a classic lobbying organisation. It is obviously right for the campaign to be part of it and support its actions which currently focus on sending postcards to 10 Downing Street, where Britain’s cabinet meets.

But the lesson from so many other areas of activity will be that the left will need to be at the centre of bringing people onto the streets.

From this point of view it is important that the Campaign retains its own integrity and continues to debate strategy and tactics.

One step forward at the conference was the decision of the small but useful trade union workshop to set up a trade union network within the campaign as a way of sharing information and experiences about what is going on in different unions and to build for the November demonstration.

The network also hopes to try to organise a fringe meeting at this year’s Trade Union Congress in Brighton and to plan meetings at next year’s individual union conferences. On the other hand, it was regrettable that the Annual General Meeting of the campaign, which was squeezed into an hour at the end of a long day, and was probably attended by a minority of those at the conference. It decided not to accept the recommendations of the outgoing committee on its new structure - on the argument that there were “too many socialists on it”.

Socialist Resistance supporters have been involved in the campaign both because we think this issue is a central one for the left and the labour movement and because we believe we have a particular contribution to make.

We think that there is an even greater need for the campaign to clarify its own politics with the development of Stop Climate Chaos and hope to play our part in doing so however we can.

The nuclear debates in Britain have mobilised huge numbers in the past, and are likely to do so in the future. Socialists argue for the climate campaigners to connect the nuclear issues to allies in the international labour and peace movements.

 ❖ Terry Conway is one of the editors of International Viewpoint and a leading member of the International Socialist Group, British Section of the Fourth International

Britain

Socialist Resistance hosts Latin socialists

Andrew Kennedy

The Socialist Resistance day-school on Latin America held on 24 June was the biggest and most successful event independently organised by SR in its four years of existence. Over a hundred people, many of them new to SR, attended the morning plenary addressed by Celia Hart, Michael Lowy and Edouard Diago.

Hart is a Cuban Trotskyist, Lowy a leader of the Fourth International and Diago has recently returned from Venezuela, where he represented the Fourth International. The recurrent theme in a lively discussion was what attitude marxists should adopt towards the governments of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia.

The best attended workshop on Cuba was led by Celia Hart; Resistance has published a book of the writings of this “freelance Trotskyist”. The closing plenary, with a platform of Jorge Martin from Hands Off Venezuela, Amancay Colque from Bolivia Solidarity and Andrew Kennedy and Phil Hearse for SR, addressed itself on the one hand to solidarity tasks and on the other to questions such the role of the working class in the revolutionary movement, the oppression of women and the importance of ecologically sustainable development.

A collection at the event raised almost £300, as did the raffle of a 1960 Cuban poster of Che Guevara. Literature sales were also strong at the event, with a quarter of the participants pre-ordering Hart’s book.

One result of the school has been to inspire ideas about how SR can develop wider solidarity work with Cuba and Bolivia as well as with Venezuela. It is also hoped that an interview with Celia will appear in the Morning Star (the daily paper of the left in Britain, founded by the Communist Party). One suggestion for the next day-school is that it should be on the theme of climate change, and should be held in the weeks after a national climate change demonstration on November 4.

 ❖ Andrew Kennedy is a member of the International Socialist Group, British section of the Fourth International.]

Greece

Fighting neoliberal university reform

Huge student movement in Greece

Panagiotis Sifogiorgakis

20,000 students at the largest student march in the past 20 years surge through downtown Athens on June 8th. 1,200 students of the School of Economics voted in favor of continuing the occupation of the university in a count that took place in 3 lecture halls! 2,000 students in the jam-packed central lecture hall at the University of Macedonia. 1,500 vote in favor of the occupation, even though the forces of the left that support the framework (platform) of the Pan-Hellenic Coordinating Committee of the Occupations are very weak there! 790 vote in favor of the occupation in the Philosophy Department in Athens out of 1,200 taking part in the assembly, in a department where up till today, the vote at assemblies was won by the student faction of the Communist Party, which this time by going against the occupation, experienced a bitter loss. This picture of the sensational participation of students and the overwhelming support of the proposals for mobilizations with occupations of departments is evident everywhere.

It is possibly the largest movement of student occupations ever in Greece and which, at present time, is constantly accelerating, surpassing not only the most optimistic estimates, but also any imagination! 57 departments occupied during the first week of mobilizations, 83 the next... 330 after four weeks, when the total number of university departments in the country is 447.

The wave of occupations and demonstrations is, for the first time in the history of the student movement in the country, proportionately greater in the provinces than in the capital.

Massive student demonstrations take place on all the campuses in Greece (Athens, Thessaloniki, Crete, Yannina in northwestern Greece, Xanthi in northeastern Greece and elsewhere).

The government responded with suppression of the student demonstrations on June 1st. The special police forces brutally attacked the students a week later during the national demonstration on June 8th.

However, this suppression did not have the desired results. Student assemblies are growing in number continuously. It is an impressive resistance movement, which is proportionate to the magnitude of the government attack.

Government attack

The Minister of Education of the New Democracy (rightwing) government announced that she would bring in for vote a draft law concerning tertiary education during the summer session of the Greek Parliament with the expectation that during

summer there would be limited reactions. However, she did not take the dynamics of the movement into account. The students' response was immediate because this draft law threatens the rights of tens of thousands of students, as well as the overall conditions of study at universities. In particular it incorporates the following:

- ❖ Refusal to renew the enrolment of students who do not pass their courses within one and a half years after the completion of the period of 4-7 years depending on the department. Refusal to renew enrolment of students who wish to re-sit exams after a certain number of failures. The government demagoguery claims that in this way they will do away with the phenomenon of "life-long students", which in the collective fantasy is identified with "left-wing student agitators". In reality, a large proportion of students complete their studies after a longer period of time than what is foreseen by the draft law. In several departments, it is the average duration of study! The experience of the daily problems that students, most of whom have no participation in left-wing political activities, face during their effort to complete their studies has brought them to the assemblies in masses. In particular, it is the students who come from poorer social strata or who work who are threatened most immediately.

- ❖ Revocation of the free distribution of textbooks. As the above measure, this one affects the financially weak and raises even greater class barriers within the university.

- ❖ Restriction of university asylum. This is one of the greatest conquests of the student movement. Today, students have the right to veto the decisions of the academic



authorities, within whose jurisdiction suspension of asylum lies. The government wants to abolish all student control of asylum, in order for police forces and surveillance cameras to invade campuses.

These measures go in hand with the procedure of constitutional amendment, which has been set in motion aiming at the establishment of private universities. Article 16 of the Greek Constitution of 1975 states that the character of tertiary education is exclusively "public and free of charge". Any attempt to establish non-state universities is unconstitutional.

A constitutional amendment, however, is a prolonged procedure, which lasts over the duration of two parliamentary sessions (two governments in effect) and requires a reinforced majority in parliament.

Today, however, it is possible! PASOK (socialdemocrats) abandoning their stable stance of their party supporting public and free education has created an unprecedented consent for the amendment of Article 16 which is also indicative of the degree to which PASOK has adopted "social liberal" policies. The degeneration of social-democracy appears even greater in the stance of the leadership of the General Confederation of Greek Workers, which is controlled by PASOK. It has submitted candidacy for the creation of one of the first "non-state" universities!

A first set of measures were already passed by the government last year. The law for the "assessment of departments" created an institutional framework in concordance with the course of the Bologna procedure. Taking all this into consideration, we can safely support that the present law decisively advances the privatization of tertiary education.

It prepares the conditions with which both the state universities and future private universities will function entirely under conditions of competition and will be subordinate to corporations.

Autocracy, intensification of studies and rejection of the “superfluous” student force is a prerequisite for that type of university, in which political freedom and social sensitivities have no place.

A decisive clash

There can be no doubt about the significance of this movement. It is a face on confrontation in which the defeat of the struggle will possibly be - with no exaggeration - “swan song” of the radical student movement in Greece, as we knew it.

The student movement - from the renowned “rebellion of the Polytechnic” in November of 1973 against the junta of the Colonels, and through the occupations of campuses lasting for 1.5 years in the years of 1978-79, up to the great movement of occupations which caused a huge political crisis within the right-wing government during the period 1990-91 reaching today’s struggles - constituted the “unpredictable factor” in the social struggles within a country where the forces of social-democracy and Stalinism dominate oppressively over the labor movement.

The universities were a unique source of radicalization and a social reservoir for the revolutionary left in Greece. If this government reform prevails, the radical youth movement in the universities will lose its rank and file. If the government is defeated, we can foresee a new rise in radicalization among students.

The university lecturers’ strike

The government’s draft law aroused unprecedented reactions among the university lecturers, since it mainly affects the lower level lecturers. The Pan-Hellenic federation of lecturers declared an all-out strike, which widened the front against the government. Their mobilization facilitated the students’ struggle in another way: with the lecturers’ strike, the argument against the occupations (in order not to lose the exam period) became even more unconvincing. The lecturers, in most cases, participate in the student demonstrations.

Political Forces

Politically the student movement is led by a grass-roots united front between the EAAK (which brings together most of the far-left organisations, including the Greek section of the Fourth International OKDE-Spartakos, which won 8.5% of the vote in the student elections in March 2006), [1] the DARAS (the youth list of Synaspismos which won 2.5% in the same elections) and the small but well-organised forces of Genoa 2001 (the student union front of the SEK, Greek organisation of the IST, 0.3% in the last elections).

This movement has surpassed all the political forces that are active in the student movement.

Through the struggle, thousands of students, who until recently were hostile to “politics”, today are discovering the value of joint action and “grassroots politics”. The spontaneous participation inflated the movement and broke the impenetrability of student factions and organizations. However, there is always a dialectic of the spontaneous - conscientious. Not all political forces were ready to the same extent to develop their activities within this uprising.

The forces of EAAK (United Independent Anti-capitalist Movement), within the ranks of which the main bulk of the anti-capitalist left in the universities participates in the struggles (and in which the activists of the 4th International participate), moved in the beginning with greater ease with the current of the movement. That is because EAAK was born from a similar movement (that of 1990-91) and was integrally linked to all the later movements and occupations of universities (1995, 1998 and 2001) up to present time.

EAAK is the main political expression of the movement and plays a predominant role in the Pan-Hellenic Coordinating Committee of Occupied Departments. The rest of the forces, most of the time, support the proposals EAAK makes. Nevertheless, a prerequisite for EAAK to play this role was for it to abandon any sectarian complexes which accompany its political practice most of the time. It calls upon the PKS (Communist Party) for unity and votes along with DARAS (Synaspismos) and Genoa 2001 (SEK) and in many cases along with PASP (the student faction of PASOK), something which a few months before would have been considered almost treason.

EAAK, through experience, reached the conclusion that without the unity of all of the forces, the movement would be inconceivable.

The forces of the Communist Party of Greece (ÉÉÁ), [2] on the other hand, acted essentially against the movement. During the three first weeks, the ÉÉÁ was scaremongering about students’ losing the exam period and was calling on students to continue the struggle in September! Through “Rizospastis” (ÉÉÁ’s official newspaper) they slandered the left constituents of the movement claiming that they “were playing the game of PASOK” and denied its mass appeal.

It hid behind its so-called “Pan-Hellenic Coordinating Committee”, which at first had the support of only seven departments, to be left eventually with only 1! Wherever PKS (the student faction) exerted its influence to

gather support in the assemblies, it met with huge losses in favor of the framework supported by the Pan-Hellenic Coordinating Committee of Occupied Departments.

In the fourth week of the movement, under great pressure from the mass movement which brought the CCG to the verge of total isolation, it recognized that “the struggle is escalating” only to propose its own framework of five-day occupations separate from the more militant proposals put forward by the Pan-Hellenic Coordinating Committee of Occupied Departments. In other words, it continues its divisive policies. In all the assemblies, however, once more the CCG foundered in the voting procedure.

DAP, the student faction of the governing right-wing government, with the majority of votes in the student elections, is totally isolated from the assemblies. While during previous movements, it achieved the mass mobilization of its supporters against occupations, for the time being, it is unable to accomplish that now. Even in departments where it has the great majority of votes in student elections, it hasn’t been able to stand against the sweeping current of the movement.

Whereas in previous years, PASP the PASOK student faction, [3] increasingly aligned itself with DAP, it has now split into many parts and disappeared within the movement. This fact reflects what is taking place within its social base. As long as the movement is growing, in most departments the members of PASP support the occupations in defiance of the official position of their party.

DARAS (Synaspismos’ student faction) supports the occupations, playing a positive role in the movement but is shadowed by the EAAK.

Forms of organization

The Greek student movement has several historical particularities which differentiate it from the student movements in other countries.

Firstly, for the past 12 years there has been no functioning National Student Union of Greece (ÁFEE, the Greek equivalent of French UNEF). It convenes, in name only, to announce the student elections and then sinks into oblivion again.

On the one hand, the anti-capitalist left sabotaged every effort for the reconstruction of the EFEE from the point that the right-wing DAP threatened to gain control of it. On the other hand, all the other student factions more or less accepted this situation to further their own political aims. The absence of an official bureaucratic apparatus facilitates



mobilizations. They have no bureaucratic leadership to overcome!

There is no bureaucratic student structure to present itself as the official interlocutor with the government. Only the decisions of the assemblies legitimize any form of mobilization.

Another difference with that of student movements in other countries is that in the assemblies, the students don't vote for specific proposals one by one, but integrated frameworks proposed by various factions.

Whenever a decision is made in favor of occupying a university department, a Coordinating Committee for the Occupation is created. This is not made up of elected and revocable members, but it is "open" to all. It is logical that this model will have advantages but also serious disadvantages. Its basic characteristic is that everything depends on the balance of forces between the political organizations in the Coordinating Committees.

This model was confirmed throughout this movement also. With the difference that this time it has been expanded. Coordinating Committees exist in each city and there is also a Pan-Hellenic Coordinating Committee of Occupied Departments. The greatest problem is that the Coordinating Committee risks being cut off from the assemblies and the limits of its actions, as we will see further down, are the limits of the forces of the radical left which prevail in it.

The French example

No other external incentive, no other "example to follow" has had the repercussions on the Greek student movement that the struggle of the French youth against the law concerning the CPE (Contract of First Employment). The victorious outcome of the struggle in France gives an immense boost to the movement and is a universal point of reference.

The lesson from France is simple: we can win. But the significance of international solidarity with the French movement doesn't stop here. Even a small scale solidarity

protest which took place in Paris in support of the students' struggle in Greece was received with enthusiasm in the departmental assemblies. Solidarity statements (such as the ones from our comrade Olivier Besancenot and from JCR which were read at the Pan-Hellenic student rally on June 8th) and symbolic protests by the youth movement in France (and in other countries) have greater significance than usual.

Governmental intransigence and suppression

The Minister of Education, Marietta Giannakou, categorically refuses to enter into discussions with representative of the students. She characterizes students and lecturers both as "minorities who are reacting to the modernization of the Greek university". The government hasn't limited itself to intransigence: it has launched a wave of suppression culminating in the barbaric and brutal attack during the mass student march on June 8th with the intent of intimidating the youths who are inexperienced as far as struggles are concerned.

The march split up. The forces of suppression struck the student bloc indiscriminately, boys and girls between 18 and 21 years old in most cases. Police from the special forces, armed to the teeth isolated students in groups and beat them till they were unconscious.

The police attack is considered to be the most brutal in recent years (dozens injured!) and was accompanied by 40 arrests (in the following days detainees were set free under the pressure of the general outcry).

Even reporters from establishment mass media were struck. Pictures of bleeding students filled the television news bulletins counter-balancing the usual pictures of black bloc.

Between three and four thousand students took refuge within the Polytechnic University after the demonstration. In this way, they made the best use of academic asylum, confirming the significance of the struggle to defend it.

Breaking the social isolation

The suppression on June 8th turned the movement into the topic of the day. Until then, the government tried to impose a conspiracy of silence over the mass media and particularly over television.

PASOK, which essentially assents to the government measures, speaks of the need for dialogue and is beginning half-heartedly to differentiate its stance. The parliamentary parties of the left reject the draft law but do

not take serious unifying initiatives to support the student movement.

An even greater obstacle is the stance of the leadership of the General Confederation of Greek Workers, which, as stated above, not only did not move in the direction of supporting the student demands, but also supports the establishment of "non-state" universities.

As far as we know, in France, the CGT, which at first was in favor the European Constitution, changed its position under the pressure of its rank and file.

We also know that in the movement against the CPE, the large trade union federations were at first unwilling to mobilize. If they didn't manage to adopt the slogan for a permanent strike, nevertheless, under pressure from the youth, they organized strike mobilizations and took to the streets along with it. That gave breadth and credibility to the movement.

Comrades of the Fourth International, along with a few other tendencies within the movement, are supporting the point of view within the Coordinating Committees that the Pan-Hellenic Coordinating Committee itself should address the workers' movement and exert pressure on it.

However, the currents of the radical left - mainly within EAAK which, in a way, has found itself in the leadership of the movement - do not fully realize the significance of this duty and use as an excuse the truly unacceptable stance of the trade union bureaucracy.

In spite of this, the students cannot wait until new "pure and red" workers movement is created to ask the workers organizations to mobilize with strikes by their side. The issue of the mobilization of the trade unions in support of the student struggles will be of vital importance within the next few weeks...

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NOTES

[1] With more than 70% participation, the student elections, which take place every March, can be considered as a valid indication of the relationship of forces. The main force is the right (ND), with almost 40% of the votes.

[2] 15% in the last student election

[3] 25% in the last student elections

Fighting homophobia

Support EuroPride!

Terry Conway

George Bush's recent pronouncements that he wants to amend the US constitution to enshrine marriage as something that can only take place between a man and a woman is not a piece of homophobia dreamt up in his own brain. For once the most powerful politician in the world is following someone else's political ideas - in this case the right wing "preachers party" in Latvia which successfully amended their constitution in this way last year.

But it's not just at the level of the law that lesbians, gay men, transgender people and bisexuals have faced increasing discrimination in Eastern Europe in particular.

On May 27, a gay pride march in Moscow was banned by the city's mayor Yuri Luzhkov. Luzhkov said such a march would never take place while he was in office and denounced homosexuality as "mad licentiousness".

But despite this a small group of Russians together with their international supporters went ahead with the protest and were then viciously attacked by right-wing thugs, chanting obscene and threatening slogans and hurling smoke bombs.

One of their chants was 'Gays and lesbians to Kolmya', a reference to the gruesome gulag camp where dissidents were incarcerated and abused during the Soviet era.

Initially the police did nothing to stop this assault and then later arrested two of the two co-organisers of the Pride event; Nikolai Alekseev and Yevgenia Debryanskaya while apparently trying to keep the two sides apart. The gay German Green MP, Volker Beck, was one of those who was bloodied, having been hit in the eye and on the nose with a rock and fists. He was arrested but his attacker was not.

Activist Peter Tatchell, who was one of those present concludes his report on this web site by saying: "The Moscow Pride events of 27 May remind me of my teenage memories of the black civil rights marchers in the 1960s. They, too, defied an authoritarian state and faced bloody repression. But they triumphed in the end, as will Russian lesbians and gays.

Moscow Pride 2006 is over. But the battle for the right to protest that it sparked has only just begun. Nikolai Alekseev and the others

who were arrested will appeal against the ban on Moscow Pride, and against their arrest by the police. They plan to take their appeal all the way to the European Court of Human Rights. This is a battle that looks set to run and run. Undeterred, they are already planning Moscow Pride 2007. Be there! "

Subsequently on June 2 about forty people protested in Brussels outside the Russian Federation Delegation to the European Commission about the banning of the protest and the subsequent violence. And the French Communist Party have broken off relations with the Russian CP over the banning of the Moscow march.

And sadly Moscow was not a complete aberration, though the level of violence was particularly bad. Two days later on May 29 a "gay tolerance march" in the southern Polish city of Krakow was attacked by members of the far-right All Poland Youth Group, throwing stones and eggs.

Activists say that the overall situation in the country has become worse since the election of the conservative Law and Justice Party came to power last September which campaigned on traditional, family and Catholic values. Shortly after he became Prime Minister, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz said in an interview that homosexuality is unnatural. Surveys suggest that 9 out of 10 Poles agree with him.

In Bucharest the second Pride March took place on June 3 with around 500 marching through the streets of the capital. But egg-throwing counter-demonstrators organised mainly by the Romanian Orthodox churches marred the day. The growth of visible homophobia in Eastern and Central Europe will be a key theme of the Europride events taking place in London at the end of June/beginning of July.



Moscow police attack Pride march, May 27

On June 30 a conference will take place organised by Amnesty International, the European Prides Organisation Association and ILG-Europe. Its aim is "to provide practical support to LGBT activists who organise or plan to organise a Pride event in a hostile environment, whether in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, or elsewhere in Europe. It will build on successes achieved so far by sharing the lessons gained and by exploring the ways that European institutions and international solidarity can contribute to further advances".

"It is certainly hoped that as well as looking at how to strengthen solidarity with those in Eastern Europe the conference will address other issues such as the important fight against transphobia which has been taking place in Portugal and the need to act to widen that struggle.

In February 2006, Gisberta Salce Júnior, a Brazilian transsexual living in the Portuguese city of Porto, was tortured and anally raped with sticks for three days and then thrown into a pit and left to die in an abandoned construction site.

Gisberta had been in very poor health. She was HIV Positive, and had tuberculosis. She lived on the streets, and engaged in sex work to earn some money.

The coverage of this crime in the Portuguese media was an outrage. The press refused to publish her photo, neglected to mention that she was transsexual and generally tried to dehumanise her. They ignored the public statements of LGBT organisations.

Although a group of boys aged 12-16 confessed to the crime, at one point it seemed they would not be prosecuted. However on June 6 the legal process started against twelve adolescents, all of whom were in a care home run by the Catholic Church. Their



Moscow - a "21st century Stonewall"

defence team is attempting to argue there was no intention to murder and to have the charges reduced from murder to manslaughter.

These latest developments happened in the run up to a successful international day of action demanding justice for Gisberta and opposing transphobia. The horror not only of Gisberta's death and the manner of it but the response from Portuguese society shows the depth of prejudice facing trans people.

And while the situation in a number of other European countries (including Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark) is undoubtedly better both from the point of view legal rights (legal partnership agreements, anti-discrimination laws) and public attitudes as high-profiles lesbians and gays in political in many spheres of life including politics have a positive impact but real discrimination, hatred and violence are part of the daily lives of far too many in our communities.

In Britain, the increase in homophobic bullying in schools and a number of high profile murders are particular causes for concern. At the same time as linking arms with our sisters and brothers across Europe and across the world, we have to ensure that our own Pride is visible and militant.

It is obviously important that there is an increasingly organised presence of LGBT people in many trade unions and that those contingents are likely to be visible at Pride in London as well as at various other events across the country throughout the year. But the left needs to give this issue a higher priority and a higher profile in its activities.

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June 24 1956. Workers march out of factories

Poland

50 years since the Poznan uprising

Zbigniew Marcin Kowalewski

The insurrectional uprising in the Polish town of Poznan in June 1956 shone a searchlight on the crisis of Stalinism. Preceded by a similar event in East Berlin (in 1953) and followed four months later by the Hungarian Revolution (October 1956), the Poznan insurrection opened the great cycle of the Polish workers' struggles against the bureaucratic dictatorship (1970, 1976, 1980-1).

In Poland, the overthrow of the bourgeois regime after the Second World War, and the incorporation of the country in the Soviet Union's 'buffer zone', was followed by a real industrial revolution which the Polish bourgeoisie - in the framework of a backward and dependent capitalism - had been incapable of achieving. In six years, through a gigantic voluntaristic effort and mass mobilisation, the country changed from top to bottom.

A new and powerful industrial proletariat became the decisive social force in the nation. The social advancement of wide layers of the labouring masses, generated by the regime of 'popular democracy' and industrialisation, had no precedent in the history of the country. And it gave birth to enhanced aspirations on the part of the proletariat for a better life - economically, culturally and morally; but also for a role in the management of enterprises and the economy in general, society and the state.

The Stalinist regime however entered into crisis. At the end of the 1940s two events had marked the consolidation of the regime. The

first concerned the police suppression of a current which wanted to follow a "Polish road to socialism" - "right wing nationalists" in Stalinist terminology, in other words a current which wanted autonomy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. Wladyslaw Gomulka, the main Communist leader of this current was arrested in 1947.

The second event was the liquidation of the two main currents of the Polish workers movement, the Communist and Socialist parties, into a single bureaucratic party, the Polish United Workers Party (POUP).

The terrorist dictatorship, concentrated in the sinister Department 10 of the Ministry Public Security and in Military Intelligence, which lorded it even above the formal leadership of the POUP, was dismantled after the death of Stalin in 1953. In the subsequent atmosphere of the 'thaw' and of factional struggles inside the leadership, there was a small political opening and a timid liberalisation by the party leadership.

But at the same time, the tensions and contradictions inherent in the bureaucratic

management of the economy, the industrial revolution and the state, began to emerge. The promises of a major growth in the standard of living, after the major effort of reconstruction and industrialisation, evaporated.

Armed confrontation

The bureaucracy in power, incapable of raising productivity through technical progress, intensified workplace exploitation and raised output norms, lowered real wages by paying less than the value of labour power, raised income tax, lowered overtime payments etc. It was precisely resistance to this super-exploitation which unleashed the protest movement among the metal workers at the giant 'Stalin' factory in Poznan.

While negotiations between the workers' delegation and government representatives dragged on, mass meetings took place, the election of representatives continued, and links were formed between different factories and enterprises. This birth of workers democracy made the situation explosive. The uprising started on 28 June at six o'clock in the morning, with the unleashing of a general strike in the town and a demonstration in front of the Town Hall of 100,000 workers who had walked out of their factories.

At 10am the movement took the form of an insurrection. The local prison was attacked and 257 political and ordinary prisoners were released, as well as all the prison documents destroyed. The courthouse was set on fire and there were successive attacks during the day on the 10 arsenals in the city. Workers' violence hit all the repressive institutions of the state.

About midday, the demonstrators besieged and attacked the core of the repressive system: the central building of the State Security, the most hated criminal institution of the bureaucratic regime. The crowd attacked the building from 20 different directions. The crowds disarmed a party of military cadets sent to help the besieged State Security men and disrupted the advance of a column of 16 tanks. The insurrectionist workers captured two tanks and tried to use them against the State Security building.

From 4pm onwards the town was besieged, bit by bit, by a force of two armoured divisions and two divisions of infantry - a force totalling 10,000 soldiers and 360 tanks, under the command of the deputy minister of



The first tanks to arrive are stopped by workers

national defence, General Stanislaw Poplawski - a Soviet military officer of Polish origin, seconded to the Polish army. The general strike lasted three days; the armed confrontations lasted for four days, gradually becoming more and more sporadic.

The outcome was 57 dead, including 49 civilians and eight soldiers and state security agents. Between the two sides 600 were wounded. Seven hundred and forty six people, 80% of them workers, were arrested - and many of these were beaten and tortured to make them confess that the uprising was the work of American or West German intelligence agencies and a secret anti-communist organisation, which in reality didn't exist.

However in the course of three trials only 22 people were prosecuted and only 10 found guilty. They were given relatively lenient sentences of between two and six years in jail. The last trial furnished a paradox; 10 people who had formed an armed insurrectional group, finished with none of them being sentenced. They were defended courageously by their lawyers who declared that the guilty people were the bureaucrats in power, who had stopped being an ideological elite to become "an elite in the field of consumption".

The Poznan uprising shook the bureaucratic order and unleashed a major political crisis. Four months later, in October 1956, a huge anti-bureaucratic mass movement swept the country. The workers formed workers councils in the factories and firms and parliament voted for a law which said "The workers council manages the enterprise in the name of the workers". Gomulka, imprisoned since 1947, was brought back to triumphantly take the leadership of the POUP with immense popular support. But his role eventually was to put an end to the political revolution and re-establish a reformed bureaucratic order which was, at a formal level at least, de-Stalinised.

22 June 2006

❖ Zbigniew Kowalewski was in 1980-81 a member of the regional leadership of Solidarnosc in Lodz. As a delegate to the First Congress of Solidarnosc, he took part in the elaboration of the programme that was adopted. He was in Paris at the invitation of French trade unionists when the state of siege was declared in December 1981. He helped to edit Polish-language *Inprekor*, a journal of the Fourth International circulated clandestinely in Poland from 1981 to 1990, and published "Rendez-nous nos usines!" ("Give us Back our Factories!") (*La Brèche*, Paris 1985). He is at present editor of the trade union weekly *Nowy Tygodnik Popularny* and of the theoretical journal *Rewolucja*.