



# INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

News and analysis from the Fourth International

IV390 - June 2007



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**Philippines** -  
Electoral fraud at  
home,  
exploitation  
abroad



**Plus** -  
François  
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## IV390 - June 2007

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## Palestine

# The Crisis in Gaza: Made in Israel

Not a Civil War

*Michel Warschawski*

The old dream of Ariel Sharon is becoming a reality: Palestinians are killing Palestinians, and Israel is counting the number of victims with great satisfaction. The tears of Israeli leaders are crocodile tears, and their claims that they are sorry for the tragic developments in Gaza are mere hypocrisy. The bloody confrontations were predictable, and the Israeli-US responsibility and active involvement are crystal clear.

Many Israeli journalists are analyzing Israel's responsibility as indirect: "1.4 million people closed in a small territory like Gaza, without any possibility to have normal economic life, but also without the possibility of escape, are doomed to kill each other... like mice closed in a box." That zoological explanation is not only typically racist, but also based on a huge understatement. For, the Israeli and US role in the present confrontations was much more than simply "creating the conditions" for an inner-Palestinian conflict.

For months, the US State Department has been pushing the Fatah leadership to launch a military offensive against Hamas, and two weeks ago, Israel was giving a green light to the entry of huge quantity of arms for Fatah militias in Gaza. In that sense, the Israeli part in the present situation is not only conjectural, but an active role.

### Who is the Aggressor?

"Hamas is taking over," "A Hamas coup d'etat"-these are some of the headlines from the Israeli newspapers in the last days, repeating the big lies of the Tel Aviv and Washington administrations. It appears that there is a need to make clear what should be obvious: Hamas smashed Fatah in the last Palestinian elections, after an electoral process that the whole international community, including Washington, hailed as "the most democratic ever in the Middle East." Unquestionable democratic process and massive popular support, few regimes can claim such legitimacy.

Despite their huge victory, Hamas accepted to share the power with Fatah in a national unity government formed under the hospices of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and hailed by the entire international community, with the



exception of Washington and Israel. The political platform of the new government gave de facto recognition the State of Israel and endorsed the strategy of peaceful negotiations, based on the mechanism of Oslo.

The priority of the new government was to deal with the burning domestic issues-economic improvement, restoration of law and order in Gaza, fighting the endemic corruption of the old Fatah-led administration-while allowing President Mahmoud Abbas and the PLO to continue the negotiation process, if and when Israel would accept to renew it.

Hamas' moderate government platform, however, was confronted by two powerful enemies: a segment of the Fatah cadres who are not ready to renounce their monopoly in the political power, and the material privileges connected to that monopoly, and the US-Israeli neoconservative governments, which are conducting a global crusade against political Islam. Muhammad Dahlan, former Preventive Security chief and present Security Adviser of Mahmoud Abbas represent both: they are the executioners of Washington's plans in the Palestinian leadership, as well as the representatives of those corrupt Fatah leaders who are ready to do everything in order not to lose their economic resources.

Since the electoral victory of Hamas, Dahlan's militia has been provoking the government, attacking Hamas militias and refusing to let the government control the Palestinian police forces. Despite Dahlan's aggression, Hamas has been doing its best to reach an agreement with Dahlan, asking its own activists to refrain from counter-violence. However, when it became clear that Dahlan was not looking for a compromise, but indeed attempting to liquidate Hamas, the Islamic organization had no alternative but to defend itself and fight back.

### The Algerian Model

The US-Israeli plan is part of a global strategy aimed at imposing governments which are loyal to their interests, against the will of the local population. Algeria provides an example of such a strategy, but also of its failure and its colossal human cost: the unquestionable electoral victory of the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) over the corrupted and discredited FLN, in 1991, was followed by a coup d'etat, supported by France and the US, which paved the way for a civil war that lasted for more than a decade and provoked more than one hundred thousand civilian victims.

Hamas has clearly learned from the Algerian tragedy, and decided not to let Dahlan's plans succeed in his attempt to take power by force. Enjoying the support of the majority of the local population, Hamas militants smashed Fatah in less than two days, despite the arms supplied, indirectly, by Israel: a corrupt militia without any popular support could not face a relatively disciplined and highly motivated organization.

Even after its smashing victory on Fatah, Hamas leadership has reiterated its intention to keep a national unity government and not to exploit the failed coup d'etat of Fatah as a pretext to eradicate the organization or to exclude it from the government. Fatah leadership, however, decided to cut any kind of relation with Hamas, and to establish a government without Hamas... in the West Bank. Another dream of Ariel Sharon is becoming a reality: total separation between the West Bank and Gaza, the later being considered a hopeless "Hamastan," a terrorist entity in which there are no civilians, but only terrorists which can be put under a total state of siege, and doomed to starvation.

Washington, which fully endorses this policy, promised its full support to Mahmoud Abbas and his new Bantustan in the West Bank, and Ehud Olmert decided to release some of the



Palestinian money that is in the Israeli government hands.

### Not a Civil War

One of the Israeli and US administrations' objectives failed however: there is no chaos in Gaza. On the contrary. As one Palestinian security officer told Haaretz (17 June): "For a very long time the city has not been quiet. I prefer the present situation to the previous one. I can, finally, go out from my house..." The eradication of Fatah gangs from Gaza may put an end to a long period of anarchy, and allow for a return to a certain level of normal life. The latest events confirmed that Hamas does have the power to impose it.

Israeli talks about a "Palestinian civil war" are no more than wishful thinking. The armed confrontation was between armed militia only, and if, unfortunately, there were civilian casualties, there were what the US army calls "collateral damage." The population is indeed politically divided-in the West Bank as well as in Gaza-but not fighting each other, in the meantime at least.

With Gaza being defined as a hostile entity and its whole population as allied to Hamas, there is no doubt that it will be, in the near future, the target of a brutal Israeli aggression: eventual military incursions, bombardments and starvation.

This is why our top priority, in Israel as well as throughout the world, is to organize solidarity with Gaza and its population.

(This article appeared originally at [www.alternativenews.org](http://www.alternativenews.org).)

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).

## Palestine

### Gaza - Stop inter-Palestinian fighting

LCR

The confrontations between Palestinians in Gaza are the direct consequence of the Israeli occupation and the transformation of the Gaza Strip into a ghetto. Locked up, hungry, without work and freedom of travel and without vital resources, the population is constantly harassed and threatened by murderous Israeli incursions and bombardment.

The LCR condemns the fratricidal confrontations between the Palestinian armed forces. The Western governments created the conditions for this catastrophe: boycott of the Palestinian governments as a result of the Hamas victory in the 2006 elections and a murderous embargo aimed at the population under the pretext that Hamas is in a majority.

The announcement of new elections will not change anything with the current situation of chaos. The LCR calls for ending of fratricidal combat. The LCR rejects the proposal to send an international military force into Gaza. It would only be used to crush the Palestinian resistance.

The only way out of the crisis is the re-establishment of the basic rights of the Palestinians, the immediate release of all the prisoners, freedom to travel and work, and

the ending of the bombardments and the assassinations perpetrated continuously by the Israeli army.

A viable perspective for the Palestinian people means by the total withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces and the evacuation of all the Israeli settlements on Palestinian land. The LCR demands that the European Union, and in particular of France, intervenes to stop the Israeli aggression, and begins again an honest co-operation with the Palestinian government. By acting this way France and the EU could show a real willingness to unblock the present tragic situation in Gaza and the West Bank.

15 June 2007

The Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire is the French Section of the Fourth International.

## Philippines

### Padding and shaving

Mammoth electoral fraud in Philippines elections

*Clara Maria Sanchez*

Nearly three weeks after election day, there are still no definitive results for the Philippine elections to the Senate and House of Representatives. Counting is still continuing and in a number of provinces it has not even begun.

This has nothing to do with inefficiency and everything to do with ballot-rigging. The Philippines is one of the most corrupt 'democracies' in the world.

During the 2004 presidential election, the victory of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was widely attributed to large-scale fraud.

A tape was massively circulated of a conversation between the President and Virgilio Garcillano, head of Comelec, the national election commission. Arroyo was heard addressing him familiarly, 'Hello Garci', and the election chief proudly assured her that he would guarantee her a million-vote majority.

The diffusion of the tape led to widespread protests and attempts to impeach Arroyo, which failed because the opposition was unable to secure the necessary number of votes in Congress.

One of the things at stake in these elections is to prevent the opposition winning enough seats to change that. That would require it to win eight of the twelve (out of twenty-four) Senate seats that are up for re-election.

It is not looking good for Arroyo. Current estimates of the votes counted give the pro-Arroyo Team Unity (TU) just two seats, with eight going to the Genuine Opposition (GO) slate, and two to independents. At least one of these, retired army officer and serial coup plotter Gregorio 'Gringo' Honasan, is no friend of Arroyo. He is currently awaiting trial for an alleged coup attempt last year.



Fraud occurs throughout the country, as elections take place under the sway of 'guns, goons and gold'. By intimidation and/or bribery, the contents of ballot boxes are changed. Some candidates' votes are 'shaved' (reduced), others are 'padded' (increased). Indeed in some particularly blatant cases, no actual voting takes place. Ballots are filled in with the names of the appropriate candidate by the local warlord or corrupt village chief and handed over to the election authorities.

But much of the fraud is concentrated in the southern island of Mindanao, the second biggest in the Philippines. Mindanao and the adjacent islands have been the scene of armed conflict for more than thirty years. The resulting instability largely favours election-rigging. Populations have been displaced; accurate records of the number of voters are unavailable or intentionally concealed. The heavy presence of the army and police (two-thirds of the Philippine armed forces are concentrated in Mindanao) does nothing to guarantee fair elections, quite the contrary.

At present, counting still has to begin in seven provinces of Mindanao. This is a common feature of Philippine elections, and these late counts are used to 'adjust' the overall results and increase the votes of pro-government candidates.

A glance at the country's main newspaper, the Philippine Daily Inquirer, provides daily evidence of cheating. One of the most picturesque concerns the island province of Basilan, off the coast of Mindanao. Teachers assigned to supervise the elections were taking ballot papers over in a motor boat.

They were surprised to be accompanied by armed goons in the hire of a local mayor. Half way across, these men ordered the ferryman to stop, confiscated the ballot papers at gunpoint and began to fill them in with the name of their candidate. Only heavy waves forced them to stop and continue in a house on the island. Voters in the precincts concerned never saw a ballot paper.

All 252 seats in the House of Representatives are up for re-election. Most are elected in constituencies, and Arroyo is fairly sure of winning a majority by hook or by crook. But 20 per cent are allocated to party lists, by proportional representation. Previously used mainly by radical left groups unable to compete financially in the constituencies, this election has seen a flurry of government-inspired 'parties' take part. The votes of the really independent party lists are particularly vulnerable to fraud, and they have to try and physically protect their votes up to the time of the proclamation of the results.

In Mindanao, the radical left party list Anak Mindanao (Amin), which fights for peace and cooperation between the 'tri-people' of the island (Muslim Moros, indigenous peoples, Christian settlers and their descendants), and which has at present one Congressman, is having to combat widespread fraud. Votes in its bastions are being attributed to government-sponsored party lists that no one in Mindanao has heard of - including a Manila-based list of...tricycle drivers.

## Philippines

# Exporting domestic labour - the Philippines' participation in globalisation?

Development or devastation?

*Eva Olaer Ferraren*

The present administration of President Gloria Arroyo has basically opted for the institutionalization of labour migration as a central measure to counter the economic crisis in the country due to the effects of neo-liberal policies. It is also the most profitable way of global trading, with less capital investment and risks on the part of the sending country and the expectation of high returns in the form of remittances. Human resources are now the primary commodities for export; and most of the labour deployed is female, to respond to labour demands in the advanced countries, such as domestic work, taking care of the aging population and other human service-related work.



The aggressiveness of this human trading was even shown during the wars in Lebanon and Iraq when President Arroyo announced that she was sending more "supermaids" to Middle East countries, while other governments were sending rescue vehicles for their citizens living in these countries.

According to Philippine economic indicators, the remittances of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) exceed foreign direct investment in the country. Remittances per annum amount to about US\$12-14 billion, which only includes those working legally abroad, whereas many OFWs working in domestic and other service work are undocumented.

The Philippine government relies heavily on the remittances the OFWs send to their families to compensate for the lack of spending on social services such as health and education, to boost domestic consumption and to cover its yearly budget deficits. And the sad truth is that the income from the labour migration business is mostly spent in this way and not on productive investments, which means that the migrant workers will work forever abroad, in order that their families can simply survive and

because there are even fewer options for them to return to the country, whose economy is bankrupt and corrupt.

This dramatic increase in labour migration has created a large population of transnational migrant families. Thousands of children now grow up apart from one or both parents, as the parents are forced to work outside the country in order to send their children to school, give them access to quality health care, or, in some cases, just provide them with enough food.

### The Feminization of the Export of Human Labour

Philippine labour migration has a woman's face. According to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), in 2003, more than 70% of the total number of workers abroad were women. Most of them are between 25-29 years old. Women migrants live and work in more than 192 countries. They work as professional and technical employees, nurses, clerical and sales workers, entertainers, caregivers, and domestic workers. Many are employed in

jobs which have traditionally been undertaken by women.

Most of these women migrants who work in the service and domestic sectors leave families behind and their children are taken care of by their parents, male partners, or relatives. The function of reproduction of labour that was performed by migrant women is passed on to their male partners and women relatives.

The paradox of this feminization of migrant labour is that the women who have left this reproductive function in their own family to join the global working force are still performing the same function for families in First World countries. The effects of the feminization of labour migration on the families of the migrant women from poor countries demonstrate how the global economy is structured to benefit the rich countries of the world.

The migrant women who work in domestic households in the countries of Europe, the Middle East, US and Asia are mostly undocumented and are basically denied their rights as workers and human beings. The

## Philippines

worst cases are encountered in Middle East countries where these undocumented domestic workers are locked up in the houses of their employers, treated inhumanely and sometimes even killed. An increasing number of migrant women are victims of sexual abuse, trafficking, and prostitution. Despite the reports of these abuses many Filipina women still migrate and work in these countries, putting their chances of survival at the mercy of their employers.

Most of the migrant women's families are run by their male partners. Research shows that the spending habits of the family increase - shopping sprees, spending more on luxurious items and other non-essential buying. Consumerist practices have become prevalent among migrant families and so they become a target for commercial capital.

In its discourse about labour migration, the Philippine government proudly makes the OFWs the country's new heroes, because they salvage the dwindling economy and sacrifice themselves as victims of this global capitalism. However, the remittances of the OFWs have only benefited the state, because of its cuts in social service spending, and global capitalists because they can easily dump their goods and commodities on Third World countries whose economies have been liberalized.

### OFW Remittances: Do they compensate the social costs of migration?

The most often-used argument in favour of labour migration is that remittances play an extraordinary role in the economies of many developing countries, far more important than official development assistance or even the country's foreign direct investment. Worldwide, remittances are estimated at about US \$167 billion per year, and approximately 60 percent of this sum goes to developing countries. Remittance estimates are imprecise, however, because remittances often move through private, unrecorded

channels. Yes, the Philippines has annual OFW remittances of 12-14 billion US dollars, excluding the non-formal channels, and NO that does not compensate for the social costs of migration and the development of the country. Despite this enormous amount of remittance or cash inflow, labour migration does not significantly improve the development prospects of the country of origin. The Philippines have had great difficulty in converting remittance income into sustainable productive capacity. In addition, most Third World countries are able to exercise little control over the composition of their labour exports-rather, they are determined by foreign labour markets, and may bear no relation to "surplus" labour at home. The Philippines has focused quite deliberately on "producing" skilled labour for foreign markets, but remains passive in the face of international supply and demand.

As we have said, remittance income is rarely used for productive purposes. Remittances go in small amounts to poor people (the average size of a transfer from the US or Europe to the Philippines is about \$200 or €150 per month), and are used mostly to support direct consumption and spending on housing, healthcare, and education.

Only a very small proportion of remitted funds seem to go into income-earning, job-creating investment and property acquisition. Remittances may not constitute a rising tide that raises all boats, but they do have a very important effect on the standard of living of the households that receive them, constituting a significant portion of household income. They represent the most important social safety net of poor families, especially in times of disasters or difficult times. Far from being productive, remittances increase inequality, encourage consumption of imports, increases domestic prices for education and health and create dependency. Other than that, the real value of money has been reduced, given the fact that foreign exchange rates are too low for weak currencies and also because of the costs

incurred in transferring money. Thus, remittances increase the profits of foreign banks and have led to the proliferation of money transfer and exchange businesses. Much more money goes to the financial markets and on consumer spending than on productive investments that could enhance labour productivity and sustainable development.

Aside from the economic aspects, labour migration affects families. It has contributed to the malfunctioning of family structures. Cases of marital infidelity and juvenile delinquency are prevalent among migrant families and a relationship of dependency on the migrants is created.

### Conclusion: Migration and Globalization: who are the servants of the global economy?

Migrant women work around the clock taking care of the families of the workers of global companies. Global capitalists are the principal beneficiaries of the labour of migrant women in the domestic households, because they do not have to pay for the reproduction of the labour force. This is especially the case with undocumented migrants, whose monetary compensation is low and who have no social benefits - health care, sick pay, retirement pensions, paid holidays.

For a long time invisible, undocumented workers are now organising in many countries. The movement of the 'sans papiers' in France began over ten years ago. More recently there have been demonstrations in the US and Britain. In the Netherlands a campaign is underway for the recognition of overwhelmingly female domestic labour as real work and for the regularization of migrant domestic workers. It is vital that these workers receive the full support of the left and the workers movement.

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Eva Olaer is Executive Director of Stichting Sumpay Mindanao International.

## Italy

### Cannavò's farewell

"The PRC is finished and other comrades will come with me"

*Fabrizio Roncone*

Rome. On Saturday afternoon the honourable deputy Salvatore Cannavò, at the head of the demonstration protesting against George W. Bush, said something like: "I have a letter in my pocket but I still want to wait a few hours..."

"And now the few hours have passed, indeed". Precisely. "And yes, in sum I spoke of my relationship with Rifondazione Comunista. A relationship that, unhappily, is broken" Broken? It's a rather vague term, Mr Deputy. "I mean that so far as I am concerned, I consider that the experience of Rifondazione has come to its end, that it is over. Naturally, I should in any case discuss that with the comrades of my current...". The "Critical Left". "In September we will hold our first national conference".

These words and projects could be a harsh blow for his party.

"Look, to be sincere, my relationship with the party has already profoundly changed following the expulsion of senator Turigliatto." It was indeed known... "I no longer participated, in reality, in the life of the party. I did not take part in its leadership and I was outside of the everyday life of the parliamentary group."

And then on Saturday he found himself at the head of a demonstration.

"What I saw, and what I felt, it confirmed what I had experienced..." He tries to explain. "While me and other comrades of Rifondazione were in this magnificent demonstration of the movement, which had nothing to do with these fifty hooligans, this gang... the leadership of the party was on the contrary isolated, terribly isolated, at the Piazza del Popolo" The scene was eloquent, he says. "I know it. I sent one of my comrades to see. Giordano [secretary of the PRC] was surrounded by a few dozen people. The truth is that, this Saturday, under a photographic, plastic, mode we have been confronted with the bankruptcy

of the political line of Rifondazione."

In what does it consist? "To be both in the struggle and in the government. You see, it is an unwritten rule of Italian politics..." Which? "You cannot be at the same time in the government and in the movement. In Italy such an operation cannot succeed. And Rifondazione, not by chance, has for several months no longer succeeded in speaking with the movements in struggle, with the workers..."

You are thinking of the chilly welcome that the workers at Mirafiori [Fiat] gave a few days ago to Franco Giordano and to the minister Paolo Ferrero. "Completely. It was a terrible day. If your comrades, your electorate no longer recognises you, that means that you have failed."

Who is responsible for this policy? "All of the leading group". Can you be more precise? "Fausto Bertinotti." What are the errors he has committed? "Two. Above all he has underestimated the real relationship of forces in this country. He was convinced on the eve of the elections that the centre-left was going to sweep all before it whereas we said that we would see a substantial equilibrium." Then? "He believed that mass mobilisations would condition the activity of the government. But on the contrary, he did not want to know what we had succeeded in building in the north east, against the US base in Vicenza".

Some in the party begin to think that proposing Bertinotti for the presidency of the Chamber of Deputies was a strategic error. "This was an error. Sensational. Inane. I said so immediately. But I remember that a number of



comrades smiled, looked at me with an air of self-importance, as if something obvious had eluded me, as if I didn't understand".

And you say that now between Rifondazione and the movement there is a fracture. "Think about it, if the leaders of Rifondazione had the slightest perception of reality, they would immediately call a special congress." The professor Massimo Cacciari argues that Rifondazione has now become a weight for the Olive Tree. "You've noticed it? Cacciari notices that Rifondazione is in difficulties and he attacks it. But them, no. They are trying to resolve the problem of their weakness by allying with other weak forces. With the Greens, with the PdCI,[1] with the Mussiani?[2] Do you know where that will end up?" No, where? "They will become an external current of the Democratic Party."

And you, on the other hand? "What about us?" What do you expect to bring from Rifondazione? And to do what? "We will see in September, at our national conference."

On Saturday, on the demonstration, there were at least fifty thousand people. "Stop there! What you are saying is a trap... We didn't organise this demonstration to found a party".

And what will you do now in the Chamber? "You want to know how I'm going to vote?" At least. "I will decide case by case. And to be better understood: I will fight so that the proposed Bersani legislation, on liberalisation, cannot pass if it is not changed." You are truly a fighter. "I am coherent. There was a time, you know, when coherence was a value inside Rifondazione."

And today, how do you prefer to define yourself? "Write that I was and I remain a Communist."

#### APPENDIX - Article by the Italian press agency ANSA

### According to Cannavò, the left's break with the movements is irreversible

Rome, June 11.

"The governmental left has broken in an irreversible manner its relationship with the movements. What happened on June 9 is only the consequence of a situation which has developed for several years, even before the government inside of which they have made so many errors".

Thus Salvatore Cannavò, spokesperson of the Critical Left, drew the balance sheet of the situation of the parties of the radical left after the flop of their initiative at the Piazza del Popolo.

"The fundamental project of the PRC has failed. The problem relates as much to the political line as to the inadequate leading group".

For Cannavò "the archipelago of the governmental left was crushed by the strategic pact made with the Democratic Party".

The spokesperson of the Critical Left also said that he had sent a letter to the leadership of the party to announce "the suspension of the financing of the party". "Some days ago they let me know verbally that they

## Italy

## The Watershed of June 9

*Sinistra Critica*

had suspended the financing of the tendency because it was now external to the party and because it participated in the No War demonstration, against the war. Flavia D'Angeli asked for explanations inside the leadership of the PRC but obtained no response. so I decided to suspend my financing of the party. I will henceforth pay my share into a special account, separate from mine, awaiting clarification."

When asked if his link with the PRC was now definitively broken, the PRC deputy responded: "If there was only me, Salvatore Cannavò, the relation would already be broken, but I cannot take such a responsibility without the decision of the whole of the Critical Left. In autumn we will hold a national conference at which we will decide what to do".

ANSA is the main Italian press agency.

Fabrizio Roncone is a journalist for *Corriera della Serra*

## NOTES

[1] 1. The Party of Italian Communists (PdCI) emerged from a right split from the PRC, in 1998, when the majority of the PRC decided to withdraw its support from the first government of Romano Prodi. Then Armando Cossutta, one of the historic leaders of Rifondazione, split to support the government of D'Alema.

[2] 2. The term Mussiani - from the name of Fabio Mussa - refers to the small minority of Left Democrats which did not accept the foundation of the Democratic Party with the other components of the Olive Tree. In relation to the reorganisation of the Italian left, see. IV no 388, April 2007.

On April 15, during an assembly of a thousand activists in Rome, in the presence of many representatives of different social movements, Sinistra Critica (the Critical Left) took the decision to organize on June 9 a demonstration in Rome against the war, on the occasion of the visit of US President George Bush. The governmental Left - the majority of the leadership of the Party of Communist Refounding (PRC), the Party of Italian Communists (PdCI), the Greens, etc. - instead of joining this demonstration took a decision to hold on the same day a rally-cum-concert.

This is how the correspondent of the radio station RFI described the two initiatives: "Bush! Bush! Bush! Out! 'No Bush-No War!'. Thousands of global justice activists and sympathizers of the far left, from all over Italy, shouted these slogans throughout the anti-Bush demonstration which started at Esedra Square, close to the Termini central station, and ended at Navone Square in the heart of the Eternal City, not far from the Square of the People where there took place, without much of a crowd present, a real musical happening in favour of peace, organized by the radical wing of the left parties who are in the government". The two photographs which we reproduce here give a better idea than long speeches of the impact of the two initiatives.

For the Italian social movements and for the Left, a watershed clearly appeared on Saturday June 9, 2007. Several undeniable facts make it possible to affirm this. First of all, the large demonstration which went from Esedra Square to Navona Square; the figure of 12 000 demonstrators given out by the Prefecture of Police makes no sense, because in order to contradict it, it is enough just to know that when the head of the demonstration was in Venezia Square, the tail was only turning into Via Cavour, which means that there were between 80,000 and 100,000 demonstrators, if not more. And on the other hand the flop, in every sense of the term, of what took place in the Square of the People.

Then there were the confrontations with the police, whose scale was excessively inflated, well beyond their modest dimensions, whereas nobody wanted to remark the ability of the demonstration to defend itself and to continue as planned to Navona Square in spite of the clouds of teargas, the clashes and the "revolutionary aestheticism". From this day there emerge three fundamental aspects.

First of all, we succeeded in the objective that we fixed at the assembly of the Critical Left on April 15 in Rome, when we decided to build a social opposition and to do it in total opposition to the government. The demonstration really opened up a space of action for the movement and re-launched the process of mobilization against the war. There is a continuity in ideas and in on the ground with the mobilization of February 17 in Vicenza,[1] and it is not an accident that in the demonstration you could not fail to see the compact and active presence of the "No Dal Molin" committees. The dynamic of the movement was confirmed, even "excessively" by the massive presence of participants outside of the organized forces which had sponsored the demonstration and which made up the core of it. Their presence around the organised contingents was important, they were not afraid, and they gave confidence to the demonstration, to its platform, without even imagining or intending to try and link the two

squares or to go from one to the other. It was a demonstration against the war, "with no 'ifs' and no 'buts'", so it was a demonstration against Prodi and against those who were so few to assemble in the Square of the People.

The Critical Left played an important part in this dynamic, just as it did at the time of the events of February 21, when it voted against the Prodi government, provoking the "Turigliatto case"[2] This choice, which seemed at the time to be isolated, contributed to reopening the debate, made it possible to build a polarization and thus to offer everyone a space for action, a space that was gradually occupied, leading to the success of the June 9 demonstration. It is difficult to foresee how this space will be occupied in the future. For the moment we can only note that an energy has been awakened, after a year of torpor, and that choices will have to be made such as, for example, going back to Vicenza in order to block the construction of the base there. And that will have to be the first national initiative after June 9.

We then move on, obviously, to more political elements. First of all, it is the first time that the left opposition to the Prodi government has been visible. An opposition linked to a precise content - the war - very direct and which cannot be generalised, but in any event an opposition which, and it is no accident, was situated outside - if not against - the governmental

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Left. Precisely, the governmental Left! This element helps to counterbalance, even though it is still in an insufficient and limited way, the offensive of the Right, which has important repercussions in the front of the Centre-left.

The reasons for the demonstration were, besides, absolutely confirmed at the end of the meeting between Prodi and Bush. We saw the full and complete confirmation of the alliance with the United States, the confirmation of the engagement in Afghanistan, Lebanon and in Kosovo, the reaffirmation of the continuity of the foreign policy conducted by Berlusconi and, as Prodi affirmed at the press conference, "a shared conception of the future destinies of the world". The government committed itself even more to the war and the immediate decision in favour of the US base in Vicenza represents the first concrete expression of this. On this terrain, the contradictions will continue to develop.

The third aspect is the relationship between the different lefts, the comparison between the two squares and the developments which result from this. On this terrain no ambiguity is possible. There was a united mass demonstration. And then there was a Square of the People without the people. An operation from on high in which, unfortunately, important organizations allowed themselves to be involved, in the first place the FIOM.[3] These organisations wanted to maintain a protest without causing any problems for the government. The bankruptcy of the Square of the People is the bankruptcy of the line of the "party of struggles and of government" and the more general bankruptcy of the position that came out of Venice congress concerning the Party of Communist Refounding (PRC),[4] a position which has reached the end of the road. There is no mediation possible between the struggles and the government, nor any possibility of building

"bridges" between these two dynamics. It is this reality which is feeding the whole crisis of the PRC and the other parties to the left of the Democratic Party, who have chosen to come together in order to mask the state of weakness in which they find themselves.

The absence of the PRC from Navona Square demonstrates where this party has ended up. It has reached a point from which there is no longer any possible return. This is combined with a ruinous line and a blind and incapable leading group, which has led it into this dead-end, which it is now so difficult to get out of.

We cannot foresee what will come out of this 9 June, but it is certain that we have created the necessary conditions for a less fragmented course for the alternative Left, for the opposition Left. The networks, associations and organizations that represent this Left have

started to define both what makes their unity and what contrasts there are - and whoever says that the project that unites them is that of a "small party against the PRC", has quite simply not understood anything: there is a social base to be developed (but the parties of the governmental left do not do any better). It is certain that if all that produced in return an effect on social questions, such as pensions or job insecurity for example, we would see a real modification of the relationship of forces between the movements and the government, between the movements and the institutions, in other words, in the society.

As far as we are concerned, this political year has been dense in events and successive key dates. We set up the Critical Left Association, then we determinedly turned ourselves towards the movement by proposing the Forum for Social Opposition, which we are re-

launching. Something has appeared. And even, for the first time really in the June 9 demonstration, you could see the capacity of the Critical Left to provide organization and initiative, to present itself as a means of resisting the crisis of the PRC and the "radical" left in general. There is no doubt that this is the road on which we have to continue, with even greater determination and speed.

The first National Conference of the Critical Left, which we will hold after the summer, will represent an important moment in this process.

The Sinistra Critica (Critical Left) Association (ASC) was set up in January 2007 by the minority of the Party of Communist Refounding (PRC) which refused the participation of the party in the Prodi government. The members of the Fourth International in Italy form part of this association, which regroups members both inside and outside the PRC. This document is the first balance sheet of June 9, produced by the national operational group of the ASC and published on June 11, 2007 on its web site: [www.sinistracritica.org](http://www.sinistracritica.org).

## NOTES

[1] On February 17 in Vicenza, tens of thousands of people demonstrated against the construction of a new US military base in the suburb of Dal Molin, which had been decided on by the centre-left government of Romano Prodi.

[2] Franco Turigliatto was expelled from the PRC for having voted in the Senate against the war in Afghanistan. A massive movement of solidarity against his expulsion developed in Italy. See the articles in International Viewpoint 387 and 388, March and April 2007.

[3] The FIOM, the strongest union in Italy, is the Federation of the Metal Industry of the General Confederation of Italian Labour (CGIL). Its leadership is more to the left than the CGIL's.

[4] The PRC held its Fifth Congress in Venice in March 2005. See Salvatore Cannavo, "The challenge of the anti-capitalist Left", International Viewpoint 366, April 2005.

piazza esedra



piazza del popolo



## Marxist Theory

# Elements of revolutionary strategy

François Sabado

### Introduction

This article is an edited version of a report given at a cadre school for comrades with national responsibilities in the LCR. It aims to bring up to date some key elements of revolutionary strategy in an advanced capitalist country. Several working hypotheses are submitted to the discussion. Among these, certain questions deserve to be more thoroughly examined. Others will remain work in progress.



## Elements of revolutionary strategy

Even though the relationship of forces on a world scale remains largely unfavourable to the working class, a series of factors are putting a new discussion on strategic questions on the agenda: factors such as the crisis of neo-liberalism, the war in Iraq and the threats of war in other areas of the world, the social-liberal restructuring of the workers' movement and its contradictions, the discussion within the left on governmental questions, the depth of the social and political crisis in Latin America, the revolutionary processes in Venezuela and in Bolivia, the discussion initiated by Chavez on the socialism of the 21st century. Strategic questions are back on the agenda.

### 1) Remarks on the history of our discussions on strategic questions.

The history of the discussions on strategic questions in the LCR is marked by two stages. The first, in the period after May [1968] and up until the end of the 1970s, was favoured by the pre-revolutionary situations in Southern Europe. The second was rather characterized by an absence of discussion. In this first phase, the debates of the 1920s in the Communist International, but also a series of discussions around revolutionary experiences, were gone over again. May '68 had been analyzed as a dress rehearsal, following the example of the relationship between the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, but our analysis was never reduced to Russian questions. In the 1970s we distinguished the specificities of the Russian Revolution from those of the revolutions in Europe and Latin America. The League's cadre schools, in particular under the influence of Ernest Mandel, were centred on Germany, Italy, Spain, Chile. These strategic discussions were in direct connection with an analysis of the period that was marked, as we saw it at the time, by a new conjunctural actuality of the

revolution. Pre-revolutionary situations were foreseen in Europe in the coming four or five years. The strategy of armed struggle in Latin America was adopted, with a perspective of taking power in the short-term in countries like Bolivia and Argentina. For some comrades, even, "history was snapping at our heels".

The inversion of the period, at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, with revolutionary perspectives receding, put an end to these discussions, except for some incursions in the cadre schools of the years 1986-87.

The Manifesto of 1992, for example, remained silent on these questions. "Because the Wall had come down", it was necessary to go back over our history - the history of the Russian Revolution and the Stalinist degeneration - and to bring our fundamental ideas up to date. It was a question of priorities. But we were losing the thread of the strategic discussion. The difference is clear between the Manifesto of 1992 and the Manifesto of 2005 which took up, even in a modest way, some strategic points. That raises a first question. Strategic problems can obviously not be

dealt with in an identical way in different periods, it depends on whether the revolutionary wave is rising or ebbing. The strategic discussions of the 1920s - when the revolution was on the rise following the Russian revolution - and those of the 1930s - revolutionary reactions faced with the rise of fascism - were different. The approach to strategic problems during the short century - 1914-1991 - was not the same as at the present time. Revolutionary Marxists, over and above the characterizations and the concepts covering the Stalinist phenomenon, modified many of their strategic approaches following the bureaucratic counter-revolution. The relationship of forces between the classes, the changes in capitalism and the modifications within the working class, the collapse of Stalinism, the social-liberal evolution of social democracy, the emergence of new social movements like the global justice movement, all that modifies the framework of and the approach to strategic questions.

Should this discussion be reserved only for periods of rising class struggle or revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situations, as we

rather tended to think, implicitly, in the League? I do not think so. Over and above the difficulties or questionings, the question of the revolution and the problems which are linked to it must remain at the centre of our preoccupations. Let us not forget that Trotsky, even though he thought that the Second World War would be transformed into revolution, wrote the Transitional Programme in September 1938, after the defeat of the German proletariat in 1933, the defeat of the Catalan proletariat in 1937 - key date in the Spanish Civil War - and when the French workers' movement was in full retreat after the betrayals of the Popular Front, before the defeat of the general strike of November 1938.

### 2) Discussion on the concept of "actuality of the revolution"

The concept of "actuality of the revolution" has a double function: conjunctural but also historical. It was operational during the period after the Russian revolution and during the revolutionary periods of 1918-1923 in Germany, 1934-1936 in France, in 1936-1937 in Spain, the post-war revolutionary situations and those of the 1960s and 1970s,

and the colonial revolutions. It is useful in order to characterize longer historical periods of rising class struggle which encompassed pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situations.

But when we go back over certain texts of Marx or certain documents of Trotsky, after the revolutionary period of the 1920s, the question of revolutionary perspectives is presented in a fuller way:

Let us recall this passage of Marx in the Grundrisse:

"At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society enter into contradiction with the existing relations of production, or, which is only the legal expression of the same thing, with the relations of property within which they had hitherto evolved. From being the forms of the development of the productive forces that they were, these relations become obstacles to it. Then a period of social revolution opens up".

In his turn, Ernest Mandel gives the following explanation of this passage in his notes on Late Capitalism.

"When we evoke the epoch of revolutions that does not at all mean that no further development of the productive forces would be possible without the fall of this mode of production. It means only that, from this point of view, the productive forces which continue to develop enter into increasingly open rebellion with the existing mode of production and contribute to its downfall".

The revolutionary horizon or perspectives are linked to the reactionary character of capitalism, to its internal contradictions, to the social cost of the system of capitalist property, to the difference between the possibilities of

technological, cultural and social development of society and the obstacles that are put in place by the race for capitalist profit.

It is also for this reason that the epoch of the actuality of revolutions or of socialism is related to the imperialist phase of capitalism.

Mandel rejects any mechanical and catastrophist interpretation of the formulas of Marx.

What Trotsky, following Lenin, developed in the CI in 1926, was: "Can the bourgeoisie obtain a new epoch of capitalist growth? To deny such a possibility, to count on a 'situation without any way out' for capitalism would simply be revolutionary verbalism"...

And he specified that it was necessary to relate the developments of the capitalist economy and the cycles of the class struggle: "Retreats or defeats also make possible new phases of stabilization or revival of capitalism", he wrote in *The Third International After Lenin*.

It think it is useful for us to have such an approach, which takes account of the specific analysis of each period, while integrating it into a history which remains that of capitalism, its contradictions, and its possible revolutions. That may seem banal, but it is necessary to remember it in a situation characterized by the absence of revolutions in capitalist Europe over a long period: 23 years separate the revolutionary rise of 1944-45 from that of May '68; and there have already been almost 38 years between May '68 and 2006. Such periods of time explain why the thread of a strategic discussion on the revolution gets lost. It is also useful to reconsider these problems of periodisation.

The "periods of social revolution" result, therefore,

above all "from a time marked by the fundamental contradictions of capital". Our perspectives of revolutionary transformation come back to these fundamental contradictions. They take account of the specific analysis of each historical period. They accelerate and are sharpened during situations where the question of power is really posed. But this course must be maintained, whatever the cycles, long or short, of the class struggle.

### 3) To come back to the concepts of revolutionary strategy

What is a revolutionary strategy?

The central question of any revolutionary strategy remains the conquest of political power. Although we approached strategic questions through the study of revolutionary crises - which was correct -, the League tended to reduce strategy to only the moment of the revolutionary crisis, and even to the politico-military modalities of the conquest of power, in particular by the study of the various models - insurrectionary general strike, prolonged war, guerrilla wars, debates on the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban models - etc. Though it was correct to work on these questions, nevertheless we often had a tendency to reduce strategic problems to a debate over models, whereas strategy includes many dimensions in the construction of the revolutionary subject. This tendency to modelisation furthermore led us to make mistakes, in particular in Latin America, by adapting to generalizations of the Cuban model by the Castroite currents.

Trotsky gives a more general definition of the strategic problems in the Criticism of the Draft Programme of the 6th Congress of the IC: "Before the

war, we spoke only about the tactics of the proletarian party, and this conception corresponded exactly to the parliamentary and trade-union methods which then prevailed and which did not go beyond the framework of immediate demands and tasks. Tactics are limited to a particular problem. Revolutionary strategy covers a whole combined system of actions which, in their interconnection and their successive character, as in their development, must bring the proletariat to the conquest of power".

A "combined system of actions" and the "conquest of power" - it is this tension which makes revolutionary strategy. We do not work enough on this "combined system of actions" and its relationship to governmental questions...

We must grasp both ends of the chain: the concrete modalities of formation of an anti-capitalist consciousness, of a socialist consciousness, starting from the key experiences of the class struggle, and at the other end, a permanent striving towards the final goal, the programme and strategy to reach it, starting from the specificities of the socialist revolution.

We do not know what will be the forms of the revolutions of the 21st century, but we are always confronted with this characteristic of the proletarian revolution: How, from "nothing", to become "all"?

The popular classes can conquer positions, obtain partial reforms, "seeds of workers' democracy within bourgeois democracy", but these conquests cannot be made permanent without replacing the power of the bourgeoisie by the power of the workers and the majority of society. From which flows the central strategic place of revolutionary crises, where the

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ruptures occur which modify durably the relationship of forces and the process of formation of a socialist consciousness. Unlike in the bourgeois revolutions, where the bourgeoisie had become the dominant class before the revolution, the proletariat can only become the dominant class after the conquest of political power.

Lenin had in his time given the first indications: the famous conditions of a revolutionary crisis, developed in Left-wing communism, an infantile disease: "Those on high no longer can, those below no longer will, the layers or classes in the middle swing to the side of those below, and there is a revolutionary leadership - [in the sense of leadership, party, and class consciousness, let us add] - to lead the process". And he added, along with Trotsky and the leaders of the CI in the capitalist countries of Europe: "It will be much more difficult to conquer power [compared to Russia] and easier to keep it" He was speaking about the more developed socio-economic level of these countries compared to Tsarist Russia.

It is in this sense, without building models, that Ernest Mandel tried to outline a typology of future revolutions, in the notes of his book *Late capitalism*: "The future typology of socialist revolutions in highly industrialized countries will probably more resemble that of the revolutionary crises of Spain in the 1930s, of France in 1936 and 1968, of Italy in 1948 and 1966-70, of Belgium in 1960-61, than the crises of collapse after the First World War".

These future revolutions will have much stronger interconnections on the continental and international level. The relationship between a revolutionary process which starts on the national terrain and

its projection on the world arena is much stronger today than in the past. The international content - at least in the advanced capitalist countries - of revolutions is more marked. In Europe, that raises the question of a European strategy or at least of a European programme.

Lastly, it falls to us to incorporate into the main lines of a modern revolutionary strategy the lessons of the revolutions of the last century. We often explain that we will work for "majority" and "conscious" revolutions. Majority: which implies "revolutionary-democratic" processes... so with strong tensions between revolutionary chaos and "the mechanisms of democratic decisions". Conscious: which requires the preparation of the revolutionary rupture by a series of confrontations where the masses go through the experience of the superiority - even partial - of socialist solutions compared to capitalism. We never fell into a vision of the revolution as the product of "the great day", but both the increasing complexity of societies and the lessons of revolutionary experiences must lead us to get rid of any trace or remains of this type of conception.

These majority and conscious revolutions also result from a reorganization of the whole of the workers' movement. We can on this point take guidance from some of the intuitions of Trotsky, put forward in a discussion on the Transitional Programme with leaders of the American SWP in 1938.

He explained that there are three conditions for a new society:

a) "that the productive forces are sufficiently developed and that they enter in contradiction with the relations of production; b) "a progressive class that is sufficiently strong socially" [the

working class] c) "the third condition is political consciousness".

We are confronted with a double difficulty, objective and subjective.

Objective, because there is at the same time, extension of the proletariat on a worldwide scale, but also an increase in the internal differentiations within the working class - technical, of status, gender, nationalities... and a differentiation in class consciousness, impacted by these new differentiations of the working class but also by the balance sheet of the century, of revolutions, by the effects of Stalinism.

It is necessary to rebuild from further back...

The question with which we are confronted is not only "the crisis of leadership", as Trotsky presented it in the Transitional Programme, but an overall crisis of leadership, organization, consciousness, from which flows the necessity of reorganizing, of rebuilding the workers' movement.

It is not a question, as in the 1920s and 1930s, of substituting a revolutionary leadership for a reformist, centrist or Stalinist one. All these substitutions were possible because it was being done within the framework of the same culture, in a climate marked by revolutionary dynamics.

The subjective factor is not reduced, today, to the building of a revolutionary leadership, or even just to the building of the revolutionary party. There are problems of experiences, organization, consciousness of the mass movement. There is the need to discuss mediations, to discuss tactics in order to advance towards broad anti-capitalist parties, while situating ourselves in each country on the

terrain of class unity and independence in order to build, under the best conditions, the future revolutionary leadership.

Today, without starting out again from scratch, by starting from the basis of the present-day reality of the workers' movement, it is thus necessary to rebuild practices, organizations, projects of revolutionary transformation of society, but on the basis of a series of strategic reference that we have outlined above.

### 4) The transitional approach

This is a weak point in the history of the French workers' movement, dominated by Jacobinism - the statist pressure - and Stalinism - the negation of self-emancipation. But it is also a weak point in the history of the LCR since May '68. A weakness with which Ernest Mandel often reproached us, and which was, perhaps, also linked to an approach that was too centred on the moment of the revolutionary crisis, to the detriment of the preparations for it.

It is through a transitional approach that our strategic problematic must be redeployed.

It integrates immediate demands - compatible with the logic of capitalism - and intermediate demands that are contradictory with this logic. It combines the forms of day-to-day struggles, which respect bourgeois legality, and mass anti-capitalist actions, which transgress legality. It rejects the separation between a minimum program and a maximum programme. A revolutionary strategy is simultaneously a strategy of wearing down the enemy and of confrontation. It comprises offensive and defensive periods, phases of retreat and of attack, depending on the class struggle.

This is how Trotsky defined the transitional problematic: "It is

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necessary to help the masses in the process of their daily fight to find the bridge between their current demands and the programme of socialist revolution. This bridge must consist of a system of transitional demands starting from the present conditions and consciousness of broad layers of the working class and leading invariably to one and the same conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat".

Each word has its importance:

- ❖ "daily", "immediate demands", "present consciousness". The starting point is the immediate demands of the popular classes.

- ❖ "System of transitional demands": Trotsky underlines the combined character of the demands.

- ❖ "Conquest of political power". The conclusion of the process is the revolutionary rupture.

Mass actions in general aim for the immediate satisfaction of needs. It is thus important that revolutionary strategy links to these needs demands which cannot be integrated into the capitalist socio-economic order, but which on the contrary, unleash an anti-capitalist dynamic, which leads to a trial of strength between the two determining classes of society. The consciousness of the masses can develop in a revolutionary direction only if they accumulate experiences of struggle which are not limited to partial demands that are realizable within the framework of the capitalist system. This consciousness also results from demands which start from immediate needs and raise the question of power or ownership.

The following examples can illustrate how to put forward demands which respond to the

immediate needs of the masses and pose the question of power or ownership.

- ❖ The question of water and gas in certain countries of Latin America, such as Bolivia, or the question of oil in Venezuela, poses all the problems of national sovereignty, control and popular management.

- ❖ The question of land occupations in the countries where land reform is a central issue: that is today, for example, the case in Brazil. These land occupations are not, in general, incompatible with the system, but, in the framework of the globalised capitalist economy, they are incontestably points of imbalance, points of rupture.

- ❖ The taking over and running by the workers of certain companies condemned to bankruptcy by their owners. These experiences are partial and indicate that another kind of functioning of the economy is possible, with workers' or social management. These experiments are related to exceptional experiences of a rise of the mass movement: this is the case of factories abandoned or closed in Venezuela, with a mixed co-management between the workers and the public administration. These experiments of occupation, of control, of co-management and, under certain conditions, of co-operatives, were one of the expressions of the pre-revolutionary situation in Argentina in 2001-2002. The problem was posed, in a limited way, by certain experiences of control or management in the 1970s in Italy and France. It points its head in the mobilizations at Nestlé or in the shoe industry in Romans.

The transitory step that we must build is also crystallized through a series of demands put forward in a plan of social and democratic emergency

measures: real, serious, immediate measures, but also which also aim at a redistribution of wealth and proposals for a reorganization of the economy in function of social needs and not of the capitalist economy.

- ❖ The question of the prohibition of sackings, in the form of a whole series of proposals or laws which call into question the power, the arbitrary rights of the employers, is one of the principal transitional demands. It starts from the elementary refusal of sacking and leads to the idea that incursions into capitalist property rights are necessary in order to implement the demand.

- ❖ The refusal of privatizations implies not only the return to the public sector of all that has been privatised by the Right and the Left, but also a reorganization of the public ownership of key sectors of the economy.

This approach must be extended on a European level...

The starting point of these demands is the refusal of the liberal counter-reform and its measures. Their outcome and their effectiveness imply confrontation with the ruling classes and the capitalist system. There is an organic link between anti-liberalism and anti-capitalism. And when you separate anti-liberalism from anti-capitalism, you limit the range of even the anti-liberal demand: that is what happens with the programmes which only attack the excesses of "financialisation" or "commodification" without taking into account the overall logic of capitalist social relations. To be a consistent anti-liberal, it is necessary to tackle capitalist property relations and to pose the problems of public and social ownership. This global approach is not ultimatic. It can be

concretized around some demands which can serve as key points, for example, for an election campaign.

- ❖ Behind the system of transitional demands, what is at stake is this: the accumulation of social experiences which destabilize the system, indicate another possible economic and social organization, and demonstrate the capacities of the working class from this point of view. Gramsci deals with this question with his "concept of politico-ethical hegemony". The oppressed class must conquer positions within society before conquering political power. Of course, in a normal situation, that remains propaganda and experiences which have a limited scope. But in a situation of social acceleration, it is integrated during a whole preparatory period to the conquest of political power.

### 5) The United Front

The policy of the United Front has a double dimension: strategic and tactical.

Strategic, because if the revolution is a majority process and "the emancipation of the workers, the act of the workers themselves", the popular classes must overcome their differentiations and internal divisions. Social differentiations related to the specific place in the production process and more generally in social life, but also political divisions related to the history of the workers' movement, to the crystallization of currents and organizations. Their social and political unification is one of the conditions of a revolutionary transformation.

Furthermore, Trotsky indicates the roots of the policy of the united front in this passage on Germany (The German Revolution and the Stalinist bureaucracy, 1932): "The

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proletariat reaches revolutionary awakening not by a scholastic approach but through the class struggle, which does not suffer interruptions. To fight, the proletariat needs the unity of its ranks. That is true both for partial economic conflicts, within the confines of an enterprise, and for 'national' political struggles such as the fight against Fascism. Consequently, the united front tactic is not something occasional and artificial, nor a skilful manoeuvre, no, it flows completely and entirely from the objective conditions of the development of the proletariat".

Thus the united front responds to the following strategic objective: to unify the proletariat - the working class in the broad sense, those who are forced to sell their labour power - in the course of a revolutionary process, to transform it from a dominated class into the dominant class in society. To stimulate this development, this movement must create the conditions of "the class independence" of the workers with respect to the bourgeoisie, and aim at the self-emancipation and the self-organization of the popular classes, fundamental condition for the revolutionary transformation of society. Thus, while making clear at each stage of the class struggle its content and its forms, striving for the unity of the workers and their organizations is a permanent element of the politics of revolutionaries.

But the policy of the united front is also a political tactic, which depends on the general goals of revolutionary politics. Let us recall that a revolutionary policy is not reduced to the tactic of the united front. Many other aspects related to the political struggle, the definition of objectives, the delimitation between currents and organizations, the building of organizations, are essential

links in the activity of revolutionaries.

Following from that, tactics remain subordinate to strategy: "The historical problem is not to mechanically link all the organizations which remain from the various stages of the class struggle, but to unite the proletariat in the struggle and for the struggle. These are absolutely different problems, sometimes even contradictory". (Trotsky, *How to Defeat Fascism?*).

The forms and the content of a united front tactic can abruptly change, in particular in crisis situations.

The question of the united front has a content, explains Trotsky: "The campaign of the united front must be based on a well worked out transitional programme, that is to say a system of transitional demands - with a workers' and peasants' government - which must ensure the transition to socialism".

However, our whole programme should not be a precondition for unity. But that must put us on guard against unity for unity's sake, unity without content.

In the policy of uniting workers for struggle, the conflicts with the reformists can reach points of rupture: "If the reformists sabotage the struggle, go against the dispositions of the masses, we reserve ourselves the right to support the action to the end, without our temporary half-allies, as an independent organization... In fact it is the masses who decide. From the moment when the masses separate from the reformist leadership, the agreements lose any meaning. To perpetuate the single face would mean not to understand the dialectic of the revolutionary struggle and to transform the united front from a springboard into a barrier. For Marxists, the united front is only

one of the methods of the class struggle. In these given conditions, the method is completely unusable: it would be foolish to want to build an agreement with the reformists for the carrying out of the socialist revolution" (Trotsky, *How to Defeat Fascism?*).

Indeed, as Daniel Bensaïd explains, "The united front always has a tactical aspect. The reformist organizations are not reformist from confusion, inconsistency or lack of will. They express social and material crystallizations... The reformist leaderships can thus be tactical political allies to contribute to unifying the class. But they remain strategically potential enemies. The united front thus aims at creating the conditions that make it possible to break with these leaderships, at the moment of decisive choices, with the best possible relationship of forces, and to detach the broadest possible masses from them". (*Crisis and strategy*, 1986).

Its conditions of application also depend on the global relationship of social and political forces, and in particular on the relationship of forces within the workers' movement. This is moreover a problem which Trotsky posed, in the discussion with the French Communists in 1922: "If the Communist Party only represents an insignificant minority... its attitude with regard to the class front does not have decisive importance. The problem of the united front does not arise when the CP, as in Bulgaria, represents the only political force. But where the CP constitutes a political force without yet having decisive strength, where it embraces perhaps a quarter, perhaps a third of the proletarian vanguard, the question of the united front is posed in all its sharpness".

The question of the united front is a central question in a country like France in 2006, but it is not posed in the same terms before 1968, after 1968 or today, with the social-liberal evolution of the workers' movement, the crisis of the CP and the new spaces for an anti-capitalist policy.

### 6) The general strike

One of the key questions for our strategic and tactical orientation consists of creating the conditions for the direct intervention of the workers, of the popular classes onto the political and social stage. To achieve this objective, the general strike represents a central element of our strategy.

The general strike appeared as the hypothesis of the overthrow of capitalism, from the end of the 19th century. In the first place as a surge of working-class energy, counter-posed by the anarchists to the old tried and tested tactic of social democracy, a tactic linked to the gradual conquest of parliamentary positions. For the anarchists, it was a question of counter-posing the extra-parliamentary mass movement to the parliamentary tactic of social democracy.

Rosa Luxemburg took up again the perspective of the general strike, going beyond the anarchist-Socialist debate, and trying to link the dynamic of the mass movement to political perspectives. "The mass strike, the Russian Revolution showed us, is not a clever means invented to give more force to the proletarian struggle. It is the way of the proletarian mass movement, the form of the proletarian struggle in the revolution". Since then, the strategic hypothesis of the active general strike - the "revolutionary general strike" as our Spanish comrades said in the 1970s - remains, in new forms, the most probable variant of the

upsurge of the masses against the established order.

Today, the relationship of forces between the classes in Europe does not put the outbreak of such general strikes on the agenda. But does this specific historical conjuncture put into question the strategic hypothesis? None of the theses which relativise the strategic role of general strikes and central demonstrations have been verified when the mass movement has gone into action, and the paths taken by it during certain pre-revolutionary situations in Latin America tend rather to give fresh force and vitality to certain traditional strategic concepts.

The general strike has several dimensions: it is not a "big day of action", it is the framework of a political movement of the working class, it makes possible its independent expression, it has its organizations - strike committees or the central strike committee -, it has a functionality in the confrontation with the state: paralysis of the economy, of the strategic axes of transport and communications. It creates the framework for re-launching production... In the central capitalist countries with a strong working-class social composition, it is the form par excellence of the direct intervention of the working class.

But the preparation of these general strikes also takes place through daily intervention, by practical proposals for coordination, centralization of struggles, by flexible propaganda and agitation to create the conditions of broad general movements of the working class.

We can add to it or combine with it the succession of big mass demonstrations which paralyse a country, the problem being on each occasion to find the forms

which express the force of the mass movement, its radicality and its effectiveness in paralysing the bourgeois state. The recent social explosions or experiences of pre-revolutionary situations, once again in Latin America, remind us of the importance, at times of big confrontations between the classes, of general strikes and mass demonstrations, including insurrectionary ones.

Lastly, the "general strike" does not by itself resolve the question of the strategy of conquest of power. "It poses the question of power, it does not resolve it", said Lenin. For that, it must be accompanied by forms of organization and a perspective of governmental power.

### 7) Self-organization

In the rebuilding of a practice of self-emancipation, self-organization also has a strategic character.

These structures can appear in the course of a struggle or a strike, in the form of struggle committees or strike committees elected by general assemblies.

These kinds of structures appear in all pre-revolutionary or revolutionary periods. They emerge in general from concrete problems or in situations where the people try to obtain new instruments to deal with the organization of their lives in the workplaces or in the neighbourhoods. Their name varies according to the time and place where they are established: "Soviets", "factory committees" in Russia..., "internal commissions" in Italy, elections of workplace delegates in Germany, committees and militias in Spain, workers' commissions, shop stewards in England, Jap (food supply juntas), communal commandos, industrial cordons (local unions of the CUT trade unions) in Chile, workers' commissions

and residents' committees in Portugal... They can also start out from forms of legal bourgeois institutions in the framework of existing institutions: elections of delegates, setting-up of structures to ensure supplies of food.

In short, the forms of self-organization can be varied and revolutionaries do not make a fetish of this or that form. What is essential is the democratic unitary expression of the dynamics of the mass movement, with an objective: to create the most direct mechanisms of representation of the mass movement.

At the beginning of conflicts, this can take the form of a united front of workers' organisations or else combined forms, but in the heat of the struggle, there is a need for structures which most accurately represent the reality of the mass movement. From this point of view, although Andreu Nin, leader of the POUM in Spain, was right to propose a "workers' alliance" in the years 1934-36 as the form of the united front of workers' organisations, he was wrong to want to replace the militias and committees, products of the insurrection of July 1936, by the formal unity of the organizations. Behind this substitution, there was a displacement of the relationship of forces: the most advanced elements - CNT, POUM, Socialist Left - of the revolution went back to being in a subordinate position with respect to the leaderships of the PCE, the PSOE and the republican bourgeoisie. It was a backward step.

We should have no formalism, all the more so as the explosion and division of the forms of self-organization are problems that we can be confronted with in situations of a rise of the mass movement. That was a major

problem in Argentina between "neighbourhood associations or committees" and the "piquetero" movement, between the trade unions and the "piqueteros": more than 2336 barrages at the high point of the movement in 2002, involving several hundreds of thousands of people. The division between parties also fragments self-organization. Each party has its mass movement... This is a key question in Bolivia today, between the COB, the assemblies of El Alto, the indigenous movements, but also on a lesser scale, in certain social mobilizations in Europe (examples of co-ordinations, organized around this or that political organization).

Linked to the problem of unity, there are the problems of centralization: when there is division, corporatist or social fragmentation, there cannot be centralization.

What these experiences have in common is their social explosiveness but also their deficit of consciousness of the need for a radical transformation of society, which also has consequences for the organization, the leadership.

Are these structures incapable of taking power and reorganising society? We do not believe that.

Already the Austro-Marxists wanted to relegate them to "socio-economic" structures while leaving power to a parliamentary national assembly.

Others are taking up this thesis Trotsky today in their manner, explaining that "the forms of self-organization will have to find their place, without being institutionalized. But, especially, without taking power".

The limits of a revolutionary situation and the weaknesses of organization and leadership did not make possible - except in

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Russia, with the limits that we know - durable phases self-organised power. But, in all mass movements of a certain scope and, all the more so, all revolutionary crises, there is the aspiration of social movements to establish the first forms of self-emancipation. That creates the conditions for the emergence of new structures of representation of the popular movement. Without falling into any kind of linear vision of the development of the mass movement, that can take the form of general assemblies, action committees, strike committees, and later on communal or workers' councils. Our role consists on each occasion of testing the possibilities for new structures of self-organization, of creating them, of centralizing them as forms of popular representation, giving priority to the organization of citizens and workers in their localities and their workplaces. There is there a desire for coherence between our project for socialist self-management and the importance given to "socialism from below".

### 8) Dual Power

There too, the most recent experiences of situations of social and political pre-revolutionary crises pose the questions of dual power, always in "specific" forms. They result from new forms of popular representation, combining the organization of the mass movement and a crisis of the existing institutions, which can put on the agenda constituent processes. That was the case in Venezuela where elections to a Constituent Assembly are envisaged next August, under an enormous pressure of the mass movement. There again, when a revolutionary process deepens, new popular structures of representation appear, new legitimacies against the old central state apparatus are

created: committees, but also communal or local structures of the "red municipalities" or "liberated zones" type. A process of confrontation and duality of power develops which also involves crises, fractures in the old existing institutional structures. The old shells can even become the envelope of new powers. That is the example of the Paris Commune, where the old commune was regenerated by the energy of the popular explosion which constituted it as an organ of popular power. Chile, in the years 1970-73 with the JAP - juntas for provisioning the popular neighbourhoods - and the industrial cordons - co-ordinations of the trade unions by geographical zone - saw the birth of a beginning of dual power, starting from structures established by the authorities or by the trade-union confederation. Something of capital importance was posed then: the new structures that were the most effective in the organization of the struggle also had to demonstrate their effectiveness in the resolution of daily problems, show themselves to be more democratic, more representative: demonstrate their superiority.

It is there that the problem of confrontation with the state is posed. As it becomes generalised, this process runs up against the rights of ownership, against the institutions and the capitalist state. "The right to existence takes precedence over the right to property" (Convention of 1793), the democracy of the new structures representing the people - factory or neighbourhood assemblies - takes precedence over the old structures. There is at this moment contradiction and struggle between the old and the new. The "new" also exerts pressure on the fragmentation of the old bourgeois institutions. Democratic demands must be

put forward within the old parliamentary or municipal institutions, but the axis, the priority in order to resolve the "duality of powers", is for the mass movement to have its own independent forms of organization.

The experience of the Paris Commune made Marx evolve on the question of the state, which it was no longer a question of transforming but of smashing.

The lessons of all revolutionary experiences, socialist or revolutionary nationalist, confirm the need to destroy the apparatus of repression of the ruling classes. And we mean by that, the hard core of the State - army, police, judicial system, central administrative machinery - even if these institutions can, under the pressure of revolutionary events, fragment and split (e.g. committees or councils of soldiers, trade unions of magistrates, etc.)

History shows that this process unleashes the opposition and the repression of the ruling classes. The fundamental forces in struggle clash with each other, confront each other, tear themselves apart at strategically-decisive moments. These are the moments of revolutionary crisis, where the confrontation between the classes is played out, where things sway from one side to the other... It is necessary to prepare this or these moments... so as to concentrate the forces of the movement from below against the state apparatus. The question of power is posed, and the duality of powers must then be resolved, one way or the other. The preparations for revolution can last "several months, several years", Ernest Mandel specifies, but the moments of central confrontations are always the most decisive.

The objective is then to defend the revolutionary process. We are not putschists - "the

emancipation of the workers will be the act of the workers themselves" - but we are not naive. This defence implies acting "militarily". Without however appearing to be the aggressor, Leon Trotsky explains, in extraordinary pages on the history of the Russian Revolution, that the MRC (Military Revolutionary Committee of the Soviet of Petrograd) took the initiative of the seizure of power, while taking care always to maintain a defensive position: it was necessary to defend Petrograd against the troops of Kornilov who were going to empty the city.

So from the history of this century and some revolutions, we will retain the importance of the preparatory process. But the decisive character of the revolutionary crisis is the "moment" or "moments" where everything is played out, where certain hours will determine the course of history for several decades...

The key question remains the conquest of the political power. The first specificity of the proletarian revolution is that the workers cannot establish new social relations, nor durably conquer new positions, without changing the entire social and political structure. Counter-powers are useful, the fight for reforms is essential. The partial experiences of control, of self-management in the workplaces or the neighbourhood are decisive, but not strong enough to start a process of transformation of social relations. We have to conquer power.

It is from this standpoint that we debate with Holloway and with all the currents of the global justice movement which defend the possibility of changing the world without taking power. And it is indeed Holloway that we are talking about, because it seems

that the Zapatistas are evolving on this question and no longer make a virtue out of necessity by explaining that their struggle must not have a political outcome. Besides, they seized power in their zones in Chiapas. The revolutionary experiences in Latin America show on the one hand, the need to drive forward the movement from below, and on the other hand, the decisive importance of the impulsion from on high. The positive role and the limits of someone like Chavez show the importance of building an overall political alternative. The social-liberal policies of someone like Lula call for a political alternative, including an electoral one, oriented towards a break with imperialism and the financial markets. Counter-powers or the addition of social movements are not enough to oppose an alternative to liberal capitalism.

Of course, throughout the history of social struggles, many reforms, new rights, social conquests were obtained under the pressure of relationships of forces and social mobilizations... without taking power!

Revolutionaries are in favour of all reforms which improve the living and working conditions of the population. They are attentive to or take part in all the experiences which loosen the vice of capitalist domination. These movements are decisive but are not sufficient to consolidate the gains that have been made in the long term - the ruling classes often take back with one hand what they have conceded with the other - nor to change the fundamental logic and substitute a logic of social needs for the logic of profit.

In the building of an alternative, these experiences can prove to be indispensable points of support, but their accumulation cannot be enough to overthrow the fundamental logic of society.

They run up against the central power.

To prevent structural modifications of society, the ruling classes use a double safety mechanism: the state and capitalist property. Moreover, the war in Iraq, the attempts to set up here and there in Europe or America state or para-state mechanisms demonstrate the key role of states. The state is redeploying, but it is there. The strength of American imperialism, like the power of the multinationals, demonstrates the importance of the ownership of capital and the major means of production in the world economy. Economic and military power appears to be more disseminated than ever, but it is also more concentrated than ever.

To open the way to change, this double safety mechanism must be demolished: the state and property. Without a revolutionary social mobilization which breaks the backbone of capitalist domination - the state - and which substitutes for capitalist property public and social ownership, the mechanisms of production and reproduction of capital continue to dominate.

### 9) Self-organization, democracy

The relationships between parliamentary institutions, constituent assemblies, and structures of self-organization constitute one of the key problems of a revolutionary strategy, in particular in the major imperialist countries.

The axis is the self-organization, the emergence, and the centralization of the structures of direct democracy, in the broad sense: not only "factory councils" in the "workerist" sense, but social and political self-management constituted as political power.

With the perspective of a new power for workers and citizens, there is also the place for a logic of radical democracy based on proposals for the transformation of parliamentary assemblies: a single-chamber constituent assembly, the definition of competences, proportional representation, control of elected officials, creation of structures of direct democracy, subsidiarity from the local to the European level, in the framework of a constituent process.

In short, the objective pursued is the generalization of a radical democracy which, starting from a radical transformation of the assembly, opens the perspective of structures for a new power. This is the problematic that Trotsky put forward, in 1934, in his draft action programme for the Communist League of the time.

This constituent process must be used to push forward a new power of direct democracy. But in a revolutionary situation, the democratic effectiveness of self-organization runs up against the state apparatus.

We have already seen various examples: either the constituent assembly is carried away by the revolutionary whirlwind and transmits its powers to the new revolutionary structures, or goes into hibernation, or else it opposes the new forms of self-organized power, thus provoking a conflict. Let us not forget that in certain revolutionary crises, Germany in 1918-19 or Portugal in 1974-75, the Constituent Assembly was used as a counter-revolutionary instrument. It was then necessary to put the accent on the structures of self-organization and on their centralization. All this process is not external to the institutions of bourgeois democracy, especially in countries with long-standing parliamentary traditions - the revolutionary process exerts pressure on them - but the

objective is the constitution of a new power. We still do not think - unlike certain Austro-Marxist, "Eurocommunist" or "left reformist" theses - that we can conquer power by combining "popular power" and "gradual conquest of a revolutionary majority in the old parliament". The taking of political power requires getting rid of the old institutions and building new ones.

After the conquest of power, the problems are posed differently, in particular at the beginning of a society of transition to socialism: several assemblies elected by universal suffrage can coexist with territorial assemblies and assemblies resulting from elections in the workplaces, even assemblies representing national minorities. Assemblies which will have power, assemblies elected by universal suffrage. This combination was tried in an ephemeral way under the Paris Commune.

This was the position of Rosa Luxemburg on the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in Russia. She came out for the dissolution of an assembly which no longer corresponded to the real state of the country and demanded a new Constituent Assembly, that is, alongside the power of the Soviets an assembly elected by universal suffrage: "Without general elections, without unlimited freedom of the press and of assembly, without a free struggle of opinions, life dies away in all public institutions, vegetates, and the bureaucracy remains the only active element".

When there is conflict, it is the people who have the last word.

### 10) Workers' government

The demand for a "workers' government" ("government of the workers" or of the "popular classes") is a transitional slogan

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put forward in a revolutionary situation, in the 1920s, or on the eve of the Second World War, which Trotsky envisaged as a repetition of the First. These are the formulas developed in the Transitional Programme. In general, these questions take on great importance in situations of acute social and political crisis. The debates that we have on the governmental formula or formulas of are often far removed from this context.

The workers' government is a transitional governmental formula, in a situation of crisis where the institutions of the old state apparatus are not yet destroyed. It is not yet the power of popular organs or the "dictatorship of the proletariat", but it is no longer the normal functioning of bourgeois institutions. It is thus not a synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is a possible intermediate government, on the road to the conquest of power by the workers.

Also, all the formulas of workers' government include in general immediate demands, but also objectives related to workers' control, to the expropriation of the capitalists, or even the arming of the proletariat. In revolutionary situations, there is a coherence between a united front policy and the proposal for a government that breaks with the bourgeoisie. There, the "workers' government can be the crowning point of the united front policy". The basis for unity of action and for a government is the same: they are coalitions of revolutionary forces, left reformists, centrists or revolutionary nationalists, based on popular organizations or committees. It is by referring to Russia from February to October 1917, and Germany between 1918 and 1923, that Trotsky uses his formulations "demanding that the workers' parties break

with the bourgeoisie". But these formulas have today been relativised by history.

Two remarks on this approach:

It is closely related to revolutionary situations. In many documents, in particular on Germany or France in 1922, Trotsky speaks about "the parliamentary beginning of the proletarian revolution".

But all these experiences, even though they can have as their starting point a parliamentary majority, must very quickly find their centre of gravity in the organs of dual power, otherwise these governments get bogged down or become the hostages of bourgeois institutions.

This is what Trotsky denounced as "the parliamentary interpretation" of the workers' government. It is unfortunately the error that was committed by some revolutionary militants: in Saxony-Thuringia, where the leaders of the KPD made the decisions on insurrection depend on the legal government of the Land, dominated by left social democrats, and not on a council of committees. This was also the experience in Catalonia in July and September 1936, where the POUM accepted the dissolution of the "central committee of the militias" in order to enter and recognize the government of the "Généralitat Catalana" as the legal government of Catalonia.

These formulations were situated within a certain historical framework, marked by the driving force of the Russian Revolution, where the reformist and Stalinist parties, in spite of their degeneration, still had references to the revolution, to the "dictatorship of the proletariat" (the SFIO and Léon Blum in the 1930s), to the break with capitalism, where a vanguard of several million working-class militants, even reformists, were educated in this

"ideological bath". These demands for a break with the bourgeoisie no longer make much sense addressed to social-democratic formations which have been carried away by social-liberalism. They can have, in certain political conjunctures, a certain functionality with respect to the militant base of certain CPs, in the following form: "choose between a social-liberal alliance and an anti-capitalist alternative", understanding well that the dynamics of reformism and of integration - over a long period - into bourgeois institutions, leads the bureaucratic apparatuses of the CPs to adapt to the existing order.

These historical modifications of the workers' movement have consequences for the problems of "current policy": there is a certain de-synchronisation between the policy of unity of action and the construction of a political alternative.

We are for unity of action of the entire social and political left against the far right, the right and the employers. We do not think it is possible to build an alternative to liberal capitalism along with social-liberalism. There is no logic other than a parliamentary logic in seeking "an anti-liberal majority against the Right involving the entire Left and therefore the SP and the social-liberal Left.

This "parliamentary" option cannot be taken up to the detriment of an accumulation of forces against liberal capitalism.

Lastly, there can be specific cases, in the developing countries, where revolutionary nationalist governments break with imperialism, even if it is a partial break. This is the case with Chavez in Venezuela. Trotsky gave some indications concerning the government of Lazaro Cardénas in Mexico in the 1930s or the APRA in Peru.

These governments, which oppose imperialism, must be supported against imperialism, while maintaining our independence. Independence, because there is a political battle, a struggle in the "anti-imperialist" camp between revolutionaries, reformists, nationalists, etc. Political struggle, but support for a process. We judge the measures that are taken for the popular classes and the initiatives for action and mobilization. As a result of which, for example, we give support to what is called the process of the Bolivarian revolution.

On governmental questions, our positions must therefore combine:

- a) independence with respect to the governments which manage the institutions and the capitalist economy;
- b) the refusal to take part in any government which manages the institutions or the capitalist economy. Our tactic is determined by the policy and the decisions of each government, supporting positive measures, opposing the others;
- c) a position determined by the course of the government in question - from frontal opposition to the Lula government, which is today a social-liberal government - to support - the experience of Chavez;
- d) and to always centre our efforts on the development of the independent movement of the masses.

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## France

# The presidential election and debates on the Left

François Duval

A few weeks ago, I published an article entitled "French Left: what's going on?" for the use of activists of the different parties and movements of the European Anti-capitalist Left who wanted to know more about the situation of the French Left. This new document sets out to give additional information and analysis after the results of the two rounds of the presidential election and, incidentally, discuss some contributions written on the same topic among the anti-capitalist and/or anti-liberal Left.

### A new political situation

The main issue, of course, is the election of Nicolas Sarkozy and the meaning of that event for the Left. Sarkozy was elected with a clear advance mainly because he was able to bring together the right and to convince a significant number of former far right voters. He first won the ideological battle for hegemony and then the electoral battle. Ségolène Royal - the candidate of the SP - didn't propose a really different programme and was unable to personify the hope of a better life, better jobs, better wages.

At this point, Sarkozy's victory is an electoral victory. His biggest challenge is to change it into a social victory, into a defeat of the working class in order to accelerate implementation of the neo-liberal agenda that has been delayed in France (compared to others developed countries) by social resistance. Whether he can win that challenge or not is exactly what is at stake in the coming months.

### Social and political background

We can all consider that the election of Sarkozy and the circumstances of this election will significantly help the offensive of the MEDEF (bosses' association) and the right wing parties against workers' rights. In a certain way, the high number of voters for this election as well as the really very rightist proposals Sarkozy made publicly during his electoral campaign are new and important obstacles to popular resistance because his politics have gained a kind of legitimacy on a broad scale.

But there is more controversy about another issue: this election obviously shows an evolution towards the right of the political superstructures (both right wing and left wing parties). But is that global trend another evidence of a deep gap between the genuine mood of ordinary people and the different political apparatus? Or is this election the logical concretization of an already damaged status of the relationship of forces between social classes and of left ideas



in society? In other words: after a social and political period of increasing popular resistance, are we now faced with a kind of "downturn"? This issue can remain open for a while.

My view is that we should remember that the outcome of most of the explosions of resistance - from 1995 to 2006 - has not been a victory and that the neo-liberal agenda has effectively been implemented in France, though at a slower rhythm than in other imperialist countries.

I have summarized a more detailed analysis of these issues in a document for the LCR National Leadership "Remarques post 6 mai", available on request (but, unfortunately, only in French ...).

In his document - "The French presidential election" - Murray Smith considers it "a very lucid and realistic contribution on the extent and limits of resistance to neo-liberalism and the relationship of class forces in France today". But he states that, despite that "objective" situation, important items to be underlined are "the level of political consciousness", "a greater mobilisation and politicisation of young people". Consequently, he argues, the main issue to be addressed is "a credible political alternative". And he adds: "In the first place, the lack of such an alternative makes social resistance harder".

Yes, we have to build a credible political alternative! But is the lack of this political alternative the main reason for our difficulties in building a broad movement of resistance? One can also think exactly... the other way round! The difficulties in organising resistance are significant obstacles to building a political alternative. These difficulties - and the defeat of some of the widest movements of resistance (such as the demonstrations and strikes in 2003) - can explain the difficulties in building a political alternative, as well! Most probably, the conclusion will be that the tasks of building resistances AND building a political

alternative are interrelated and have to be carried out simultaneously.

### Fairy tales

These points - relationship of forces, political situation, and so on - are very important and have to be clarified. A correct analysis of the social and political situation, including a realistic analysis of the relation of forces between classes, between left and right wing parties, between radical left and neo-liberal left is useful. But, anyhow, an accurate analysis will not automatically guarantee a clever political orientation. Of course, if it was so, life would be easier for us! Unfortunately, a correct analysis cannot by itself provide an orientation. But it can specify what is possible. And what is NOT possible.

And, according to the real situation of French society in 2007, some hypotheses that have been brandished in diverse debates among the anti-liberal Left were simply... not possible. For example, some of the self-proclaimed leaders of the anti-liberal Left have supported the idea that a joint single candidate of the anti-liberal Left would have been able to get more than 10% of the votes for the first round of the presidential election.

Some even stated that a single anti-liberal candidate could get a better result than the candidate of the SP! Under such circumstances, being suspicious about a "secondary" issue such as the supposed and contingent relations with the SP would have been out of place! And the insistence of the LCR in raising that issue would only have been additional evidence that the LCR actually didn't want a common candidate because the LCR was only looking for pretexts in order to stand Olivier Besancenot as its own candidate...

And you can oppose nothing to that, not even the genuine results of the election! For the supporters of a single anti-neoliberal candidature, whatever the political cost should be, the results of the election are just

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an evidence of the mess caused by the absence of such a candidature. And the "apparatus" of the CP and the LCR are (necessarily) guilty for that mess. A mess that would not have taken occurred in the case of a common candidature...

They don't try to explain why, in the framework of a global disaster for the anti-liberal Left, Olivier Besancenot and the LCR have been able to resist and obtain a "relative success". They don't try to explain it because it is not so easy to do so and, mainly, because they are not interested in doing so. They prefer to feed the regrets of lost illusions.

But, of course, more than 10% for an anti-liberal candidate - or even more votes than the candidate of the SP! - were just absurd statements. Nevertheless, AFTER the 22nd of April, some of the leaders of the former anti-liberal coalition, mainly those who supported José Bové, are still "explaining" what could have happened ... "if".

For instance, in the daily Liberation (11/05/2007), Yves Salesses - former candidate to be the candidate of the anti-liberal Left and a spokesman of José Bové's campaign - wrote: "The failure of the left doesn't end with the failure of the social-liberalism. Because it doesn't provide any accurate answer, the division of those who are supporting another orientation for the Left has been devastating. The surprise of this election should not have been Bayrou but the breakthrough of this alternative Left. The leaderships of the LCR and the CP have made a different choice."

For instance, Pierre Khalifa, a former leader of SUD and a leading member of the French global justice movement, in the course of his debate with Pierre Rousset wrote: "For me, it was possible to be involved in unitive dynamics which would have won more than 15% of the votes, asserting its will to win the majority in the Left space. Of course, this is not what has happened. But this fact doesn't invalidate my position, except if it's a case of wishful thinking: I analyse that it is not possible; I act in order for that not to be possible; it didn't happen; so, I was right to think it was not possible!"

For instance Murray Smith wrote: "I have never found convincing the wilder surges of enthusiasm by the partisans of unity, going so far as to predict that a unitary candidate could have got more votes than the SP. But I think he or she would certainly have got more than 8.5 per cent. Between 10 and 15

per cent seems a perfectly realisable objective. At that level, the relationship of forces on the left starts to change, and a serious marker is laid down for the future".

Before the first round of the presidential election, you could consider these analyses just as (serious) political mistakes or ridiculous polemical speeches in order to denounce the "sectarianism of the apparatus of the CP and the LCR" and to please the average mood of the numerous activists of the No campaign who were yearning for unity. But, AFTER the results of the election, we are faced to something qualitatively different: a desperate attempt to find a magic explanation of what has gone wrong, a pathetic denial of reality. And, of course, a very comfortable reading of the election that protects you from any self-criticism! Actually, they prefer to borrow an "explanation" once used by the SP. Just as the SP tried to "explain the 21st April 2002" by the dispersion of the left (too many candidates), they explain the failure of the anti-liberal left in 2007 by its dispersion...

### Back to reality

The attempt of José Bové to present his campaign as a unitary campaign failed. Even his decision to stand was not, in any case, the result of a democratic debate in the "movement" or in the framework of the remaining anti-liberal collectives. When it was possible for him to be designated as candidate by at least a part of the anti-liberal collectives, he withdrew his candidature. He has been able to be "designated" only after the explosion of the movement (after the takeover of the CP in order to impose its general secretary as unitary candidate) via a very anti-democratic process through a web-petition.

Some of his rallies were successes, while others were not. He failed to express a really broad anti-liberal orientation and confined himself to very specific - though legitimate - issues (such as the fight against dissemination of genetically modified crops). It also must be noticed that he attacked LCR publicly in a very nasty way, while Olivier Besancenot never attacked the other candidates of the anti-liberal Left. He even counterposed its candidature to the "eleven others" presented as "candidates of the system"!

Between the two rounds of the presidential election, he even accepted a "mission" from the SP candidate (Segolène Royal) about

"food sovereignty". He also had a very indulgent evaluation of her openings towards François Bayrou and the centre right. That doesn't "prove" he was under the control of the SP. But it proves that the issue about being independent from the SP that the LCR had raised was not... superfluous. The electoral results were bad (483,000 votes; 1.32%) and left many of its supporters disappointed. Anyhow, one point must not be discarded: he really did have a significant number of supporters, some of them being radical activists of the social movements, a necessary component to build a political alternative, a broad anti-capitalist party. A problem that has to be dealt with now...

The campaign of Marie-George Buffet was an impossible challenge from the start. The CP desperately tried to convince people to vote for her - and not for the SP candidate - by criticising the neo-liberal orientation of the SP. But, at the same time, the CP never explicitly rejected the idea of a governmental or parliamentary coalition with the SP, feeding the illusion that it would be possible to have a government bringing together "all the left"... on an anti-liberal basis! The CP obtained its worst ever result: 707,000 votes; 1.93%. Then it has tried (without success) with the SP leadership in order to rescue a handful of its MPs. No doubt about it: this is a new step in the endless crisis of the CP. And the anti-capitalist Left has to deal with that...

Another issue we have to think about is the result of Arlette Laguiller, the candidate for Lutte Ouvrière (LO), the main other revolutionary organisation in France: from more than 5% in 2002 to 1.33% in 2007. There are several explanations for that. It was the sixth (!) campaign of Arlette Laguiller for presidential election and that was not the best way to show how revolutionary organisations deal with the renewal of politics.

This was made worse by the competition with Olivier Besancenot, of course. Some former voters for LO were also angry about its attitude after the 21st April 2002 when LO refused to be part of the movement against Le Pen. And during the 2007 campaign, LO sometimes gave the impression of calling on the SP to defend genuine left measures rather than opposing it. Anyhow, the anti-capitalist left should now consider that LO will remain a significant revolutionary organisation that will not disappear just like that...

## New responsibilities, new opportunities

Obviously, the political situation after this presidential election gives new responsibilities to the LCR. As noticed before, we have to deal with the disappointment and the bitterness of the activists who supported José Bové; we also have to deal with the deepening crisis of the CP and the former supporters of LO who are more or less orphans. But in order to decide what to do, it is necessary to analyse our own results and understand why we have been able to resist better than the others candidates of the anti-liberal Left. Because we now have to build mainly on that basis.

There are at least three reasons of the success and they make the difference with the other candidates:

- ❖ The defence of a radical anti-capitalist programme,
- ❖ The ability to personify the renewal of the radical left,
- ❖ Absolute independence from any hint that we would support a government of the neoliberal SP "Left".

Our programme - for the presidential campaign and for the general elections - was a set of emergency measures that were at the same time concrete answers to the situation of millions of people and a bridge towards another world. The LCR has not invented anything: most of these measures were borrowed from social movements or, at least, from the most advanced sectors of the social movements. But supporting them without any compromise made the difference: they are not items of a programme just for elections; they have been and they will be the core of the forthcoming struggles.

Personifying the renewal of the Left needs a clear political profile and a candidate appropriate for that. Olivier Besancenot was that candidate because he is young - and able to be understood by young people - and because he is a worker, not a professional politician. In 2002, one of the slogans of the campaign was: "Olivier Besancenot, 27 years old, postman". At that time, he was the youngest candidate by large. In 2007, of course, he was five years older... but he was still the youngest candidate. And he was still a postman, as well. It's not about "casting" or

political "communication". It's about our ideas of political fight.

Absolute independence has been the most disputed issue. It's the most important one. It's both correct and... efficient! Many new voters and many former voters for the radical Left in 2002 (even the majority of voters for Olivier Besancenot) voted for Ségolène Royal in April 2007, even without any enthusiasm for her programme and campaign: the pressure for "useful vote", the will to avoid another "21st of April", the opposition to Nicolas Sarkozy were very high. And these reasons explain to a large extent the average bad results of the radical Left. More than the fact that this anti-liberal Left was divided, anyway. And those voters who nevertheless wanted to vote "more to the left" that the SP chose to vote for the most independent candidate from the SP, Olivier Besancenot. Actually, having 280,000 votes more than in 2002 means, at least, he has convinced between 800,000 and 900,000 new voters.

Considering what would have happened if - if a common candidate would have stand, if the CP have supported José Bové or another non communist candidate, if the LCR had supported José Bové, and so on - make no sense, because these hypotheses have just no basis in reality. But, anyhow, I believe that Marie-George Buffet featuring a common anti-liberal candidate, supported by LCR and anti-liberal collectives, would have got more or less the same result she reached as a candidate of the CP.

José Bové, supported by the LCR and CP, would have got, more or less, the same results he got on its own. Nowadays, none of the parties of the anti-liberal and/or anti-capitalist Left has a stabilised electorate. For every election, you have to win every voter by convincing them it is useful to vote for you. And arithmetic is not politics...

Anyhow, the results of the first round of the presidential election, the number of people who sent letters or e-mails in order to join and resist against Sarkozy have given the LCR a broad credibility. And new responsibilities! After the general elections that, most probably, will be a severe defeat for the SP and its allies, a debate will begin about the future of the Left. For many activists inside the traditional Left and among workers and young people, the question is: what had happened? Why have we been defeated? How can we avoid new forthcoming defeats?

The different leaders of the SP are already arguing of the necessity for an "aggiornamento", a realignment of the French SP on the political orientation already shared by the other parties of the European social-democracy. They underlined the contrast between their defeat and the victories of Tony Blair in the UK or Romano Prodi in Italy. They suggest they lost the election because they were linked to old-fashioned ideas about socialism, class struggle and so on. And they begin to think about the kind of relationship they must have with the centre right.

The challenge we have to answer is to show that, in face of that neo-liberal left, there is another left, a left "100% left", which thinks that in order to oppose Sarkozy you must refuse any evolution towards centre and clearly defend workers' rights. A Left entirely committed to struggles and socialist alternatives. A Left whose main purpose will be to organise resistance and contest the hegemony of the SP rather than trying to pressure it.

The LCR doesn't intend to be sectarian or arrogant. But there is absolutely no reason to apologize for not having been marginalised like the other candidates and parties of the anti-liberal Left! Now, we have to move and offer a genuine alternative to failed orientations. We have to do it in an open manner, with the genuine will to associate as many people as possible.

How can the LCR - a small revolutionary organisation - in practice help a significant number of people to make a new step towards a broad anti-capitalist party? This issue will now be discussed among our members (old and new) and be clarified during the preparation of our national Congress (December 2007). But, during that discussion, we will keep in mind the reasons why we are faced with such a challenge (rather than sadly discussing about our failure): commitment to a radical anti-capitalist programme and absolute independence from the institutional left.

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

France

## Preparing for the presidential elections - a minority report

*Alain Mathieu, Patrick Tamerlan*



### Report on the situation in France

Given to the International Committee of the Fourth International, in the name of the minority of the LCR.

The context of the 2007 elections in France cannot be understood without reference to two political and social events which happened in the last two last years: - the victory of the "no" in the referendum on the liberal constitution for Europe, a victory obtained by the voters of the left (a majority of Socialist Party voters voted "no" whereas the leadership of the PS defended "yes") and by a mobilization of the anti-liberal Left (PCF, LCR, left socialists, global justice campaigners, left ecologists).

For months, Olivier Besancenot, Marie George Buffet (PCF), José Bové, figure of the global justice movement, J.L.Mélenchon (left wing of the PS) multiplied joint meetings, mobilizing thousands of participants. Consequently, the question was widely posed: how to concretize this relationship of forces, this overturn within the left, to the disadvantage of the social-liberal orientation defended by the leadership of the Socialist Party.

The powerful movement of workers and youth, in spring 2006, for the first time made the government of the liberal Right retreat. The government wanted to impose on everyone under 25 insecure employment contracts (First Employment Contract, C.P.E., which gave employers the right to sack them without giving any justification). On two occasions, three million demonstrators took to the streets, after 3 months of massive mobilizations, making it the strongest movement, in term of demonstrations, since 1968. This movement confirmed that resistance to liberalism was dominant within the country, a year after the referendum.

There then arose on the left, on a mass scale, an immense hope that we could succeed in expressing this anti-liberal aspiration on the electoral terrain in 2007. The idea of "Unity of the anti-liberal left" was popular, as opposed

to the multiplication and the dispersion of candidacies just for the sake of it, which would defend virtually identical political proposals. The idea was born of an electoral coalition between all these forces, to present candidates in common for the 2007 elections - presidential (April), and legislative (June).

A new appeal was made, calling to bring together all the forces that were in agreement with this objective and to create unitary collectives at the base in the localities. At their height there were between 600 and 700 collectives, spread across the whole country, involving approximately 15.000 people. Not only did we see the whole arc of forces that had made the common campaign for a "no" from the left in the referendum, but especially many militants, trade unionists and organizers of social movements, who saw, at last, the outlines of a political space in which they could take their place, to express on the political level their day-to-day struggles.

It was then necessary to move from a campaign based on refusal of liberalism to the positive formulation of an alternative programme, of political proposals, of a strategy implying the clarification of the relationship with the Socialist Party, the attitude towards the Right and towards a government of the Left and a left parliamentary majority.

It was also necessary to solve a difficult problem within the specific framework of the institutions of the Fifth Republic: in France, elections take place in two rounds.

For the legislative elections, there are approximately 580 constituencies, which each elect a deputy, in a uninominal system with two rounds. There is no proportional representation. And France is one of the rare European countries to elect its president by direct universal suffrage. There is not even, as in the USA, a vice-president, which makes it possible to compose a "ticket" of two

candidates; there is only one name on the ballot paper. It is a hang-over of Gaullism and the strong state, where the candidate-president meets the people and the citizens over the head of the parties and the elected assemblies, is able to name the Prime Minister, has exorbitant powers, not controlled by a parliament which he even has the right to dissolve if he wants to. These institutions have modelled political life for many years, and the political parties have almost all had to adapt to this framework.

Everyone then thought that if the political questions were resolved, we would find a solution for the candidate: find a personality accepted by all, a name on the ballot paper, around whom the best-known figures (Buffet, Besancenot, Bové, etc...) would gather, in meetings and common media interventions.

For the legislative elections, it would be possible to vary the candidates coming from the various political forces in the 580 constituencies.

#### The LCR did not play the game

While affirming that it was in favour of such candidatures, the LCR organised a national conference in June 2006. A majority (60%) decided to launch the candidacy of Olivier Besancenot, while affirming that it would withdraw it if a unity agreement was concluded later. The minority (40%) defended the idea that it was necessary first of all to be integrated into the unitary movement and to throw all our weight into obtaining the best possible agreement, before launching our Besancenot campaign, which made us appear to not really want unity.

This divergence within the LCR was concretized in two possible orientations. And differently from preceding debates in the LCR - which is however accustomed to internal debates - the divergence was expressed

publicly, by different interventions in public meetings and in the movement of the collectives, by the "majority of the LCR", and by the minorities who spoke in the name of the "unitary current of the LCR". The unfolding of events accentuated these different public expressions, without up until now calling into question the unity of the organization, because the two orientations each had legitimacy, in the LCR and outside it.

In September a first stage was accomplished: a meeting of 500 delegates from collectives and from political forces adopted a document which specified the political framework:

- ❖ To regroup all the forces for an alternative anti-liberal Left in the elections in order to challenge within the electorate of the left the domination of the social-liberal policies of the PS.

- ❖ To defeat the Right and the far Right in the second round of the elections by voting for the best-placed left-wing candidate, without conditions or negotiations. It was obvious that it was necessary to respond to the powerful desire to beat Sarkozy: if the Right was victorious again, following on 2002, we would see a situation which would resemble the second term of Mrs. Thatcher in the United Kingdom, with an offensive aiming to destroy the powerful resistance to liberalism.

- ❖ To define an attitude towards a government of the Left, after the experience of the "plural Left" between 1997 and 2002, when the PCF took part in the government of Lionel Jospin. It was a key question, to verify what the PCF's policy was. The text of the agreement specified clearly:

"We will not be part of a government dominated by social-liberalism, which, by its composition and by its project, would not give itself the means of finally breaking with liberalism, would not respond to what people were waiting for. The Socialist Party, in particular, has adopted a programme which turns its back on a clear break with liberalism. It is out of the question, for us, to negotiate on this basis a contract of government whose action, letting people down once again, would lead ineluctably to the return of a harder Right"

The text further specified:

"If we do not take part in the government, our group in Parliament will not take part in a majority made up to support this government, but will vote in favour of any legislative provisions going in the direction of the interests of the population. We will also use our parliamentary strength, along with all those who will take part in social mobilizations, to get a certain number of positive measures adopted or to get negative measures withdrawn; to translate our programme into law and reality. We reserve the right to judge and to discuss publicly how the government and its majority act in the course of the legislature".

So we were very far, for example, from what Rifondazione had accepted in Italy: to take part in a government of coalition, not only with the social-liberal Left, but also with the centre-right of Prodi, and in a majority that supported it. The refusal of the PCF to take part in a social-liberal government demonstrated a certain break with its traditional positions. Having fallen to a very low electoral level, it did not want to go even lower by endorsing unpopular social-liberal governmental policies. Of course, that did not mean that the PCF, on another occasion, would not change its mind, nor that there were not within its currents which regretted abandoning this policy of alliance with the PS. But the success of the "no" and the anti-liberal resistance had convinced it that it should use the coming period to regain strength and credit and to win again the positions it had acquired, by relying on the unitary anti-liberal movement, in which it wanted to remain dominant.

It was however an important occasion, for the LCR, to take a full part in this movement, to act and to exert pressure on the contradictions that it entailed within one of the two big left parties in France.

### The LCR withdrew

The majority of the LCR clumsily put forward two amendments to the agreement, which were unconvincing: that participation in a government and a majority with the PS was excluded, but since the text of the agreement already said that, it seemed like a pretext. It asked for the passages to be removed which envisaged defeating the Right by calling for a second-round vote for the best-placed left-wing candidate, but this was rejected as unacceptable in the current situation. From then on, the majority of the LCR put itself in

a situation of "observer" in the movement, and stopped being seriously involved in the collectives, while the minority "unitary LCR" continued to act within the movement to push it in the right direction.

In October, another stage was reached: a national meeting of 600 representatives of the unitary collectives adopted a document of 125 programmatic proposals, taking up the best of the demands elaborated by the social, anti-war and global justice movements. All the principal measures proposed by the Left that was in favour of social transformation and by the social movements were there (on sackings, wages, services, immigration, the right to vote for foreigners, refusal of any military intervention, in the Middle-East as well as in Africa, support for Palestine etc...).

Only one important point continued to provoke debate and was resolved by a positive compromise: on civil nuclear power, between the traditional position of the PCF, favourable to nuclear power, and the ending of nuclear power that was defended by us and the ecologists, it was proposed that the question would be decided by a referendum after a public discussion throughout society, accompanied by a moratorium on the construction of new power stations during this debate.

The majority of the LCR did not have much to say in this debate, it did not take part in it, having put itself on the sidelines in September. The minority was there, strongly present, defending the traditional political positions of the LCR, generally successfully.

It remained, after the political agreement, to solve the question of the candidacy by a debate within the collectives. Olivier Besancenot and the LCR put themselves on the sidelines, Olivier never wanted to be a candidate for the candidacy within the movement, but in spite of that, during all these months there were very many calls for the LCR to come back into the movement. In addition to the two principal figures (Bové and Buffet) the debates saw the emergence of other candidates who did not represent a particular party, but could be agreed by all: Clementine Autain, Yves Salesse, Claude Debons, figures of the unitary movement. It was necessary to make the PCF understand that the candidacy of its general secretary could not unite the movement, because she

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would reduce it, people thought, to a small circle around the Communist Party.

The discussion and the consultation began in the collectives. José Bové withdrew without much explanation, criticizing the practices of the PCF which wanted to impose its general secretary, but especially taking note that his candidacy was not being chosen in priority in the collectives. He would remain absent from the movement for two months, reappearing in mid-January supported by a petition initiated outside of the movement.

It only remained to make the PCF agree to a non-PCF candidacy, in a situation where it had become the dominant force within the movement after the withdrawal of Besancenot and Bové, with the aim of making the two of them come back. On December 9-10, an assembly of more than 800 delegates did not succeed in solving the question, but the movement was strong enough to prevent the PCF, which was in a majority in the meeting, from imposing Marie-George Buffet as the candidate of the collectives.

The PCF then underwent an unprecedented crisis: it decided just afterwards to force its way through, against the will of the unitary movement, and to present Buffet as candidate, in the name of the party, by having recourse to an internal vote. In this internal vote, 10.000, out of the 50.000 militants of the PCF consulted, voted against the candidacy of the general secretary, preferring another candidate who would respect the unity of the unitary movement. Entire federations, sections, those most committed to the movement, voted against the majority of the leadership, which, knowing the internal workings of the PCF, was an event. Some left the party, but still more still decided to organise to continue the debate. Those who call themselves "unitary communists" are organised in a public association.

It was the first time that the PCF had undergone such a crisis, and the opposition was organised on a basis that was anti-liberal and left. Once again, the majority of the LCR was absent from this confrontation and this debate, and by its refusal of a unitary policy it missed an occasion to influence and make links with this movement of contestation. The unitary minority of the LCR was by the side of the unitary militants of the PCF and the collectives.

### Rancour against the leaderships of the parties held responsible for the failure

Immediately after this failure, many militants, but also many voters, were disappointed and felt great bitterness. The political logics proper to the parties were judged to be responsible the division, whereas a political agreement was possible and would have produced a considerable electoral and political dynamic.

The LCR found itself isolated: not only in broad sectors of its electorate, but also among the sympathizers and actors of the social movements who had previously looked on it with sympathy. Within the LCR, well-known militants, of long standing, leading representatives of the political influence of the LCR, even if they were not members of the minorities, repudiated this policy of wanting to impose an LCR candidate at all costs, in direct opposition to the unitary dynamic.

The leadership of the PCF was considered to be responsible for the failure, the crisis is open, and the solitary campaign of Buffet does not have any dynamic behind it.

Why did the PCF choose to force its way through?

The PCF is paying for forcing its way through by a crisis without precedent. Initially, many people thought that it made this choice in order to return to its policy of alliance with the Socialist Party. An influential current within the party and its leadership defend this perspective, but the present leadership does not seem to be following it on this issue. It appears that the PCF, already reduced to the lowest level in electoral terms and with a decreased number of elected officials (22 deputies, whom it is not guaranteed to keep, and municipalities which are threatened with being taken from it by the Socialist Party), considers that a "cure of opposition" would be more beneficial to it. All the more so as the situation after the presidential election does not offer many other choices; either the Right wins, and the question of going into government is not posed. Or the candidate of the PS wins, and it will be rather an opening to the "centre" that a recentred PS will seek. The refusal to give way to another unitary candidature is due to two reasons:

❖ For the PCF, the interest of this movement was not only to find itself with the radical Left, but to lay the foundations of a movement which would include sectors of the opposition within the PS, and to thus aim at the heart of the left electorate. Many references by the PCF to the German situation attest to this, as does the presence of Oskar Lafontaine at the meetings of M.G. Buffet. The PCF was waiting to see how the currents of the PS which had defended the "no" to the constitution would react, after the designation of Ségolène Royal as candidate of the PS, which demonstrated an inflection to the right on the part of the PS. In fact, precisely nothing happened: after this designation, the "no" currents, apart from some very minority exceptions, have had to agree to form a united bloc with the party against the Right. The only current present as such in the movement, the PRS group of Mélenchon, gave up at the end of December. It is certain that the contradictions within the PS were attenuated on the eve of an election where it is a question of defeating a government of the Right, and that they will re-appear with even more force if the PS is confronted with applying its policies in government. That was the case of Germany, it was in fact under a Schröder government that the rupture around Lafontaine occurred. Taking note, moreover, of the withdrawal of Besancenot and Bové, it only remained to the PCF to accept a coalition with small currents of the radical Left, without any counterweight coming from the Socialist Left. The PCF preferred to run its own campaign, breaking the consensus of the collectives. More than a disagreement about participation in government, the real difference between the PCF and the LCR lay there: what should be the contours of the movement? "Radical anti-liberal Left", or "left of the plural Left" as Olivier Besancenot argued, or "left of the Left" as the PCF proposed? It is a debate to be continued, but it was not an irremediable divergence which prevented the LCR from entering a coalition - on the contrary, the debate would have unfolded in the course of the campaign.

❖ The second reason is due to the traditions of this party. To leave behind it the Stalinist period which marked its functioning and its conception of the party that had to be built, the current leadership undertook only a timid reform which did not go far. The "opening" of the PCF was limited to agreeing, during preceding elections, to make common lists with some small forces around the PCF, which

remained the centre of gravity. By wanting to reproduce this schema with a powerful unitary movement, it ran head-on against this movement, showing its incapacity to understand the meaning of it. As for reflection and debate within the party on "transcending" itself to build another force, there are only some mumblings. The culture of the party and its militants remains very attached to its "identity", in defence of the "Party", and these reflexes also pushed towards a clash with the collectives.

It remains the case that the crisis that has opened up is extremely profound. The future of the PCF remains a question that is impossible to circumvent for all those who pose the question of a new political organization on the left. The PCF, in spite of its decline, remains one of the forces on the left which still has the most links with ordinary working-class people (much more than the LCR with its equivalent presidential results, and not yet supplanted by a PS which is struggling to implant itself among these layers of the population at the same time as it regularly takes on government responsibilities...)

### The candidacy of José Bové cannot be the candidacy of the unitary movement

After having withdrawn his candidacy in the collectives, José Bové came back at the end of January, announcing that he was now a candidate. He was backed by a double movement: a petition of 30,000 signatures organised outside of the collectives by militants who had either a project of creating a political current behind him (some particular currents of the ecologist and global justice movement), or the idea that this was the last chance to force the PCF and the LCR to unite around him. A part of the collectives, on the basis of the rancour that had accumulated against the LCR and the PCF, chose to use this candidacy, hoping to maintain the unitary pressure, while another part of the collectives chose not to support any candidate, maintaining the objective of uniting the whole anti-liberal Left.

Bové's candidacy did not shake the LCR: when the minorities proposed that Besancenot should meet Bové to discuss a common candidacy, thus effecting at least partial unity, the majority of the LCR refused. So the Bové candidacy, legitimate for a layer of

militants, cannot appear as enabling the unity of the movement. By establishing itself as the third candidacy coming from the unitary movement, it underlines even more its failure. In the opinion polls, the three or four candidates who speak in the name of anti-liberalism are stagnating, with between 2 and 3 per cent each. The collectives are divided on the appropriateness of the Bové candidacy. Some are trying through it to constitute an alternative political force which would occupy a space by building itself between and against the PCF and the LCR, giving up the objective of a unitary movement for an objective that is still not very well defined.

So there will be no unitary anti-liberal candidate at the 2007 presidential election, and that is a failure, felt as such by thousands of militants and millions of voters.

Why did the LCR stick to its course?

The political differences invoked by the leadership of the LCR have been seen as pretexts to justify at all costs its separate candidacy. All the more so as the agreement made it possible to accept a coalition where each party or political force would keep its autonomy. The reasons, in our opinion, for the refusal of the majority of the LCR to integrate into the movement, are of several kinds:

- ❖ The majority of the LCR did not draw the balance-sheet of the policy that it pursued in 2003-2004, based on a far-left agreement with Lutte Ouvrière, which had led to an electoral failure, and had subsequently not produced any effect of political regroupment. Going from 10 per cent of the votes in 2002 to 4 per cent at the 2004 regional elections and 2,5 per cent at the European elections, this policy led to isolation, equating the Right and the Left, refusing to enter into dialogue with the anti-liberal forces existing on the political scene.

- ❖ The LCR has also become a victim of the French presidential system: having a young and media-friendly candidate, it overruled the political objections of its sympathisers, hoping that at the end of the day its candidate would obtain an honourable result (between 3 and 4 per cent), and reduced its objective to a competition with LO and the PCF. Rather than making it possible to take a step forward in the building of a unitary movement, (which would have been able to

unleash a dynamic and to get more than 10 per cent of the votes), it preferred the affirmation of a candidacy guaranteeing the identity of the current which we represent. That will not lead to any step forward in regrouping activists, and even a good result will not be repeated, since we know that in the legislative elections, the LCR has neither the political implantation nor the popular support to attain the same relationship of forces.

- ❖ Especially, the LCR has been a victim of a form of conservatism. With 2500 members and results which can sometimes be up to 4 per cent of the electorate, many sections of the International could envy this situation. However, it is not the sign that we have reached the Promised Land, and that it is enough for us to occupy this space while waiting for the social crisis in which we will make a revolutionary party emerge. Years ago, in the LCR and the International, we became convinced that it was necessary to unite currents and militants in order to create broad parties, mass parties, to carry forward the perspective of a radical change of society, even if revolutionaries were in a minority to start with. We no longer thought of the building of the revolutionary party as a linear growth of our sections. It is this political advance, which was common to us, which is being called into question by the majority of the LCR. However, it is not a question, in France in 2006-2007, of starting by discussing the building of a new party. The anti-liberal unitary movement did not resemble the processes which have given rise to what we have called "broad parties" of the anti-capitalist Left. In several European countries, groups coming from the far-left have been capable of pursuing an intelligent, open policy (Portugal, Britain, Scotland, Denmark...). In France, all the attempts at a broad party with the forces of the far Left have failed, all the attempts at agreement between the LCR and LO ran up against the sectarian politics of L.O.. This time, it was a question of something else: of building an electoral coalition, to test out an initial stage of broader unity, on the basis of an anti-liberal anti-capitalism, rather like in Germany with the WASG coalition at the elections in 2005. Of course, if the electoral coalition had materialised in France, immediately afterwards the question would have been posed of the political space that had to be organised, passing perhaps through a stage of a federation of parties, currents and collectives, and in any case moving in time

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towards a united political movement. But the LCR refused to enter into even the electoral coalition, did not want to take the first step, the first stage. For fear of being "sucked in", in order not to take any risks, it preferred to fall back on organising its own space around its party and its candidate.

This policy poses the question: if we do not have confidence in our ideas, in our programme (which is not intended to be kept in the refrigerator, but whose function is to convince a significant sector of the working class so as to become a force for action and transformation), if we are not able then to confront it with social reality, if we do not seek to change the relationship of political forces within the Left, then that becomes a form of conservatism that is not very compatible with our announced objective of transformation of society.

Comrades in the International have a tendency, in discussion, to isolate the building of a political movement and the question of social struggles: it is enough, according to them, to have a nucleus that is determined and firm on principles, in order to intervene in social struggles, which will in the end be the decisive element. That is to forget that the concretization of an alternative on the political terrain encourages social struggles, and that, reciprocally, social struggles should help political construction. To build a useful political space, in the sense of providing a vehicle for thousands of activists in the trade unions and associations, to organise a political space with which they can identify and which will organise a significant part of the working class and youth, we need regroupment: militants who are not in parties, currents coming from different traditions and with different histories, coming from the far Left, from the Communist and Socialist parties, from ecologist and alternative currents. A regroupment which will have to confront the questions that every party that begins to represent an important sector of the population has to face: questions of government, parliamentary majority, presence in local and regional councils, without betraying its anti-liberal principles, without compromising itself by alliances which would denature the struggle that has been undertaken and would prevent new social conquests.

The abandonment of such an active unitary policy in France will have repercussions in

Europe. It is necessary to avoid a generalization of a "French turn" which would put us on the margins of phenomena of recomposition in Europe. We do not need to make the demonstration that in the country where Trotskyist political forces have acquired sizeable autonomous strength, they "freeze" any possibility of unitary regroupment for an alternative on the left.

### The end of the story has not yet been written

It is still possible to modify the policy of the LCR, and we are going to try to do that. There will be no unitary candidate in the presidential election, and in these conditions it is necessary that Olivier Besancenot is present. But it is still possible to discuss an approach and an agreement for the legislative elections in June. There will be 580 candidates, there can be an agreement, so that in 150 to 300 constituencies, the LCR, the PCF, the forces around José Bové, the unitary collectives which have survived these turbulences (and there are many of them), would agree to present common candidates. It is of course necessary to have an agreement to defeat the Right, to defend an anti-liberal policy in complete independence in Parliament, not to take part in a government and a parliamentary majority on the basis of social-liberal policies. The French situation is unstable.

If the Right wins, the entire Left, including the PS, will explode and have to be rebuilt. If the Left wins, an agreement between part of the PS and the "centre" of the Right (Bayrou and the UDF) is possible, as in Italy or Germany. A "unitary turn" by the LCR, after the candidacy of Besancenot, is necessary. The failure to achieve unity for the presidential election does not invalidate the need to persevere with this type of regroupment, on the level of the immediate situation in France, but also, no doubt, for a whole period in Europe. If an agreement was reached for the legislative elections in France, the anti-liberal Left would also become the non-governmental left, since for the moment the PCF does not envisage going into a Socialist government (if it changed its mind, the crisis in the party would be at its height, and once again thousands of militants would rise up against the leadership of the party. It would then be necessary to be there, in the process of discussion, to have some influence on this crisis).

Furthermore, it is a situation which is tending to be found on a European scale: the more the liberal offensive develops, the more the traditional parties are under pressure and accentuate their social-liberal turn. But even more, in reaction, crises of perspectives take shape within these parties.

In Germany, the policy of Schröder in government, and then the establishment of the grand coalition, led to the unification of a wing of the SPD with the PDS and a part of the radical Left.

In Italy, the coalition government of Prodi is provoking a crisis within Rifondazione.

In France, unable and unwilling to repeat the experience of the "plural Left", the PCF today, and the PS tomorrow, will face strong contradictions. It is necessary to be ready to intervene actively in these crises, which will multiply.

What our Italian comrades are doing is a good example. Considering their limited forces, it was necessary for them, 15 years ago, to go into Rifondazione, which was a product of the breaking up of the Italian CP.

Confronted with Rifondazione joining the Prodi government, they demonstrated at the same time their independence in relation to the government and their loyalty to the social movement, without however creating a worst case scenario and becoming responsible for a return to power of Berlusconi.

This Italian debate will be important in France for the legislative elections, with a PCF which for the moment refuses to follow the road of Rifondazione, but remains hesitant on what policy to carry out.

All these debates will involve the European Left. It is up to us to know how to respond, not only not by the reaffirmation of principles that we declaim from the side of the road, but by a policy of concretely building regroupments which respect the principles of class independence and encourage workers to get involved in the discussion on alternative policies to those of social liberalism. In these processes, we will put forward our ideas.

## Pakistan

# Farooq Tariq arrested - again!

5 June 2007

*Khaliq Shah*

In less than four weeks Farooq Tariq, General Secretary Labour Party Pakistan, was arrested second time in early hours of Tuesday, 5th June 2007 by a heavy contingent of Punjab Police from his residence in Lahore. He has been detained at Harbanaspura Police Station, Lahore.

It may be mentioned that Farooq was also arrested to stop his participation in reception for CJ in Lahore on May 4, 2007 and detained for three days. Talking to media men and party members after his arrest at police station Farooq has said that he was arrested without any warrants. He said the state and its illegal tactics cannot force him to bow and vowed to continue struggle against dictatorship.

Meanwhile his advocate has filed a habeas corpus petition against the police in the court of Sessions. Judge Rauf Sheikh has issued a notice to SHO Harbanispura Police Station to produce Farooq Tariq at 9am Wednesday 6th June. Syed Mohammad Shah, President Lahore Bar Association and senior advocate Ejaz Hussain will appear in court on behalf of the petitioner.

Labour Party thinks that the immediate reason of Farooq Tariq arrest is his proactive role in the Lawyers movement, participation in 4 May Press conference against PEMRA (Pakistan electronic Media Regulatory Authority) action against the media as well as announcement of Free Media Conference being organized by LLP on 6th June at Lahore Press Club.



A number of political parties, organization, trade unions have condemned the arrest and demanded immediate release of Farooq Tariq. Several political workers, leaders and friends have visited Farooq Tariq at police station to show solidarity. LPP is going to hold a protest demonstration against his arrest at 5 pm Tuesday in front of Lahore press club.

Khaliq Shah writes on behalf of the Labour Party - Pakistan

## Pakistan

# Appeal for the release of Farooq Tariq

For the immediate release of Farooq Tariq and the other prisoners detained after the wave of repression of the democratic movement in Pakistan!

Farooq Tariq, general secretary of the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP), was arrested without a warrant on June 5, 2007 at his residence in Lahore. A posteriori, the Ministry of the Interior issued a three-month detention order against him. In order to further isolate him, he was transferred to the prison of Bahawalpur. All visits to him are prohibited, except with the prior agreement of the Ministry of the Interior.

Several hundred people were arrested on suspicion on June 5th and 6th and many others are subject to judicial procedures. The regime is trying to break by force the democratic mobilizations which followed the suspension on March 9th of the President of the Supreme Court, Judge Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudry. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets to protest against this arbitrary measure. Repression by the regime was

already responsible for 41 deaths and many injured in Karachi on May 12th and 13th. President Pervez Musharraf almost decreed a state of emergency and no one knows how far the military regime is ready to go to stamp out the democratic contestation.

Farooq Tariq was arrested because he was fully engaged in these mobilizations, in particular in support of the Lawyers' Movement that was created after the suspension of Judge Chaudry. Farooq Tariq is also known for his solidarity activities on the international level. He contributed to the organization of the World Social Forum of Karachi in 2006. He took an active part in other World Forums, like those in Mumbai (India) and Nairobi (Kenya), as well as European Forums, including the last one in Athens (Greece). He is also an activist of the international anti-war movement.

The situation is all the more worrying because the regime does not hesitate to use intolerable measures against Farooq Tariq and other prisoners:

psychological pressures, inhuman conditions of detention (over-populated cells in very hot weather, lack of water and sanitary facilities...), prohibition of visits ETC.

We call for the respect of human rights and freedoms in Pakistan.

We demand the immediate release of Farooq Tariq and all those who have been imprisoned for having taken part in the democratic mobilizations.

First signatures:

Gilbert Acheat, Professor, SOAS, University of London, Great Britain

Daniel Bensaïd, University of Paris VIII, France.

Olivier Besancenot, spokesperson of the LCR (France)

Vincent Charbonnier, trade unionist (SNASUB-FSU, Vénissieux), France.

Jean Pierre Debourdeau, FSU, vice-president of Attac 21, France

Chris Harman (editor International Socialism journal), Great Britain

Alain Krivine, former member of the European Parliament, spokesperson of the LCR, France

Luc Quintin, Physiology (CNRS UMR 5123), France

Pierre Rousset, Europe Solidaire sans Frontières (ESSF), France.

Roseline Vachetta, former member of the European Parliament, spokesperson of the LCR, France.

Sign this appeal now and get others to do the same.



Pakistan

## Farooq Tariq Released!

19 June 2007

Lahore

Dear All!

After 15 days of detention, Labour Party General Secretary General Farooq Tariq was released on Tuesday (19 June) from Kot Lakhpat Jail, Lahore by the Government of Punjab.

Dozens of Party workers, members and some civil society activists received him warmly outside the jail. We are thankful to all comrades, friends and well wishers who extended support and solidarity to Farooq Tariq during his detention and launched struggles and campaigns for his release. A detailed e-mail regarding his two week detention will soon be circulated by Farooq Tariq himself. Meanwhile Farooq Tariq is going to hold a press conference at Lahore Press Club at 5 pm Tuesday.

Warmly,

On behalf of LPP

Khaliq Shah

Pakistan

## The 15 Jail Days

Under the Musharaf military dictatorship

*Farooq Tariq*

It was one of worst jail experiences I had during my 30 year of activism. I was released after 15 days when my detention orders were withdrawn by the home secretary of the Punjab government on 19th June. It was not due to a mercy of the government but our local and international massive solidarity campaign. Hundreds of protest letters have been sent to General Musharaf with dozens of faxes and messages of protest to different provincial authorities during the solidarity campaign against my detention.

Most importantly, a write petition at Lahore High Court was to be heard on 20th June. One of the most prominent advocates and former president of Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan Abid Hassan Minto was to argue my case against the detention. Abid Hassan Minto is also head of National Workers Party and convener of the Awami Jamhoori Tehreek (Peoples Democratic Movement), a left alliance of seven political parties. Labour Party Pakistan is part of the alliance.

Police came to my house on 4th June at 4am to pick me up. While at police station Harbancepura, I repeatedly asked if there was any formal detention order. There was no reply by the local police officer. He kept telling me that you will be free this evening and that at the most in three days. That lie was told to over 600 political prisoners who were rounded up from their houses, in the same way and at the same time.

Our advocates that included Syed Mohammed Shah, president District Courts Bar Association and Ijaz Hussain. The advocates went to Lahore Session Judge that morning and filed a petition for my recovery from illegal detention.

Unfortunately, the Session Judge did not issue orders for a bailiff to recover me, but issued notices to the police for the next morning. This was the turning point for the change of police behaviour towards me.

Until they received a court notice, the police officers were polite and I was even allowed to keep my mobile and receive visits of my comrades and friends at the police station. The my ordeal has started. I was immediately removed from the Harbancepura police station and then after nearly two hours in a moving police van, I was finally de-loaded at Bagbanpura police station.

After spending the night at this police station, I was once again asked to sit in a police van which drove me to a private place. This was the time when police had to tell the Session Judge that Farooq Tariq is not arrested and is not with them. I was in fact not with them in formal terms. I was like a kidnapped person, not by private gangs, but state gangsters. The place belonged to an elected councillor of ruling party Muslim League. It was a store of a plastics factory where I was kept for the next 24 hours, under the strict vigilance of two armed men from local police.

I protested again and again for being kept in a private place instead of a police station. But the two armed men told me that is a order by my high ups and they have to obey the orders. The two police officers who came to collect me late at night in plain cloths told me that our senior police officers are very angry with you because of your petition in the court.

I was brought back to the same police station and then put behind bars with over 13 persons charged for different criminal activities.

On June 6th, I was again removed from the police station and sent to another private place near Harbancepura police station. By then, the police had got my detention order from the home department of Punjab for three months and had to tell the Session Judge that morning that Farooq has already been sent to Bahawalpur jail.

The Bahawalpur is nearly 450 kilometre from Lahore. The jail is famous for its cruelties and strictness. Most of the prominent political prisoners have been kept in this jail during the past many years.

The police van had another political prisoner from Pakistan Peoples Party when we left at 12

## Pakistan

noon to Bahawalpur in the company of seven police men. The temperature was over 47 degree and the driver was over speeding the van. It was one of the worst travels I did during my life. A heat wave with bumpy over speeding van was an experience that I can not take off my mind.

We arrived at 7pm and immediately were sent to Block A of Bahawalpur Jail.

There were four more political prisoners from Muslim League (N) who were there for three weeks already. Noshad Hameed, an activist of MLN immediately shouted "Labour Party has arrived". We both had shared the same jail barrack at Lahore Kot Lakhpat jail in 2001.

We the two political prisoners from Lahore were put in separate cells. I asked the jail authorities that allow us to share one cell. "two are not allowed to share one cell; they might be involved in homosexual activities" I was told by one jail warden. "It has to be three or more than three or single in one cell" he told me.

Bahawalpur is one of most hot areas of Pakistan. We had to experience that for next seven days. I was alone in the cage. There was small room, a small veranda and something you can call a bath room. One woollen blanket was thrown inside the cell. That was to put on the floor to sleep, nothing else.

We were not allowed to bring any paper or pen. I had three pair of my Shalwar Qameez, the traditional dress in Pakistan for summer. No towel or tooth paste and brush. I was like a lion in a cage moving from one corner to another all the time, then sitting in one place, eating what the jail has to offer, something like food. It just remembered me of Lahore zoo where I normally go with my 6 year old son Abdullah to see the lions.

Next day in the evening, 22 more political prisoners arrived from Lahore to share these four cells in Bloc A. I was absolute

pleased to see more people. Seven of them, all from Pakistan Peoples Party were pushed in my cell. This ended my solitary confinement, much to my pleasure. At least there were some to talk to.

We were sent to Bahawalpur from Lahore as a punishment. This was to isolate us from our friends, families and community. This was to teach us a lesson for our opposition to a military dictatorship.

The Musharaf regime was acting like his British colonial masters who used to send the political prisoners to Andaman Islands while they ruled the Indian sub continent for over 200 years. The Island was known in common terminology as Kala Paani (black waters). Many freedom fighters that were sent there never came back to their homes, most of them died while serving the life long prison terms.

This was to break our will to fight the military regime. This was to tell us that we are in a prison and a prison in Pakistan under military regime. When ever we asked the jail wardens, please take us out of our cages to have a little walk inside the Bloc, they told us, it is a prison and not a garden. The jail authorities treated us like animals.

The heat wave went up to 52. The electricity always went off, some time 14 hours a day. The floor of the cell was heated all the time. Even the water will be off while the electricity went off. We had one fan and the air of the fan came down to the floor after hours. It was only after three days of protest that our defected fan was changed with a better one and one more fan was installed in the veranda. We paid from our pockets for the fan. It was PPP leaders who had some amount deposited with the jail authorities while they arrived. There was no newspaper allowed inside. So we were totally blank from the outside world.

We had to go on hunger strike after four days in the cell. This was to demand water. One morning there was absolute no water coming in. Earlier, there was very little water coming in from the pipe but we could fill a little plastic bottle in half an hour. This paid off. The jail management had to change the pipes and replace the age old motor. The water problem was at least solved. The only remedy to save the body from heat was to put some water on the body all the times.

On the sixth day, my two elder brothers Ahmad Yaseen and Ahmed Saeed were able to visit me at Bahawalpur jail. They got the permission to visit me from home department in Lahore. They brought fruit, soft drinks and some cloths, tooth paste and brush etc. they also deposited some amount in my jail account, so I could order some basics from the jail shop. It was my first contact from the outside world. My brothers told me that I was going to be shifted to Lahore Kot Lakhpat Jail tomorrow. They had heard the news from the home department.

Comrades from LPP in Lodhran, a city 20 kilometre from Bahawalpur, had tried their best to contact me; they were able to send some fruit and sweets inside the cell the next morning. The comrades were close friends of an assistant jail superintendent of Bahawalpur jail, but he was unable to help me. He came several times to visit me and asked me what can I do for you, I always asked him to bring me some blank papers to write down something, but he was not able to do that. Next morning when he arrived, I asked him if he can arrange my travel to Lahore at night time instead day time if I shift to Lahore jail. That is what he was able to do and I left to Lahore next evening in a police van at 11pm. This was to avoid the heat of the day time.

Police at the jail gate was waiting for me to take me to Lahore. They tried to hand cuff me. I refused to do that. It took

one hour before they were able to do that because of my resistance. I told them I am not criminal, I am not going to be treated like criminals. I am not running away from here in the presence of dozens of policemen.

After whole night travel, we arrived at Kot Lakhpat jail in Lahore. Here I was put together with other political prisoners who were brought in from other districts. I shared a very small cell, small than Bahawalpur jail with eight others political prisoners. But the difference was the out side door was open and we could stroll in the lawn of the Qasuri Chakki number three.

A 52 year political activist Sarmad Mansoor from the Pakistan Peoples Party had died a day earlier in this jail dispensary after he was denied proper medical facilities. It was murder by the government of Punjab with the help of jail authorities. He was arrested from a hospital in Gujrat district and was admitted to a jail dispensary with no adequate facilities. He died of a heart attack in this dispensary on 14th June. When I arrived on 15th June morning, all the 32 political prisoners from different political parties were on hunger strike, so I join in as well.

Here the next five day till my release on 19th June was OK. We had to sleep inside the very tiny cell but from morning till evening we were allowed to move around. But no one from outside was allowed to visit me. Although, on 16th June, several comrades waited outside the jail for several hours with a permission to visit me, but were not allowed to visit me.

After the death of one political prisoner which became a national issue, the attitude of the government changed. They started releasing the political prisoners. I was the last political prisoner to be released on 19th June. While I was coming towards the jail gate, I had to collect the amount, I had deposited at the jails accountant.

While I was standing there, I was approached by one political prisoner. He was shouting already that I want to see Farooq of Labour Party Pakistan. When I heard this, I told him, it is me, he could not recognize me immediately but then he hugged me several times. He was Iqbal from India. An Indian prisoner, whom I had met in 2001 in the same jail. On his request, I was able to send a Human Rights Commission Pakistan delegation to jail afterward. The HRCP delegation was able to help in release of several Indian prisoners who had completed their sentences but waiting for an exchange of prisoners between the two countries.

Iqbal has heard that I am in jail and he also knew that I could be released today, so he was able to come out of his barrack to greet me in the lobby. We spoke for some minutes; he wanted me to do the same. Get some Indian prisoners out of jail. I promised to do what I could do. I also gave him some five hundred Rupees to buy some fruit for the Indian prisoners. This was touching time for me. I was remembered even after six years by the Indian prisoners. Good work is not forgotten for long times.

Outside the jail, several dozens of LPP and social organization s activists were waiting to welcome me. They had heard only few hours earlier that I be released today. "Go Musharaf Go" was the chant that might even be heard by people inside the jail. The red flags of LPP were waving and slogans to continue the struggle against military dictatorship were raised. Many more were waiting at Shimla Pehari Chouck near LPP office. I was brought to LPP office in a procession. At 5pm, I addressed a press conference at Lahore Press Club. So straight from jail to the thick of political activities.

Farooq Tariq is the general secretary of Labour Party Pakistan.

## Portugal

### Fifth Convention of the Left Bloc

*Raul Camargo*



On June 2-3, the Fifth national convention of the Left Bloc took place in Lisbon. Since its creation in 1999 this unitary organization of the anti-capitalist left in Portugal has strongly consolidated and implanted itself in society and on the political landscape, becoming today a significant force which has more than 4,000 members, hundreds of local councillors, 8 members of parliament and an active presence in struggles and in the social movements.

The convention was dominated by the desire to build a strong left opposition to the social-liberal government of Socrates. The openly neo-liberal policies conducted by the government of the Portuguese Socialist Party are giving rise to widespread unease and discontent in the popular layers of society.

This was expressed in the general strike which took place on May 31st against the measures of deregulation in the civil service. Although it is true that this strike had a limited impact, it nevertheless made it possible to demonstrate the real nature of social liberalism when it comes to power and its determination to push forward with policies which always end up by provoking the return to power of the hardline right.

The Fifth Convention of the Bloc brought together more than 600 delegates from all over the country who represented the 4,200 members of the organization (Portugal has about 10.5 million inhabitants). The debates were concentrated around four tendency motions, representative of the internal plurality of the Bloc. Motion A, which brought together the three founding organizations of the Bloc (the APSR, Portuguese section of the Fourth International; the ex-Maoist UDP and Política XXI, which came from the Portuguese Communist Party) and many members who did not come from these organizations presented a document entitled "The Socialist Left as an Alternative to the Socrates government". This document laid out the main lines

that should be a priority for a fighting left which puts at centre stage the struggle against climate change from an anti-capitalist perspective and the struggle against all the injustices caused by capitalism. This tendency had the support of nearly 75 per cent of the delegates.

Motion B, entitled "For a Platform of Socialist Democracy" was put forward by a group whose origins are in various organizations of the Portuguese far left of the 1970s. This motion insisted in its theses on the need to deepen the internal organization of the Bloc and on correctly handling internal pluralism. This motion had the support of 5 per cent of the delegates. Motion C, entitled "Everyone in the struggle, everyone in the streets!" was defended, along with some independents, by the Ruptura/FER current, an organization linked to the LIT tendency (International Workers League, "Morenoite" Trotskyism).

This motion was the most critical towards the outgoing leadership of the Bloc (essentially Motion A) and centred its attacks on the supposed absence of internal pluralism in the organization and on the adhesion of the Bloc to the European Left Party (Ruptura/FER asked in particular that the Bloc propose within the ELP the expulsion of Rifondazione Comunista for its support to the Prodi government). This motion, which had the support of 12 per cent of the delegates, also proposed that there should be a rapprochement with the

Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), in particular in trade union work.

Lastly, Motion D (3 per cent of the delegates) was presented under the title "The Bloc for a social majority of the Left", and was defended by a group of militants from the town of Matosinhos. This motion insisted on the necessity to link the Bloc more closely to the social movements, but its proposals were very similar to those of Motion A.

The Congress debates were very rich, first of all in the discussion of the different motions, then in the debates on the statutes and finally for the election of the 80 members of the new national leadership. The composition of this leadership is the following:

Motion A: 404 votes - 62 representatives 74.5 per cent

Motion B: 24 votes - 4 representatives 4.42 per cent

Motion C: 78 votes - 12 representatives 14.3 per cent

Motion D: 17 votes - 2 representatives 3.13% per cent

There were 3 blank votes and 6 invalid votes.

It should be noted that our comrade Francisco Louça of the APSR was elected spokesperson of the Bloc. The Left Bloc came out of this congress strengthened, in particular in its ability to articulate different left traditions without however losing sight of a clearly anti-capitalist perspective.