



Challenges facing revolutionaries today:

- Building broad anti-capitalist parties
- Experiences in Italy and Brazil
- Up dating Marxism – Daniel Bensaïd

LETTER TO READERS

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Five years ago the “teamsters and turtles” on the streets of Seattle marked the failure of the WTO negotiations. Since then the global justice movement – from World to European to Asian Social Forum(s) – has demonstrated its ability to bring together all the social movements – challenging capitalism, imperialism and war, the destruction of the environment, working conditions, discrimination and violence against women, racism and the oppression and exploitation of migrants and refugees. These movements and forums have shown a light at the end of the tunnel for the workers’, people’s and progressive movements that have suffered the full strength of reactionary attacks since the election of Reagan and Thatcher twenty-five years ago.

At that time the left and workers’ movements were still able to mount a resistance to these attacks, as was shown by the valiant fight of the British miners’ in 1984-85 and the broad solidarity movement with them. However 1989 marked an ideological defeat. The “end of history” was, supposedly, the end of any alternative to capitalism. This interlude was in fact short-lived. On January 1, 1994 the Zapatistas demonstrated that the oppressed would not accept the “new world order”. In 1995 the workers’ strikes in France insisted on the same point. The fightback had started.

However, up to now, this fightback has not reversed the overlying trend. The “permanent war” on terrorism and the continuing attacks on working and social conditions have not been defeated even if from time to time they have been slowed down or diverted.

The new social movements included in the “movement of movements” or “global justice movement” are vital to

the building of a movement capable of rolling back this offensive. So are the traditional trade unions which, despite a certain involvement in the social forum movement, are in general slow off the mark in organizing international resistance.

However, without a conscious element that takes the responsibility of being the political tribune of these movements they will not emerge in the terrain in which the majority of the population recognizes political alternatives - that is to say in elections. We know that political action is first and foremost in the grassroots movements and that without that involvement political alternatives are hollow.

These are the ideas that Livio Maitan defended throughout his long life as a leading member of the Fourth International. After his youth as a member of the Socialist Party and then through many years in a strictly FI organization, Livio led the turn of the Italian FI organization first to an integration with Democrazia Proletaria and then to participating in the founding of Rifondazione Comunista.

The idea that inspired Livio was the idea of a new political force, going over and beyond existing political divisions, which would take its inspiration from the new social forces and be able to propose new ideas for the new society we are striving for.

Like his comrades of Bandiera Rossa we think he would be disappointed by the orientation taken by the Bertinotti leadership.

An appreciation of Livio by one of his longstanding close collaborators, Lidia Cirillo, is available on the International Viewpoint website: www.internationalviewpoint.org

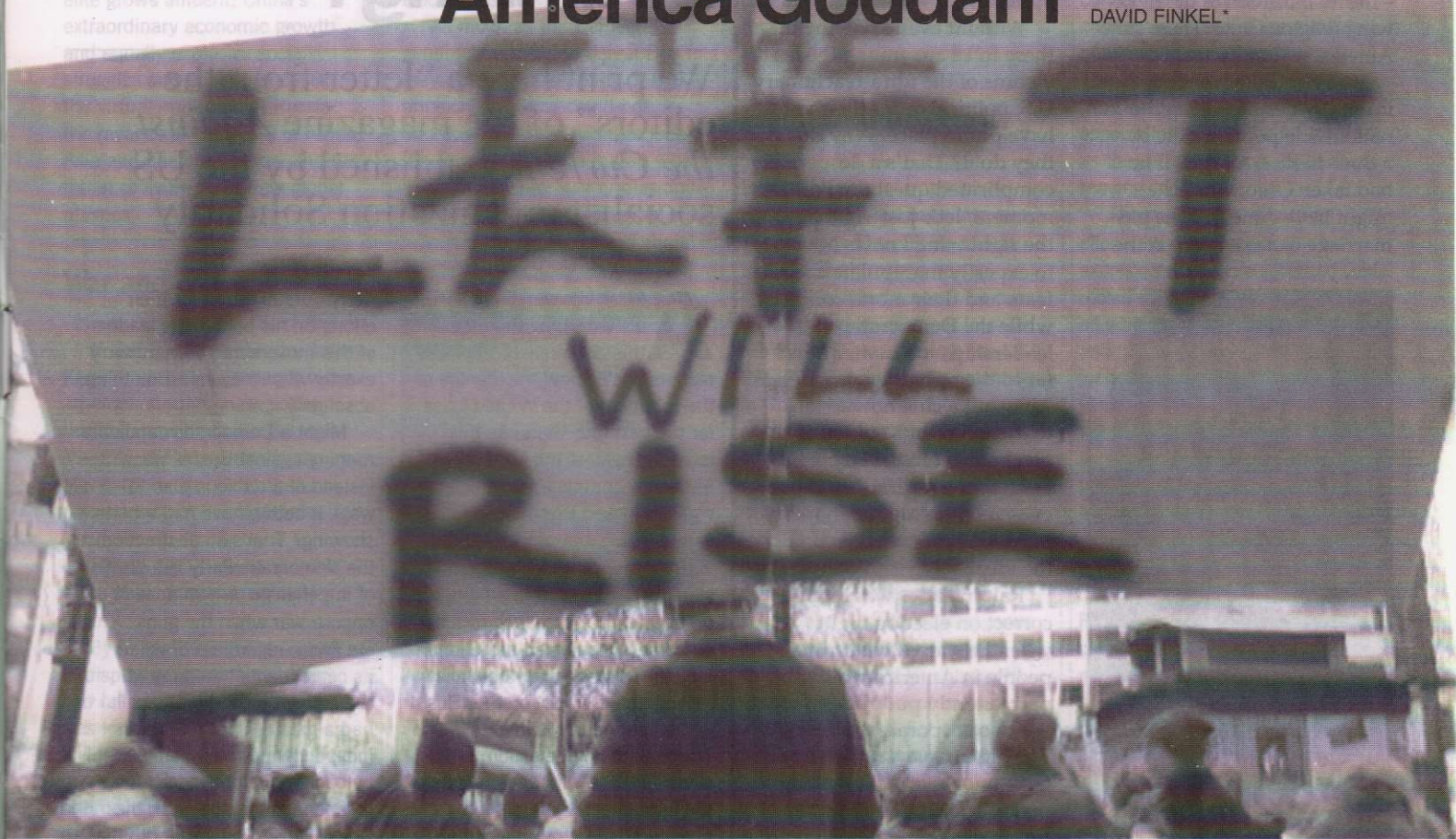
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USA: America Goddam¹

DAVID FINKEL*



To understand what happened at the US presidential elections of November 2, 2004, you have to think of the United States as a kind of Christian Iran, only with actual and not hypothetical nuclear weapons.

That's somewhat of a caricature, obviously, but let me briefly pursue the parallel. The government of the Islamic Republic brought its people to virtual ruin in the Iran-Iraq Gulf War of the 1980s, and has run the Iranian economy about as far into the ground as is possible for a country with such oil wealth; yet the regime has survived and maintained a powerful social base, even though much of the population loathes and despises it.

The Republican right wing in the United States dragged the country into a war that was based on lies and, it's now clear, that cannot be

won. Its fiscal subsidize-the-rich and military spending policies have produced budget deficits that pose the real danger of full financial meltdown in the next economic downturn.

On top of that have come the torture photos from Abu Ghraib, the Halliburton war profiteering, the collapse of Enron, the health care crisis and the taunts of Osama ("I'm back") bin Laden.

The Democrats and, it must be admitted, much of the Left that might have known better, assumed that John Kerry had this election in the bag, requiring only a large turnout from the African American community and other sectors alienated by the Bush gang and furious over the stolen 2000 election.

The conventional pollsters, we were assured, had it all wrong when they showed an extremely tight race with a slight edge for Bush. They

were missing the youth vote, the kids with cell phones who weren't in the phone book. And this time, the Democrats were mobilizing their base and their legal apparatus to check the harassment and "suppress the vote" tactics of the right. Kerry would win and it wouldn't even be that close.

The calculation was half right. The Black vote, above all, was there. The antiwar vote, taken for granted by the Democrats with their pro-war candidate, was there. (Ralph Nader and Peter Camejo, the independent antiwar campaign, got 390,000 votes nationwide - about one-seventh of Ralph's vote in 2000, and not even what he received when he ran a barely visible frayed-shoestring campaign in 1996. As for David Cobb, the Green Party candidate, his vote of slightly over 75,000 is too sad even to laugh at.)

Labor poured tens of millions into anti-Bush ads,

voter turnout and lawsuits to keep Nader/Camejo off the ballot in many states. The problem was that something else was there, too, which the pollsters saw but the left didn't – the mobilization of the right-wing religious vote. There's the America-as-Iran factor.

Kerry could have won, ironically despite losing the nationwide popular vote by a three million margin, if he had taken Ohio, which he might have done had the gay-marriage ban not been on the



state ballot. Make no mistake, however: Such an outcome would have been a fluke. The actual result reflects the reality – the mainly white religious conservative vote has made the Republicans the governing party in the United States.

It's important neither to disrespect the folks who vote this way on "moral values", nor to pander to them. The Democratic Party does both, while the Republicans mobilize them, and in essence there goes the election.

The bulk of this religious conservative vote is made up of white people, either working class or middle class of very modest incomes. For a complex set of reasons, they are voting for the party that is most aggressively dedicated to screwing them. Their jobs are disappearing into the global marketplace, their social security (the U.S. term for old age pensions) are at risk of being privatized, their health

is increasingly uninsured, their kids are one war away from getting the draft notices, and in the new capitalist order their lives are dominated by permanent indebtedness and insecurity.

Without even knowing it, these folks are among the first victims of the ultra-reactionary U.S. political order their votes have put in place. Why do they do it? That's a desperately complicated question: For the moment, let's just say that the right wing knows how to expertly manipulate their fears and their moral concerns, while the Democratic leadership – no matter how far to the right they move – haven't a clue how to talk to them. When Kerry runs on about "colossal errors in judgment over Iraq" without even mentioning the morality of Abu Ghraib, well, you get the idea...

Ralph Nader was entirely correct on election night when he stated that ordinary people in America will not permanently put up with what the two corporate parties offer. The big unanswered question today, however, is how long that will take, and the stakes riding on that conundrum are incredibly high.

In this writer's opinion, the Republicans are in a position to dominate all levels of U.S. politics until they seriously screw up. In the violently unstable world that U.S. imperialism has created, and the prospects for a financial meltdown from the astonishing deficits that military spending and tax giveaways to the rich, the debacle may come sooner than later.

The question then will be whether there's a democratic, populist or socialist left with anything meaningful to say. The first step is to unchain the antiwar movement from a decaying Democratic Party and begin to mobilize again. ■

1 With apologies to Nina Simone

* David Finkel is an editor of *Against the Current*, published by the US socialist organization *Solidarity* (www.solidarity-us.org)

USA: an end or beginning?

We print here a "letter from the editors" of the magazine *Against the Current*, published by the US socialist organization *Solidarity*

At last it's over. For what it's worth, by the time this issue reaches our readers, we'll know the identity of the occupant of the White House for the next four years. As this issue of "Against the Current" was frantically completed on election night, it looked like Bush would win narrowly, but unlike 2000, without the stigma of a blatantly stolen election – barring a reversal of fortune in Ohio that throws the outcome to contested provisional ballots. This editorial, then, reflects the assumption that Bush is the near-certain winner. This was the first election since 1968 in which war was the fundamental and defining question. Much has changed since, but then as now, the pro-war Democrat lost to the pro-war Republican as the antiwar movement futilely chained itself to the lesser evil.

There are numerous other issues, of course, from so-called "values" to the economy to the raw memories of the stolen election of 2000; but the debacle that Iraq has become was the factor that made the Bush gang so vulnerable. It's been astonishing to see, on the one hand, the genuine energy and voter mobilization growing out of the popular anger over Bush's disastrous war; and on the other, the Democratic Party establishment's display of cynical contempt for its core antiwar supporters in running a "better war" campaign.

The politics of John Kerry fit snugly into what used to be called, when such a thing existed, the moderate wing of the Republican Party. Perhaps this election's greatest irony was the desperate effort of the U.S. peace movement to rescue

Kerry. And in return for their efforts on his behalf, the leaders of this movement got from Kerry exactly what they asked: nothing, absolutely nothing.

Might a Democratic candidate running against Bush's war, instead of a dubious plan to wage it better, have had a better showing? That's an abstraction; the Democratic Party is a party of imperialism, which doesn't oppose war when the guns are firing, regardless of what its constituents think. Could the antiwar movement have had a greater impact with an independent strategy, conceivably by backing Ralph Nader's independent campaign or the Green Party? The answer to that, sadly, we'll never know.

The Democrats had the antiwar vote, which they took for granted. The Republicans, on the other hand, had the great bulk of the evangelical vote, which is a secret of success in this respect: Some millions of working people (mostly though not exclusively white), vote on religious grounds for the party that is most firmly committed to screwing them on issues of health care, living wages and social security. As they say, only in America.

The broader striking feature of this presidential election was the gulf between the campaign and the profound crises confronting this society and the world. Consider the Middle East alone: the intractable mess of occupation and incipient civil war that imperialism has produced in Iraq; the just-under-the-radar threat of a U.S. or Israeli "pre-emptive" strike against Iran; the destruction of Palestine; mass murder, population removal and starvation in Darfur.

Add to this the devastating

impact of runaway corporate globalization and catastrophic climate change; the profound growth of inequality in Latin America as hundreds of millions become poorer while a thin elite grows affluent; China's extraordinary economic growth and equally explosive social struggles and ecological crisis; the virtual implosion of Russia; the ravages of HIV/AIDS in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe, and the threat of avian flu or new global plagues.

War and chaos

It was in mid-September that Kerry's inner circle brought to his attention startling new polling results, showing that a decisive majority of likely voters (sixty percent, plus or minus three percent with a .95 confidence level) strongly preferred a candidate who showed tangible signs of being physiologically alive.

By failing throughout August to display such evidence, Kerry had fallen so far behind that it was looking like Bush would win the election without even having to steal it. Responding in the nick of time, the Democratic nominee delivered himself of a major critical address on the subject of Bush's mishandling of Iraq and the "war on terror."

In 47 minutes, Kerry discussed the administration's diplomatic debacle in the United Nations, the weapons inspectors, the United States' international allies and the government's own intelligence estimates on prospects for post-conquest Iraq.

The astonishing feature of this speech was what Kerry never mentioned: Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo; the torture and humiliation of prisoners, including cases of fatal beatings and the rapes of children in detention. The omission wasn't accidental, as the subject was not broached during the supposedly "pivotal presidential debate" of September 30 on foreign policy.

In a properly functioning democracy, every official up the chain of command that presided over the Abu Ghraib atrocities, up to and including the Secretary of Defense, would be finished, and the government itself would be forced out over these revelations.

In the United States of America, the power that presumes to show Iraq how to build democracy, not only does the government not fall but the opposition party refuses even to make such crimes an election issue!

As much as the Democrats genuinely wanted to defeat Bush, they remain a loyal party of U.S. imperialism. They could not afford, and did not wish, to label the Bush gang's acts in Iraq what they actually are: war crimes and crimes against humanity (the bombing of civilian neighborhoods and torture of prisoners),



committed in the course of an invasion openly described as illegal by the United Nations Secretary-General.

Whatever their critique of "this administration's colossal error in judgment," Kerry and the Democrats couldn't and wouldn't open a discussion before the U.S. public on the present real condition of the Iraqi adventure. The "optimistic" scenario is that Iraq might barely hold together, with a ramshackle quasi-parliamentary system and a "strong man" regime backed up by the U.S. military. The more likely outcomes are a disaster almost beyond imagining, with the country more or less dissolving or imploding in 1970s Lebanon style.

Behind the debate on "errors of judgment," the Democratic opposition actually serves as part of the filtering mechanism that keeps most of the truth from slipping through. The truth is this: To carry out the exercise of an election in Iraq scheduled for January will require a "coalition" military offensive that will claim, probably, Iraqi civilian lives in the thousands. But if that long-touted election were to be deferred, Iraq might disintegrate.

The Democrats, hoping that John Kerry would "succeed in the mission in Iraq" by getting major

military and financial support from U.S. allies, couldn't say what most of the world knows, which is that no Middle Eastern government or European military power in its right mind would sink into that mess. (As George Bush might remind us, "You forgot Poland." Our point exactly.)

Homeland Insecurity

Inevitably, wars of imperial conquest have fed back into our own society. The culture of fear that the Bush regime has so crudely exploited since 9/11 has enabled this government to shred the Bill of Rights through the USA PATRIOT Act, indefinite detentions in Guantanamo without charges or trials, and the return of ethnic and racial profiling.

Ironically, from the standpoint of the long-term health and stability of American capitalism, this administration may be remembered as the most destructive in history. Outrageous tax giveaways to the rich and corporate America have brought on a structural budget crisis with half-trillion dollar annual federal deficits stretching into the indefinite future. It's difficult to imagine what fiscal options will be available to whatever government is in office during the next economic downturn.

"Suppress the Vote"

Within the contests over control of the White House, Congress and the courts, struggles of equal or even greater ultimate importance were raging over the future of democratic politics in the United States. On the right, obviously, Republican operatives and government machinery were flagrantly mobilized to "suppress the Black vote" – as Michigan Republican official John Papageorge openly put it, before his party leadership had him bound, gagged and stuffed in a closet for the duration of the campaign.

On the Democratic side, this election was about not only defeating Bush but also, they hoped, wiping out permanently any independent challenge from the social justice movement. That's why the Democrats unleashed a four-year Hate Nader campaign right after the 2000 election, and in 2004 expended

as many resources to keeping Nader off state ballots as in trying to stop Republicans from stealing the election.

The Democrats' strategy of running as moderate conservatives depends critically on the absence of alternatives challenging corporate power. The vacuum on the left enables the Democrats to take labor and especially Black votes for granted as they chase the ever-rightward-moving "center."

The importance of such an alternative – and of giving it an expression through a solid and well-rooted new political party – is above all why Ralph Nader, Peter Camejo and their supporters deserve credit for their courage and perseverance in seeing the campaign through to the end. We repeat now what we said in 2000: If you agreed with Ralph Nader's message (or that of the Green Party) but voted Democratic to defeat Bush, you have wasted your vote. Now comes the even harder part. First, in a difficult post-election climate, there's the urgent need to remobilize the antiwar movement on many levels – from mass protests as Iraqi population centers like Falluja are pounded to dust, to giving moral and legal support to military resisters, to building upon the deep-seated popular fears of the return of the draft.

Second, the gulf that opened up in the Green Party between supporters of Nader/Camejo and David Cobb/Pat LaMarche must be bridged. At its best, the Green Party has the potential to become an authentic third party with a substantial African American and Latino leadership. To accomplish this will require both a spirit of reconciliation and willingness to grapple with structural problems that left many Green activists feeling disenfranchised this year.

Finally, the left in the United States needs to confront a difficult political period realistically, but without panic. A government headed by right-wing extremists has been returned to power, to preside over a divided country and a potential for real catastrophe in Iraq. Our first priority as always must be building the movements, from the ground up. How the movements respond will determine whether the end of this election marks the end of the hopes inspired in 1999 by Seattle, or a new beginning. ■

Michel Warschawski is a journalist and writer and a founder of the Alternative Information Center (AIC) in Israel. We reproduce here his "letter to my comrades of the world coalition of the anti-war movement", published by the Beirut daily *A-Safir* on September 18, 2004 during the international conference of the anti-war movement



Anti-war movement: the centrality of the Palestinian question

At the last international conference of the anti-war movement it was decided that the next meeting would be held at Beirut in Lebanon. It was obvious that no Israeli activist could be present in Beirut for this conference: nonetheless, I heartily approve of the decision.

It is of the highest importance that the world anti-war movement roots itself in the Arab world – the front line of the imperialist offensive which is currently waging two battles, in Iraq and in Palestine.

Israeli as well as Syrian-Lebanese law makes participation in the Beirut conference impossible for my Israeli colleagues of the "Alternative Information Center" (AIC). It is nonetheless important to establish a clear distinction. The Arab decision concerning the Israelis stems from their legitimate battle against the normalization of relations with Israel, while the Israeli law which forbids its citizens from traveling in Arab countries is based on a deliberate policy seeking to prevent any cooperation among activists; more precisely any type of cooperation whose objective is not "normalization" (i.e. the creation of a false impression of peace and normality) but rather cooperation with

the aim of coordinating our struggles against imperialist war, colonialist Zionism and the occupations in our region.

In this letter, I want to stress this global war as well as the anti-war movement and the centrality of the Palestinian question. Why Palestine is so important in the eyes of millions of activists in civil and political society. Why, in every demonstration against neoliberalism or against the war, is the Palestinian flag omnipresent, much more than the Iraqi or any other flag? Is it because the Israeli occupation is the most barbarous or murderous? No, unhappily, there are situations which are worse, like that in Chechnya where the Russian army is carrying out a veritable genocide.

Is it because the Palestinian national movement is a source of inspiration for the peoples of the world? No, there are movements of national liberation which are more efficacious and closer to victory than the Palestinian movement.

Some "friends of Israel" will claim that the centrality of the question of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the confirmation of the anti-Semitism of the anti-war and anti-globalization militants. I cannot subscribe to this quite defamatory accusation, knowing how our movements in Europe,

Africa, America or Asia have always been in the vanguard of the struggles against racism including of course anti-Semitism, which is not the case with the "friends of Israel".

In my view, the centrality of the Palestinian question is explained by the fact that more than any other conflict on our planet, it concentrates the stakes of the global war launched by the Bush administration and its allies.

In reality, the Palestinian question was the laboratory of this war. All the methods, arguments and justifications, all the images and techniques were tried in Palestine before being put into practice elsewhere in the world. If we look at the "checkpoints" in Iraq, we have to note that they are carbon copies of the "control points" in Palestine. If we also look at the terrible images of torture in Iraqi prisons, most of these are old Israeli methods. The concept of unilateralism, the declaration that the Geneva conventions, and more generally the post world War 2 political order, are no longer pertinent. The framework of Bush's new strategy was at the heart of the Israeli policy of the last ten years. Again, since 2000 Israel has waged a preventive, global and permanent war against the Palestinians, who are more than enemies for they are perceived as an "existential threat".

Remind you of anything? Some try to explain the similarity between the strategies of Bush and Sharon as the result of a "Jewish conspiracy" behind the US president, manipulating him to implement policies serving Israeli interests.

However, there is a simpler explanation: that over the last 15 years, a group of US, Israeli and European politicians – experts, retired officers and businessmen – have together drawn up a new vision of the world, a new global strategy after the fall of the Soviet bloc.

Some of them had relations with the Israeli Likud

end of history" but Islamist terrorism and that the US has the right to protect the world against this menace, that Israel is at the centre of this new world war and that US unilateralism should replace UN multilateralism. The Israeli neoconservatives came to power with Netanyahu and his gang in 1996, five years before coming to power in Washington: that's why one has the impression that the US administration copies Israeli methods. To some extent Israeli policy against the Palestinians is a kind of local laboratory for the neoconservative strategy on a global scale. This strategy is based on the recolonization

in the goal of neutralizing the future challenges to their global domination. At the beginning of the 21st century, there are no longer local conflicts but rather local battles of the same neocolonial war between on the one hand US imperialism and its allies and on the other the peoples of the planet who resist global capitalism and colonial domination.

The second reason for the centrality of the Palestinian question is that the front line of this global, permanent and preventive war is situated on the frontline where Israel is building the apartheid wall. To the east of the wall, in Qualquilya and Tulkarm,

apartheid wall between Israelis and Palestinians, it is a universal apartheid wall which separates the world into two global social forces, leading a war to life, to death on a planetary scale. The existence of a huge movement for global justice and against the war, even inside the imperialist states, is an enormous challenge to the strategy of apartheid which tries to deliver the world to a "clash of civilizations". This is also the case in Israel with the existence of an anti-colonialist movement, modest in size but crucial in its capacity to challenge in its daily activities the setting up of an apartheid system on a huge scale



party. They are known as neoconservatives, and in various research centres and think tanks they have developed the concept of the "Islamist menace", "the clash of civilizations", "the global preventive war".

Their main hypotheses are the global political order established after the victory over fascism is no longer relevant, that the new threat is no longer communism, "the

of the world, imposing the domination of the US and its allies through local collaborators, thus establishing a system of global apartheid.

That has foundered in Palestine as it is now foundering in Iraq, thanks to the extraordinary resistance of the peoples, even in the face of an unlimited military power.

It is by definition a unilateral strategy using preventive war

begins the axis of evil, the "rogue states"; to the west of the wall, in Kfar Saba and Zur Yigal begins Bush's civilization. Israel is in the front line of civilization combating the barbarians, Palestine is in the first line of the gigantic army of peoples of the world who fight against the civilization of MacDonald, Microsoft, Mitsubishi and Lagardère.

The wall is not only the

and a policy of permanent, preventive and colonial war against the Palestinian people.

As long as we are ready to combat colonialism and occupation, as long there are soldiers refusing to serve in an army of occupation and men and women who will fight for a true cohabitation, "ta ayush" between Jews and Arabs, the chances of avoiding a catastrophe for the peoples of the region will be increased. ■

European Social Forum: strategies for changing the world

JAIME PASTOR *

*Among the various plenaries, seminars and working groups which took place at the third European Social Forum in London in October 2004, that on "strategies for social transformation" attracted the interest of many delegates. Organized by the British reviews Socialist Resistance and Red Pepper, the Transnational Institute of Amsterdam and the two networks of reviews, Project K and Transform, this session benefited from the presence of John Holloway (known particularly for his book *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*), Hilary Wainwright (author of *Reclaim the State, Adventures in Popular Democracy*), Phil Hearse (an editor of *Socialist Resistance* and regular collaborator of *International Viewpoint*) and Fausto Bertinotti (leader of the *Party of Communist Refoundation of Italy*)*

John Holloway began his intervention by noting that there were two points on which it is easy to agree: capitalism is a catastrophe for humanity and we do not know how to bring about change. From that starting point we have to ask whether we should build a party and try to take state power or, on the contrary, turn our backs on the state and to try to achieve change outside it. Holloway is clearly in favour of the second option, given his balance sheet that the history of the left centred on the question of state power during the 20th century is one of betrayal of emancipatory ideals once it arrived in power. This, according to Holloway, is due to the fact that when we enter into a relation with the state, there is no symmetry between this institution and ourselves, so the generalized tendency is to push us in a direction opposed to the self-determination of those "below". He took as an example of what he suggests the strategy of the EZLN and the creation of the Assemblies of Good Government. He considers that by this road, while ceasing to collaborate in the construction of capitalism, it will be possible to advance towards a new way that will make possible another world. Neither an electoral strategy, nor waiting for the "last crisis" of capitalism can be used to build an alternative.

While starting by expressing her agreement with many things said by Holloway in his assessment of the left, Hilary Wainwright expressed disagreement with his proposals. She considered that Holloway made a false polarization between the strategy of self-organization on the one hand, and power on the other: "the fact that there were defeats does not mean that everything we tried to do was bad". Work

in the representative institutions cannot be abandoned, we have to be at their centre and to put them at the service of a participatory democracy. She argued that the experiments made at local level in many places, including in London before they were stopped by Margaret Thatcher, show that it is possible to advance in this direction. Obviously the goal must also be to challenge capitalist relations within the framework of the State. The real problem consists in defining what should be the subject of this radical change to which we aspire: this is the aspect on which we are confronted with the need for reinventing the party and the type of the relations it has with the social movements, with the aim of finding new ways of making policy and building the organization.

Phil Hearse challenged the theses of Holloway, starting from an assessment of what occurred recently in Argentina: the high level of self-organization and radicalization of the movement which took place there during recent years found itself in a major political dead end, which allowed the re-composition of the "political establishment" and increasing fragmentation of the forces which had led this process. The incapacity of the left to create a regroupment capable of meeting the needs for this movement was the fundamental weakness that explains the relative retreat that we see today. He also referred to the case of Venezuela, as a different experience, because there the process of popular mobilization, against a putschist line and in support of Chavez, appears to have propelled certain sectors towards their own self-organization and, at the same time, to take up the slogan "we want to be the government". As for the Zapatistas, the problem they confront and

that they cannot solve alone, is the major causes of poverty in the Indian communities, which would require a change at the level of the whole country.

Fausto Bertinotti started by underlining the fact that there is today more capitalism than ever, than there is more exploitation of labour, both in intensity and in scope, and more destruction of nature, with China as an extreme demonstration of all that. In these conditions that we are confronted with the challenge to the "welfare state" social compromise in Europe and that we must develop resistance to "the permanent war", which we are also suffering on a social level. Casualization of work is the dominant trend and, as a result, the question of the revolutionary subject is not posed in relation to the manufacturing worker or the student as in the 1960s, but to a very plural subject from the point of view of social conditions and construction of identity. But for the need for revolution to become relevant again, there would have to be a transformation of politics; and this needs new dialogue between parties, movements and associations, as happens at the European Social Forum and as his party tries to do in Italy.

There were many speakers in the ensuing discussion. I will limit myself to mentioning some of the most significant. Alex Callinicos (of the British SWP) polemicized both with Holloway and Wainwright. He pointed out to the former that even if we want "to turn the back on the State" this latter does not turn its back on the people, especially when they are fighting and self-organized, as we have seen in Argentina, in Mexico or currently in the European Union against antisocial policies. To the latter, he said

that if he agreed with working in the representative institutions, it was not to reform them but to replace them with another type of democracy and state. Jose Iriarte "Bikila" (of the Basque organization Zutik) indicated his agreement with Holloway in regard to the self-critical assessment of the left during the twentieth century, but he recalled that in any revolutionary situation the question of power is posed openly. If one does not replace the existing official power by that founded on workers' and people's self-organization, the first is quickly revived and puts an end to the second. He used the example of June 1936 in Catalonia and the failure of the CNT to illustrate his thesis. Finally there were many contributions by Italian

delegates, indicating both their agreement with Bertinotti and their doubts on the compatibility between a governmental alliance with the centre-left Olive Tree and the theses he defended on the reform of politics.

In his final intervention Bertinotti nuanced these doubts, stating that participation in a government must be seen as one means of political action but that we should always start from the presence in the movements which should be the principal function of an oppositional left wanting to encourage forms of self-organization and dual power.

Hearse insisted that we should beware of the mythical concept of the revolution as something that

explodes suddenly; that the major problem for the left is to progress towards an accumulation of forces which will make it possible to win hegemony in situations which could become revolutionary crises. Wainwright underlined that, in the context of the fight against neoliberalism, we should distinguish between the aspects where we fight against the state and those where we demand policies that are favourable to the workers, taking the example of the need to prevent privatizations. Finally Holloway reaffirmed his rejection of any strategy of taking power (according to him, what happened in Russia and October 1917 was a defeat). He said clearly that he did not deny that movements could have a certain type of relation with the state

(always to be against it) and he rejected the need for a party to build a new subject of overall change.

To sum up: this was a very interesting discussion that will no doubt continue in other forums and in writing. One regret – the absence for health reasons of our comrade Daniel Bensaïd, whose contribution would no doubt have further enriched the discussion. ■

* *Jaime Pastor is member of the leadership of Izquierda Unida in the Spanish state and one of the main leaders of Espacio Alternativo (the current in which the members of the Fourth International are active). This report is taken from their site <http://www.espacioalternativo.org>*

3rd European Social Forum

The 3rd Social Forum took place this year from 15th to 17th October in London. It underlined once again the vitality of the global justice movement and its strengthened links with the trade-union movement.

More than 25,000 people from 70 countries, hundreds of interesting discussion forums, a demonstrations of tens of thousands, an Assembly of Social Movements which called for a central demonstration on 19th March 2005, against war, racism and the neoliberal Europe, against privatization, against the Bolkenstein proposals and attacks on work time, for

a Europe of human rights and for solidarity between the people - these are some of the successes of the London Forum.

There were weaknesses as well. No real women's assembly, which had been a big success in Paris-St Denis last year, marginalization of the unemployed and casualized workers, under-estimation of the importance of the fight against the neoliberal European Constitution. But for an ESF held in the heart of the neoliberal laboratory it was an encouraging success. [JM]



European Social Forum: take the power to change the world

PHIL HEARSE*

Transcript of a speech in the debate on 'Strategies for Social Transformation', at the European Social Forum, October 16, 2004

Subcommandante Marcos focussed this debate in the 1990s by his declaration that the Zapatistas refused, as a matter of principle, to fight for state power. I don't want to attack Marcos too much, because in my opinion the real start of the anti-globalization movement and the fightback against neoliberalism was the Zapatista uprising on January 1st 1994. But Marcos and those who think like him are wrong to believe that anti-capitalist social transformation is possible without dealing with the question of state power, by simply turning your back on the state.

This can be seen by looking at some crucial contemporary social struggles. First, Argentina. In my opinion, in the last four years the social and political struggle in Argentina has been the most advanced in the world. When the Argentinean economy collapsed in December 2001, a direct result of "dollarization" and extreme neo-liberal policies, the savings and livelihood of millions of working class and middle class Argentineans was expropriated. This led to a massive social explosion.

As a consequence a massive process of self-organization developed, including the formation of neighbourhood and factory committees, the occupation of factories, which continued production under workers' self-management, the piqueteros movement, and many other forms of struggle. Self-organization on a massive scale, while all the capitalist parties and leaders were

completely discredited. But where is this movement today? It has largely disappeared or even been co-opted into government work projects at poverty wages.

Naomi Klein wrote a widely published article in which she said the decline of the mass movement was because of the sectarianism of the far-left organizations. She claims they brought their ideological arguments and petty squabbles into the movement, and as a consequence the masses became bored and frustrated and went home.

I don't discount the possibility that there is an element of truth in what she says about these organizations, but it is not the fundamental problem. The basic problem is that there was no big anti-capitalist party capable of uniting the movements and struggles in an overall project for taking the power. That's my criticism of the Argentinean left groups – that, despite all the opportunities, they failed to create such a party on a united basis, when they have had more opportunities in the past 30 years than most countries.

The decline of the Argentinean movement is a massive tragedy because for a time in that country there was a real vacuum at the top, and an anti-capitalist way out of the crisis was possible. Now we just have capitalist normalization and the return of the corrupt and right-wing Peronists. As James Petras has put it, "The original strength of the popular uprising – its spontaneous, mass, autonomous character

– became its strategic weakness, the absence of a national leadership capable of unifying the diverse forces behind a coherent program aimed at taking state power." (This article is available at www.rebellion.com)

The same problem is posed in a different context in Venezuela. In 2003 the London "Observer" newspaper published a very interesting article reporting from the massively self-organized barrios in Caracas. The reporter told of how the people were taking over the schools and utilities like water and electricity, organizing literacy campaigns and so on. One militant told the reporter "We don't want a government like that of Hugo Chavez to represent us, we want to be the government." This article also told of some hostility to the Bolivarian circles among some barrio activists, accusing them of dragging politics into the struggles.

I sympathize with these anti-government and anti-state feelings, but ultimately they are a dead-end and a trap. Why is there this tremendous Bolivarian process, this enormous level of struggle against the right wing and the bourgeoisie, in Venezuela? Because of the election of a left-wing government. Where have all the resources come from for the literacy campaign, the pension and wage increases, the free children's breakfast programme? From the government, of course.

If you say we must turn your back on the state and power, then it becomes a matter of indifference, completely

irrelevant, if Hugo Chavez is defeated in the right-wing referendum, because all that is about the state and doesn't concern us.

In reality, if Hugo Chavez had been defeated in the August 23 referendum it would have been a massive defeat for the Bolivarian revolutionary process – in fact it would have ended it in a carnival of reaction. Vast numbers of the working class

created their own self-organized space in the highland villages of Chiapas, formally declaring their own independent municipalities in September 2003. All that is true. But it is the product of very particular circumstances, of geographical isolation and the fact that these communities are defended by the whole of Mexican civil society. For the moment, it is too politically dangerous for the Mexican bourgeoisie to launch

the same thing happened all across Mexico – the masses rose up and took control of their own workplaces and communities. Now, shouldn't these self-organised communities in Veracruz, in Monterrey, in Mexico City, in Guadalajara – shouldn't they talk to each other? Plan their futures together? Co-ordinate their economic plans in an overall plan of social development of Mexico? Elect

of state. Exactly what Marx called the "Commune state".

John Holloway rejects both any alternative form of state and any form of political party. In my opinion the refusal to form political parties of the left, and a refusal to fight for any alternative form of state power, are both disastrous choices.

Today in many parts of the world there is an enormous crisis of political representation of the working class and the oppressed, as a result of the old social democratic and Stalinist parties going off to the right. This threatens the presence of the working class in the national political arena; and far from being a positive thing, this has a negative impact, not only on the national political discourse, but on the struggles and mass campaigns as well. To see this, look at the example of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP).

The SSP now has six deputies in the Scottish parliament and a significant electoral impact (up to 10% of the vote). Is this a bad thing, a diversion? I don't think so. In fact the activity of the SSP deputies, who are always on the picket lines outside factories, who have led the campaign against racist immigration laws and the Iraq war, and who are regularly being arrested protesting outside the Faslane nuclear submarine base, is a positive factor in the struggles, and not counterposed to it.

Equally the existence of Rifondazione Comunista in Italy or the United Left in Spain is, for the moment at least, a very positive factor for the struggle. I agree with Antonio Gramsci: the political party is the "modern prince". Social struggle always strives to find a political representation, and this we cannot turn our backs on. Today means not trying to find largely mythical autonomous spaces in which we can try to hide from the state, but building united left parties on an anti-capitalist basis to propel the struggle forward. Another world is possible, but not without a revolution. ■



and the poor understood this and did not turn their backs on Chavez and their revolution. They came down from the barrios in their millions to vote for Chavez and deal the hysterical bourgeoisie, the reactionary petty-bourgeoisie and US imperialism a fearful political blow.

Now I don't say that Chavez, a left-wing populist, is the final answer to socialist transformation in Venezuela. I do say we defend him against the right wing. But to progress towards the victory of the Bolivarian revolution, the Venezuelan masses need to create their own self-organized system of national administration. That's not turning your back on the state, that's creating a different kind of state and a different kind of power.

You can see the same thing in Mexico. The Zapatistas have

any kind of all-out attack. In the future, this could easily change.

However, autonomy has not solved the problems of the Zapatista base communities. They are impoverished communities, and the people there share the same problems of health, of nutrition and of living standards of poor people in many other parts of Mexico. Because the Zapatista movement raises questions which cannot be solved simply at the level of their own communities, or even at the level of the whole of Chiapas. To bring the indigenous people of Chiapas out of poverty, you need social transformation at (at least) an all-Mexico level.

I will pose John Holloway a question. The Zapatistas have created their own liberated zone, through their own uprising. But suppose

recallable representatives to an all-Mexico assembly to decide these things?

Co-ordinate their response to the massive counter-revolutionary wave which is sure to hit them from inside and outside the country?

Obviously they should. If they simply turn their back on the Mexican capitalist state without replacing it with something else – well, the capitalist state will not turn its back on them. But if they do create their own national, self-governed co-ordination, than they will have created what is the slogan of the whole of the militant Mexican left – "Un gobierno obrero, campesino, indigena y popular" – workers', peasant, indigenous and popular government. Not only that: they will have created an alternative form of power, an alternative form



Flavia d'Angeli is a leader of the Bandiera Rossa current that organises comrades identifying with the Fourth International within Italy's Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC). She is also a member of the national leadership of the PRC and made the following contribution in the opening session of the discussion for the PRC congress scheduled for March 2005, in which the Bandiera Rossa current is waging a fight for a political alternative to that presented by the Fausto Bertinotti leadership

Italy: change the PRC's orientation!

The theses presented by the Secretariat have the merit of basing the preparatory discussion for the congress on an overall analysis of the economic, political and social period, on the basis of which we should develop our political line. This breaks, at least in the pages of "Liberazione", with a debate centred on the need for the "lesser evil" to defeat the right and "save the party" a debate which often seems to dominate the discussion in the circles and federations.

1. Divergence in the analysis

It is on the basis of these elements of analysis that we can measure the scope of our first difference, which is significant. While it is certainly true – and this should be underlined – that the social movements in the last few years have scored points in stopping the spiralling crisis of credibility and self-confidence of any alternative proposal to capitalist globalization, it is false – and therefore dangerous for the movements themselves – to overestimate their structural capacity to overturn the existing social relationship of forces that they could have developed in such a short time. These movements are the result of a defeat, that which closed the 20th century in the rubble of the Berlin Wall: a historic defeat. It is only by demanding the "right to patience" that new movements really make possible an alternative system to neoliberal fragmentation and war.

Although we should not underestimate the historical significance of the upturn in social confrontation and involvement which we have seen over the last few years, we should also note – this is where the proposed analysis is incomplete – that this renewal of commitment has not yet acquired a strength capable of fundamentally challenging the processes against which it is fighting, whether international dynamics such as the war, or those locally which are eliminating or barbarically "reforming" jobs.

The movement, which has been and must remain central for our initiatives, draws its resources from itself, not by imposing on itself a political leap forward which would run the risk of cutting it off from its indispensable social base and thus weakening it.

How can we otherwise explain the fact that, faced with the enormous mobilizations which have marked the political diary over the last few years, "Politics" with a capital "P" does not seem to have changed, either in its programmes or even, symbolically, in its public representatives or leading circles?

That the centre left, which barely two years ago was challenged by the "girotondi"¹ is once again solidly in the saddle and not in the least inclined to either make a self-criticism or a change in orientation, as is continually evident from the positions that they take, from the defence of the Stability Pact to the laws on small and medium-size businesses. Even as far as the war is concerned – a question on which

you cannot have a balancing act (you are either for or against) the Great Democratic Alliance (GAD) has succeeded in formulating a position that is objectively a retreat in relations to the positions of the movement. Thus we are in the paradoxical situation of a movement (and ourselves) which next Saturday will demonstrate for the withdrawal of the troops and an opposition, which we say should now be receptive to the demands on the movement, which is going to take to the streets in the coming weeks with an ambiguous position and which cannot even agree on the calendar for the votes in parliament.

2. Another political line is necessary

In this framework, which I have simply sketched out for obvious reasons, there is the need for another political line which, by centring on the development of the social movements and our place within them, would be able to challenge the opposition at the level of programme and efficacy, starting from the need for a frontal opposition to the Berlusconi government. The strategy followed by the party in the last few months – of which I was never convinced – turns out to have been dangerously imprecise.

To state from the start that we are ready to make a governmental agreement, which accepting to postpone a clear programmatic

discussion, while a good part of the centre left forces are turning away from serious opposition to the government runs the risk of leading us into a dead end. Rather than breaking the trap of the centre left we are going to rush into it. The first steps of the Great Democratic Alliance are not leading in a good direction. We are building a framework that is not in the least innovative, without even starting a serious programmatic confrontation and we accept the idea of "primaries", which we are told will make it possible for the movement's demands to be expressed, taking place on the leadership question.

We cannot build a new critical social actor without having an idea of its programme, that is to say of an alternative society. The concern with programme should be separated from the governmental question: it should come first, that is a condition in and of itself. It should serve in particular to harass and challenge the centre left on its capacity (or more probably incapacity) to represent the demands that emerge from the movements and the still unsatisfied social needs of the majority of the population.

We were wrong to leave aside the question of programme from our discussions with the opposition forces, because it is on the programmatic questions that we would at least be able to really measure the credibility of a real alternative to the rightwing government.

We cannot accept a "static" conception of the programme, split between a minimum and maximum. The idea of a "minimal" agreement, on the basis of which it would be possible to prepare a "maximum" programme, refers to a mechanism that has already led the workers' movement to submission and defeat. On the other hand an acceptable programme would be that which today contains even partial elements of rupture sketching out a desirable perspective: reduction in working time, sliding scale of wages, nationalization of certain sectors of production, reduction in the army and military spending, turning around the policy of privatizations, that is to say clear signals of a change of direction.

The fact that we all know now that with this centre left such a programme could not be proposed shows nothing other than the impossibility of a governmental agreement and the need for a radical change in our political line.

3. Another refoundation is possible

This party, in order to carry out the mission it gave itself, has changed several times since it was created. These were founding or refounding moments. The last congress seemed to have really decided a correct orientation, a renewed affirmation of the communist subject that led us to a break with the first Prodi government and to involve ourselves completely in the new movements, in some way since the Genoa events.

The new political turn proposed today is likely to lead to a reversal of this orientation, of this "new departure", by putting into question the very identity of the party and what is more important its "social identity". We cannot not be concerned, whatever our position, by the signals of disorientation of the party, which could lead us into a congress of disinterest, where we measure bitterness and fear rather than enthusiasm.

I think it is the very essence of the political proposals put forward by the secretariat that is at the origin of this situation. This is a strong statement but I cannot imagine the life of a collective body like a party, its state of health and capacity to react, without linking them to the political line. Otherwise we would be adhering to a monolithic conception of the party and its members, who move forward like robots, leaving it up to the leading group to interpret the line. I think, on the contrary, that this party has learnt a lot more than we think from the movements and that it will react to the difficulties and lack of conviction.

I think that to lead the communist refoundation to a globalization government, however moderate, completely changes the nature of

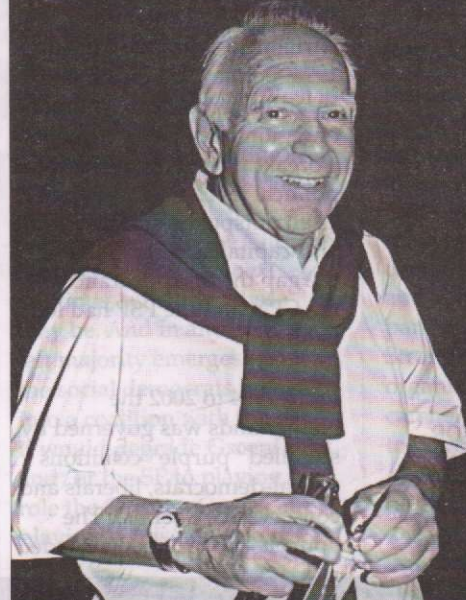
this party to the point of putting in danger its very existence and a living community able to interact with society.

And I am sufficiently convinced on the other hand that there is still a space for our collective work to think that in returning to our previous inventiveness and thoroughgoing radicalism that marked the last years we can take another road. This conviction leads me to believe that that it is possible to have a congress discussion that would make

possible collective elaboration along the lines indicated by the comrades who signed the contribution "refoundation, refoundation, refoundation". By doing this I commit myself to working for the development of a broad and pluralist grouping of the critical left in the next congress. II

I *The movement of the "Girotondi" (rounds) opposed the changes in the law made by the Silvio Berlusconi government in order to protect him from legal condemnation.*

Ciao Livio



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Dirigente storico della
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e del movimento operaio.
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PARTITO DELLA RIFONDAZIONE COMUNISTA



see also International Viewpoint's website:
internationalviewpoint.org

Netherlands: left must help rebuild the unions

LEO DE KLEIJN *

THROUGH THE AUTUMN HOLLAND HAS BEEN SWEEPED BY A WAVE OF INDUSTRIAL ACTION IN RESPONSE TO PLANNED GOVERNMENT WELFARE REFORMS. THE MASS STRUGGLE AGAINST SOCIAL CUTS HAS ALREADY DEEPLY INFLUENCED THE DEBATE ON THE LEFT. MANY ACTIVISTS THOUGHT OF THE TRADE UNIONS AS ARCHAIC, NON-REPRESENTATIVE, CORPORATIST ORGANIZATIONS, WITH NO WILL AND CAPABILITY TO FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE NEO-LIBERAL REFORM OF THE DUTCH WELFARE STATE. THE MASSIVE RESPONSE OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, TRANSPORT AND INDUSTRIAL WORKERS AND OTHERS TO THE UNIONS' CALL FOR ACTION TOOK THE UNION LEADERS THEMSELVES BY SURPRISE. BUT MAYBE MORE SO THE DUTCH LEFT.

In the past fifteen years two main political forces emerged to the left of the social democracy. In 1989 the Dutch Communist Party (CPN), the Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP) and the PPR (left wing Christians) formed Groen Links, the Dutch Greens.

The ex-Maoist Socialistische Partij (SP) first entered parliament with two MPs in 1994. Before 1994 the SP had some strongholds in a number of regions, but never managed a breakthrough on the national political level. Basically the SP, as an outspoken socialist and anti-capitalist party, filled in the gap the disappearance of the CPN and the PSP had left behind.

From 1994 to 2002 the Netherlands was governed by so called "purple" coalitions (social-democrats, liberals and conservative liberals). The "purple" governments headed

by prime minister Wim Kok, managed — with the help of a period of economic expansion in the 1990s — to strengthen corporatist social relations with the trade unions, keep wages relatively low and "reform" social security gradually on a neoliberal basis. Bill Clinton and Tony Blair hailed Wim Kok and his politics as a perfect example of the so-called Third Way. But the downside of the "success" was further impoverishment of the unemployed and urban poor, and a growing underfunding of public services.

Fortuyn

The SP (and to a lesser extent GroenLinks) were the only political opposition from the left and gained support in that period, both in membership and in electoral results. But they failed to organize substantial social struggle against the politics of "purple".

In the year before the general elections of 2002 the "purple" coalition collapsed. But it was not the left that took the initiative. In less than half a year the right wing populist Pim Fortuyn shook Dutch politics dramatically, with a combination of a popular critique of the deplorable state of public services, health care and education on the one hand, and on the other a xenophobic call for blaming the victims, above all migrants from Turkey and Morocco.

Fortuyn was shot dead just before election day, his party gained nearly 20 percent of the vote and entered a right wing government coalition headed by the Christian Democrat Balkenende. This coalition formulated a sharp right wing turn on social-economic, migration and cultural issues, but exploded in less than a year due to the instability of Fortuyn's party, left without a leader.

The following elections of 2003 brought a comeback of the social democratic PvdA (from 15.1% to 27.2%), while GroenLinks got 5.1% and the SP 6.3% of the vote. Despite the growth of the PvdA, the Christian Democrats chose a right wing coalition, this time without Fortuyn's party, which dropped to 5.7%.

300,000 march

Facing economic depression, the second government headed by Balkenende succeeded in binding the trade unions in the autumn of 2003 to a new social contract. In exchange for some minor concessions on social security issues, the unions agreed on moderating wage demands to zero percent. This "cheap and easy deal" convinced the right wing parties that further steps to meet the Lisbon agenda were possible. In the spring of 2004 the union leaders were provoked with a new package to cut pensions and social benefits. It gave the unions no other choice than to mobilize their members, despite their lack of confidence that they were really able to do so



successfully. The response of the rank and file surprised the right, the union leaders and the left. 300,000 people took to the streets of Amsterdam on October 2, and a series of successful strikes followed.

The now proven ability to fight back has a direct impact on the relationship of forces, both on the social and political level. For sure, the union leaders will return back to their corporatist

if parliament agrees to the government's proposals.

But neither in GroenLinks nor in the SP is there a tradition of organized political work inside the unions. In the 1970s and 1980s the SP organized its own radical "union", Arbeidersmacht ("Workers Power"). Leaving Maoism behind in the 1990s, the feeling of a large number of party activists remains that

of the struggle is based on a very basic rejection of the sharpest edges of government policies by the majority of the population, not on enthusiasm for the alternatives put forward by the left.

This over-optimism leads on the one hand to illusions that a left wing government of PvdA, SP and GroenLinks, that would solve the problems, is possible in the short term.

it is partial.

Of course, the worst case would happen if the trade union leaders were able to make an agreement with the government on similar terms to those of autumn 2003. This would frustrate the activists that took the lead in the struggle. We have to look very critically at the negotiations between the unions, the government and the employers that are now taking place. The outcome of these negotiations must be discussed democratically in the unions. The left should put forward the view that a deal only on pensions is not enough. The government will have to bend also on the issue of unemployment benefits and insurance for the disabled.



practices in the coming months or sooner. But they can only do so after substantial — in the eyes of the union membership — gains will have been made or if the struggle wavers and the unions are defeated.

The left and the unions

Recent electoral polls show a majority for the left (PvdA, SP and GroenLinks), which is unprecedented in Dutch politics. The SP would get some 10% of the vote according to these polls.

But the perspective of the majority of trade union activists, some of them organizing strikes for the first time in their lives, remains exclusively syndicalist, despite the fact that the struggle has a political character (against the government's policies).

The direct role of the left in the mobilizations is limited. GroenLinks and especially the SP participate actively in "Keer Het Tij", a coalition of social movements and the left that supports the trade union struggle and initiated the organization of the first Dutch Social Forum on November 26, 27 and 28. Apart from that, a coalition has been built of the major trade union federations, PvdA, SP and GroenLinks to prepare a referendum initiative

the mass unions are social democratic institutions, not really worth their while. The SP was successfully built as a party mobilizing locally door to door, not in the workplace. The mass union struggle has helped to change this feeling. Some of the 43,000 SP members are drawn actively into this fight as rank and file union members. Attempts are being made to organize union activists inside the party and to build a network of left wing trade unionists.

Optimism

The mass mobilizations, the polls, the comeback of the left after the dark period of the Fortuyn revolt, leads to a considerable dose of over-optimism on the left. Certainly, the dynamic of the mobilizations in the last few months shows that it really is possible to resist the neoliberal agenda. Steps forward in building a left, anti-capitalist alternative can be made, and we have to make full use of the opportunities to do so.

But it is important to see that this struggle remains defensive, that it is primarily organized by relatively small and older layers of union activists who are for this moment fully supported by their union leaders, that the real dynamic

The leadership of the SP, for the first time in the history of the party, puts forward this perspective. But the PvdA remains so closely tied up with the basis of the neoliberal agenda, that it will, if it can, make a deal with the Christian Democrats after the next elections, whenever these may be. And in any case, if a left majority emerges and if the social democrats will step into a coalition with the left, it would degrade GroenLinks and/or the SP to playing the role the German Greens are playing at this very moment.

On the other hand, radical groups and organizations, and some SP activists, are putting forward a maximalist approach. Bringing down the government should be the perspective, everything else will be proof of "betrayal" by the union leadership. The problem is that they overestimate the possibility of winning the long and enduring fight that would be needed. For a battle like that a strong and rooted organization of the unions in the workplaces is needed. The current movement can help the workers to start and rebuild the unions as organizations that can fight for their rights. But for that to happen we need a victory on substantial issues in the current struggle, even if

Rebuilding the unions

Instead of just putting forward semi-radical slogans, the key role for the left at this moment is to help building and broadening the movement, organize solidarity campaigns with the strikes and above all take an active part in rebuilding the unions. Stronger and active union organization in the workplaces can help, in the coming years, to build up an opposition against the corporatist politics of the union leadership.

The battle now being fought should and will be just a starting point. Whether we will be facing a right wing government or a coalition which includes the PvdA, we will be confronted with new cuts and attacks on working conditions in the coming years.

A substantial victory in the current struggle will help to rebuild both the unions and — in the longer run — build an anti neoliberal, anti-capitalist alternative from the left. ■

* Leo de Kleijn is a member of the leadership of the Rotterdam branch of the Socialist Party, an activist on the Dutch radical left and a member of the editorial board of *Grenzeloos*, the magazine of Socialist Alternative Politics (SAP).

Debate: building broad anticapitalist parties – a necessary step

The results of the European elections have re-opened a discussion on the building of the anti-capitalist left in Europe. One of the first to take it up was Alex Callinicos of the British Socialist Workers Party, the largest and most influential of the groups on the British far left. Murray Smith, although today living in France and active in the LCR, was for a number of years a leading member of the Scottish Socialist Party (a new anti-capitalist party which has made a significant breakthrough in Scotland), and Alan Thornett, leading member of the International Socialist Group (British section of the Fourth International) and member of the leadership of Respect – The Unity Coalition, have also contributed. These contributions can all be consulted on the International Viewpoint website: internationalviewpoint.org

We publish here a contribution by François Sabado*, member of the Political Bureau of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, French section of the Fourth International), and of the Executive Bureau of the Fourth International (subtitles by IV)

Political situation, anti-capitalist party and revolutionary party in Europe

The articles by Alex Callinicos and Murray Smith open a necessary discussion on the problems of orientation and construction in Europe. Unlike Callinicos, we do not start from the existence of so-called models: electoral coalitions of the "Respect" type, broad parties like the Scottish Socialist Party or electoral alliances like LCR-LO. These forms of political intervention or organization are too much the specific product of the history of the class struggles and the revolutionary movement of each country. They are not generalizable. We choose rather to start from the broad features of the political situation in Europe and clarify certain important questions of orientation.

Political effects of bourgeois attacks

1 The situation in Europe is marked by the brutality of the new offensive around neoliberal counter-reforms: the reduction of unemployment benefit and demolition of social security in Germany; pensions

and social security reform and new privatizations in France; attacks on pensions, the health system and social security in Holland. After the "Thatcherism" of the 1980s in Britain, a new wave of deconstruction of the social relationships established after 1945 is underway. This radicalism of the capitalist attacks results from a sharpening of inter-imperialist competition in the framework of the current phase of globalization, with the European bourgeoisies seeking to carve out new margins of manoeuvre in relation to the USA and the Asian powers.

2 The brutality of these attacks creates new social and political tensions. This provokes social resistance through strikes, struggles and demonstrations (demonstrations in Germany against the Hartz 4 plan, strikes and demonstrations in France against pensions reform and the privatization of EDF, demonstrations and strikes in Holland) as well as a rejection of the ultra neoliberal policy of

the governments: rejection of the neoliberal right in France and Italy but also of Schröder's SPD-Green government or Blair's government.

3 The brutality of these attacks also generates elements of political crisis: a crisis of political representation with the confirmation of high abstention rates in most countries, and a weakening of all the political apparatuses on the right and the left – how can a governmental party establish a social basis while endorsing neoliberal restructuring? This weakening is accompanied by internal divisions, here again on both right and left. In France, the majority party is riven by a confrontation between the president of the Republic, Jacques Chirac and the future president of the party, Nicolas Sarkozy. On the left, although the general evolution of the majority sectors of the trade union movement and the institutional left in Europe is to the right, in a growing integration with social liberalism, fractures and divisions are emerging. In

Germany a part of the union bureaucracy and the SPD, in the image of the posture of Oscar Lafontaine, opposes Schröder. In France, against all expectations, Laurent Fabius – one of those who incarnate social-liberalism – is calling for a “no” in the referendum on the European Constitution. The steamroller is such that it leads to fractures and sharp turns.

4 These evolutions repose the question of the analysis of social democracy and the left in general. Contrary to what is often presented by the British SWP, we do not think that the Socialist Parties have become bourgeois parties [rather than bourgeois workers' parties - tr note]. That has never been our analysis. In the same way, if we have underestimated the fact that the popular electorate can use the left to beat the right – but we were not the only ones, the most surprised being the socialists themselves – we explained in the documents of our last congress that in the framework of alternation, the socialist parties could win an electoral majority. What we have explained and what we maintain is that under the pressures of neoliberal capitalist globalization, social democracy has undergone a process of “social-liberalization”, with a rightwards shift in its politics and an advanced social interpenetration of its leadership with the highest levels of administration and the capitalist summits. We have noted that this process leads – in an uneven fashion – to the delinking of significant sectors of the popular classes from the organizations of the traditional left. In practice the improved electoral standing of the PS, or the stabilization of the PCF's electoral score, are not reflected in the growth of these parties, nor by a dynamic of reconstruction of the left. The electoral gains of the PS in 2003 are not reflected in a dynamic comparable to that of the 1970s with the Union of the Left or the developments of the Italian or Spanish CPs.

5 But all these struggles, all these confrontations, have until now ended in setbacks or social defeats. Neither the strength of the anti-war movement nor the dynamic of the movement for global justice has reversed the deep underlying tendencies of the situation. As a result, the capitalist offensive is deepening and, globally, the positions of the traditional workers' movement are pushed back. This has effects on the level of consciousness of broad sectors but it is not strong enough to outflank the trade union apparatuses, which accept the neoliberal framework. These defeats have effects on the morale of wage earners; and although, in certain historic circumstances, the experience and lessons of partial defeats have led to the development of workers' organizations, the social movements and the growth of class struggle currents, this is not the case today. The successive waves of struggles, but also setbacks, weigh on the radical currents. As Alex Callinicos puts it, “the relation of social

and political struggles with the electoral process is extremely complex, combined and indirect” but it is this combination of factors that explains for example, the setback for the LCR-LO lists in France. As for the electoral results of the PRC in Italy, which have improved, we cannot consider them as those of a radical left organization “strictly speaking”. In many aspects, it can be placed on the radical left but its implantation as well as its electoral influence smack above all of a segment of the traditional communist movement.

Anti-capitalist politics

6 In these conditions what are the key elements of an anti-capitalist political orientation? First, because revolutionaries “have no interests distinct from the working class”, they must reaffirm a policy of unity and class independence. That requires a tactic of a united front of the workers and all their organizations – which we carry out through social mobilizations, of the anti-war movement or the movement for global justice, combined with the defence of an anti-capitalist programme. We would like to use this article to reject all the accusations that have been made against the LCR, claiming that we have been “external” to the movement of rejection of the right. Our stand against the government and the right – unity of action of all the social, trade union and political left – was first concretized in the struggles. This orientation was then translated into the electoral campaign, presenting our action as that of the real opposition against the government and the right. We did not, it is true, call for a vote for the left in the second round. This question is a question of electoral tactics, linked to the French particularities of the majority ballot over two rounds, so this is not the last word of a united front policy. We unceasingly, throughout the whole electoral campaign, made proposals for common action to the whole left. Our arguments differentiated between right and left. We have never had so much influence on the internal debates on the left. That is why, for any observer of French political life, the accusation of “anti-politics” does not stand. Since the presidential campaign of 2002, with Olivier Besancenot, we have never done so much “politics”. But we did not call for a vote for the left, judging that, during these elections, to call for such a vote was to give a blank cheque to the SP leaders. Moreover, even if the majority of our voters did vote in the second round for the left, few people have reproached us for our failure to call for a vote. For beyond the vote for the left, there is not the same type of relationship between the wage earners and the traditional left as existed in the 1930s or 1970s. A vote for the SP – or even for the French CP – is more a vote against the right than a vote of support for the policy of the SP. Once again, there are not, as in the 1930s or 1970s, interconnected relations between struggles, the

organic growth of the reformist organizations and a political outcome to the struggles which would be a PS-PC government. The meaning of the call for a vote is not the same today as in the 1970s because the labour movement does not have the same relations with the reformist leaderships.

7 This tactic of the united front should be accompanied by the defence of an anti-capitalist programme, what we have called in France an emergency social and democratic plan in the service of the workers. From this viewpoint, we would like to stipulate that our electoral campaigns, contrary to what Alex Callinicos has said, are not “openly revolutionary socialist”, in the sense that our electoral programmes take up the totality of the revolutionary programme. No, we choose some key themes of the transitional programme – the struggle for a ban on collective layoffs, wage increases, the defence of public services and democratic rights – and we explain that these immediate and anti-capitalist demands can only be satisfied by social mobilization and a government which breaks with the bourgeoisie, a workers' government.

This government is defined by the tasks it must accomplish to satisfy the main popular demands and to begin to break with the capitalist institutions.

This formula remains “algebraic” – it can moreover go under a number of names: anti-capitalist government, a government as loyal to the workers as the right is to the bosses and so on. – but it allows us to make a distinction from all the governmental policies of management of the state and the capitalist economy. It is not a question of avoiding the question of power, as Holloway or others suggest we should do. The revolutionary left must face the question of power and of government but by giving its own responses, not by entering class collaborationist governments. Of course, the topicality of a discussion on this question depends on the political situation in each country, but it is decisive to define a general orientation on this question of power. Thus, there should be some flexibility in forming electoral alliances, but there where these alliances are confronted with the governmental question, we cannot skirt the question... under the threat of paralysis or breakup of the coalitions that we set up. The building of an anti-capitalist party, as a medium and long-term project, should clarify its positions on the governmental questions. This debate is a debate on the entire international radical left: should we participate in or support governments dominated by social-liberalism? The response of the PT in Brazil with Lula, that of the PRC in Italy, that of the CPs of the European left is positive. These parties lead or prepare to support or participate in this type of government. We think, as the whole of historical experience

Youth camp: a big success

THOMAS EISLER

From the 25th to 31st July, the 21st youth camp of the Fourth International took place in Ruesta in the province of Aragon in the Spanish State. The site was close to the Pyrenees, in beautiful surroundings close to a lake where you could go swimming during leisure time. The Ruesta village used to be a peasant village, but when a dam was constructed in the 1950s they lost almost all their land. The village was abandoned until 1989 when the anarcho-syndicalist trade union CGT moved in and made a site for educational and recreational activities. Nevertheless it was not fully equipped for a camp the size of an FI Youth Camp. The forums of the camp took place in the former village church. It had only been used as a storehouse by the CGT, so it had to be cleared out and construction work done by the Spanish State comrades to make it adequate for the camp forums. The camp was also on the pilgrim path to Santiago de Compostela, and from time to time pilgrims or others following that trail would pass through. An unexpected encounter with another world!

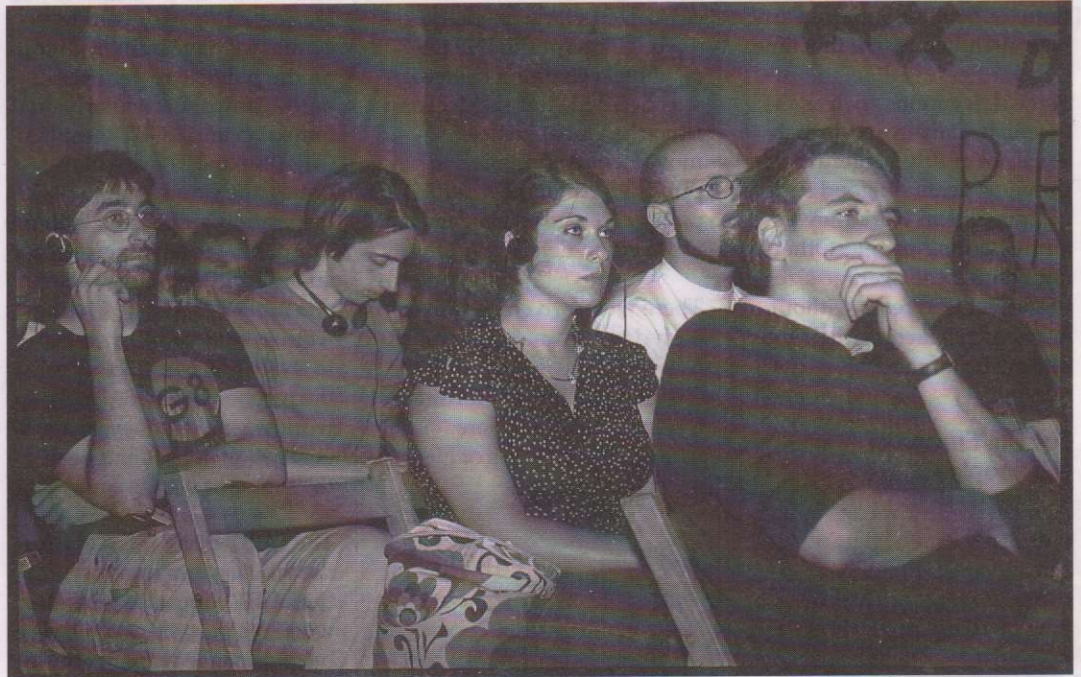
Rebuilding the FI in the Spanish State

More than 400 youth participated. It started out as the smallest camp ever with 350 participants. But numbers grew when over twenty Portuguese came on Wednesday directly from the first youth camp of the Left Block. Even more important, the number of

In 1989 the Fourth International organised the sixth annual youth camp in Catalonia in the Spanish State. That was before the unification with Maoist MC (Communist Movement). The unification produced an organization that did not exist for long and supporters of the Fourth International became dispersed. This was also reflected in the participation at the youth camps. From an average delegation size of 91

40 in 2003. This reflects the rebuilding and reorganization of the Fourth International. But the ability in itself of the comrades to take on the task of organising the camp is a real proof of this positive development, although it was based on a few people doing a lot of work.

The camp was a chance for Spanish State comrades who have never or not for many years seen an FI youth camp to



participants from the Spanish State more than doubled from 50 odd at the beginning to over 120 at the end.

in the period 1984-1991 this dropped to an all-time low of 10 in 1997. Since then the number has been growing to

be part of it. It was dedicated to Eduardo Langarita who was for many years active in mobilizing for the camps



and building youth work in Aragon but died at a much too young age. Organizing such a politically successful camp in Aragon was achieving one of his goals.

Scotland and the Philippines represented for the first time

The camp enthusiastically received the three-person delegation from the newest FI section, in the Philippines, and also the fraternal delegation from the Scottish Socialist Party, both attending for the first time.

Some delegations such as the Swedish, Danish and British were noticeably bigger than in previous years – a good sign of the political work they do among young people. Others maintained the average size of the last few years without necessarily reaching their most optimistic targets.

For the Europe of the peoples

Against the Europe of capital, patriarchy and ... for the Europe of the peoples was the camp slogan. The latter part put the emphasis on the right to self-determination of the nations. In the Spanish State this is an important question. But it is not a simple one. During the camp there was room for an open discussion on the national question. There was a debate between the positions of Lenin and Luxemburg, Trogló, a leading member of the Basque organization Zutik, gave an educational on nations and the right to self-determination. And of course these debates are also quite relevant for the Scottish who did a workshop about the national question in Scotland.

Using the camp to organize and educate

In the context of European Social Forums – the globalization of struggles – the youth camp is no longer the sole place for youth in Europe to debate and organize and this might make it more difficult for

people to go since they have to make a priority among several international or European events. But the most important thing is that the camp has in this process become a useful instrument to reflect, plan and get educated.

The camp has given more practical results in recent years. This year's most ambitious plans came from the permanent commissions working on students and casualized workers where a workshop for the ESF to promote a common campaign was decided, and the decision from the global justice movement commission to publish a common youth paper and organize a debate at the London ESF.

There were two educationals each day. The more theoretical issues were also related to the debates of the social forums. For instance there were debates on the ideas of Negri and Holloway.

Tradition and renewal in our politics

More than 30 workshops – it might be one of the most ambitious programmes ever with political activities from 10 in the morning till 11 at night – were organized during the week and were judged better

prepared than in previous years. The growing number of workshops that were held in a participatory way was something the participants evaluated very positively. As an example, a workshop on sexuality began with massage to make everybody more relaxed and then people were asked to reflect on their own sexuality as a starting point for a more general discussion on the heterosexist myths that are imposed on us.

During 20 years of youth camps we have built traditions on the political experiences of the camps. Particularly on feminism and LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual) issues, the camp is an inspiration for our work. In the camp there is a women's space and a LGBT space as well as one night is dedicated to the women's party and another to the LGBT party. This year the responsibility for LGBT work was taken over by a new generation after it had been the same for some years.

The LGBT party is a party for the whole camp organised by the LGBT comrades while the women's party is organised by and for the women only as it has been since the first women's party more than 15 years ago. This is also one of the most hotly-debated issues of the year, and there were

proposals that the format should change next year.

March to Artieda

While the camp is place for discussion and relaxation it is also a gathering of activists. In 2001 the camp took place in Italy after the Genoa demonstrations and a delegation from the camp participated in the Rome demonstration against police repression.

The nearby village of Artieda is struggling against a new dam that will destroy its livelihood – not only in the 1950s was the area affected by the construction of dams. To show active solidarity the camp made a march to Artieda. The participants liked the idea of taking concrete action during the camp and about half the camp participated. But the march turned out to be not such a good idea. It took place in the hottest hours of early afternoon and it turned out that the distance was 10 km instead of the 5 to 6 km that we had been told! So the deputy mayor of Artieda and Manolo Gari from Espacio Alternativo addressed a very tired and hot group of marchers. Apologizing for their mistake, the Spanish comrades swiftly organized for everybody to be brought back to the camp by bus. ■



Brazil: left debates new party

THE RECENT ESTABLISHMENT IN BRAZIL OF A NEW SOCIALIST PARTY – THE PARTY OF SOCIALISM AND LIBERTY (PSOL) – BY DISSIDENTS FROM THE WORKERS PARTY (PT) AND THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF UNITED WORKERS (PSTU), HAS LED TO A LIVELY DEBATE ON THE BRAZILIAN LEFT ON THE WISDOM OF THE DECISION TO BUILD A NEW PARTY AND THE POSSIBILITY OF DOING SO.

WE PUBLISH HERE A RANGE OF VIEWPOINTS, STARTING WITH AN INTERVIEW WITH OUR COMRADE HELOÍSA HELENA, SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ALAGOAS AND A SUPPORTER OF THE SOCIALIST

DEMOCRACY TENDENCY, WHO WAS EXPELLED FROM THE PT LAST DECEMBER (SEE IV 357, MARCH 2004). HELOÍSA HELENA IS NOW PRESIDENT OF THE PSOL.

THE OTHER ARTICLES CRITICIZE THE INITIATIVE FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES. THE FIRST IS THE EDITORIAL FROM A CATHOLIC LEFT WEEKLY WITH CLOSE LINKS WITH BRAZIL'S COMBATIVE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, WHILE THE SECOND WAS PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY TENDENCY OF THE PT (IN WHICH BRAZILIAN SUPPORTERS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATE). [JM]

1 Dissidents form PSOL to defend socialist ideal

MAURÍCIO HASHIZUME*

A new left party led by parliamentarians expelled from the PT made a significant advance last weekend. At a founding meeting held in the federal capital, Brasília, nearly 700 activists from various regions of the country participated in choosing a name, adopting statutes and approving the provisional programme of the Party of Socialism and Liberty (PSOL, pronounced "sol" in reference to the Portuguese word for "sun").

The organization, which sees itself as an alternative on the spectrum of left parties, already has a president, senator Heloísa Helena, elected for the PT from the state of Alagoas. In addition to her, the new parliamentary group will include the former PT deputies Babá (from the state of Pará), João Fontes (from the state of Sergipe) and Luciana Genro (from the state of Rio Grande do Sul), who is the daughter of the Education Minister, Tarso Genro. All have suffered political isolation after having voted against social security reform in Congress – a process that culminated with their expulsion for indiscipline at the meeting of the PT national leadership held on December 2003.

Most of those present at the founding meeting of the PSOL originate from the Socialist Democracy current (DS) of the PT – in the new organization they have formed a tendency called Red Liberty – or from dissident elements of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) and the Socialist Party of United Workers (PSTU), as well as public sector trades unionists (teachers in particular), the MTL peasant movement and independent groups. According to one of the 16 members of the executive of the new party, for most activists it represents the "final attempt" to build an institutional party. Among the "personalities" who have joined the new group are the sociologist Chico de Oliveira and the academic Paulo Arantes.

In order to participate fully in the elections, the PSOL still needs to succeed in its "campaign of legalization" – that is, gather the signatures needed to register. "On the day of the municipal elections in November 2004, the "brigades of the PSOL" will spread across Brazil to gather the 438,000 signatures. We will hold seminars in every state – both to satisfy the formalities and the "bureaucratic weights" to which we are subjected and to refine the provisional programme and statutes that we have adopted. Finally, in January [2005], we will hold our second national meeting during the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre", said the president of the new party.

The senator, who says she devoted "the best years of her



life" to helping build the PT, criticized the government in that it now contributes to "the deepening of the same neoliberal policies which were limited by the participation of the PT in opposition, whether in the social movements or Parliament". "We feel ourselves obliged to build a political refuge, to safeguard the banner of the labouring classes, and the ideological and programmatic elaborations accumulated throughout the history of the socialist left" she continued.

We print here extracts from the interview that senator Heloísa Helena – potential PsoL candidate for the Brazilian presidency in 2006 – gave to Agence Carta Maior (ACM) shortly after the end of the first national meeting of the country's newest party.

What is the main difference between the programme of the PSOL and those of the other parties of the left that already exist?

Today, the other parties behave as instruments of the triumphalist propaganda of neoliberalism, because in one way or another they support the neoliberal project as implemented by the Lula government. Any sensible person, whether socialist or capitalist, who wanted to make a precise analysis of the actions of the Lula government, would see the persistent subordination to the parasites of the International Monetary Fund (FMI) and the other multilateral financial institutions, the distortion of public finances to the benefit of speculation, the reforms which have nothing to do with the

reforms of the state apparatus that we have always defended.

We are partisans of reform of this Brazilian state which has been privatized in the service of a minority. On the other hand, the state reforms carried out by the Lula government, following in the footsteps of [his predecessor] Fernando Henrique Cardoso, are only neoliberal counter-reforms involving the sole mechanism of reducing social budgets to compensate for increased financial expenses, the fruit of their economic policy and their monetarist orthodoxy. Workers in the public sector are sacrificed – as was the case with pensions reform – for the benefit of the speculators, while public resources are literally pillaged.

**Is all this irreversible?
Is there no chance that
social tension can change
the orientation of the Lula
government?**

I hope – for the good of Brazil and its millions of oppressed, excluded and marginalized – that the live forces of society will be able, in an organized fashion, to bring pressure for change. But unhappily a number of the social movements are bureaucratized, assuming responsibilities in the governmental structure, and are above all interested in paralyzing their base to stop such social tensions.

It is obvious that I want things to change, but in view of the measures already taken by the government, I don't believe in the objective possibility of a change of orientation. If I can imagine a God who is immaterial and not geographically located, you can bet that I believe in the strength of the Brazilian people and in its capacity to struggle to force the government to change course. Unhappily, the analysis that I make of members of the government is that they have changed side. So we feel obliged to create a "refuge" for the left, so that even if they have changed side, they do capture the legitimacy of left traditions. Starting from the time where they went over to the other side, they

are no longer authorized by the Brazilian people – and still less by the Brazilian left – to represent and

trample on the historic banners which have been sanctified not by this or that political personality or party, but by heroic struggles, by the blood, sweat and tears of the toiling class and the socialist militants in Brazil, Latin America and the world.

These historic reference points and the resulting programmatic conceptions, are not the property of any party, including our new party, the PSol, or any political personality. If a political instrument which is conceived to promote these historic objectives in the imagination of the popular classes fails, our task is to build a new party.

**Do you hope that more
PT parliamentarians and
cadres will join the PSol?**

The PsoL will welcome comrades from all left parties who wish to join us with pleasure and much affection, solidarity and respect. A number of fighters for the people who have left the PT, the PCdoB, the PSTU and other parties are with us. But I will not spend a drop of sweat and energy to try and tempt away activists in other parties, and still less parliamentarians – if only because the parliamentarians know exactly what is happening.

If these people decide to quit the government and join us, they will be met with open arms.

We preserve certain bonds of affection built up in the course of our common history, but it is no longer about doing politics together. Where those bonds of affection have been broken, it is because they were not very strong, or not sincere enough to be maintained despite the ideological and programmatic disagreements of militant life.

Sincerely, I already knew that there was a socialist life, of dignity, courage and generosity, outside of the party structures which exist today – and I have become certain of this in the course of crossing the "desert" to build a new party and meeting fellow travelers. That has been a real apprenticeship for me. I will devote myself more to the conquests of these people rather than the attempt to convince activists and parliamentarians of

other parties.

* *This article is translated from Inprecor América Latina, electronic publication of the Fourth International for Latin America and the Caribbean: inprecor.americalatina@uol.com.br*

2 A new socialist party

CORREIO DA CIDADANIA*

The people who have set up the Party for Socialism and Liberty (PSol) merit the respect of the nation. They are serious and courageous political activists, who reject the drift to the right of the Workers Party (PT). Yet, despite all the respect that they deserve, it does not seem that they have made the right political choice.

The manifest deviation in the ideological posture of the PT and the ineffectiveness of the struggle to reverse it inside the party structures (given the monolithic majority which has constituted itself around a veritable political-electoral machine) do not constitute sufficient reasons to create a new socialist party in Brazil.

Before launching a new party, it is necessary to determine precisely the causes of the PT's drift. That would involve a long contradictory debate, which would necessitate not only an effort at intellectual analysis, but also the experience of new forms of political action, so as not to run the risk of reproducing the errors which have led the PT into the current situation.

We should not forget that the participation of socialists in bourgeois institutions constitutes a contradiction which will only be resolved when socialism will be substituted for capitalism as the form of organization of the economy and of society. Thus the participation of socialists in bourgeois institutional politics can only know partial and temporal solutions, which will be a function

of concrete circumstances.

Born a little after the defeat of the strategy of armed struggle, the PT proposed a strategy of institutional struggle, based on two pillars, participation in elections and direct mass pressure, often to the limits of legality. For different reasons, this strategy has not yielded results. But during this time, the conjuncture during which this strategy was formulated was completely transformed by the changes which took place in Brazil and globally.

It does not seem to us prudent, in these circumstances, to offer a new socialist proposition to the Brazilian people.

We do not mean by this critique to "fire on" the PSol or prevent the fraternal debate that the socialists should lead if they wish to face the serious crisis threatening the country. On the contrary, we recognize the purity of the intentions of the founders of this party, their objective being to open up dialogue through the creation of a new regroupment.

It goes without saying that the columns of the "Correio" are open to contradictory opinions.

* *We reproduce here the editorial of the Catholic left weekly "Correio da Cidadania" number 402 (dating from the week of June 19-26, 2004). "Correio da Cidadania" is closely linked to the radical social movements in Brazil. This article is translated from Inprecor América Latina, electronic publication of the Fourth International for Latin America and the Caribbean inprecor.americalatina@uol.com.br*

3 A new party: the PSol

JORNAL DEMOCRACIA
SOCIALISTA*

The federal deputies Babá, Luciana [Genro] and João Fontes announced its formation before even being expelled from



the PT. Now the “new party” has a name, the Party of Socialism and Liberty [PSoL]. Senator Heloísa Helena is the main spokesperson of the new grouping.

The essential militant forces of the PSoL come mainly from the political current Movimento de Esquerda Socialista (MES, Movement of the Socialist Left) and Corrente Socialista dos Trabalhadores (CST, Socialist Current of Workers). These two organizations are part of the tradition of Morenist Trotskyism. They remained in the PT, still united, as the CST, when the then majority of Socialist Convergence formed the Socialist Party of United Workers (PSTU).

Former militants and leaders of the PSTU, like Junia Gouvêa and Martiniano Cavalcante, who left this party at different times, are part of the leadership of the PSoL. A small group of militants, who have not respected the decisions of the National Conference of the Socialist Democracy Tendency (DS), are grouped in “Liberdade Vermelha”

(“Red Liberty”) and have come out in favour of the PSoL. They have not submitted this decision to any collective debate inside the DS. Milton Temer and Carlos Nelson Coutinho – who taught us Gramsci and the concept of process in the revolution – are also inside this new party, as well as Francisco de Oliveira.

The disenchantment provoked by the Calmar government and discontent at the evolution of the PT can lead different political traditions to come together and proclaim a new party. But in the light of the experience of the PT, we know that to build a useful political tool much more is needed. And we are not talking about the 438,000 signatures needed to get onto the electoral register¹ but of the absence of a reasonably “warm” social and political environment capable of merging different conceptions in a common programme to produce a transformative political action.

The 7th National Conference of DS in November 2003, approved

the following resolution:

“We consider the pursuit of the defence of the positive values originating in the history of the PT valuable (the programmatic contribution; rights of tendency and internal democracy; feminist conquests; the synthesis of the experiences and the forces of the left). In this framework it is also necessary to renew the links between the partisan organization and the broad political-social movement around the PT.

“We seek to intervene in the battle of orientation inside the PT, basing ourselves on the legitimacy of the defence of the historic and strategic project of a socialist and democratic party. Faced with the development of a conflict inside the party, it is more than ever necessary to put forward the construction of a broad left current which is the pole of reference of the reconstruction and functioning of the PT as a socialist and democratic party.

“The construction of this current

and the struggle for the socialist reconstruction of the PT represent an alternative also faced with the sharp pressures seeking the abandonment of its programmatic character, that face those who wish to leave the PT and orient towards a project of a sectarian party, for these two orientations renounce the experience of the construction of a mass socialist and democratic party”.

* We translate this article from the monthly published by the Socialist Democracy tendency, “Jornal Democracia Socialista”, number 4, July 2004.

1 A law introduced during the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso changed the conditions of formation of political parties. New parties have to gather a large number of signatures (438,000 across the Brazilian federation!) in order to take part in electoral contests. During the foundation of the Workers Party the conditions for legalization of political parties were much less draconian.

Marxism: theses of resistance

THE TEXT BELOW, WRITTEN BY DANIEL BENSÂID FOR THE JOURNAL "VIENTO SUR", REPRESENTS A BOLD ATTEMPT TO TRACK THE THEORETICAL CHALLENGES FACED BY MARXISM TODAY. ACCORDING TO THE AUTHOR, THE THEORETICAL STERILITY OF MODERN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND OTHER MAJOR POLITICAL TRENDS COULD RESULT IN MARXISTS SITTING ON THEIR LAURELS AND MERELY AFFIRMING ORTHODOXIES INHERITED FROM THE PAST. BUT, HE INSISTS, REVOLUTIONARY THEORY MUST NOW ATTEMPT TO COME TO GRIPS WITH HUGE CHANGES IN THE WORLD SINCE THE COLLAPSE OF STALINISM. HIS DISCUSSION RANGES OVER MODERN IMPERIALISM, THE BALANCE SHEET OF THE SOVIET UNION AND SIMILAR COUNTRIES, THE CLASS STRUCTURE OF CONTEMPORARY CAPITALISM, NEW NATIONALISMS AND COMMUNITY IDENTITIES, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND POLITICAL PARTIES AND POSTMODERNIST NOTIONS OF DIFFERENCE AND DIVERSITY - AND MUCH ELSE BESIDES. THIS IS A DENSE AND DIFFICULT TEXT. WE HAVE MADE IT AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH HERE BECAUSE OF ITS IMPORTANT INSIGHTS INTO THE WEAKNESSES OF AND CHALLENGES TO MODERN MARXISM, AND BECAUSE OF ITS SIGNIFICANT SIGNPOSTS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND REFLECTION; DESPITE ITS DIFFICULTY, IT WILL INTEREST AND PROVOKE MANY OF OUR READERS

"We are faced with a double responsibility: the transmission of a tradition threatened by conformism, and the exploration of the uncertain contours of the future".

In the course of the last decade (since the disintegration of the Soviet Union and German unification), something came to an end. But what? Was it the "Short 20th Century" of which Eric Hobsbawm and other historians speak, beginning with World War I and ending with the fall of the Berlin Wall?

Or is it the short period that followed World War II, marked by the twin superpowers of the Cold War, and characterized in the imperialist centres by sustained capital accumulation and "Fordist" regulation?

Or again, is it the great cycle in the history of capitalism and the workers' movement, opened by the capitalist development of the 1880s, subsequent colonial expansion and the blossoming of the modern labour movement, symbolized by the formation of the Second International?

The great strategic analyses of the workers movement date to a large extent from this period of formation, before World War I: for example the analyses of imperialism (Hilferding,

Bauer, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, Parvus, Trotsky, Bukharin); the national question (Rosa Luxemburg again, Lenin, Bauer, Ber Borokov, Pannekoek, Strasser); party-trade union relations and parliamentarism (Rosa Luxemburg, Sorel, Jaurès, Nieuwenhuis, Lenin); strategy and the road to power (Bernstein, Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky).

These controversies constitute our history as much as those of the conflicting dynamics between revolution and counterrevolution inaugurated by the world war and the Russian Revolution.

Beyond the often intense differences over orientation and options, the workers' movement of that time displayed a relative unity and shared a common culture. What remains of this inheritance today?

In a very unclear editorial in the first issue of the relaunched "New Left Review", Perry Anderson estimated that the world has not been so lacking in alternatives to the dominant order since the Reformation. Charles-André Udry is more definite, arguing that one of the characteristics of the present situation is the "disappearance" of an independent international workers' movement.

We are then in the middle of an uncertain transition, where the old is dying without being abolished, and where the new is making an effort to emerge, caught between a past which

has not been transcended and the increasingly urgent necessity of an autonomous research project, which would allow us to orientate ourselves to the new world opening before our eyes. Because of the weakening of the traditions of the old workers' movement there is a danger that, given the theoretical mediocrity of social democracy and other opponents to our right, we could resign ourselves to just defending old theoretical conquests, which today are of limited value. Certainly theory lives off debate and confrontation: we are always to a certain extent dependent on the debates with our adversaries. But this dependency is relative.

It is easy to say that the great political forces of what is called in France the "plural left", the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the Greens, are not very stimulating in their approach to fundamental problems. But also it is necessary to remember that, in spite of their naiveté and sometimes their youthful excesses, the debates of the far left of the 1970s were much more productive and enriching than they are today.

We have then begun the dangerous transition from one epoch to another and we are in midstream. We must simultaneously transmit and defend our theoretical tradition, even if it is threatened by conformism, while at the same time boldly analysing these new times. At the risk of appearing shocking, I would like to face this test

with a spirit I would describe as "open dogmatism". "Dogmatism", because, if that word gets a bad press (according to the media's common sense, it is always better to be open than closed, light than heavy, flexible than rigid), in all matters of theory, resistance to vogueish ideas has its virtues. The challenge of versatile impressions and the effects of fashion demands that serious refutations are made before a paradigm is changed). "Open", because we should not religiously conserve a doctrinaire discourse, but rather enrich and transform a world view by testing it against new realities.

I would propose then five theses of resistance; their form deliberately emphasizes the necessary work of refusal.

- 1 Imperialism has not been dissolved in commodity globalization.
- 2 Communism has not been dissolved in the fall of Stalinism.
- 3 The class struggle cannot be reduced to the politics of community identities.
- 4 Conflictual differences are not dissolved in ambivalent diversity.
- 5 Politics cannot be dissolved into ethics or aesthetics.

I think these theses are demonstrable propositions. The explanatory notes explain some of their consequences.

THESES 1: IMPERIALISM HAS NOT BEEN DISSOLVED IN COMMODITY GLOBALIZATION

Imperialism is the political form of the domination that corresponds to the combined and unequal development of capitalist accumulation. This modern imperialism has changed its appearance. It has not disappeared. In the course of recent centuries, it has undergone three great stages: a) that of colonial conquest and territorial occupation (the British and French colonial empires); b) that of the domination of financial capital or the "highest stage of capitalism" analyzed by Hilferding and Lenin (fusion

of industrial and banking capital, export of capital, import of raw materials); c) after World War II, that of the domination of the world shared between several imperialist powers, formal independence of former colonies and dominated development.¹

The sequence opened by the Russian Revolution has come to an end. A new phase of imperial globalization which resembles financial domination as it appeared before 1914, is what we have moved into. Imperial hegemony is now exerted in multiple ways: by financial and monetary domination (allowing control of credit mechanisms), by scientific and technical domination (a quasi-monopoly on patents), by the control of natural resources (energy supplies, control of trade routes, patenting of living organisms), by the exercise of cultural hegemony (reinforced by the huge power of the mass media) and, in the last instance, by the exercise of military supremacy (obvious in the Balkans and two Gulf Wars).²

Within this new configuration of globalized imperialism, the direct subordination of territories is secondary to the control of markets. From this results a very unequal and very badly combined development, new relations of sovereignty (disciplinary mechanisms like the debt, energy, food and health dependency, military pacts), and a new international division of labour.

Countries that seemed to be on the path of economic development until twenty or thirty years ago are again caught in the spiral of underdevelopment.

For example, Argentina is again mainly an exporter of raw materials (soya has become its main export product). Egypt, which when ruled by Nasser's Arab nationalism in the 1950s boasted of its recovered sovereignty (symbolized

by nationalisation of the Suez Canal), its successes in literacy (providing engineers and doctors for the countries of the Middle East) and the beginnings of industrialization (like Algeria under Boumedienne) is today becoming simply a paradise for tourist operators. After the two debt crises (1982 and 1994) and integration into NAFTA, Mexico appears, more than ever, as the dominated backyard of the "Northern colossus".

The metamorphosis of the relations of dependency and domination is reflected in particular through the geostrategic and technological transformation of war.

During World War II, it was no longer possible to speak of war in the singular and of a single line of fronts, but of several wars overlapping with others.³ From the end of the Cold War, the nature of the conflicts prevents any approach in terms treating the sides simply good and bad. All recent conflicts, with their unique combinations and multiple contradictions, show the impossibility of a simplistic response.

At the time of the Falklands War, opposition to the imperial expedition of Thatcher's Britain in no way forced Argentine revolutionaries to support the military dictators. In the conflict between Iran and Iraq, revolutionary defeatism in both countries was justified in face of two forms of despotism. In the Gulf War, international opposition to operation "Desert Storm" did not imply any support for the despotic regime of Saddam Hussein.

Globalization also has consequences in the structure of conflicts. We are no longer in the era of wars of liberation and relatively simple oppositions between dominator and dominated. From this results an intertwining of interests and a rapid reversibility of positions. It is an obvious reason to make a detailed balance sheet and

to draw some lessons from the doubts, the errors (sometimes), and the difficulties that we could locate within the conflicts of recent years.

Reducing conflicts to an opposition between the simply "good" and the simply "bad" underlies much of the discourse of "human rights imperialism" which justified NATO's intervention in ex-Yugoslavia.

COROLLARY 1.1: INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE DEMOCRATIC SOVEREIGNTY OF NATIONS CANNOT BE DISSOLVED IN HUMANITARIAN ETHICS

Even though the function of the nation-state as it was constituted in the 19th century has undoubtedly been transformed and weakened, the era of interstate international law has nevertheless not arrived. Paradoxically, Europe has in the last 10 years seen more than 10 new formally sovereign states with more than 15,000 kilometres of new borders emerge. The vindication of the right to self-determination for the Bosnians, Kosovars or Chechnyans, is obviously, a vindication of sovereignty. It is this contradiction that is obscured by the pejorative notion of "sovereignism" under which nauseous nationalisms and chauvinisms are confused with legitimate democratic aspirations to a political sovereignty that offers resistance to the pure competition of all against all.

International law is still called upon to articulate two legitimacies: that, emergent, of the universal rights of human beings and citizens (of which certain institutions like the International Criminal Court constitute partial crystallizations); and that of interstate relations (whose principle goes back to the Kantian discourse about "perpetual peace"), on which institutions such as the United Nations rest. Without attributing to the UN virtues that it does not

have (and without forgetting the disastrous balance sheet of its performance in Bosnia, Somalia or Rwanda), it is necessary to state that one of the aims pursued by the powers involved in operation Allied Force was to modify the architecture of the new imperial order in favour of new pillars, namely NATO (whose mission was redefined and extended during its 50th anniversary summit in Washington) and the World Trade Organization.

Emerging from the relationship of forces that emerged after World War II, the UN must undoubtedly be reformed and democratized (anti-parliamentarianism does not prevent us supporting democratic reforms of the mode of scrutiny like proportionality and feminization), to the benefit of the General Assembly and against the closed club of the Permanent Security Council. Not in order to confer on it an international legislative legitimacy, but to ensure that a certainly imperfect representation of the "international community" reflects the diversity of interests and viewpoints. In the same way, we urgently need to develop a reflection around the European political institutions and the international judicial institutions like the Hague Tribunal, the emergency criminal tribunals and the future International Criminal Court.

EXPLANATORY NOTE:

To update the notion of imperialism, not only from the point of view of the relations of economic domination (obvious), but as global system of domination (technological, ecological, military, geostrategic, institutional) is of capital importance, precisely when seemingly intelligent people consider that this category became obsolete with the collapse of its bureaucratic foe in the East, and that the world is now organized around an opposition between democracies without

Mary Kaldor, who was, in the early 1980s, together with EP Thompson, one of the leaders of the campaign for nuclear disarmament against "exterminism" and the deployment of Pershing and Cruise missiles in Europe, now says that "the characteristic distinction of the Westphalian era between internal peace and foreign war, ordered domestic law and international anarchy, ended with the Cold War." We have now entered, it is argued, an era of "regular progress towards a global legal regime". It is what some call, without fear of the contradiction in terms, an "ethical imperialism", what Mary Kaldor calls "a benign imperialism".

THESES 2: COMMUNISM WAS NOT DISSOLVED IN THE FALL OF STALINISM

The ideology of neoliberal counter-reform, as well as trying to dissolve imperialism into the loyal competition of commodity globalization, tries to dissolve Communism into Stalinism. Bureaucratic despotism would then be the simple logical development of revolutionary adventure, and Stalin the legitimate son of Lenin or Marx. According to this genealogy of the concept, the idea leads to the world. The historical development and the dark disaster of Stalinism are potentially there already in the notions of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" or the "vanguard party".

In reality, of course, a social theory is never more than a critical interpretation of an epoch. If we should seek gaps and weaknesses that make it lose its force in the face of the evidence and of history, that theory cannot be judged according to the criteria of another epoch. In this way, the contradictions of democracy, inherited from the French Revolution, a confusion of people, party and state, the decreed fusion of the social and the political, blindness in the face of the bureaucratic danger (underestimated in relation to the main danger of capitalist restoration), were

propitious to the bureaucratic counterrevolution in 1930s Russia.

There are in the Russian Thermidorian process elements of continuity and discontinuity. The difficulty in accurately dating the triumph of the bureaucratic reaction relates to the asymmetry between revolution and counterrevolution. The counterrevolution is indeed not the reverse fact or the inverted image of the revolution, a sort of revolution in reverse. As Joseph de Maistre put it very well with regard to the Thermidor of the French Revolution, the counter-revolution is not a revolution in the opposite sense, but the opposite of a revolution. It depends on its own timescales, where ruptures are accumulated and complement each other.

If Trotsky dated the beginning of the Thermidorian reaction to the death of Lenin, he says that the counter-revolution was not completed until the beginning of the 1930s, with the victory of Nazism in Germany, the Moscow trials, the great purges and the terrible year of 1937. In her analysis "The Origins of Totalitarianism", Hannah Arendt establishes an apparent chronology that dates the coming of bureaucratic totalitarianism proper to 1933 or 1934. In Russia, USSR, Russia, Moshe Lewin brings to light the quantitative explosion of the bureaucratic apparatus of the state from the end of the 1920s. In the 1930s, the repression against the popular movement changed in scale. It is not the simple prolongation of what was prefigured by the practices of the Cheka (the political police) or the political jails, but a qualitative leap in which the state bureaucracy destroyed and devoured the party that believed it was able to control it.

The discontinuity demonstrated by this bureaucratic counter-revolution is central from a triple point of view. In relation to the past: the intelligibility of history that is

not a delirious story told by a crazy person, but the result of social phenomena, conflicts of interests of uncertain outcomes and decisive events. With respect to the present: the consequences of the Stalinist counter-revolution contaminated a whole epoch and perverted the international workers' movement for a long time. Many paradoxes and impasses of the present (beginning with the recurrent crises in the Balkans) are not understandable without a historical understanding of Stalinism.

Finally, with respect to the future: the consequences of this counter-revolution, where the bureaucratic danger is revealed in its unexpected dimension, will still weigh for a long time on the new generations. As Eric Hobsbawm writes, "one cannot understand the history of the short 20th century without the Russian Revolution and its direct and indirect effects".

COROLLARY 2.1: SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY CANNOT BE SUBSUMED IN DEMOCRATIC STATISM

To portray the Stalinist counter-revolution as a result of the original vices of "Leninism" (a notion forged by Zinoviev at the 5th Congress of the Communist International, after the death of Lenin, to legitimise the new orthodoxy of reasons of state) is not only historically erroneous, it is also dangerous for the future. It would be then sufficient to have understood and to have corrected the errors to prevent the "professional dangers of power" and to guarantee a transparent society.

If the mirage of abundance is renounced this is the necessary lesson of this disastrous experience that would excuse society from choices and arbitrations (if necessity is historical, the notion of abundance is strongly relative); if we abandon the hypothesis of an absolute democratic

transparency, founded on the homogeneity of the people (or of the liberated proletariat) and the rapid abolition of the State; if, finally, we remove all consequences of the "discordance of time scales" (economic, ecological, legal choices, customs, mentalities, art identify different temporalities; the contradictions of gender and generation are not resolved in the same way and at the same rhythm as class contradictions), then we should conclude that the hypothesis of the weakening of the state and of law, as separated spheres, does not mean their decreed abolition, unless the result is to be the statization of society and not the socialization of power.

talks about political pluralism as a principle, the independence and autonomy of the social movements with respect to the state and to the parties, the culture of law and the separation of powers. The notion of "dictatorship of the proletariat" evoked, within the political vocabulary of the 19th century, a legal institution: the temporary emergency powers designated to the Roman Senate in opposition to tyranny, which was then the name given to arbitrary power.⁴ Nevertheless it is too loaded with initial ambiguities and associated with too many bitter historical experiences to be still used. This note can nevertheless give us the chance to reframe the question of majority democracy, the relation between the social and

effect the conclusion at which the "renovators" coming out of the orthodox Communist tradition arrive when they persist in thinking of Stalinism mainly as a "theoretical deviation" and not as a formidable social reaction.

Louis Althusser, in his "Reply to John Lewis", characterised Stalinism as an "economistic deviation". Many other theorists put the emphasis on theoretical error or deviation. This suggests it would be sufficient to correct this error to avoid the danger of bureaucratism.⁵ The method of the "theoretical deviation", in perpetuating the parenthesis in the political analysis of the bureaucratic counter-revolution, is committed to a search for the original theoretical sin and not only leads to a recurrent liquidation of "Leninism", but, to a great extent, of revolutionary Marxism or the inheritance of the Enlightenment: from blaming Lenin, we quickly pass to blaming Marx... or Rousseau! If, as Martelli writes, Stalinism is primarily the fruit of "ignorance", a greater theoretical lucidity would be sufficient to prevent the professional dangers of power.⁶ It's excessively simple.

EXPLANATORY NOTE 2.2

The French publication of Eric Hobsbawm's "Age of Extremes" was welcomed by the left as a work displaying intellectual health, a retort to historiography in the manner of Furet and historical judicialization in the style of Stéphane Courtois. This well-merited reception nevertheless runs the risk of leaving unclarified the extremely problematic aspect of the work.

Hobsbawm certainly does not deny the responsibility of the Thermidorian gravediggers: but he diminishes it, as if what happened, had to happen, by virtue of the objective laws of history. He hardly glimpses what could have been different.

And thus Hobsbawm arrives at what he considers the paradox of this strange century: "the most lasting

result of the October Revolution was to save its adversary in war as in peace, inciting it to reform itself.⁷ As if it was a natural development of the revolution and not the result of formidable social and political conflicts, of which the Stalinist counter-revolution is not the least! This "objectivization" of history reaches the logical conclusion that, in 1920, "the Bolsheviks committed an error, that seen retrospectively, seems capital: the division of the international workers' movement" [between Communism and social democracy - ed].⁸

If the circumstances in which the 21 Conditions for joining the Communist International were adopted and applied demand a critical examination, we can nevertheless better understand the division of the international workers' movement not as a result of ideological will or a doctrinaire error, but of the original shock of the revolution and to the watershed between those who assumed its defence (critical, like Rosa Luxemburg) and those who opposed it and were associated with the holy imperialist alliance.

If the inter-war period means for Hobsbawm an "ideological civil war on an international scale", he is not talking about the fundamental classes, capital and the social revolution, but: progress and reaction, anti-fascism and fascism. Consequently he talks of regrouping "an extraordinary spectrum of forces". Within this



Eric Hobsbawm

Thus bureaucracy is not the annoying consequence of a false idea, but a social phenomenon. It certainly had a particular form within primitive accumulation in Russia or China, but it has its roots in scarcity and the division of labour. It manifests itself in diverse forms and different degrees of a universal manner.

This terrible historical lesson must lead to the deepening of the programmatic consequences drawn from 1979 onwards with the document of the Fourth International, "Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", that specifically

the political, the conditions for the weakening of domination to which the dictatorship of the proletariat seemed under the form "finally discovered" of the Paris Commune, to have given an answer.

EXPLANATORY NOTE 2.1

The idea that Stalinism represents a bureaucratic counter-revolution, and not a simple more or less irreversible evolution of the regime arising from October, is far from meeting a general consensus. The opposite is true: liberal reformers and repentant Stalinists agree in seeing Stalinist reaction as the legitimate extension of the Bolshevik revolution. It is in

Rosa Luxemburg



perspective there is little space for a critical balance sheet of the German revolution, the Chinese revolution of 1926/27, the Spanish civil war and the popular fronts.

Avoiding any social analysis of the Stalinist counter-revolution, Hobsbawm is content with stating that, starting from the 1920s, "when the dust of the battles settled, the old orthodox empire of the Tsars resurged intact, in its essentials, but under the authority of the Bolsheviks." For him, on the contrary, it is only in 1956, with the crushing of the Hungarian revolution, that "the tradition of the social revolution exhausted itself" and that "the disintegration of the international movement that was faithful to it" constituted the "extinction of the world-wide revolution" like a fire that is extinguished alone. In short, "it is above all by organization that the Bolshevism of Lenin changed the world". With this funeral phrase a serious critique of bureaucracy is avoided; it is simply considered as transitory, an "inconvenience" of the planned economy founded on social property, as if this property was really social and as if the bureaucracy was a small and lamentable expense rather than a counter-revolutionary political danger!

Hobsbawm's work has more the perspective of a "historian's history", than that of a critical or strategic history capable of discovering the possible options in the great turning points of events.

In "Trotsky Vivant", Pierre Naville strongly emphasizes the reach of this methodological slant: "The defenders of the accomplished fact, whoever they are, have a much shorter vision than political actors. Active and militant Marxism is predisposed to an optic which is often contrary to that of history."

What Trotsky called "prognosis", says Naville, is more comparable to prophetic anticipation than to prediction or forecast. The same historians who find the sense of the event

natural when the revolutionary movement has the wind in its sails, look for disadvantages in it when things are complicated and it becomes necessary to know how to swim against the current. It is hard for them to conceive the political imperative of "outlining history in the wrong direction" (in Walter Benjamin's formula). Naville says that this gives history the possibility of unfolding its retrospective wisdom, enumerating and cataloguing the facts, the omissions, and the errors. But, lamentably, these historians abstain from indicating the correct route that would have allowed a moderate to lead a revolutionary victory, or, on the contrary, to indicate a reasonable and victorious revolutionary policy within a Thermidorian period.

EXPLANATORY NOTE 2.3

It would be useful to do something that our movement has neglected: to take a deeper discussion about the notion of totalitarianism in general (and its relations with the epoch of modern imperialism), and on bureaucratic totalitarianism in particular. Trotsky frequently used this term in his book *Stalin*, without giving precision to its theoretical status. The concept could be considered very useful in approaching simultaneously certain contemporary tendencies (pulverization of the classes in masses, ethnicization and tendential deterioration of politics) analyzed by Hannah Arendt in her trilogy on the origins of totalitarianism, and the particular form that they could take in the case of the bureaucratic totalitarianism. This would also allow that a vulgar and over-flexible employment of this useful notion serves ideologically to legitimize the opposition between democracy (without qualification or adjectives, consequently bourgeois, actually existing) and totalitarianism as the only pertinent cause of our time.

EXPLANATORY NOTE 2.4

To insist on the notion of bureaucratic counter-revolution does not imply in

any way closing off a more detailed debate on the balance sheet of the revolutions in the century. On the contrary, we need to reappropriate it from a renewed perspective thanks to a better critical reframing.⁹

The different attempts at theoretical elucidation (theory of state capitalism, from Mattick to Tony Cliff, the new exploiting class, Rizzi to Burnham or Castoriadis, or the degenerated workers' state from Trotsky to Mandel), while they could have important consequences in terms of practical direction, are all compatible, through corrections, with the diagnosis of a Stalinist counter-revolution.

If Catherine Samary now proposes the idea that the fight against the nomenclature in power demanded a new social revolution and not only a political revolution, this is however not a simple terminological modification. According to Trotsky's thesis, enriched by Mandel, the main contradiction of the transitional society was between the socialized form of the planned economy and the bourgeois norms of distribution at the origin of bureaucratic parasitism and privileges. The "political revolution" consisted then in bringing the political superstructure into conformity with the acquired social



Hannah Arendt

infrastructure. Antoine Artous says that this forgets who "in the post-capitalist societies (not only in those societies that would be better not to

describe as "post", as if they came chronologically after capitalism, when, in fact, they are determined by the contradictions of world-wide capitalist accumulation), the state is an integral part in the sense that it plays a determining role in the structuring of the relations of production; and it is by this slant that, beyond the common wage form, the bureaucracy, social group of the state, can be situated inside the relations of exploitation with the direct producers".

The continuation of this debate would have to call attention to the theoretical confusion related to the characterization of political phenomena in directly sociological terms, to the detriment of the specificity of the field and the political categories. Many ambiguities attributed to the category of "workers' state" arise from this. It is probably also the case with the notion of "workers' party", which tends to relate the function of a political force to a game of oppositions and alliances, to a deep social "nature".

THESIS 3: THE CLASS STRUGGLE IS NOT DISSOLVED IN COMMUNITY IDENTITIES

For too long a time, so-called "orthodox" Marxism attributed to the proletariat a mission according to which its consciousness would eventually meet with its essence, thus becoming the redeemer of all humanity. The disappointments of the following day are, for many, proportional to the illusions of the day before: by not having transformed itself into an "everything", this proletariat is then reduced to nothing.

We should begin by remembering that Marx's conception of the class struggle does not have much to do with university sociology. In practice he does not have a statistical approach to the question, this is not mainly because of the embryonic state of the discipline then (the first International Congress of

Statistical Data was in 1854), but for a more fundamental theoretical reason: the class struggle is a conflict inherent to the relation of exploitation between capital and labour that governs capitalist accumulation and the result of the separation between producers and means of production.

We do not thus see in Marx any reductive, normative or classificatory definition of classes, but a dynamic conception of their structural antagonism, at the level of production, circulation and reproduction of capital: classes are never defined only at the level of the production process (the face off between workers and employers in the enterprise), but determined by the reproduction of the whole when the struggle for wages, the division of labour, relations with the state apparatuses and the world market enter into play. (From this it is clear that the productive character of labour that appears notably in Volume 2 of "Capital", with respect to the circulation process, does not define the proletariat. In their central aspects, these questions were dealt with and discussed widely in the 1970s, in clear opposition to the theses defended both by the Communist Party in its treatise on State Monopoly Capitalism, and inversely by Poulantzas, Baudelot and Establier.)¹⁰



Nicos Poulantzas

Marx speaks generally of proletarians. In general, in the 19th century, people spoke of the working classes in the

plural. The terms in German, "Arbeiterklasse", and English, "working class", stayed general enough, whereas the term "classe ouvriere", current in French political vocabulary, entails a restrictive sociological connotation prone to ambiguity: it relates to the modern industrial proletariat, excluding employees in the services and commerce, although these undergo analogous conditions of exploitation, from the point of view of their relation to private ownership of the means of production, location in the division of labour or still more in terms of their status as wage-earners and the amount of their remuneration.

Perhaps the term "proletariat" is theoretically preferable to that of "working class". In the developed societies it represents indeed between two thirds and four fifths of the active population. The interesting question is not its predicted disappearance, but its social transformations and its political representation, taking it as understood that the strictly industrial proletariat, even though it has undergone an effective reduction in the course of the last 20 years (from 35% to 26% more or less of the active population), is still far from the extinction.¹¹

The real situation of the proletariat is revealed from an international perspective. Then what Michel Coh n calls "the proletarianization of the world" becomes evident. Whereas in 1900, wage-earning workers were around 50 million of a global population of 1,000 million, nowadays they are around 2,000 out of 6,000 million.

The question is then of a theoretical, cultural and specifically political order rather than strictly sociological. The notion of classes is in itself the result of a process of formation (see the introduction to EP Thompson's "Making of the English Working Class"), of struggles and of organization, in the course of which the consciousness

of a theoretical concept and a self-determination born out of struggle is constituted: the sentiment of belonging to a class is as much the result of a political process of formation as of a sociological determination. Does the weakening of this consciousness, then, mean the disappearance of classes and their struggles? Is this weakening conjunctural (linked to the ebbs and flows of the struggle) or structural (the result of new procedures of domination, not only social but also cultural and ideological, what Michel Surya calls "absolute capitalism"), with the discourse of postmodernity representing its ideological expression? In other words, if the effectiveness of the class struggle is widely verified in everyday life, do postmodern fragmentation and individualism allow us to conceive the renewal of shared collectivities? Given the generalization of commodity fetishism and consumerism, the frenzy for the ephemeral and immediate, can durable political and social projects appear again, beyond moments of intense fusion without future?

One of the high-priority theoretical tasks has to be not only related then to the sociological transformations of the wage-earner, but to the transformations underway in the wage relation in terms of regime of accumulation, as much from the perspective of the organization of work as of the legal political regulations and what Frederic Jameson calls "the cultural logic of late capitalism".

The critique of ultra-liberalism, in reaction to the counter-reform of the Thatcher-Reagan years runs the risk of being mistaken in its goal if, obsessed by the image of a commodity jungle after unrestrained deregulation, it does not measure the reorganizations and the attempts at re-regulation taking place. The domination of capital, as Boltanski and Chiapello note, could not last

under the naked form of an exploitation and oppression without legitimacy or justification (there is no lasting imposition without hegemony, said Gramsci).

EXPLANATORY NOTE 3.1

What is on the agenda then is the redefinition of a global structure, a territorial organization, legal relations, based on the present productive forces (new technologies), the general conditions of accumulation of capital and social reproduction. It is in this framework that we see crises of transformation of the traditional political forces, Christian democracy, the British Conservatives, the French right, and the questioning of the function that they fulfilled since the war within the framework of the national state; and it is also in that framework that the transformation takes place of the Social-Democratic parties, whose elites, through the privatization of the public sector and the fusion of the private elites with the state elite, are increasingly organically integrated with the ruling strata of the bourgeoisie.

Given the weakness of the traditional bourgeois formations in the midst of reconversion, social democratic parties are often called often to assume temporary responsibility for the modernization of capital, dragging into their orbit the post-Stalinist parties without a project and most of the Green parties who lack the doctrinal wherewithal to resist accelerated institutionalization.

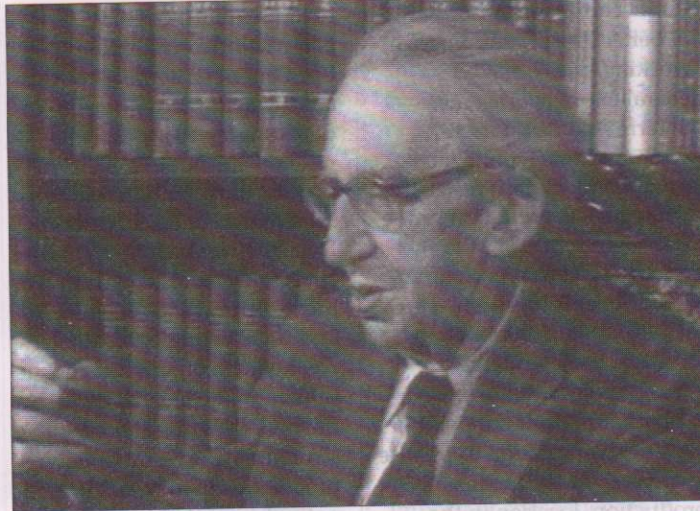
What it is outlined then, whether in the manifesto for a third way from Blair-Schr der, the projects for a social Europe of minimums, debated at the European summit in Lisbon, or the manoeuvres of the French employer's association on the subject of "social refoundation", is not a liberalism without rules, but a new wage relation in a framework of a previously unheard-of form of liberal-corporatism and

liberal-populism. It would be dangerously short sighted to think that the only possible form of populism in the future will be the kind of backward-looking sovereignty of people like Pasqua and Villiers in France.

The crusade for wage-earning shareholders, private pension funds (to the detriment of solidarity), and the "refeudalization" of the social link (denounced by Alain Supiot) through the legal primacy of the individual contract (often synonymous with personal subordination in strongly unequal societies) over the impersonal relation with the law; all this outlines a new capital-labour corporative association, in which a small coterie of winners exist to the detriment of the mass of victims of globalization. In certain situations, this tendency is perfectly compatible with convulsive forms of national-liberalism in the manner of Russia's Putin or Austria's right populist leader Jörg Haider.

On the other hand, it is inoperative and possibly deceptive, to deal with the Haider case by analogy with the fascist movements of the 1930s, instead of linking it to the contemporary and probably unprecedented forms of the rightist danger. If it is right to participate in the mobilizations against Haider (without forgetting, nevertheless, the complacency of some of his affluent detractors towards Berlusconi, Fini, Millon, Blanc and others) we should not forget that Haider is firstly also a product of thirteen years of coalition between conservatives and Social Democrats, the lack of democracy in the EU and austerity policies that allowed him to arrive where he is.

It is important to consider the singular forms that reactionary threats can assume in today's world, the role of regionalisms in European reconfiguration, and the marriages between nationalism and neoliberalism. In his way, Haider is not lacking in black humour when



George Lukacs

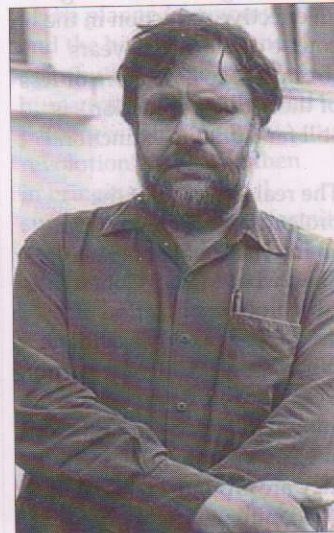
he says "Blair and I against the forces of conservatism".¹² Our two parties "want to escape the rigidities of the beneficent State without creating social injustice". Both want "law and order". Both consider that "the market economy, on condition that it is made flexible, can create new opportunities for wage-earners and companies." The Labour Party as well as the FPÖ has then a non-dogmatic approach "to that world transformation in which we live", where "the old categories of left and right have become irrelevant": "Are Blair and Labour right to accept the Schengen agreements and strict legislation about immigration?" Haider asks. And he responds, "If Blair is not an extremist, then Haider isn't either".

We should add that the regional populist Haider is as much in favour of NATO as Blair, and even more partisan than he in relation to the Euro!

EXPLANATORY NOTE 3.2

The recent appearance of an unpublished text of Lukacs from 1926, in defence of "History and Class Consciousness", invalidates to a certain point the ultra-Hegelian interpretations of Lukacs according to which the Party is the form finally discovered of the absolute Spirit.¹³ Attacked for "subjectivism" by Rudas and Déborine during the 5th Congress of the

Communist International, that of Zinovievist Bolshevization, Lukacs rejects the argument of Rudas, according to which the proletariat is condemned to act according to its "being" and the task of the party is reduced "to anticipating that development". For Lukacs, the specific (political) role of the party arises from the fact that the formation of class-consciousness constantly clashes with the phenomenon of fetishism and reification. As Slavoj Žižek says in his epilogue, the party plays for him the role of middle term in the



Slavoj Žižek

syllogism between history (the universal) and the proletariat (the particular), whereas for social democracy, the proletariat is the middle term between history and science (incarnated by the educating party) and in Stalinism, the party uses the sense of history to legitimize its domination over the proletariat.

THESIS 4: CONFLICTUAL DIFFERENCE IS NOT DISSOLVED IN AMBIVALENT DIVERSITY

As a reaction against a reductionist representation of social conflict to class conflict, now – according to postmodernism and similar theories – is the hour of plurality of spaces and contradictions. In their specific and irreducible singularity, each individual is an original combination of multiple properties. Most of the discourses of postmodernity, like certain tendencies in analytical Marxism, take this anti-dogmatic critique as far as the dissolution of class relations in the murky waters of methodological individualism. Not only class oppositions, but more generally conflictual differences, are diluted then in what Hegel had already called "a diversity without difference": a constellation of indifferent singularities.

Certainly what passes for a defence of difference often comes down to a permissive liberal tolerance that is the consumerist reverse of commodity homogenization. As opposed to these manoeuvres of difference and individualism without individuality, vindications of identity on the contrary tend to freeze and naturalize differences of race or gender. It is not the notion of difference that is problematic (it allows the construction of structuring oppositions), but its biological naturalization or its identitarian absolutization. Thus, whereas difference is mediation in the construction of the universal, extreme dispersion resigns itself to this construction. When one renounces the universal, says Alain Badiou, what prevails is universal horror.

This dialectic of difference and universality is at the heart of the difficulties that we frequently encounter, as illustrated by the discussions and the lack of understanding about equality or the role of the homosexual movement. Unlike the queer movement that proclaims the abolition of differences in

gender to the benefit of non-exclusive sexual practices, up to the point of rejecting all logically reductionist lasting collective affirmation, Jacques Bunker, in his "Adieu aux norms", outlines a dialectic of affirmed difference to constitute a relationship of force faced with oppression and its desired weakening in a horizon of concrete universality.

Queer discourse proclaims, on the contrary, the immediate elimination of difference. Its rhetoric of desire, in which the logic of social necessity is lost, advances a compulsive desire of consummation. The queer subject, living in the moment a succession of identities without history, is no longer the homosexual militant, but the changing individual, not specifically sexed or defined by race, but the simple broken mirror of his sensations and desires. It is not in the least surprising that this discourse has received a warm welcome from the US cultural industry, since the fluidity vindicated by the queer subject is perfectly adapted to the incessant flow of interchanges and fashions. At the same time, the transgression that represented a challenge to the norms and announced the conquest of new democratic rights is banalized as a constituent playful moment of consumerist subjectivity.

Parallel to this, certain currents oppose the social category of gender with the "more concrete, specific and corporal" category of sex. They claim to transcend the "feminism of gender" in favour of a "sexual pluralism". It is not surprising that such a movement implies a simultaneous rejection of Marxism and critical feminism. Marxist categories would have provided an effective tool for approaching questions of gender directly related to relations of class and the social division of labour, but to understand "sexual power" and found an economy of desire different from that of necessity, it would be necessary to invent an independent theory (inspired by "Foucaultian" biopolitics).

At the same time, the new commodity tolerance of capital

towards the gay market leads to the attenuation of the idea of its organic hostility towards unproductive sexual orientations. This idea of an irreducible antagonism between the moral order of capital and homosexuality allowed one to believe in a spontaneous subversion of the social order by means of the simple affirmation of difference: it was sufficient that homosexuals proclaimed themselves as such to be against it. The critique of homophobic domination can then end in the challenge of self-affirmation and the sterile naturalization of identity. If, on the contrary, the characteristics of hetero and homosexuality are historical and social categories, their conflicting relation with the norm implies a dialectic of difference and its overcoming, demanded by Jacques Bunker.

This problematic, evidently fertile when it deals with relations of gender or linguistic and cultural communication, is not without consequences when it concerns the representation of class conflicts. Ulrich Beck sees in contemporary capitalism the paradox of a "capitalism without class". Lucien Séve says that, "if there is certainly a class at one pole of the construction, the amazing fact is that there is no class at the other". The proletariat has seemingly dissolved in the generalized alignment; we are now obliged "to fight a class battle not in the name of a class but that of humanity".

Either, in the Marxist tradition, this is a banal reminder that the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat constitutes, under capitalism, the concrete mediation of the struggle for the universal emancipation of humanity. Or, we have a theoretical innovation heavy with strategic consequences, for the rest of the book by Lucien Séve: the question of social appropriation is no longer essential in his eyes (it is logical, consequently, that exploitation becomes secondary with respect to universal alienation); social transformation is reduced to "transformations [of "disalienation"]", no longer sudden, but permanent and

gradual"; the question of the state disappears in that of the conquest of powers (the title, formerly, of a book by Gilles Martinet), "the progressive formation of a hegemony leading sooner or later to power in conditions of majority consent", without decisive confrontations (from Germany to Portugal via Spain, Chile or Indonesia, this "majority consent" nevertheless has never been verified so far! We find the same tone in Roger Martelli, for whom "the essential is no longer to prepare the transfer of power from one group to another, but to begin to give to each individual the possibility of taking control of the individual and social conditions of their life". The very legitimate anti-totalitarian theme of individual liberation ends then in solitary pleasure in which social emancipation is diluted.

If there is certainly interaction between the forms of oppression and domination, and not a direct mechanical effect of one particular form (class domination) on the others, it remains to determine with more precision the power of these interactions at a given time and within a determined social relation. Are we merely dealing with a juxtaposition of spaces and contradictions that can give rise to conjunctural and variable coalitions of interests? In which case the only conceivable unification would come from a pure moral voluntarism. Or else, the universal logic of capital and commodity fetishism affects all spheres of social life, to the point of creating the conditions of a relative unification of struggles (without implying, nevertheless, to be so discordant to social times, the reduction of contradictions to a dominant contradiction)?

We do not oppose to post-modern restlessness a fetishized abstract totality, but argue that detotalization (or deconstruction) is indissociable from concrete totalization, that is not an a priori totality but a becoming of totality. This totalization in process happens through the articulation of experience, but the subjective

unification of struggles would arise from an arbitrary will (in other words, an ethical voluntarism) if it did not rest on a tendencial unification of which capital, understood here under the perverse form of commodity globalization, is the impersonal agent.

THESIS 5: POLITICS DISSOLVES NEITHER IN ETHICS, NOR IN AESTHETICS

Hannah Arendt feared that politics would finally disappear completely from the world, not only through the totalitarian abolition of plurality, but also by the commodity dissolution that is its dark side. This fear is confirmed by the fact of having entered an era of depoliticization, where the public space is squeezed by the violent forces that accompany economic horror and by an abstract moralism. This weakening of politics and its attributes (project, will, collective action) impregnates the jargon of post modernity. Beyond the effects of the conjuncture, this tendency translates a crisis of the conditions of political action under the impact of temporal space compression. The modern cult of progress means a culture of time and becoming to the detriment of space, reduced to an accessory and a contingent role. As Foucault indicated, space becomes the equivalent of death, fixed, immovable, opposed to the richness and dialectical fecundity of living time. The diabolical rotations of capital and the planetary widening of its reproduction overturn the conditions of its valuation. It is this phenomenon that expresses the feeling, so intense for two decades, of reduction of the duration of the instant and disappearance of the place in space. If the aesthetization of politics is an inherent recurrent tendency to crises of democracy, the admiration for the local, the search for origins, the ornamental overload and the manoeuvres of authenticity undoubtedly reveal a distressed vertigo verifying the impotence of politics faced with conditions that have become uncertain.

That politics is, in a first approximation, conceived as the art of the shepherd or that of a weaver, implies a scale of space and time, in which the city (with its public place and the rhythm of elective mandates) is the form. Citizenship is spoken of much more than the city and the citizen becomes unavailable in the general disorder of scales and rhythms. Nevertheless, we live still "in a period where there are cities and where the problem of politics arises because we belong to this cosmic period during which the world is delivered to its luck". Politics remains as the profane art of duration and space, of drawing up and moving the lines of the possible in a world without Gods.

COROLLARY 5.1: HISTORY IS NOT DISSOLVED IN A PULVERIZED TIME WITHOUT TOMORROW

The postmodern rejection of the grand narrative does not imply only a legitimate critique of the illusions of progress associated with the despotism of instrumental reason. It also means a deconstruction of historicity and a cult of the immediate, the ephemeral, the discardable, where medium term projects no longer have space.

In the conjugation of the misadjusted social times, political temporality is precisely that of the medium term, between the fugitive moment and the unattainable eternity. It now demands more a mobile scale of duration and decision.

COROLLARY 5.2: PLACE AND SITE ARE NOT DISSOLVED IN THE FRIGHTFUL SILENCE OF INFINITE SPACE

The misalignment of the geographic mobility of capital (money and commodity) with respect to the relative or very conditional mobility of labour appears as the present form of unequal development that allows transfer of surplus value in the epoch of absolute imperialism: the unequal development of temporalities

complements and relegates that of spaces. Consequently a mobile scale of territories, the importance acquired by the control of flows, the outline of a world order supported by a mosaic of weak, auxiliary states subalterned to commodity sovereignty.

However, collective action is organized in space: the meeting, the assembly, the encounter, and the demonstration. Its power is exerted in places and the very name of the event is related to dates (October, July 14, July 26) and to places (the Commune, Petrograd, Turin, Barcelona, Hamburg,...) as emphasized by Henri Lefebvre, only the class struggle has the capacity to produce spatial differences irreducible to the single economic logic.

COROLLARY 5.3: STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY IS NOT DISSOLVED IN ECONOMIC NECESSITY

The political sense of the moment, the opportunity, the bifurcation opened to hope, constitutes a strategic sense; that of the possible, irreducible to necessity; not the sense of an arbitrary, abstract, voluntarist possible, of a possible where everything would be possible; but a possible determined by an authority, where the propitious moment emerges for the decision adjusted to a project, an objective to be attained. It is, at the end of the day, sensed from the conjuncture, the response adapted to a concrete situation.

COROLLARY 5.4: THE OBJECTIVE IS NOT DISSOLVED IN THE MOVEMENT, THE EVENT IN THE PROCESS

Postmodern jargon willingly conciliates the taste for the event without history, happening without past or future, and the taste for fluidity without crisis, continuity without rupture, movement without objective. In the post-Stalinist slang of resignation, the collapse of the future ends logically at degree zero of strategy: to live the moment without enjoying, without

ties! The ideologists of the disappointing tomorrow are satisfied, consequently, with preaching a "Communism that is no more", conceived as a "gradual, permanent movement, always unfinished, that includes moments of clashes and ruptures".¹⁴ Advocating "a new concept of revolution" "a revolutionary process without revolution, a revolutionary evolution", or still more "to go further on without delay", towards an extra temporal immediacy.¹⁵ Affirming that "the revolution is no longer what it was since there is no longer a single moment where evolutions crystallize", "there is no longer a great leap, a great decline, nor decisive threshold."¹⁶

Certainly, there is no longer a single revolutionary moment, a miraculous epiphany of history, but moments of decision and critical thresholds. But the dissolution of the rupture in the continuity is the logical counterpart of a representation of the power possible to obtain with individual disalienation: "the progressive formation of a hegemony that leads sooner or later to power within the conditions of majority consent", says Lucien Sève. That "sooner or later" that defines a politics outside time seems at least imprudent in the light of the century and its tests (Spain, Chile, Indonesia, Portugal). Above all it ignores the vicious circle of fetishism and commodification, the conditions of reproduction of domination.

Zygmunt Bauman



COROLLARY 5.5: THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE IS NOT DISSOLVED IN THE LOGIC OF THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Between the social and political struggles there are neither Chinese walls nor watertight compartments. Politics arises and is invented inside the social, in the resistance to oppression, the statement of new rights that transform victims into active subjects. Nevertheless, the existence of a state as separate institution, simultaneously false incarnation of the general interest and guarantor of a public space irreducible to private appetite, structures a specific political field, a particular relationship of forces, a language of conflict, where social antagonisms are pronounced in a game of displacements and condensations, oppositions and alliances. Consequently, the class struggle is expressed there in a manner that is mediated under the form of the political struggle between parties.

Everything is political? Doubtless, but only to a certain extent and up to a certain point. In the "last instance", if you wish, and in diverse ways.

Between parties and social movements, more than a simple division of labour, there operates a dialectic, reciprocity, and complementariness. The subordination of the social movements to the parties would mean a statization of the social.

Inversely, politics in the service of the social would rapidly lead to lobbying, corporative, a summary of particular interests without general will. Since the dialectic of emancipation is not a long and tranquil river: popular aspirations and expectations are diverse and contradictory, often divided between the exigency of freedom and the demand for security. The specific function of politics consists indeed of articulating them and conjugating them.

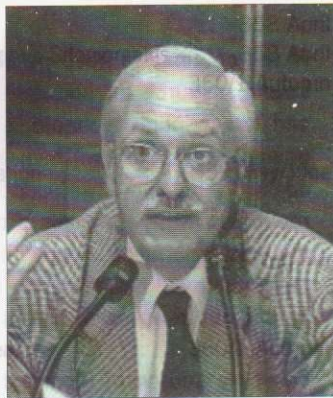
EXPLANATORY NOTE 5.5

Commenting on the disappearance of distinctive authentic political choices and the fact that the confusion of class alternatives is translated, in the Anglo-Saxon countries, in the tendency to the elaboration of rainbow platforms, conceived as incoherent collages of slogans that seek to catch all and whose priorities are obtained from the opinion polls, Zygmunt Bauman examines the capacities of the social movements to contribute an answer to the crisis of politics.

He emphasizes the way in which social movements undergo the effects of postmodernity: a limited lifespan, weak continuity, temporary aggregates of individuals reunited by the contingency of a unique difficulty and dispersed again as soon as the problem is solved. It is not the fault of programmes and leaders, says Bauman: this inconsistency and intermittency rather reflects the neither cumulative nor integrative character of suffering and shortage in these dissonant times. Social movements have then a poor capacity to demand great transformations and to pose great questions. They are poor substitutes for their predecessors, mass political parties. This impotent fragmentation is the faithful reflection of the loss of sovereignty of the state, reduced to a police station in the midst of commodity *laissez faire*.¹⁸

Zizek sees in the dispersion of the new social movements the proliferation of new subjectivities on the background of resignation, a consequence of the defeats of the century. This return to states, estates and bodies would be the logical consequence of detotalization and obscuring of class-consciousness. Rejection of politics responds to the political limitation of the social made by the "political philosophies" of the last decade. However, the same gesture that tries to draw the

Ernesto Laclau



limit between politics and non-politics and, to remove certain areas (beginning with the economy) from politics is "the political gesture par excellence".¹⁹

For Laclau, emancipation will indefinitely be contaminated by power, so that its complete realization would mean the total extinction of freedom. The crisis of the left would be the result of a double end to the representations of the future, under the form of the bankruptcy of bureaucratic Communism and the bankruptcy of Keynesian reformism. If a possible renaissance implies the "reconstruction of a new social imagination", the formula remains very vague since Laclau does not face any radical alternative.

In the controversy that opposes them, Zizek insists, faced with the new domesticity of the centre left, in "keeping open the utopian space of global alternative,

even if this space must be left empty while it waits for its content". In effect, the left must choose between resignation and the rejection of the liberal blackmail according to which any perspective of radical change would have to lead to a new totalitarian disaster.

Laclau does not give up on the perspective of unification. He sees, on the contrary, in the radical dispersion of the movements, that makes unthinkable their articulation, the same failure of postmodernity.

Leaderless, reticular, decentred movements, forced by defeat to be cornered in a subaltern internalization of the dominant discourse? But also redeployment of the social movement in the different scopes of social reproduction, multiplication of spaces of resistance, affirmation of its relative autonomy and its own temporality.

All this is not negative if it goes beyond simple fragmentation and thinks about articulation. If this is not done, there is no another outcome than dispersed lobbying (the very image of subaltern as effect of domination on the dominated cf. Kouvelakis) or authoritarian unification by means of the word of the master, or a scientific vanguard, that would reduce political universalization to scientific universalization (a new avatar of "scientific socialism") or an ethical vanguard that would reduce it to the universality of the categorical imperative.

Without, in either case, approaching the process of concrete universalization by means of the extension of the area of the struggle and its political unification. There is no another way out in this perspective but to go back to the universalising theme, capital itself, and the multiple effects of domination produced by commodity reification. ■

NOTES

- 1 See Alex Callinicos, "Imperialism Today", in "Marxism and the New Imperialism", Bookmarks, London 1994.
- 2 See Gilbert Achcar, "La Nouvelle guerre froide", PUF, collection Actuel Mane, Paris 1999.
- 3 See Ernest Mandel, "The Meaning of the Second World War", Verso, London 1986.
- 4 See V. Garonne, "Les révolutionnaires du XI-Xe siècle", Free Champ, Paris.
- 5 Lucien Séve, "Commencer par les fins", La Dispute, Paris 1999.
- 6 Roger Martelli, "Le communisme autrement", Syllepse, Paris 1998.
- 7 Eric Hobsbawm, "The Age of Extremes", Penguin, 1994.
- 8 Ibid, page 103.
- 9 See the contributions of Catherine Samary, Michel Lequenne, Antoine Antous in "Critique communiste", number 157, winter 2000.
- 10 Nicos Poulantzas, "Classes in Contemporary Capitalism", NLB, London 1975; Baudelot and Estabiet, "La Petite bourgeoisie en France", Maspero, Paris 1970. See also the collection of magazines "Critique de l' économie politique", "Critique communiste", "Cahiers de la Taupé".
- 11 Stéphane Beaud and Michel Pialoux, "Retour sur la condition ouvrière", Fayard, Paris 1999.
- 12 "Daily Telegraph", February 22, 2000.
- 13 Rediscovered recently in Hungary, the Lukacs text has been published in English under the title "Tailism and Dialectic", followed by an epilogue by Slavoj Zizek, Verso, London, 2000.
- 14 Pierre Zarka, "Un communisme à usage immédiat", Plón, Paris 1999.
- 15 Lucien Séve, "Commencer par les fins", op. cit.
- 16 Rober Martelli, "Le communisme autrement", op.cit.
- 17 Laclau, op.cit, page 66.
- 18 "Letter from Zigmunt Bauman to Dennis Smith", in Dennis Smith, "Zigmunt Bauman, Prophet of Post modernity", Polity Press, Cambridge 1999.
- 19 Zizek, op.cit., page 95.

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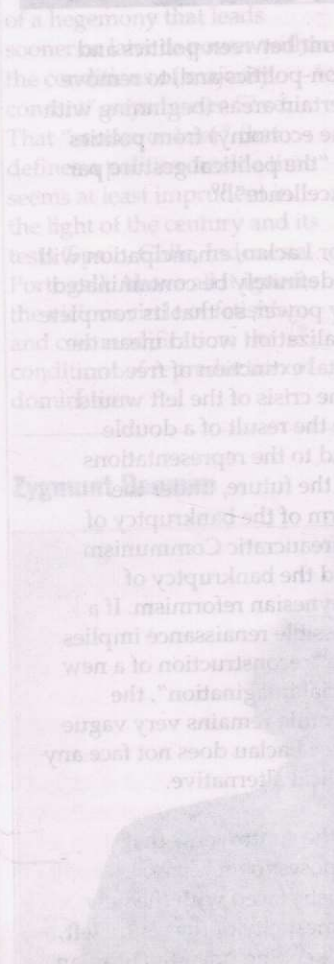
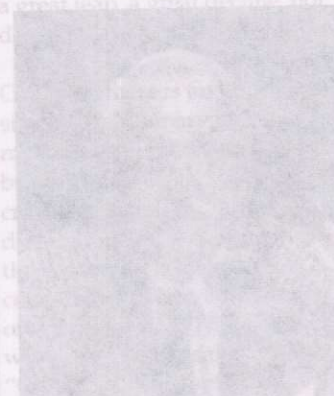
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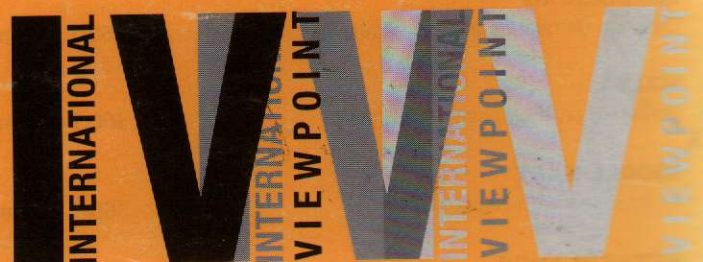
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