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Rebellion of the youth

[Spain: first cracks in the regime]
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Rebellion of the youth



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THE UPSURGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE OPENS THE FIRST CRACKS IN THE REGIME INHERITED FROM FRANCO

By Santiago Lupe

For a week now, the main squares of the cities of the Spanish state have been the focus of the whole world's attention, especially for militant workers and young people, who have attentively followed how, in one of the countries of Europe most battered by the capitalist crisis, a broad youth movement was triggered against the dark perspectives of the future to which the bosses, the bankers and the politicians who serve them are sentencing us. The dozens of gatherings and camps throughout the world have been good evidence of that.

The process got going with the massive mobilizations that took place on May 15 under the slogan, 'For real democracy now'. The repression of the most massive mobilization of them all, that in Madrid, unleashed a reaction for the release of those arrested, in the form of a camp, that, after it was first cleared out, grew massively and spread throughout the country. At the end of the week, coinciding with municipal elections and elections in various autonomous regions, tens of thousands of people defied the bans on assembling issued by the Central Electoral Board, by packing the squares, participating in assemblies of thousands of people and raising sharp condemnations of the political regime of the 1978 Constitution, its institutions, and the austerity policies to make us workers pay for the crisis.

The IMF's 'lost generation' breaks Zapatero's social peace

The main leading group of the so-called 'Spanish May' has been precisely the youth, that confront a dramatic situation of a lack of prospects for the future, with official unemployment at 45%, a very offensive process of gentrification of education, hunger wages ... Inspired by the revolutionary processes of the Arab world, using tools like the social networks and certain methods like seizing the streets, tens of thousands of young people are leading a struggle that could signify a turning point regarding the weak response that had been made. Likewise, broad groups of the middle classes and workers sympathize with the camps and assemblies and are even participating in them, though the workers are still acting as 'citizens', that is, not using their own class methods, like strikes. The most interesting thing has been some actions

by groups of youths to show their solidarity and merge with workers in struggle. This movement is being born while the autonomous administrations are preparing brutal attacks on healthcare and education, and on their workers, which could provoke big mobilizations, as is now happening in Catalonia.

Cracks begin to open in the regime

The protest continues, after the elections. Although the electoral victory of the right wing came as a 'nasty surprise' in a part of the broadest groups of the movement, a vanguard of thousands continues participating in the protest and the assemblies. The discussions on what to do, how to extend, are going through the plazas, and assemblies are beginning to occur again in outlying neighbourhoods and municipalities. Without being able to speculate on the tempos and the forms that it will adopt, recent days have been exposing the first cracks through which it is possible to end up overthrowing the regime of the monarchy of Juan Carlos I.

The demands of the movement call into question the phoney democracy that serves the employers and the banks; they demand an end to institutions that are the chief supports, like the monarchy, putting an end to the two-party system and corruption and other profound democratic demands, that do not fit in the 1978 Constitution. Likewise, many



of the demands to resolve the problems of unemployment, housing, public services, among others ... question the system of capitalist exploitation, like distributing hours without reducing wages, expropriating the housing of speculators, nationalizing the banks ... And all this is happening with the background of an enormous economic crisis that leaves scarcely any room for any concession – what they ‘feel’ now are attacks – and with political – especially the PSOE – and union interventions – the union bureaucracy closely tied to the PSOE itself – in increasing disrepute. A large vanguard expresses these tendencies on the left, but it is feasible and necessary that they go out extending to broad groups of the workers and people.

For a Revolutionary Constituent Assembly, for a workers’ republic

In order to achieve that, it is necessary that the young people from the camps get together and meet with the workers and other groups, beginning with those that are in struggle. It is necessary to organize the movement in the Institutes, the Universities, the neighbourhoods, and especially in the workplaces, by setting up rank and file committees and assemblies that will coordinate among themselves, to broaden and strengthen the movement. It is essential that the workers intervene with their own methods to administer the final blow to the government, the regime and the bourgeoisie. In this sense, the trade-union left wing and the militant and rank and file groups in the largest unions must also join this struggle, and, together with the far left, combat the anti-union and anti-political prejudices existing in part of this vanguard, that make it difficult for the struggle to make a leap. This is a matter, first of all, of overcoming the sell out union leaderships’ policy of social peace, by imposing a plan of struggle and the general strike.

Only in this way will we be able to resolve the demands that we are raising. Through struggle, we must impose a constituent process throughout the Spanish state, a Revolutionary Constituent Assembly, made up of representatives, elected by every so many inhabitants, where we will discuss how we will resolve all the democratic questions and all our economic and social needs. The radical democratic solutions, which thousands of us are already demanding in the streets, are only going to be possible with our struggle. The bosses’ parties and the monarchy are going to defend themselves tooth and nail to prevent that, which is why this process can only be begun, by those who fight, on the ruins of the current regime, by a provisional government formed by the workers and groups in struggle that will overthrow the regime inherited from Franco and impose a workers’ republic.

May30, 2011

THE PSOE COLLAPSES AND THE RIGHT GETS A BIG ELECTORAL SUCCESS

The ‘outrage’ expresses, first of all, growing detachment between the PSOE – the left wing of the Spanish two-party regime – and a big group of its electorate, a part of which has fled to the spoiled ballot and None of the Above (which has risen to 280,000 votes, the biggest under democracy), abstention or voting for options considered more to the left (like the IU which got 200,000 and other extra-parliamentary parties, that, all together, got 300,000 more votes than in 2007). On the left, it is fitting to emphasize the historic result of the left coalition abertzale Bildu (313,000 votes, 25% of the Basque Country, trailing only the PNV), and, to a lesser extent, the good result of the CUP in Catalonia (62,000 votes). The right wing, headed by the PP, got an historic 10 point advantage over the PSOE, though it only managed to increase by 550,000 votes. Other ‘winning’ options include the Spanish-chauvinist populism of the UPyD (with 460,000 votes, 208,000 in the capital) and the xenophobic PxC (that ran in several town councils of the Barcelona industrial belt, with 65,000 votes). So, while tendencies of struggle go on developing on the left (with the awakening of young people), the Spanish right wing, with a long tradition and a still-broad social base, and even ready to be politically active, if that is necessary, is also moving forward. The end of the social peace is gradually turning into a social polarization, which heralds the difficult test that the Regime of ’78 will have to pass in the coming period.



[MASSIVE MOBILISATIONS IN SPAIN]

[INTERVIEW WITH SANTIAGO LUPE, FROM CLASE CONTRA CLASE]

I am speaking to you from the Plaza Catalonia of Barcelona, renamed this very night, because of the massive assembly of more than 5,000 people, as Plaza Tahir, in tribute to the square that was the epicentre of the Egyptian Revolution, with the shout of 'The revolution starts here!' Today, the Central Electoral Board threatened to repress all the camps, especially the one in Madrid, where the movement is even more massive, and that caused even more people to go to the squares.

LVO: Santiago, tell us how this whole movement began.

Well, Spain is one of the countries that is experiencing the international economic crisis most severely, and, up to now, both the working class, and the young people had hardly responded at all to the attacks they are suffering. However, unrest at the effects of the crisis and at the austerity measures that the government has been imposing had been growing. This unrest had been expressed precisely in demonstrations like that on April 7 in Madrid, that brought together 5,000 young people, in the struggle against the cuts in healthcare in Catalonia, the demonstrations by the alternative unions on May Day, etc. All this was 'warming up the motors', that emerged this Sunday, May 15, with a day of demonstrations in more than 60 cities in the whole country, that were truly massive. It was a day that was called through the social networks, and that brought together tens of thousands, especially of young people, but also workers. The two biggest demonstrations were those in Barcelona, with around 15,000 people and the one in Madrid, with some 25,000. It is a movement that expresses, above all, a condemnation of the situation of unemployment of masses of people, of evictions of thousands of families, of a lack of prospects for an entire generation of young people, those of us whom the IMF itself calls the 'lost generation'. At the same time, all the austerity measures are being condemned, like the labour reform, raising the age at which workers can retire, elimination of collective negotiations, that they are agreeing on right now, between the government and the union bureaucracy, and still others, that will come later, like cuts in healthcare and education, that they are trying out in Catalonia. The movement also expresses a very deep criticism, a denunciation, of the political regime, of the currently existing democracy. There is weariness and constant criticism of the institutions, the parties of the regime.

LVO: How did the subject of the sit-ins, the method of struggle with camps, emerge?

Look, the epicentre of the protest is in Madrid, which had the precedent of the April 7 demonstration and where the mobilization was much more massive. The government implemented a policy of selective repression, not repressing all the protests, but really trying to repress the one that was the head of the movement, that in Madrid. When the mobilization ended, the cops charged at the demonstrators, beating people and making 23 arrests. It was as a result of this repression that the youths who had made the march, decided to gather at the Puerta del Sol, mainly to demand the release of the comrades. This was between Sunday night and Monday. Early Monday morning, the cops again attacked and cleared out the camp, arresting another comrade. Against this new repression, this type of actions is beginning to spread to many other cities. The first of them is Barcelona, where the same Monday night, the camp appeared, at the same time that, in Madrid, the youths again occupied the Puerta del Sol, more than 2,000 young people, and set the camp up again. On Tuesday, we can say that the movement made a leap again, because the camps spread to more than ten cities, and, above all, both in the Madrid and Barcelona camps, there was massive growth, with the Madrid camp holding more than 10,000 people.

LVO: And what are the main characteristics of the movement?

In the movement, above all, spontaneity predominates. The people who are participating in the camps, and who participated in the demonstrations, especially young people, are giving free rein to an unrest that until now had not been expressed in the form of protests, because of the paralyzing effect that such an economic crisis has, and because of the union bureaucracies' criminal policy of social peace that they maintain with the government. Especially beginning from today, Wednesday, when the mobilizations again made a leap, the movement has been extending itself to many other groups. It is beginning to connect with groups, for instance, from the student movement or the movement of workers who are fighting against cuts in healthcare in Catalonia, against the layoffs in many enterprises, in defence of their collective

contracts, like the bus drivers in Zaragoza. That is, these young people have begun to converge with these groups that were in struggle before May 15. So, what has now happened is that the process has grown massively: the assemblies have doubled and tripled, and, likewise, some groups of workers that were already in struggle, have begun to make their way to the camp, to show their solidarity with the young people, and to try to converge. As examples I can mention to you, the Zaragoza bus drivers, who had a march today for their contract and ended that demonstration at the camp, or here in Barcelona, workers of Alstom, a train factory, who are facing the dismissal of 40% of the staff and came here to the camp this morning; female health care workers who also showed up today, or the fire fighters (who are civilians, not cops), who are also in struggle for their contract and came here.

LVO: What perspectives can be imagined of as a result of this situation?

In the first place, the movement is on the rise; it is likely that the very success that the assemblies have now had regarding attendance and converging with other groups, is probably going to cause the next assemblies to be even larger. All the forecasts indicate that, in this sense, we are far from having reached the maximum. But, in perspective, we have to say that this inrush of youth is going to have an effect on the groups that have been mobilizing and, in fact, we are already seeing that. They are creating a more favourable climate for the possible emergence of a real radicalization and extension of the struggles currently going on. The need for these camps to act as a centre of resistance and coordination of all the existing struggles is even beginning to be expressed in the assemblies. Probably the inrush of young people on May 15 could signify a turning point, between a stage in which the crisis was striking very hard, but no type of response was taking place, and a different stage in which the government is going to continue imposing very harsh plans, but it is going to have to confront growing resistance by workers and young people. We can say that the social peace, in which the government was working with the union bureaucracy for all these months, is beginning to have a serious opponent and beginning to see a real possibility of failing.

May28, 2011

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At the important assemblies taking place in the main cities in Spain there are growing concerns among the youth as to how to continue the struggle. The weight of some anarchist and autonomist currents makes it difficult to develop this discussion in clearer and more productive way. Basing themselves on the rejection of the main political parties and the trade union bureaucracy by the protestors, these currents encourage the rejection of all workers' organisations and political groups. By doing so, they deny the right of the different political tendencies to campaign for their policies among the demonstrators, many of whom are already members of these groups. This also affects non-aligned activists who are prevented from grouping themselves with those who share similar views and who would like to defend and fight for their positions. The denial of the democratic right of expression to those organisations which support the struggle represents a step back for the development of the movement as a whole.

Zaragoza: The 'workers' committee' visits striking bus workers

In Zaragoza the 15M held a massive mobilization of 5,000 people. The comrades from CcC, along with the Left Students' Union, various parts of the CGT unions (which included Telepizza) and other young workers, were calling for and organising for mobilisations in institutions, universities, and companies. That was one of the resolutions from the Youth Workers and Students Conference, which we were a driving force in organizing on 7M (May 7th), and which served as a means to form class relations, such as strengthen the youth organization, surround the struggles with solidarity, and join the fight against government cuts and the bureaucracy looking to negotiate deals.

During the last week the mobilization grew to more than 10,000 people in the Pilar Plaza, where there was a big demonstration of people banging pots and pans to challenge the new ban on the encampments. Since the first day they have been trying to unite the 'indignados' with the sector of workers in struggle. In the first assembly on Tuesday the 17th 200 people attended and Javier Anadon, TUZSA (Urban Busses) Business Committee President, spoke. They voted unanimously that the demonstration in support of

[POLEMIC: TWO STRATEGIES FOR THE MOVEMENT IN THE SQUARE]

By Santiago Lupe

Two main strategies can be distinguished. On the one hand, the same groups that are opposed to the freedom of tendencies are trying to transform the camps into an end in themselves. The anarchists and autonomists' main goal is to build the camps 'here and now' as an 'autonomous space', where those participating can resolve by their own means some of their everyday problems – even if only in a partial way. They are trying to build 'a city within a city', a parallel world to the existing one. This leads to a disregard for the political struggle against the government, the main political parties and the bosses, and, in turn, rejects the desire of the majority to formulate concrete demands. Moreover, by doing this, they impose an obstacle to the development of the movement by preventing it from linking up with workers in struggle – who don't share this utopian and individualistic strategy. This tactic is in conflict with their stated aim of creating a 'parallel society', since isolation only assists the government in its attempts to evict the protesters from the squares.

On the other hand, there are political groups that believe that the movement has to attack the government and the main political parties, as part of the struggle to stop all the adjustment measures and put an end to reactionary institutions such as the monarchy. Their hope is to transform the world in a radical way, not to build a precarious 'alternative world'. They want to take the struggle out of the squares – a desire that many participants have already expressed – that is, to transform the camps in centres of organisation and coordination in order to link up with other sectors in struggle. Without this the camps risk becoming symbolic and isolated protests – with little impact. For the comrades in Clase contra Clase the strategic task is to link up with organised workers, who, participating with their own methods of struggle, can move the current protest from the stage of occupying the streets to the stage of paralysing the country.

May 26, 2011

[TWO EXPERIENCES OF THE GROUP CLASE CONTRA CLASE]

TUZSA on Wednesday the 18th would end in an assembly, which duplicated the attendance with the presence of many workers.

The comrades from CcC participated in the students' committee and the workers' committee, both of which participated in the striking bus workers' picket to show their solidarity. In the students' committee high school and university students have a strong presence, and they want to hold assemblies in institutes and faculties. In the workers' committee there are young precarious workers, like those in Telepizza and the contracted workers at City Hall, teachers and industrial workers from various unions and those who aren't unionized. This week they're going on 'expeditions' to GM (the main business in Aragon, with 8,000 workers) and the major unions' head offices to demand a general strike and to speak with the workers, encouraging them to join the strike and surpass their betraying leaders.

Terrassa: workers and students together in a rally

Terrassa city is one of the many cities in Catalonia that have joined the protestors who are camping in the city plazas to demonstrate against the economic, social and political

system. Through the use of social media a rally was called on the 18th to show solidarity with the other camping protestors. The rally was very successful with over 500 people attending. Those who attended included workers who are in struggles, such as the health workers and students who have been fighting against the budget cuts for a long time as well as immigrants and the unemployed. Everyone participated in a general assembly, where a consensus was reached to continue camping in the plaza for another day

In the following days the protestors have been organizing in committees and subcommittees (communication, activities, infrastructure, organization, coordination...). There are also debates organized around different issues, such as the environment, foreclosures, health, education, and immigration.

The encampment is taking place in a symbolic place: (Raval de Montserrat), which is a plaza in front of the city hall and is now called the People's Plaza. Over 2,000 people participated this weekend. But possible the most important event was the high school students' manifestation on the 25th, when over 1,000 students came out to the plaza and headed towards the Mutua hospital to show their support for the health workers' rally.

[A NEW 'SPRINGTIME

From Estrategia Internacional

The year 2011 began with a wave of workers' and popular uprisings and mobilizations. Although the epicentre of the intervention by the mass movement is in the Arab and Muslim world, where different revolutionary processes are underway, it is beginning to have repercussions in other regions of the planet, although it is even expressed in less profound and radicalized actions. With the precedent of the general strike Guadeloupe in 2009, the mobilizations and strikes in Greece in 2010, and the workers' and secondary school youths' resistance in France against Sarkozy's reform of the pension system, this wave of struggles seems to be announcing the beginning of a new, rising cycle of class struggle, against the background of the international economic crisis that has already lasted for three years.

The whirlwind of mass actions in the Arab and Muslim world

A review of the main events shows the vertiginous course that the entry on the stage of the masses in the Arab world has taken.

Tunisia, December 17, 2010: A young man with a university degree, but who was earning a living with a street vendor's job, decided to immolate himself as a protest, because of the situation of poverty to which Ben Ali's dictatorial government condemned him, just like the great majority of the young people, workers and unemployed. This tragic act ignited a tremendous workers' and popular uprising that, on January 14, 2011, toppled Ben Ali, who had remained in power for 23 years, with the support of France, the former colonial power and main commercial partner, and the support of the United States, that valued his services in the 'war on terror'. Ben Ali's downfall did not totally calm the waters: on Sunday, February 20, thousands of Tunisians mobilized again, demanding the downfall of the 'transitional government', headed by Mohamed Ghannouchi and demanded the calling of a constituent assembly.

The Tunisian process unleashed a revolutionary wave that spread like wildfire through northern Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Muslim world. The streets of Yemen, Jordan, Bahrain, Morocco, and Algeria are filling up with young people, workers, women, the urban poor, the unemployed, who are asking for the end of the despotic regimes – of dictators or monarchs – that are the ones that

for decades have, with an iron fist, kept the most brutal conditions of oppression that allowed the imposition of privatizations, austerity plans, and precarious job conditions, for the benefit of the local elites and the big imperialist transnational corporations.

Egypt, January 25, 2011: Millions of people, the great majority, young people, without jobs or with hunger wages, seize the streets of Cairo, Alexandria and other cities of the country, demanding the resignation of Hosni Mubarak, one of the main allies of the United States and Israel, in power since 1981. The dictator resists. The demonstrators stay in Tahrir Square. The army protects itself without repressing and meanwhile negotiates with Mubarak and the Obama administration on how to organize the departure of the dictatorship, without giving the masses a victory. While marches take place, and the army stands guard without repressing the protests, Mubarak, faced with pressure from the masses, tries to stay in power, until an impressive strike wave, that brings the main sectors of the economy to a standstill, ends up precipitating Mubarak's downfall on

February 11. The army, which was a central part of the regime and remained intact as the main support of the state, takes charge of the government. Big groups of the middle classes seem to be content with the promises of democratic freedoms made by the governing military junta, but the workers, encouraged by the victory won, spread the strikes, challenging the prohibition against striking and union meetings that the military government tries to impose. They forced the dictator to leave, and now they want wages, better living conditions, the freedom to form unions, and they are demanding the departure of directors of enterprises appointed by Mubarak. The prediction is still open: the possibility exists that the army, supported by imperialism, the local bourgeoisie and its political variants, will successfully dodge the 'transition' and establish a 'reactionary democratic' outcome, but the possibility also exists that the dynamics of a confrontation with the working class will again attract broad groups of the masses to the struggle. Or that the junta, that took into its own hands the drafting of a new Constitution without any participation by the people, will, in the end, yield very little and also, by that way, again push the masses into the streets.

Yemen, January 28: Tens of thousands of people in Sana'a,

OF THE PEOPLES']

the capital of the country, and other cities, demand the resignation of Ali Abdullah Saleh, in power for 33 years. That is the first in a series of mobilizations that have continued, in spite of harsh repression from the regime. The driving forces of the struggle against the Yemeni dictatorship are profound. Saleh became President of then North Yemen in 1978, and, in 1990, continued in the presidency of the Republic of Yemen, after the capitalist reunification of the country in the same year. This ally of the US and of the Saudi monarchy has, for years, been conducting a dirty war against the Shiite population of northern Yemen and against a separatist movement in the south. He is President of the most impoverished country in the Arab world, in which almost half the population lives in destitution, and unemployment reaches 35% of the population. However, this small country has a strategic importance for the United States, that is carrying out covert military actions on Yemeni territory, allegedly in pursuit of Al Qaeda combatants and is trying to organize a change of government with opposition leaders linked to US interests.

Libya, February 15: Repression against an anti-government mobilization in the city of Benghazi, in the east of the country, unleashed a local insurrectional uprising against Gaddafi's regime. The security forces went over to the side of the demonstrators, who not only took possession of weapons, but also control of the city. But when the mobilizations reached Tripoli, the capital and Gaddafi's seat of power, the response was brutal. Planes bombed neighbourhoods and shot at demonstrators. In only a few days, the repression had already left hundreds, if not thousands, dead and disappeared. Gaddafi, an allegedly 'Third World' colonel who became neo-liberal, a friend of Bush, Blair and Berlusconi, who has stayed in power since 1969, using for himself and his family clan a large part of the considerable petroleum income, decided to hold out in power by bullets.

Undoubtedly, because of the degree of repression from the regime and the radical nature of the uprising, it is the most severe process, with strong elements of state decomposition, which opens up the perspective of a civil war with an uncertain outcome, or even a chaotic situation with confrontations between tribes, in a country that is the twelfth-largest exporter of petroleum in the world. The imperialist powers, that have in the last decade made good deals with Gaddafi, went over to opposing the dictator – unlike Italy, with strong,

crucial interests in its former colony – hoping that maybe his downfall will open other opportunities for their interests, provided that the scenario of disintegration and chaos is avoided, although it cannot be ruled out either that, if this possible outcome takes place, it will be used as an excuse to deploy some force linked to NATO. For their part, the Egyptian military, that are supposed to manage their own 'transition', are worried that the break-up of the Libyan army will lead to a situation out of control in northern Africa. For that reason, they would continue supporting Gaddafi. The uprising in Libya has exposed the governments that have lined up in defence of the dictator, as Daniel Ortega did, or that up to now have been silent about the massacre, as in the case of Chávez. Even Fidel Castro justified what Gaddafi did, in the name of an alleged 'resistance against imperialism'.

Bahrain, February 16: The security forces open fire on a mobilization that, inspired by Tunisia and Egypt, was asking for better living conditions, claiming the lives of two demonstrators. This small country, with a 70% Shiite population and 30% Sunni, has been governed since the end of the eighteenth century by a Sunni monarchic dynasty, linked to Saudi Arabia. The engine of the rebellion is the marginalization of the Shiite majority – that makes up the bulk of the country's working class – from the structures of political power. Although its demographic and political weight is less, the crisis in Bahrain could have unpredictable consequences for imperialism and the monarchy of Saudi Arabia. Bahrain is the headquarters of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, indispensable for the operations of the occupation forces in Iraq. Moreover, it could be a source of inspiration for the Shiite population of Saudi Arabia, concentrated in the eastern oil provinces.

In just a few weeks, this explosive intervention by the mass movement of northern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, driven by the consequences of the economic crisis – especially the rise in food prices – and hatred for the dictatorial, pro-imperialist regimes, appears to have encouraged resistance beyond the borders of this region.

Mass mobilisations start spreading to other parts in the world

In Oaxaca, Mexico, memories of the 2006 Commune are being revived. Teachers returned to the streets to protest

against a measure enacted by President Calderón that favours private education. On February 15, teachers and other workers confronted police for seven hours. The following day, they went on strike and held a mass demonstration to condemn the repression and demand the resignation of government officials.

On February 18, in Bolivia, there was a mass protest called by the Bolivian Trade Union Confederation – the COB – against the inflationary effects of Evo Morales' failed 'gasolinazo' and for wage increases. Although the normal role of the COB leadership is to defuse workers' struggles, the fact that they called a demonstration is confirmation of the widespread discontent with the MAS government's unpopular measures.

Even in the United States, where the political scene has been dominated by the emergence of the extreme right-wing Tea Party movement, the offensive launched by Wisconsin's Republican governor, Scott Walker, which aims to remove the collective bargaining rights from public sector unions, has provoked a powerful response from workers, teachers and students, who mobilised in their tens of thousands and organised solidarity actions in several states on February 23. Although the leadership of the unions and the Democratic Party play a role in controlling the movement, the response to the attack is an important symptom that might foretell the awakening of the American working class, which has been hit hard by the economic crisis and has steadily lost political ground since the 1980s.

As we write these lines, workers and youth in Greece have resumed the struggle against the EU and IMF adjustment plans, confronting riot police on the streets of Athens.

It is a long time since there have been so many developments in the class struggle taking place simultaneously. These events are already exerting influence on the economy. The political process in the Arab and Muslim world is leading to a rise in the price of oil and other basic commodities such as wheat. The uncertain fate of Libya, a major oil supplier to several European Union powers, is spreading fears in the international markets that uncontrolled oil price rises may result in a worsening of the international economic crisis. Furthermore, given the geopolitical importance of the region for the United States, the loss of key allies like Mubarak may deepen the crisis of imperialist hegemony.

At the beginning of a new period

After 30 years of bourgeois restoration, we are witnessing the early stages of a new historical period in which the masses are returning to the fore, although the scope and the outcome are not yet clear.

Historical analogies, however imperfect, are very useful

for analysing new processes. In this regard, we have used the analogy of the Bourbon restoration in order to understand the deeper meaning of the neoliberal counterrevolution. Although no historical process can be repeated, the current wave of struggles can be compared with the 'Springtime of the Peoples' – the revolutionary wave that began in France in February 1848 and that quickly spread to Prussia and many other parts of Germany, the Austrian Empire and Hungary, which was under the latter's control, Poland, Italy, and other peoples of central Europe, against the background of the economic crisis that had erupted in 1846. This uneven wave of revolts started to be contained as Europe emerged from economic crisis in the middle of 1850, and was completed with the end of the German process the same year and the coup by Louis Napoleon Bonaparte in France on December 2nd, 1851.

The limit of this historical analogy is that in contrast to the nineteenth century, this new 'Springtime of the Peoples' occurs in the imperialist epoch of crisis, wars and revolutions. Today's working class is not making its first revolutionary appearance (as was the working class in the June 1848 insurrection in France), but has gone through the experience of revolution and counterrevolution in the twentieth century.

However, we prefer the analogy with this period, which saw the end of the European restoration that opened with the fall of Napoleon in 1815, than with the period of the uprising that started in 1968 when the masses were not emerging from a long period of defeat and which had a major proletarian component from the outset. Current events are marked by the consequences of three decades of bourgeois restoration and it is necessary to realise that the coming cycle of class struggles will be tortuous, but at the same time difficult to contain because they take place in the context of a global capitalist crisis. In 1968 the youth were also protagonists, although with the presence of a significant radical vanguard which had been steeled in the fight against the Vietnam War in several countries. The events of 1968 took place while the post-war boom was still underway – the crisis would only erupt with force in 1973 – whereas today, despite the fact that the capitalists have managed to avoid a depression, albeit at the cost of creating a colossal debt, the crisis is deeper than that which occurred in the mid-70s.

The fight to build a revolutionary leadership

The imperialist powers were taken by surprise by the events that hit their most strategically important allies and agents – Ben Ali was as important to France as Mubarak was to the USA. Western hypocrisy has been clearly exposed - in particular its rhetoric in defence of 'human rights' has been discredited. For more than 30 years, the USA, France, Italy and Great Britain, among others, have been sustaining brutal dictatorships, from Mubarak to the Saudi monarchy.

Once the initial confusion was over, the policy of Obama and the EU was to try to preserve as much as possible of the old regimes – which were challenged by the masses on the streets – while appearing to be on the same side as the masses. Their support for ‘transition agreements’ is an attempt to maintain existing geopolitical relationships and protect western business interests in the region. As far as Egypt is concerned, this implies, in the first place, maintaining the agreements with the state of Israel and remaining subordinate to American requirements. The coming weeks and months will determine whether the workers and exploited masses of the Arab world manage to impose their demands and free themselves from the dominance of imperialism and its local partners, or whether the ruling powers manage to contain the discontent and replace the dictatorships with regimes that are more or less democratic in form, but that do not question the fundamentals of imperialist order, as was the case with the end of the Latin America dictatorships in the 1980s. However, the situation in the Arab world is different in so far as there has not been a series of historical defeats similar to the counterrevolutionary coups that put an end to the 1970s uprisings in Latin America.

The factor weighing against the restoration of the old order, albeit in a democratic form, is the presence of the world capitalist crisis, which makes it difficult to grant the substantial concessions that would be necessary to demobilise the mass movement. Moreover, the autocratic character of the majority of the regimes means that political institutions that are favourable to imperialism are very weak.

From a working class perspective, the main weakness, as we have pointed out, is the low level of revolutionary consciousness with which the class enters the struggle after 30 years of bourgeois restoration. The masses, in particular the most advanced sections, do not have a clear strategy to defeat the power of the bourgeoisie and create their own state, and this prevents the struggle from developing to its full potential. It seems that a clear anti-imperialist consciousness hasn’t developed yet, although the regimes and governments against which these uprisings are taking place are openly pro-imperialist and in the past the masses have expressed their anger against them because of their support for the Iraq war and their complicity with Zionist attacks on Palestine. With this in mind, the imperialist countries and the local ruling classes are seeking to contain the uprisings in their first stages in order to derail them.

Everything will depend on the fact that in the course of this period the new workers’ vanguard and the youth manage to set up revolutionary organisations that enable the workers, poor peasants and the whole of the exploited masses to take power.

In the region which is today the epicentre of the uprisings, with the exception of Algeria the revolutionary Marxist

forces historically have been weak, although the workers’ and mass movement has an important anti-imperialist tradition. However, the uprisings will have repercussions around the world. The return to the scene of independent action by the masses favours the building of revolutionary workers’ parties, particularly in those countries where the working class is organised, has maintained high levels of militancy over recent years and has a strong Trotskyist tradition, as in France, where our comrades are promoting the Collective for a Revolutionary Tendency (Platform 4) within the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), and in Argentina, where the PTS has taken important steps in the organisation of the workers’ and youth vanguard. The events we are witnessing are reinforcing our commitment to the struggle to set up revolutionary parties rooted in the working class and to rebuild the IV International, the World Party of the Social Revolution.

February 23, 2011



THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY AND HAMAS AGAINST THE ARAB SPRING

By Miguel Raider

'Free Palestine' is the slogan written by hand on several bills of the new shekel, the new Israeli currency in circulation in the State of Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The campaign of writing on paper currency is being promoted by a group of young Palestinians, extremely moved by the new fresh air of the Arab Spring that is rustling from the depths of hearts. Without a doubt, the emotion of the Palestinian masses in view of the revolutionary process opened up in northern Africa and the Middle East expresses the imagining of new perspectives after years of casualties and sad defeats. But, in direct contrast, both Al Fatah, the party that runs the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank, and Hamas, the party that governs the fate of the Gaza Strip, showed notable suspicion.

Amid the political earthquake, the appearance of Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, proposing the formation of a national unity government to his enemies in Hamas was surprising. Fayyad supported the initiative 'to proceed from the concept of security put into practice by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, because it is not different from that implemented by the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank'.

Considering the possibility of that proposal, the Hamas representative, Sami Abu Zuhri, responded that 'the formation of a national unity government could only be achieved in the context of a national solution that covers all aspects and not something partial', although he considered it hardly credible because of the constant detentions and kidnappings of Hamas militants on the West Bank: 'the only real way towards reconciliation is putting an end to the arrests and releasing those detained'.

If the real movement of the Arab Spring stepped out of the box of the geopolitics imposed by imperialism and the State of Israel, at the same time, positions between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas about putting in check the iron control exercised over the large masses, appear to have converged. How can one understand this, except that Hamas harbours some expectation of an agreement with the same Palestinian Authority that is backing the blockade over Gaza! The same one that, during the brutal Zionist massacre of Operation Cast Lead, at the end of 2008, lined up with Mubarak, who closed the Rafah Border Crossing and blocked the

underground tunnels, isolating the Gaza Strip inhabitants for hunger and death. The same one that in 2007, resorting to a raid by its militias, tried to topple Hamas, democratically elected in the January 2006 legislative elections.

Perhaps the total capitulation to the Zionist state revealed by the television network Al Jazeera through the leak of 1,700 documents provided after the Wikileaks affair was not enough. The 'Palestine Papers' exposed the surrender by the Palestinian Authority of the right of return of 7.1 million Palestinians who live in the diaspora, one of the most heartfelt demands, in exchange for acceptance of a 'symbolic' return of no more than 5,000 Palestinians, not to mention accepting the annexation of the Zionist colonists' settlements in East Jerusalem and the Esplanade of the Mosques (a sacred space for the Muslim religion) as part of the State of Israel, and collaboration with the Zionists and British intelligence services in devising a plan for eliminating Hamas.

From what was stated above, it is not unexpected that both parties intended to repress the first mobilizations in solidarity with the masses of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, etc., in February. The Palestinian Authority broke up dozens of marches and rallies in Ramallah, that were agitating, 'Mubarak must go, the settlers from Israel must go', while in Bethlehem and East Jerusalem several people were wounded. In Gaza, Palestinian young people gathered on the Square of the Unknown Soldier and were attacked by Hamas squads, which detained six women. Besides, a few days later, Zionist troops shelled a medical supplies factory in Jabalya, as well as built-up areas in Khan Yunis, Zaytun, and Rafah.

If in 2007 US imperialism and the State of Israel encouraged the division between Gaza and the West Bank, now they are encouraging the agreements between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas to counteract the rebellious consequences that the Arab spring is already causing.

Isolated from the Arab masses for years by pro-imperialist governments like those of Mubarak, Ben Ali, the Jordanian and Saudi monarchies, etc., now the destiny of the Palestinian people is tied to the development of the revolutionary processes of the Middle East and northern Africa, a point of enormous support to increase by millions the struggle for the legitimate democratic right to national self-determination.



STOP THE IMPERIALIST BOMBING AGAINST LIBYA!
FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY DOWNFALL OF GADHAFI'S DICTATORSHIP!

Statement of the FT-CI, March 22, 2011

On March 19, a coalition of Western powers, headed by the United States, France and Great Britain, with the support of the pro-imperialist governments of the Arab League and cover from the UN, began the military attack against Libya announced in Resolution 1973, approved by the UN Security Council. A barrage of bombs and missiles launched from the sky and from warships and submarines stationed on the Mediterranean coast, has already fallen on Gadhafi's military targets on the outskirts of Tripoli, Benghazi, and other cities, although the civilian victims of these bombings are still not known.

This imperialist intervention, called 'Odyssey Dawn', is presented by the United States, France, and their allies as a 'humanitarian' action that has the alleged aim of 'protecting the lives of civilian' Libyans. As we have been charging, this is a big hypocrisy, the same people who are attacking Gadhafi today and are self-proclaimed champions of 'democracy', were the firmest supporters of the dictatorial Arab regimes, like that of Ben Ali and Mubarak, and continue supporting their agents against the popular mobilization, as Obama does with the monarchy of Bahrain and of Saudi Arabia.

With the intervention in Libya, the imperialist powers are seeking to prevent Gadhafi's eventual downfall from possibly resulting in the emergence of a regime that could challenge their interests. More generally, they are trying to win legitimacy by appearing on the side of the 'rebels' in order to be able to intervene more directly and limit the wave of popular uprisings that has been shaking the countries of northern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula and to be able to guarantee 'transitions' or diversions. This process, begun in Tunisia, continues to spread, as shown by the renewed popular mobilization in Morocco against the monarchy, a regime allied with Spain, that among other things, contributes to containing the waves of immigration to the European Union; or, like the process in Yemen that has made a jump in the attempt to overthrow Saleh, one of the main allies of the United States in the 'War on Terror'.

The military operation 'Odyssey Dawn', is not free from contradictions, and its result is still uncertain. The European powers were divided about the intervention in Libya. Sarkozy's government, because of domestic political reasons, in order to change its image, because of having supported

the Tunisian dictator Ben Ali, and, more importantly, owing to its interests in the Mediterranean, decided to recognize the National Transition Council (NTC) unilaterally, and it was a fervent driving force in the military intervention, together with Great Britain, while Germany was opposed and abstained in the UN Security Council voting.

Internal divisions also appeared within the US government, an expression of the United States' declining hegemony.

In a matter of days, President Obama changed position and decided to promote the intervention despite the fact that the Pentagon chiefs had explicitly declared their opposition to a new military incursion in another Muslim country, taking into account that the United States is still committed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This change of position is explained by a combination of factors that range from not allowing France to play the leading role, to trying to reverse the lack of US influence in the new processes in the Arab world, that was exposed in Hillary Clinton's recent trip to Egypt, where she did not manage to meet with the youth groups that were part of the multi-class bloc that toppled Mubarak.

The Arab League, composed of dictatorships and pro-imperialist monarchies opposed to the masses that are rebelling, supported the resolution and gave a lot of cover to the military action, preventing the peoples of the region from viewing it as another intervention of the United States, next to other powers, in defence of their interests or to obtain petroleum. But, faced with the prospect that the bombings will end up causing a large number of deaths in the civilian population, they have begun moderately to question the extent of the coalition's attacks.

Russia and China are doing the same thing; although they allowed the intervention to proceed, by not using their veto power in the UN Security Council, they are not abstaining from criticizing the bombings.

Nor is it clear what the political objectives of the intervention are, and whether the partners of the imperialist coalition that is running the intervention share them. This opens up several

scenarios: one is that the objective is limited to achieving, after several days of bombings, that Gadhafi will negotiate his surrender, in exchange for immunity, and establishing a 'national unity' government between the 'rebels' and the remains of Gadhafi's apparatus. Another possible scenario, although more traumatic, is that of a temporary division of the country between a zone controlled by the 'rebels' in the east and another under the control of Gadhafi or his supporters in the west. But it cannot be ruled out either that an objective of 'regime change' through military means, if it is not easily obtained, will entail an escalation of the imperialist intervention, even with ground troops, opening up the possibility of a counter-insurgency war like that of Iraq or Afghanistan, but in this case, facing the coasts of Europe.

These contradictions became public knowledge a few days after the beginning of the attack, with a discussion about who should continue to lead the operation, in which, on the one hand, the United States and Great Britain, which support the notion that command of the operation should go to NATO, and France, which has reservations, confront each other.

In view of Gadhafi's military superiority, the 'rebel' leadership of the Libyan National Transition Council, instead of appealing to the active solidarity of the workers, young people and popular groups that, from Tunisia to Yemen and from Senegal to Morocco, are demonstrating their heroism in order to confront their own reactionary governments, has for weeks been requesting imperialist intervention to restrain Gadhafi, creating illusions among the thousands who have revolted in Benghazi and other cities, that imperialism could act in favour of the interests of the popular masses. Even worse, the NTC, mainly composed of Gadhafi's former officials, prosperous middle-class groups, and bourgeois opponents, has promised the different powers that it would respect the oil deals and imperialist investments in the country. At the same time, it has not had the least policy for the hundreds of thousands of immigrant labourers who work in Libya, that are the majority of the working population, and who have been left to their fate by both sides.

The reformist left, including the Green Parties of several European countries, the Socialist Party and the Party of the Left in France, among others, in order to justify their own shameful capitulation to the imperialist military intervention, as they have already done with 'humanitarian' arguments in the war in the former Yugoslavia or in Kosovo, have been using the social-democratic argument that military intervention by the United States, France, Great Britain and their allies will allow the Libyan people to get democratic conquests.

We revolutionary Marxists have clearly explained that imperialism is not intervening so that the popular uprising will triumph against Gadhafi, but in order to attempt to

impose a puppet government serving its interests, as it did after the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Nor is the solution, as Chávez and other 'progressives' have proposed, to subordinate oneself to Gadhafi, who has not only turned into a pro-imperialist dictator, but has embarked on a counter-revolutionary war to crush the popular uprising that called his control into question, as part of the uprisings in the region. The only progressive solution for the Libyan people is to struggle vigorously both against imperialist intervention and to topple Gadhafi's reactionary dictatorship. In this struggle, the allies of the Libyan people are the workers and the popular groups that have revolted in northern Africa and in the Arab countries, against the dictatorial regimes and the pro-imperialist monarchies; the workers, the young people and the millions of immigrants that can disrupt the warmongering policy of Sarkozy, Zapatero & Co. in the imperialist countries, and all the exploited people of the whole world.

We call on workers', students', and popular organizations, human rights organizations and parties of the left, to organize actions and mobilizations to condemn the imperialist military aggression and in solidarity with the struggle of the Libyan people.

Down with the imperialist military intervention in Libya!

Down with Gadhafi! For a workers' and popular government!



CONGRESS OF THE NPA: A STEP FORWARD IN BUILDING A WORKERS' AND REVOLUTIONARY LEFT IN THE NPA

Interview with Danièle Cobet and Vincent Duse

In the National Congress of the NPA last weekend, Platform 4, in which the militants of the FT-CI in France participate, got 3.7% of the delegates' votes, and from now on, will have 6 members in the national leadership (CPN) of this party. We interviewed two of them: Vincent Duse, a worker and union activist of the CGT at the Peugeot Mulhouse factory, and Danièle Cobet, a student and short-term contract worker, a militant of the FT-CI.

What is the balance you draw from the Congress that has just ended?

Danièle Cobet: I do not believe we can say that it was a good Congress. In the first place, the small number of delegates shows an obvious setback of the militant forces of the NPA, that now are not significantly greater than the forces of the former LCR at the moment of its dissolution. For us, this is a complete diagnosis that confirms what we were explaining in the discussions of the outcome in the election assemblies of the Congress. This is the fact that two years after the founding of the NPA, the idea that the LCR leadership had proposed was false: they suggested that the act of erasing the strategy and class demarcations of the party would allow building a 'mass party'. The balance sheet of the NPA is that it could not keep as members all the 'anti-liberals' that it tried to attract, since the 'Left Front' constitutes a more interesting alternative for many of them, without, however, having been able to attract a large number of the youth and workers that viewed the NPA and Olivier Besancenot very sympathetically either. In a sense, it is the result of the ambiguous politics and the constant zigzags of the leadership; it does not go all the way, either in the sense of making a real party of the 'left of the left', or of developing a party for the class struggle and the social revolution, that can win the most radicalized elements of the vanguard of the workers and the youth. And it is precisely this that the Congress could not resolve, leaving the party in a profound impasse. None of the questions that appeared faintly before the Congress was decided, because of this, and, in this sense, it was a kind of 'no Congress'. Unfortunately, the reality of the other side of the Mediterranean (on the first day of the Congress, Mubarak fell) had only a very limited impact and contrasted with the poverty of strategy during all the debates.

Vincent Duse: And it is especially a negative balance sheet for the outgoing leadership, that found itself reduced to only

40% of the Congress; it was unable to impose the majority on any discussion and is divided, as the long episode of the election of the members of Platform 1 for the next CPN showed. They went so far as to interrupt the discussions of the Congress for almost two hours, to hold a platform [faction] meeting, and the discussions were very bitter especially because, owing to the reduction of the number of members of the former majority in the leadership (before the Congress, they were around 70%), there was a certain number of internal leaders who were not satisfied with finding themselves 'excluded' from the leadership, which benefited the central nucleus of Platform 1, regrouped around the cities of Paris, Marseilles, and Toulouse. Another episode that shows the difficulties of the former majority in imposing its politics is the subject of the vote on the question of religion and the Islamic veil. The central nucleus of the leadership had achieved a victory on this subject in the local Congresses, around a motion that explicitly stated that a woman with a veil could not represent the party, under the pretext of the principle of secularism. In the Congress, the alternative position was the one that got a victory in the voting, which caused a real crisis, with an interruption of the session and submitting to a vote successive motions that sought to postpone this decision for a National Conference by, in fact, cancelling the decision of the sovereign Congress.

You defended a platform in the Congress. What were the results?

VD: We were delegates to the Congress, in accordance with the proportion of votes obtained in the local Congresses; in any case, Danièle was elected together with another comrade in the Saint-Denis local Congress, where Platform 4 got 18 votes. In my case, it is a little different, as I had a right to intervene in debates while being a member of the outgoing leadership. In the local Congress of Mulhouse, we proposed another comrade, who was also elected a delegate. We were 12 delegates in total, and me, for Platform 4 in the National Congress, on the proportion of 119 votes that we got in all the local Congresses. This could seem small, but, considering the configuration of the NPA and the different Platforms, this was not guaranteed in advance. In addition to Platforms 1 (the former majority) and 3 (the right wing of the Party, that wants an agreement with the reformist left), it was Position 2 that opposed any agreement with the Left Front, and that has a discourse centred on the struggles. This

position focused a large part of the votes of the militants, plus the left of the NPA. In this setting, and facing a big campaign of stigmatization they made against us, accusing us of being sectarian, entrists, Lambertistes, etc., 119 votes was rather a good result. This was the reflection, first of all, of the influence of some comrades in their respective Congresses, as was especially the case of the Congress of Chartres/Dreux, where Position 4 came in first with 9 votes, and also the Congress of Mulhouse. Likewise, it was the reflection of the good intervention of our comrades who played a key role in the Interprofessional Assembly of Saint-Denis during the movement of autumn, and, to a lesser extent, in the Ecole Normale Supérieure of Paris. But, apart from these 'small bastions', what was interesting is that we were able to travel to the local Congresses throughout France, to overcome the prejudices of numerous militants against us, in order to get isolated votes sometimes, but, above all, it permitted us to connect with many activists of the party whom we did not know beforehand, and with whom we will continue discussing.

DC: On the other hand, at the time of the National Congress, we were the only platform that got additional votes for our texts and for the election of the leadership, that is, in addition to our delegates. Thus, we received 15 votes for the texts, and 13 for the election of the leadership, that is, 3.7%, which allowed us to send 6 comrades, among whom are Vincent, Manu Georget from Philips, and me, to the national leadership of the NPA. Likewise, we were the only platform that had industrial workers presenting its texts on the dais of the Congress. All this allowed us to make numerous connections, especially with some workers from the party, and with comrades who voted for Position 2, but who informed us of their agreement with our positions and with our political initiative. Another big aspect is that we managed to make the outgoing leadership back down concerning an attack that they wanted to set up against us through a motion that said that the members of the former CRI Group, who are part of Platform 4, were entrists and that 'they were not part of those belonging to the NPA'. Behind this motion was concealed a policy of isolating and stigmatizing our entire Platform, and, faced with the rejection of this motion by the majority of the local Congresses and our firm intervention within the Commission that was handling this matter in the National Congress, the leadership found itself forced to withdraw its motion and did not submit it to a vote. The modifications in the statutes that it was proposing to permit the leadership to dissolve a committee when it considered it 'not in keeping' with the statutes or the founding principles was also rejected. From this point of view, we can say that the results of the Congress were very positive for us.

What are the differences with Platform 2, and how do you view the post-Congress period?

VD: I know Platform 2 very well, because I participated, as a member of the previous CPN, in the first regroupment

within the leadership, that originated Position B at the time of the conference on the regional elections, and later created Position 2. We have many points of agreement regarding the criticisms about the outgoing leadership and the electioneering politics that it is carrying out. However, and it is exactly for this reason that I left, with the aim of building a different platform, its criticisms continue to be about the 'deviations' in the direction and the 'errors' of the leadership. It is because of this that the fundamental project of these comrades is a sort of return to the 'original NPA', without ever questioning the ambiguities that already existed in the creation of the party, especially between reform and revolution, in order to lay the foundations for a real workers' revolutionary party, and not just a 'less electioneering anti-capitalist party'. This logic leads them to an incessant search for an agreement with a part of the former majority, in order to build a 'new majority', as they say themselves. In the Congress, their discourse combined a certain radicalism with constant winks at Platform 1 and a lot of talk about party 'unity'. That said, no agreement was possible with a part of P1, and these comrades finished by presenting their own draft text of an appeal [at the conclusion of the Congress], which we called for approving, with some criticisms. The discussions will continue, and we do not rule out the possibility of taking steps in common with all or some, of these comrades.

DC: That's true. Already in the local Congresses and in the National Congress, several activists mentioned to us their hesitation between voting for us or for Position 2; others showed that they wanted us to work together, and there were even comrades that admitted to us that they were voting for the positions with a little bit of suspicion, but they wanted to see if the comrades were going all the way, and they drew good conclusions from the political struggle that they are carrying out. This shows a little bit of the state of mind in which we met each other, ready to carry out struggles in common inside the new leadership around all the points that unite us, hoping that these comrades will move forward, through their own experience, to a deeper questioning about the current character of the NPA. Meanwhile, we will continue putting all our efforts at the service of building an openly revolutionary tendency in the NPA, with the comrades who voted for us, and especially trying to win to this perspective, at least a small part of the new generation of workers that were the spearhead of the movement in autumn. Especially because we are convinced that the class struggle in France is going to continue developing, under the blows of the world crisis and under the revolutionary winds that are coming from the Arab world, which is the best setting for building a truly revolutionary tendency. In this sense, we think that the recognition of our tendency that we got in the Congress, as well as the great respect from numerous activists and advanced workers for Vincent and Manu, put us in good conditions to go towards this objective.

February 21, 2011

[PARALYSIS AND STRATEGIC CRISIS]

By Juan Chingo

The first congress of the New Anticapitalist Party of France (NPA), held last weekend in Montreuil just outside Paris, ended in a dismal failure. None of the platforms presented was able to win a majority. The outgoing leadership – including the spokesman Olivier Besancenot and historical leaders such as Alain Krivine – barely got 41.8% of the votes for their orientation document. It was not even possible to produce a joint declaration by the congress due to strong disagreements between the main platforms: Platform 3 (PF3) or the ‘unitary platform’, which is in favour of an agreement with the reformists at any cost, that is with the Parti de Gauche (Left Party) of Jean-Luc Mélenchon, former minister in Lionel Jospin’s social democratic government, and the French Communist Party (PCF); Platform 2 (PF2), called the ‘identity platform’ by the bourgeois press, which wants a candidacy of Olivier Besancenot for the 2012 presidential elections and proposes to return to ‘the NPA of its origins’ and to orient towards the workplaces; Platform 1 (PF1), which vacillates between PF3 and PF2 on the electoral issue and defines itself as ‘anticapitalist’ and ‘unitary’. As a result of this lack of definition, seven members of the outgoing leadership decided to join the Parti de Gauche. This occurs in the context of a loss of adherents, who went from about 9,000 at the founding congress two years ago to about 3,550 who voted in the electoral assemblies prior to this congress [1]

A strategic crisis

The crisis of the NPA is not conjunctural but rather of a strategic character. Its roots are in the basis on which the NPA was founded, as a broad anti-capitalist party without a clear strategic and programmatic view that sought to unite revolutionaries with militants of radical reformist origin, that is to say anti-neoliberals who were disenchanted by the social liberal turn of the Socialist Party and its old ally in the government of the ‘plural left’, the French Communist Party (PCF) – a disenchantment that had been expressed in the formation of alternative, feminist and ecologist movements and the rejection of the referendum on the European Constitution in 2005.

This deliberately centrist orientation, devised by the leadership of the former Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), sought to rid itself not only of a clear conception of the revolutionary transformation of society (as exemplified by the LCR’s abandonment of the struggle for dictatorship of

the proletariat, even before the formation of the NPA), but of any reference to revolutionary communism, even by name. This was a product of the vision that a ‘new phase’ had opened after the fall of the Berlin Wall in which the old lessons and revolutionary reference points of the imperialist epoch of crises, wars and revolutions had become obsolete and should be replaced by the famously vague definition of ‘Socialism in the 21st Century’ – taken from the Chavez movement in Venezuela. On the positive side, the NPA differentiates itself from reformism, unlike the scandalous capitulation of the former LCR’s sister section in Brazil, which had a minister in the capitalist government of Lula, and the support given by Sinistra Critica in Italy to the imperialist government of Prodi with the participation of their senator, Turigliatto, in the parliamentary bloc of Rifondazione Comunista (giving a vote of confidence for Prodi, for the war credits for Afghanistan, Lebanon, etc.). However, the explicit abandonment of a revolutionary strategy and programme leaves a door open permanently to reformism.

Initially encouraged by the results of the presidential elections of 2007, when Besancenot came out ahead not only of Lutte Ouvrière (an organisation of Trotskyist origin, the historical competitor of the LCR whose principal figure was their presidential candidate until that time, Arlette Laguiller) but also of the Greens and the PCF, the ‘magic’ and the high expectations could be maintained during the early years of Sarkozyism, when due to the crisis of the Socialist Party (PS), the ‘young postman’ – as the bourgeois press refers to Besancenot – appeared to be the best opposition to Sarkozy. These were exceptional conditions in which the NPA occupied the space vacated by the old reformism – which was in crisis following the bourgeois restoration and the capitalist offensive over two decades. This had led to the transformation of the PS into an openly bourgeois party after two neoliberal governments led by François Mitterrand that cost it its working class rank and file. But now these conditions have been eroded. Today, the historical crisis of capitalism that we are living through has made the space between anti-capitalism and social-liberalism one of the most populated on the political spectrum, with a proliferation of organisations and political positions: for example, the above-mentioned Parti de Gauche (created in the same image as Die Linke in Germany), the relative rehabilitation of the PCF (given its historical decline), the Fédération pour une Alternative Sociale et Ecologique (FASE), the left wing of the green movement, and the left wing of the PS led by Benoît

Hamon, who has been obliged to move to the left.

Even though the NPA participated in the powerful movement of the working class and the youth in France in the autumn of 2010 and in the wave of strikes using radical tactics in 2009, it suffered from a lack of real implantation in the workplaces and had no programme or strategy independent of the trade union leaderships. In this context, it was unable to offer the most minimal alternative and could not even strengthen itself by recruiting a new layer of workers out of the struggle. Even though this generation is not politically organised behind a radical alternative, the NPA was unable to attract the best elements.

Two years after its creation, the hypothesis that underpinned the founding of the NPA has been proved totally wrong both at the level of the political-electoral arena, where its plans were increasingly thwarted as a result of the discrediting of neoliberalism after the outbreak of the crisis, and at the structural level, in the context of the bourgeois offensive against the masses and the response to this, where the NPA showed its impotence in the class struggle.

Internal paralysis

In the face of this strategic crisis, PF3 sought to resolve the ambiguities of the original project in a rightwards direction, while PF2 stated that the majority of the outgoing leadership had made an opportunist turn, undermining the foundations on which the NPA was created. PF2 was focussed on 2012, in rejecting any agreement with the reformists and maintaining Besancenot's candidacy at all costs, without the slightest unitary gesture. In this context, PF1 tried to maintain an increasingly difficult balancing act which led to the failure of this congress, where the leadership preferred a disastrous congress to aligning with one or other of the two opposing poles, which could put the unity of the NPA at risk. It was an attempt to strike a compromise without breaking unity. However, the NPA is increasingly battered, in crisis and totally paralysed politically – a situation which the congress itself has worsened.

The role of the left of the NPA and the emergence of Platform 4, the revolutionary tendency

There is no doubt about the overtly liquidationist character of PF3, whose policies imply nothing less than the creation of a 'social and political front' with the reformists – in other words, a strategic alliance with them. In the face of this policy, PF2 appears as a force resisting the rightward shift, given the ambiguities of PF1 even in the electoral arena. However, the strategic orientation – that of going back to the origins of the NPA – is completely impotent and unable to overcome the incorrect programmatic bases that are responsible for the

strategic crisis affecting the NPA – a crisis which, sooner or later, unless there is a 180-degree reorientation, will condemn it to splits and failure. These programmatic and strategic limitations of PF2 – a platform which includes parts of the left wing of the former LCR [2], the majority of the former JCR youth organisation and some groups which joined the NPA like L'Étincelle (the former LO faction), Gauche Révolutionnaire (linked to the CWI), La Commune, etc – explain the emergence of PF4, which includes militants of the FT-CI together with important workers' leaders (some of the few that exist in the NPA), militants of CLAIRE and other militants from various backgrounds. Without a programmatic and strategic reorientation diametrically opposite to that proposed by PF3, it will be impossible to build a revolutionary instrument of the necessary calibre to intervene in the struggles that the French working class has been developing since 1995 and that experienced a qualitative leap in the autumn of 2010 – a kind of a 'defeated' dress rehearsal of the struggles to come.

To succeed we need an openly revolutionary party. The crisis is generating radicalism and discontent, but this will not mechanically translate into Marxism and class consciousness. For this reason the NPA has to respond to this anger with the same radicalism, but from an internationalist and class-based perspective – in stark contrast to the extreme right-wing National Front of Le Pen that presents a populist, xenophobic and racist alternative to the oppressed classes.

To postpone to the indefinite future decisions on programmatic and strategic issues and on the nature of party – anticapitalist or openly proletarian and revolutionary – as the main platforms (including PF2) propose, can only lead to the demoralisation of the best elements on the left of the NPA and facilitate the offensive that the reformist currents are carrying out from the outside, pressuring the NPA to break out of its 'isolation', joining them as a way to reach the masses. But numbers are not always the critical factor. The only way to reach the masses is through a revolutionary reorientation of the NPA, which will enable it to play a role in coming struggles and win a new generation of workers to the ideas of communism and proletarian revolution. Any attempt to find a shortcut will surely lead to defeat.

[1] This includes a fairly high percentage (over 10%) of proxies, i.e., adherents who for various reasons did not personally participate in the assemblies. The term adherents is scientific because membership of the NPA does not imply a daily militancy based on any structure, or even weekly participation in meetings of its committees, a policy explicitly defended by the leadership of the NPA against the model of professional activism, saying that each person should contribute to the NPA according to his or her abilities.

[2] Another part is in PF1, which creates tremendous pressures on the leaders of PF2, who are constantly seeking to assemble a 'new majority' as a solution to the crisis of the party.

February 17, 2011

[CUBA AT THE CROSSROADS: REFORM OR REVOLUTION?]

By Eduardo Molina and Graciela López-Eguía

The task of the Sixth Congress is to approve the document, 'Guidelines of Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution', a basis for the gradual introduction of 'structural and conceptual' changes in the so-called 'Cuban model'. With them, Raúl Castro, with Fidel's support, proposes intensifying a very dangerous course for what remains standing of the revolutionary conquests. The fundamental measures are 'adjustments' against the workers and the people, reductions of social services to 'put an end to the improper gratuities,' and changes in business management (to lead state enterprises to compete under criteria of 'profitability' that many enterprises will be unable to achieve, and that aim at dismantling the nationalized economy). They also introduce a bigger opening to non-state forms of property and production (self-employed work, cooperatives, mixed enterprises) and new concessions to foreign capital. Likewise, under the campaign against 'egalitarianism' and for labour productivity, and with the transfer of more than a million workers to the private sector, there is an attempt to liquidate full employment and create a labour market that does not currently exist. In short, they aim at a kind of gradual 'Cuban road' of capitalist restoration, while keeping the monopoly of political power in the hands of the Communist Party (CP) (which shows certain similarities to the Chinese or Vietnamese case).

On the eve of a bureaucratic Congress

The Sixth Congress will meet almost 14 years after the previous one. Its preparation took place under iron control by the apparatus and, although the Cuban leadership states that there was a broad discussion in some 127,000 meetings, attended by 7 million, it was the opposite of an act of 'socialist democracy'. There was no possibility of disseminating and debating alternative platforms to the official programmeme, nor of forming groups or tendencies to defend them. Critical positions found no space, either in the official press, or on official radio or television. The discussions had an 'informative' character, and at them, 'details' were discussed, but the fundamental line was not questioned.

The CP is basically the political organization of the privileged bureaucracy and not of the workers. The candidates proposed for delegates, among whom higher officials predominate, pass through the filter of their appointment by authorities of greater power. The leadership is assured of a docile composition, related to its goal of legitimizing its programme and lining up the entire bureaucracy behind that programme. Even so, Raúl Castro had to announce the postponement of the planned layoffs that in the first stage entailed removing half a million state workers, so they could be 'redeployed' as self-employed or in cooperatives.

The Cuban leadership says that '619,387 deletions, additions, modifications, questions and concerns' emerged in connection with the 'Guidelines ...', because of which a 'new version' would be prepared. Although with this information the leadership is attempting to depict its plebiscitary methods from the rancid Stalinist tradition as 'democratic', and it is hardly likely that there will be substantial changes, it is possible that this reflects, although through the opaque filters of a bureaucratic structure, the climate of distrust and suspicion of hardly popular measures like those that document proposes.

The priests are backing the reforms

The Church, which seeks to carry out the counter-revolutionary role that it already played in Poland and in Eastern Europe, and has the government's recognition as a 'tolerated opposition' and an intermediary with imperialism, is supporting the programme of the 'Guidelines ...', asking the government 'not to be afraid' and to advance further, while it proposes the 'dialogue' with the bureaucracy, in order to encourage moving forward towards [capitalist] restoration, accompanying the pressure from imperialism, which considers the measures 'insufficient' and is demanding that they be intensified, towards a full 'economic and political opening'. If the role of the Church and of the right-wing 'dissidents' (like the former political prisoners exiled to Spain) is widely covered in the international press, on the other hand, critical positions from the left inside Cuba are ignored,

while the regime is stifling, slandering and persecuting them.

Critical voices to the left of the Communist Party

In fact, the acute crisis has been encouraging questioning the ills of Cuban society, the single-party regime and the pro-market and austerity policies, from positions that present themselves as socialist. This phenomenon, although politically and ideologically heterogeneous, and apparently still limited to circles of the intelligentsia (some members of the CP, academic circles, artists) and youth groups, bloggers, etc. – we do not know if ties exist with broader groups of workers – appears despite bureaucratic coercion, gaining admission to certain ‘tolerated’ gaps. Thanks to the internet, some of their writings can be known outside of Cuba.

Among the positions that have achieved circulation, it is possible to mention those that raise as a solution the way of cooperatives and forms of self-management. ‘Cooperativas y Socialismo: Una mirada desde Cuba,’ compiled by Camila Piñero Harnecker (daughter of the well-known theoretician Marta Harnecker) has just been published, and, for their part, authors like Pedro Campos (a former Cuban diplomat, now retired, and the author of numerous works), defend a plan of ‘participatory and democratic socialism’, with an emphasis on self-management of enterprises by workers as an alternative to the bureaucracy’s economic and political management. But is this programme, or that of the political revolution that we Trotskyists defend, the one that can propose a socialist solution to the Cuban crisis

Cooperatives and self-management, or a democratically centralized plan?

In his ‘Propuesta Programática para el VI Congreso del PCC’, Pedro Campos and his comrades suggest ‘Leaving behind the failed centrist, vertically-structured, top-down, authoritarian, statist-wage earner system, inherited from Stalinism, and advancing to the comprehensive, modern, cooperative conception of Twenty-first Century Socialism, to a decentralized communal-democratic system’. This would be based on ‘new cooperative-self-management relationships of production’, that would be characterized by the fact that ‘the associated workers themselves, owners, or those who collectively benefit, from their means of production, self-“exploit” their own labour power; they administer their productive management (control of expenditures, planning and selection of leadership) democratically, and they control and distribute the surplus labour or excess (...)’.

However, cooperatives can be a temporary form, to help as long as a greater advance of the productive forces is not achieved, in those areas of low productivity or small scale (like some agricultural production), on the periphery of the

nationalized economy, but they are not well suited to the requirements of socialist industrialization, that demands a high degree of integration, nor to large-scale contemporary production

On the other hand, proposing self-management of enterprises does not permit combating the logic of greater autonomy to make state enterprises profitable, that the Cuban CP, preparing the road for [capitalist] restoration, wants to impose. Furthermore, it causes the danger of competition in conditions of ‘market socialism’, where the weakest would sink, with deleterious effects among the working class, since, instead of uniting its ranks, it transfers competition to the workers’ collectives of each productive unit, and, at most, could benefit the workers of the most ‘competitive’ enterprises, by creating a ‘workers’ aristocracy’, with which, in short, it would contribute to the fragmentation and dispersion of the proletariat. Self-management already recognizes a precedent in Yugoslavia, where it turned out to be functional for the plans of Tito’s bureaucracy, and, above all, ended up fomenting restorationist tendencies. As a note that defends the proposal of self-management (‘Lecciones de la autogestión yugoslava’, *Kaos en la Red*, April 25, 2010) admits, in Yugoslavia, during the 1950’s, ‘the enterprises were state-owned, and the state entrusted the management of these enterprises to their workers. They called them ‘social enterprises’ instead of ‘state enterprises’. The workers of those enterprises were not viewed as workers, but as members of a work collective. But this system led to ‘inequality between firms within the same industry, inequality between industries, inequality between countryside and city, and inequality between regions’ and increasing differentiation in wages. The article summarizes the results of the system in these terms: ‘(1) Unemployment. (2) A tendency to inequality. (3) Indebtedness of the enterprises. (4) Lack of solidarity within the society. At the end of the 1960’s it submitted to the conditions of the IMF... (5) The workers lost the power that they had to the “experts” (that is, the managerial bureaucracy)’. Obviously, no economic form that increases social inequality and weakens the working class, can be progressive; even worse, when, instead of counteracting this tendency, it adapts itself to attacks, like the announced massive layoff of state-employed workers, by embellishing the ‘socialist’ possibilities of the cooperatives, self-management by enterprises, and self-employed work, instead of proposing a strategy of industrialization, in order to strengthen the working class systematically.

Neither the cooperatives nor self-management as systems can replace a democratically centralized plan combined with the state monopoly on foreign trade, the superiority of which lies in the coordination of all the material, human and scientific resources of society, nor confront pressures from the world capitalist market, in order to advance in the transition to socialism on a national and international scale. The combination of the Plan and workers’ democracy,

if the market is subordinated to the necessary frameworks of a 'healthy' transitional economy, permits orienting development according to the needs of the workers and the systematic strengthening of the working class as the hegemonic subject in the building of socialism.

In every transitional society, as Cuba still is (although very degraded), a struggle exists between socialist and pro-capitalist tendencies, the outcome of which depends on the tempo of development of these two tendencies. Democratic planning is crucial for strengthening the socialist tendencies and fighting those 'of the market,' while the cooperatives and self-management ultimately strengthen the mechanisms of the market.

It is not accidental that the governing team and some of its measures are favourably viewed from 'democratic and participatory socialism.' Pedro Campos writes: 'Comrade Raúl's government has opened a hopeful chapter that we cannot lose, but the natural resistance of the bureaucratic fabric has only permitted the presentation of isolated measures, some counterproductive, to improve wage-earning statism.' The measures introduced include larger spaces for the cooperatives and self-employed labour, more autonomy for the enterprises, and they increase market mechanisms. Campos puts himself in the position of putting pressure on Raúl and 'advising him' to go further, by overcoming the varieties of resistance mentioned above.

Participatory democracy or democratic self-organization?

Pedro Campos proposes: 'To make the power of People's Power real, at every level, by giving full control of all activity in the municipalities to the authorities that must be chosen by the people in a democratic and direct fashion, with control over part of the taxes that will be collected for the organization and carrying out of autonomous budgets, adjusted to the real and concrete needs of each Municipality and Community.'

'Improving the democratic system of elections: to study and apply more participatory, democratic, and direct formulas in electoral processes, in the structure and in the operation of the government.' (Kaos en la Red, April 6, 2011). This is a policy of reform and partial 'decentralization' of the bureaucratic regime, not a strategy so that the working class, by organizing itself from the centres of production, will take into its own hands the management of the economy and policy of the state.

Even if the local administrative institutions (like the municipalities) get to be democratically elected, they will not be organizations of workers' and people's power. A democratically elected 'National Assembly' would be a caricature of a workers' parliament and would reproduce the bourgeois division of powers, but it would not be the

supreme organ of the workers' councils that will assume all the legislative and executive tasks, being composed of elected delegates subject to recall, who will receive the equivalent of the wages of a skilled worker or a teacher, who cannot be re-elected for more than one or two terms, and who will answer to the workers' collectives in the productive



structures. We refer to the historic example of the soviets (or councils) of the Russian Revolution of 1917 (and not to their caricature emptied of all real content by Stalinism), as the most flexible and democratic form of making up the organs of the workers' state, a thousand times more democratic than the representative mechanisms taken from bourgeois democracy.

In what we call 'deformed workers' states', like the Cuban one, the working class did not achieve political power through institutions of the soviet type; rather, a single-party regime was imposed, an expression of the consolidation of a bureaucratic caste that feeds off the workers' state, and now, in going over to the camp of the restoration, it is decomposing in an accelerated fashion. In accordance with maintaining and increasing its material privileges, it stifles every manifestation of workers' democracy, and its monopoly of political power is functional for the plan of gradual restoration of a 'Cuban way to capitalism'.

Reform or political revolution

Campos concludes: 'Improving the operation of the Party, the unions and the political and mass organizations. In order to represent the interests of the entire working class and the people, the Communist Party must be the most democratic and allow the existence of different opinions and tendencies, as long as they all defend the power of the workers and socialism.' We agree on the need to fight for the broadest democratic freedoms for the workers and the people, including their right to strike, to organize unions without the tutelage of the CP and the state, and that the state media be open to all the critical voices of workers and of the left, etc.

But it seems to us that the policy of 'improving' the Cuban CP (which is the political representation of the

bureaucracy, and, as such, cannot represent the interests of the entire working class) and not raising the liquidation of the single-party regime, only creates false illusions in the possibility of 'convincing' the ruling leadership to 'democratize' itself, and does not lead to transforming the institutions of the state, in a democratic sense. It is necessary to achieve complete freedom of action and legality for the parties that are in the camp of the defence of the Revolution. It is not possible to achieve a real democracy of the workers and the masses, without putting an end to the political monopoly of the CP, without questioning the FAR (Cuban armed forces), with its caste of officers with ranks, decorations and perquisites and its power in the nationalized economy, to develop a real system of militias to be the 'people in arms', without replacing the institutions of the current bureaucratic regime with different ones, that will indeed be able to express the decisive intervention of the working class and the masses in the leadership of national political, economic, and cultural life.

We believe that it is not a matter of raising a strategy of gradual reforms in the regime, but, on the contrary, of fighting with the perspective of a political revolution, that is, of the consistent defence of the social bases of the state created by the Revolution, and, at the same time, for the overthrow of the bureaucracy and the establishment of workers' and people's power based on the forms of democratic self-organization that the masses create for themselves.

In short, it is a matter of drawing up a programme of political revolution, opposed both to the programme of 'economic and political opening' that imperialism is pursuing through 'democratic' demagogy, and to the plan of gradual restoration of capitalism according to a 'Cuban way,' to which the bureaucracy is oriented. A programme that raises the banners of anti-imperialism and recovers militant internationalism, to forge bonds with the masses of Latin America and the world, instead of the utopian perspective of 'socialism on a single island,' that the Castroite leadership has always defended.

We believe that the combination of world capitalist crisis, the decline of imperialist hegemony and the awakening of the class struggle, as shown by the 'Arab spring' against the dictatorships, workers' struggles in Europe, and other processes, creates new international conditions that could encourage the resistance of the Cuban masses against the restorationist plans and imperialism. In the heat of the struggle against bureaucratic oppression and in the political and ideological debates about the future of the Cuban Revolution, we think that it is possible to forge a revolutionary left around a programme of political revolution and a strategy of self-organization, to impose the power of the workers and the masses, that is, a real revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, as part of the struggle for international socialism.

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