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Despair and resistance in Greece

This time the radical Left and the social movements have predicted the future. When Greece was entering the euro-zone in triumphal celebrations, we warned that the huge inequalities between the well developed northern European economies (like Germany) and the relatively weak European South (like Greece), combined with a conservative political balance of forces, would have inevitably led to a tremendous pressure on the salaries. Not being able anymore to devaluate the currency, and not having any European mechanism to counterbalance the huge differences between the various European economies, any efforts of economical adjustment would have focused the "variable" of direct and indirect labour cost. Ten years later our ominous prediction (which at that time was accused of being "leftist" and "dogmatic") was proved to be totally correct.

When Greece lived its glamorous dream of the 2004 Olympic Games, we were very few those who resisted the "New Great Idea" of our glorious and historic nation. The outcome of the "mighty Greece's" fiesta was a real disaster: cost between 20 and 30 billion euros (still nobody knows the exact figure) for totally counterproductive investments. Athens is now full of closed huge stadiums that nobody uses...

Nevertheless, when the day of judgement finally arrived, almost nobody remembered what were the words of the neoliberal politicians and the mainstream mass media just a few years ago. As a result,

the new "socialist" government managed to find scape goats for the national financial difficulties. On the one hand, our defenceless nation (which was so mighty a few years ago) was presented as the victim of the "foreigner" international speculators. On the other, the crisis was the result of the chronic structural problems of the Greek economy: too big public sector, too many (and well paid) public sector employees. The bankruptcy would have been inevitable if the country wasn't able to find 24 billion euros on April and May in order to fund its public deficit or if it continued to borrow from international markets with an interest of 6,3%. If it were to avoid bankruptcy, the country had to regain the confidence of the European Union and international markets in order to find money in low interest for its public debt. And the best way to regain the confidence of the "markets" is to take painful measures against you own people. This is a real blackmail: if the workers don't accept the austerity measures the country will be led to bankruptcy.

The Stability and Development Program elaborated by the Greek government and the EU was really painful: About 10% cuts in public employees incomes, an increase of 2% in VAT, 10% cuts in public expenses, 2 more years of work before pension,

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100 million euros cuts in education. The government's target is to save up more than 4 billion euros and to send a message to the EU and international markets that it is fully loyal to the dogma of neoliberal fundamentalism.

Despite its antisocial character, the Plan doesn't seem to convince the international markets and the rates of interests for Greece are still too high (more than 6%). As a result, a EU rescue plan is ante portas. For the time being, the exact form of this rescue plan is not yet known. But we are pretty sure that the European "help", in addition to our government's policies, will lead to an inevitable social bankruptcy. The predictions of Deutsche Bank are terrifying: recession of -7,5% of GNP until 2012, 20% unemployment (about 1 million people). The only thing that will be surely saved by the Stability and Development Program are the profits of international speculators and Greek employers (in reality, the Program is the implementation of all that the Greek employers federation have asked since 20 years).

Of course, there was another way to take, and an alternative economic policy is always possible. Although, the Greek public debt (113% of GNP) is bigger than the public debt of the rest of Euro group, if we add the private debt, the sum is 173% of GNP, which is quite smaller than the rest of Euro group (a very developed country like Japan has a public debt of 200%). Before the Euro era, in 1993, Greece was paying the 14% of its GNP for the funding of its debt; now, it pays 6%. As we can see, Greece's debt is not so big. The real problem is that the euro zone is based on extremely rigid neoliberal rules that exaggerate the importance of public debt and make very difficult its funding (for example it is not allowed to issue a bond addressed to the domestic market).

In addition to that, there were other ways for the Greek government to find the money needed. For example, the ship owners (Greece is the world's number 1 commercial fleet with more than 4.000

ships under Greek flag) get back the VAT for the goods they purchase in the Greek ports; this is about 6 billion euros lost for the state each year, while the savings of the Stability Program are estimated in much less than 5 billion. Last year, Greek ship owners paid less money in taxes than the money paid by the immigrants as fees in order to get their green cards. Besides that, the majority of Greek employers have transferred their assets in Cypriot offshore companies (tax rate 10%), the Greek Orthodox church is excepted of taxes (our holy spiritual guides are the national champions in real estate: they own forests, fields, lakes and thousands of buildings), each year the employers illegally don't pay more than 8 billion euros to the social security system although they were supposed to, 800.000 of "small" and "middle" business pay the same tax as an employee whose salary is about 2.000 euros per month, the Greek banks were given 28 billion euros of public funds in the beginning of the crisis and now they speculate with the public debt (in reality the majority of the "international" speculators are Greek, German and French...), and each year the 4% of GNP goes to military expenditures (that means 10 billion transferred to US and EU "defense" industries). All that indicate that the government could take the money from the rich, but it preferred to take it from the poor. It is a profound class choice under the name of national urgency.

Finally, we should not forget the European level. The social disaster that the Greek people is now suffering, is the product of the neoliberal structure of the European monetary and financial union. A common currency with no common budget, a unified European market without any mechanism of transferring resources from the rich to the poor, a Stability Pact based on the hardest neoliberal dogma whose only interest is the profits and doesn't give a damn for the people. The crisis indicates that it is impossible to live any more under the Maastricht rules.

Greece has always been a country of huge social inequality. It is characteristic

that although the Greek Purchasing Power Parity is 92% of the Euro zone, the salaries are about 70%. But now, the social reality created by the new measures is simply not sustainable. Not only the people cannot live with such a reduced income, not only domestic market will be frozen for many years, but also there is no hope at all that we can exit misery. This feeling of despair is getting worse by the bitter sentiment that we were left alone by the Europeans and that the so called EU "help" is an IMF style policy that will lead to a Third World type social crisis. For the first time after the end of the Civil War in the late 40's, there is such a lack of hope in Greek society.

Of course, despair doesn't automatically lead to resistance. Many people feel that nothing can be done. It is already difficult to beat your government, but it seems really impossible to beat at the same time the Greek government, EU, IMF, Germany, France, the mysterious international markets, the whole world which is united against the Greek working class. On the other hand, more and more people are turning against the government and the mobilizations are getting bigger and bigger. Two very successful general strikes, huge demonstrations in all the big cities, actions and happenings, formation of base- trade unions coordination and local committees, courageous resistance to police provocations. The working people is on the move, even against the will of the Workers' General Confederation leadership. And for the moment it seems that the more the people will feel the effects of the new measures, the more the resistance will get stronger.

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The meaning of the Greek crisis

Many things have been said about the Greek crisis in recent weeks, most of them obnoxious and confusing¹. These histories result in an argument that is aimed for export to all developed countries. The media has extensively incorporated the official message, which could be divided into 5 chapters:

- 1) Greece cheated to hide “unsustainable” public debt;
- 2) The country is on the verge of defaulting on their debt, as well as other countries in the euro area;
- 3) The European Union can not help but sympathize and even encourage the adoption of austerity measures and ask for the Mediterranean country to be placed under a trusteeship;
- 4) Greece must take austerity measures to reduce its fiscal deficit;
- 5) The crisis in developed countries means the need for a widespread adoption of austerity plans of the same nature.

We therefore need to decode the ideological message intended, as a matter of fact, to all the peoples of the North.

1) Greece cheated to hide “unsustainable” public debt

Yes, without doubt and this reveals a State plagued by corruption and backdoor arrangements between friends. It seems clear today that Goldman Sachs, through the use complex arrangements (swaps) and credit derivatives, enabled the Greek government to reduce its notional debt by more than 2 billion euros by means of an

¹ The headlines have been full of racist comments, such as the title of the article of *Le Monde* of the 6th of February, “Bad Greece puts the Euro under pressure” using the acronym PIIGS (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain). The acronym was termed by the liberal magazine *The Economist*.

invisible loan². This practice allowed Greece to enter the Euro zone. There is also evidence that the successive governments since 2001 decided to look the other way on this issue.

But Greece is not the only country in the euro area that has done so. There is a storm of hypocrisy on the matter.

In 1996, Italy used swaps with JPMorgan to artificially reduce its deficit. Afterwards, Berlusconi sold for 10 billion euros the entrance fees of national museums to a financial corporation, which in exchange received 1.5 billion euros per year for 10 years. France, issued bonds in 2000 and included the repayment of the interest at the end of a period of 14 years. In 2004, Goldman Sachs and Deutsche Bank have completed a financial package for Germany called “Aries Vermoegensverwaltungs”. Germany thus borrowed at rates well above the market, just to avoid that the debt ended showing up in the public accounts³.

Placing in context the “unfathomable abyss” of Greece

Greece would have a deficit of 12.7% of GDP, and not of 6% as announced by the previous government, and a public debt of 115% of GDP, but if we compare to other countries, there is nothing that justifies the panic cries. The cost of servicing the debt, which was 14% of GDP in 1993, is now 6%! The position of the accounts of the Greek State is certainly far from equilibrium, but it is less tarnished when compared to other northern countries.

² “With the complicity of Goldman Sachs, Greece has improved the presentation of its accounts, but the gain has been marginal. The transactions made in 2001, lowered the Greek debt by 2.3 billion euros, bringing it from 105.3 to 103.7% of GDP over the period concerned.” <http://www.irefeurope.org/content/le-masque-grec>

³ <http://www.lexpansion.com/Services/imprimer.asp?idc=226849&pg=0>

Table 1: Public Debt as a % of GDP

	2007	2008	2009*	2010**
Austria	59.4	62.5	70.4	75.2
Belgium	84.0	89.6	95.7	100.9
Finland		33.4	39.7	45.7
France	63.8	68.0	75.2	81.5
Germany	65.1	65.9	73.4	78.7
Greece	94.8	97.6	103.4	115.0
Ireland	25.0	43.2	61.2	79.7
Italy	103.5	105.8	113.0	116.0
Netherlands	45.6	58.2	57.0	63.1
Portugal	63.5	66.4	75.4	81.5
Spain	36.2	39.5	50.8	62.3
Euro Zone	66.0	69.3	77.7	83.6

*Estimation; ** Prevision; Source: Eurostat

Neither the European Commission, Eurostat or even the rating agencies, have lessons to give to Greece!

After 2001, the European Commission could not be unaware of the unreliability of the accounts presented by Greece. It only had to look at the accounts of the central government to measure the permanent deficit of the budget of the Greek state, to observe the multiplication of armament orders, to assess the cost of Olympics 2004 and to compare them with the budgetary resources and reserves held by the Greek Central Bank to understand that the official debt (made presentable to join the euro zone) was not that which was announced. It could not be unaware of this situation but in fact did nothing to denounce it.

The integration of Greece into the euro area was necessary for the Commission for political and geo-strategic reasons. The top advocates for the acceptance of Greece in 2001 were, France (2nd armament supplier of the country) and Germany. Banks in both countries now hold 80% of the Greek debt.

As regards Eurostat, no lessons to be given either

According to Bloomberg, Eurostat was perfectly aware of this operation. It is also in the name of good accounting rules that the EU statistical agency dismisses the outstanding public debt, after the billions of euros given to banks without compensation as part of the different bailout programs (SEC decision in June 2009). Eurostat is the same, which allows

to avoid the incorporation of the loans of the State into the stock of public debt ("great debt" in France, borrowing Greek and Portuguese). And yet the taxpayers (those who do not benefit from tax cuts to the wealthy) have to pay these sums one way or the other.

As for the rating agencies, how reliable are they?

They have a pretty questionable credibility, as they were the ones who gave a triple-A rating to the subprime securities issued by Lehman Brothers, just 3 days before its bankruptcy.

These same "clairvoyant" agencies are extremely powerful and do as they please on financial markets, including on those unregulated known as OTC (Over The Counter Derivatives) or the toxic markets in which agents buy insurance against the risk of default, CDS (Credit Default Swaps). They are closely related to Anglo-Saxon banks (including Goldman Sachs and Citibank). These agencies do not work with a crystal ball, but with the abundant data provided by the issuer of the loan or the intelligence provided by the market of specific financial products. In our case, the agencies have downgraded the bonds after the change in the sentiment of the majority of the market, once the Greek government itself provided new data.

2) Greece is on the verge of defaulting on their debt just like other countries in the euro area

The message has a primary function: that of increasing interest rates (risk premiums) and thus the profits of lenders (including Goldman Sachs and hedge funds). The bonds issued by Greece were traded with an interest rate of 6.40%, which is double what a creditor could expect in this area. It should be noted that this bond for 5 billion euros, received at the moment of its initial issuance, 3 times the initial offer⁴. Beautiful contradiction from the part of financial markets regarding a country considered being "on the verge of default".

⁴ AFP dispatch of March 4, 2010.

The dominant ideology has a tendency to compare the situation of the state budget with that of a household or a business, which makes no sense. One state, unlike a household or a business, always has the possibility to increase its revenue through taxes. It is this fact, coupled with a quite higher life expectancy, the essential difference and the reason that makes this comparison absurd. The U.S. state has existed for 221 years and accumulated debt since 1837, or 173 consecutive years⁵.

The second reason behind this alarmist discourse is to prepare public opinion to accept a path towards social regression and austerity. The Greek government also has discretion to conduct a thorough reform of the tax system in order to eliminate tax breaks and social gifts for the wealthy as well as taxing capital income and rent; in short, the freedom to increase its tax revenue in order to eliminate the budget deficit. This is a matter of political choice, which the PASOK (Greek Socialist Party) didn't choose because it agrees with the basic premises of neoliberalism: the Greek world is and must remain a neoliberal economy market! For several decades, the public policies followed by successive governments have increased fiscal deficits and the stock of public debt. Joining the euro

⁵ "Let us compare the budget of government to that of a household", by Randall Wray, http://contreinfo.info/article.php3?id_article=2976

area (2001) has only amplified this phenomenon. (See Tables 2, 3 and 4 below).

3) The European Union can not help but sympathize and even encourage the adoption of austerity measures and ask for the Mediterranean country to be placed under a trusteeship;

The European Central Bank (ECB) does not have the right to lend to states! Whereas the European Central Bank lent heavily to the banks in 2008-2009 to save them from bankruptcy, it is not allowed to do the same with regards to the public authorities of the Member States. It's a shame.

Is important to note that Article 123 of the Treaty of Lisbon stipulates the rules out the ECB and central banks of Member States from undertaking "direct acquisitions [from public authorities, other bodies or public companies of Member States] of debt instruments".

So, no "direct" acquisition of government debt (and no help to states) but at the same time preferential loans are granted to banks which are required to use as a collateral... securities obligations of States (including the Greek state!). Beautiful hypocrisy the one allowed by this mechanism of the Lisbon Treaty.

The European Investment Bank, which amorality is well known in developing

Table 2: Comparison of the Fiscal Policies, Greece and EU 27

	Fiscal Revenues as % of GDP		Max. Legal Tax on Earnings		Corporate Tax	
	Greece	EU Average	Greece	EU Average	Greece	EU Average
2000	34.6	40.6	45%	44.70%	40%	31.90%
2006	31.3	39.7	40%	39.10%	25%	23.60%
2007	32.1	39.8	40%	37.80%	25%	23.50%
Variation 2007/2000	-2.5	-0.8	-5	-6.90%	-15	-8.4

Source: Eurostat

Table 3: Fiscal Deficit as % of GDP

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Greece	-3.7	-4.5	-4.8	-5.6	-7.5	-5.2	-2.9	-3.9	-7.7	12.7
Euro Zone	0	-1.8	-2.5	-3.5	-2.9	-2.5	-1.3	-0.6	-2	NA

Source: Eurostat

Table 4: Public Debt as % of GDP

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Greece	103.4	103.7	101.7	97.4	98.6	100	97.1	95.6	99.2	113.4

Source: Eurostat

countries⁶, cannot finance the deficit Greek? On paper, it's true. But as a matter of fact, it funds many dubious investment projects which increase the deficit and the rising public debt such as the 2004 Olympics whose total cost is still unknown (estimated between 20 and 30 billion euros).

4) Greece must take austerity measures to reduce its fiscal deficit

This is where the proponents of economic capitalism and financial want to arrive at! On the alleged reason of a public debt deemed as unsustainable, the government imposes an unprecedented dose of austerity for its people in the name of fiscal consolidation: an end to stimulus measures, a freeze on civil service salaries in 2010, reduction by 10% of bonuses and 30% of overtime work in the public service, 10% decrease of public spending of which 100 million euros are comprised by reduction in education expenses and hospital costs, 2 years lengthening of the age of retirement which passes thus to 63 years, hiring freezes, reduction of CSD in the public, raising taxes on fuels, tobacco, cell phones, 2 percentage point raise in the VAT...

And EU wants some more! It requires structural reforms that affect all jurisdictions, the liberalization of goods, labor flexibility, comprehensive reforms of pensions and health ...

Conservatively speaking, it is a 15% unemployment rate and a contraction of at least 7.5% of GDP, which awaits the Greek people in the short term, according to estimates by Deutsche Bank.

Yet, other internal budgetary solutions exist!

The expected savings of the austerity plan are in the order of 5 billion euros. Other choices are however possible! Greece is the country of the EU whose military expenditures are the largest as a share of GDP. They reached 9.642 billion dollars in 2006⁷. In 2008, Greece spend 2.8% of its GDP on defense and this figure does not include the totality of the military expen-

diture⁸. This considerable burden on the state budget primarily benefits the defense industries of the U.S. and Europe.

Greece also has the world's No. 1 commercial fleet with more than 4 000 vessels that drain each year almost 6 billion euros in VAT rates from the Greek state through advantageous mechanisms.

The majority of the large employers have transferred their assets to offshore companies in Cyprus (where they face a tax rate of 10%). The Orthodox Greek church is tax exempt, even though is the National Champion of real state property ownership.

Greek banks have received 28 billion euros of public funds under the bailout without any compensation, and now they speculate against the public debt with impunity. Therefore the resources exist to follow a different path!

To acquire these resources requires a thorough reform of taxation but the PASOK government, serving the capitalists, decided to leave things as they are. They prefer to make the poor pay in order to stay in the euro area, even though this membership in the name of "free and undistorted competition", is the source of deregulation and loss of national sovereignty.

5) The crisis in developed countries means the need for a widespread adoption of austerity plans of the same nature.

In all developed countries, governments and the media repeat the same message. Whether is in Portugal where the government has launched a vast program of privatization of the public services; in Spain, which is entangled in a housing crisis, and where the rate of unemployment around 20%; in Ireland, whose budget deficit is close to that of Greece;; in Italy, which holds the EU record with a national debt of 127% of its GDP or the United Kingdom whose deficit now exceeds 14.5%.

Other European countries are also expected to pass through the mill of austerity plans. Proposed reforms of pension systems and rupture of the health

6 <http://www.amisdelaterre.org/-Banque-europeenne-d-investissement.html>

7 Global military spending www.julg7.com

8 <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2009/p09-009.pdf>

and social security systems are already at work everywhere in Europe.

One thing is certain: the public money, obtained at very low rates by large private banks from the European Central Bank, will not go to households or businesses. Outstanding loans have declined massively in 2009 across Europe. This money will go, and has already gone back to speculation on the public debt and sovereign risk. Today Greece. Tomorrow, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Ireland. After tomorrow, Belgium, France ... The euro area is completely fragmented and reveals his true face: it is a system built for the richest economies on the backs of the poor.

Provisional conclusions and six proposals The European Union is political bankrupt: with a common currency but a tax and social competition between its Member States, with a common market, but without a mechanism to transfer resources from the rich to poor; with its neo-liberal dogma that crushes the people, it is unable to provide a response to the crisis for its population.

In return, people are beginning to mobilize and organize the response by themselves: two consecutive general strikes in Greece, with massive manifestations taking place in most major cities; the 93% of Icelanders which refused the payment of the private debts envisaged by the Icesave law⁹; impressive demonstrations in Portugal; also demonstrations taking place the 23rd of March, which mark the beginning of a third social cycle in France.

The wind is rising throughout Europe and carries the refusal of employees, pensioners and the poor to bear the brunt of the crisis.

What is missing in these mobilizations, in addition to break the isolation of struggles, is an outlet, which establishes the links between the social and political responses. Throughout Europe, social movements need to bring elements of alternative programs to address the systemic crisis, choosing to defend and

expand the collective rights against the logic of valorization of the capital.

The central question raised by these “crisis pretexts” of the public debts in the North is about a different distribution of wealth.

For that, we must keep two irons in the fire: increasing salaries by levying taxes on dividend and implementing a comprehensive a tax reform.

Increasing wages would bring debt relief to households and would open up opportunities for the production of goods and services.

A drastic reduction of working time along the retention of wages and compensatory recruitment is also required. This would address both the problem of unemployment, the financing of social security (by increasing the number of contributors) and the insufficient leisure time and recreation for those who work.

A harmonized tax reform on a European scale would allow to address the existing tax loopholes, as well as restoring a progressive tax on all income (taxes on income and corporate taxes); to reduce or abolish indirect taxes which strike especially the poorest (VAT, taxes on petroleum products). Any effort for reform has to establish a special tax on financial income and wealth of the creditors of the debt, without forgetting the taxation on other capital income and pension tax.

A cleansed fiscal policy would also cancel the many social contribution exemptions for enterprises; increase employer contributions, and thus ensure sustainable social protection for all as well as a good standard for retirement and pensions.

Finally, the financial system has proven its adverse social effects. We must expropriate the banks and other financial institutions, transfer them to the public domain and place them under citizen control.

There is also the need for a citizens’ audit of public debts, to measure their legitimacy or illegitimacy (what have they financed?).

Let’s put these proposals into discussion to determine a list of demands.

Pascal Franchet

⁹ View Bonfond Olivier, Jerome Duval, Damien Millet “Whew! Icelanders have said massive ‘no’”, <http://www.cadtm.org/Ouf-les-Islandais-ont-dit>

Ouf, les Islandais ont dit non !

Samedi 6 mars, les Islandais se sont rendus aux urnes pour se prononcer pour ou contre la loi « *Icesave* ». Cette loi prévoyait la nationalisation de dettes privées et l'imposition de mesures économiques antisociales afin de trouver les fonds pour rembourser ces dettes. Avec une participation qui dépasse les 60%, le Non a remporté sans surprise une écrasante victoire : environ 93% des suffrages exprimés. Cela constitue surtout une victoire importante contre le néolibéralisme. Ce sera aussi une victoire pour la démocratie si, contrairement à ce qui s'est passé en France et en Irlande récemment, le choix des Islandais est respecté.

Petit pays de 320 000 habitants sans armée, l'Islande a subi de plein fouet la crise financière actuelle. Des milliers de ménages ont perdu leur travail ou ont été expulsés de leurs logements. Dans le même temps, l'Etat a déboursé des centaines de millions d'euros¹ pour nationaliser les trois principales banques islandaises (*Kaupthing, Landbanski et Glitnir*), totalement privatisées en 2003, et les sauver de la faillite. Le peuple islandais s'est alors senti floué et s'est mobilisé massivement pour tenter de faire payer le coût de cette crise aux responsables : les banques et les fonds spéculatifs. Cette pression a donné des résultats : le gouvernement a démissionné fin 2008 et, en août 2009, le Parlement a adopté une résolution pour conditionner le remboursement de cette dette aux « *capacités de paiement* » du pays². Mais les intérêts

¹ A titre d'exemple, l'Etat islandais a déboursé 600 millions d'euros pour s'adjuger 75 % du capital de Glitnir, le 29 septembre 2009, avant d'en prendre l'entier contrôle quelques jours plus tard.

² Cette résolution affirmait que le gouvernement consacrerait au maximum 6% de la croissance de son PIB au titre du remboursement de la dette, et que si la croissance économique n'est pas au rendez-vous, l'Islande ne paierait rien. Pour plus d'infos, lire Olivier Bonfond, « *Islande - si la dette ne peut pas être payée elle ne le sera pas* », www.cadtm.org/Islande-Si-la-dette-ne-peut-pas

en jeu sont énormes. Le FMI et l'Union européenne ont pesé de tout leur poids pour renverser cette orientation. Dans la nuit du 30 au 31 décembre 2009, le Parlement a changé de position et voté la loi « *Icesave* », qui visait à confirmer la nationalisation de ces dettes privées et à organiser, via des mesures d'austérité (gel des salaires, diminution des dépenses publiques...), le remboursement intégral (3,9 milliards d'euros) des montants avancés par les Etats britanniques et hollandais pour indemniser leurs « citoyens lésés » par la faillite de la banque en ligne islandaise *Icesave* en octobre 2008³, dont l'Etat avait garanti les dépôts.

Dans un contexte de crise sociale, mais surtout de conscientisation politique élevée, la population islandaise ne l'a pas entendu de cette oreille : des organisations ont lancé une pétition contre cette loi et, en quelques semaines, plus de 25% de l'électorat islandais l'avaient signée ! Face à cette protestation populaire, le Président fut contraint d'appliquer l'article 26 de la Constitution qui stipule qu'en cas de refus du Président de promulguer une loi, elle doit être soumise à une consultation populaire.

Malgré différentes pressions et menaces (pression médiatique très forte en faveur du oui, refus de discuter de l'intégration de l'Islande dans l'Union européenne, blocage de l'aide internationale), les Islandais ont donc largement dit non à cette loi néolibérale. Mais il faut être très vigilant à ce que ce choix soit respecté. Rappelons-nous ce qui s'est passé à propos du Traité de Lisbonne : alors que les Français

³ Voir Jérôme Duval et Olivier Bonfond, « Les Islandais n'ont pas dit leur dernier mot », www.cadtm.org/Les-Islandais-n-ont-pas-dit-leur

avaient dit Non au Traité constitutionnel européen, le gouvernement français a tout de même fait approuver le Traité de Lisbonne qui l'a remplacé en passant par la voie parlementaire, tandis qu'après un premier vote négatif en Irlande, le gouvernement irlandais a imposé un nouveau référendum afin de parvenir au Oui. On le voit, dès que le résultat initial n'est pas jugé satisfaisant, les dirigeants s'arrangent souvent pour contourner la volonté du peuple, comme ce fut déjà le cas au Danemark en 1992-93 au moment du Traité de Maastricht où un second référendum avait également été organisé. Difficile de faire de même en Islande tant le refus est massif. Pourtant, la question n'est malheureusement pas incongrue : on parle déjà d'un vote inutile, puisque les Islandais se seraient prononcés sur une loi obsolète, une autre proposition étant déjà sur la table. Un nouveau vote sur une nouvelle proposition s'annonce-t-il ? A moins que le Président accepte cette fois de promulguer la loi... La partie n'est pas encore gagnée.

Pourtant, si le gouvernement islandais en avait la volonté, il pourrait refuser la logique néolibérale tout en garantissant la justice sociale. Toute une série de mesures concrètes et alternatives à la logique capitaliste pourraient être mises en place rapidement en vue de sauver les emplois et de faire payer le coût du sauvetage financier aux responsables : nationalisation sans indemnisation du secteur bancaire, interdiction de nationaliser les dettes privées (comme le prévoit l'article 290 de la Constitution de l'Équateur), moratoire immédiat sur le remboursement de la dette, mise en place d'un audit intégral de la dette islandaise en vue de répudier toutes les dettes odieuses ou marquées d'irrégularités (tout comme l'a fait l'Équateur en 2007), impôt exceptionnel sur le patrimoine des grosses fortunes afin de développer des emplois publics socialement utiles et respectueux de la nature... Ces mesures sont parfaitement réalisables et tout à fait légitimes, afin que le poids de cette crise ne repose pas en bout de course sur la population islandaise qui en est la victime. Tant d'autres gouvernements dans le monde devraient d'ailleurs considérer ces mesures comme une obligation d'un point de vue international, puisque la majorité d'entre eux ont ratifié la Déclaration sur le

droit au développement de 1986 qui stipule dans son article 2 : « *Les États ont le droit et le devoir de formuler des politiques de développement national appropriées ayant pour but l'amélioration constante du bien-être de l'ensemble de la population et de tous les individus, fondée sur leur participation active, libre et utile au développement et à la répartition équitable des avantages qui en résultent.* »

L'histoire nous a appris que des mesures progressistes allant à l'encontre des intérêts du grand capital ne se concrétisent que si le peuple se mobilise largement. Il est donc essentiel de soutenir le peuple islandais dans la mise en pratique de ses droits démocratiques et dans ce qui n'est sans doute que le début d'une plus longue bataille.

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4 Tous membres du CADTM (Comité pour l'annulation de la dette du tiers-monde, www.cadtm.org)

ALGER

Excerpt from the report of the EuroMaghreb Trade Union delegation Alger 6th - 11th March 2010

During a meeting that took place last January, the network of EuroMaghreb trade unions decided to organise a delegation to support and observe the evolution of the social situation in Alger in March 2010. This action was based on the testimony that had been received from independent trade unionists. The aim of the delegation, over and above being an expression of international solidarity, was to collect as many testimonies and as much information as possible on the evolution of the social situation and the attitude of the Algerian authorities to the trade union movements.

A fragmented civil society, increased riots and the revolt of an impoverished population

Monthly average wages in Algeria are about the equivalent of 120 euros. But the cost of living in Algiers is equivalent to that in Marseilles. Basic food is becoming inaccessibly expensive; it is increasingly difficult to find housing, as there is a lack of housing and the cost of those available too high. The middle classes, if that term can still be used, have been very hard hit by this huge rise in the cost of living that is linked to galloping inflation. The rate of unemployment for the under-25s is almost 40%! Algeria has, however paid back its foreign debts, and the GNP is positive, with the country having over 150 billion dollars-worth of reserves, essentially in foreign bank accounts. The oil reserves (that account for 98% of exports) are also important.

How can this situation best be explained? It is quite obvious that a part of the resources have, for many years, been siphoned off by the minority in office, including the officers in the DRS (the State Security and Intelligence services), the omnipresent political police force, which is the first to benefit. The so-called much-advertised anti-corruption campaign that is supposed to be enforced today in Algeria hides nothing of the de facto situation: corruption is "State-sponsored" at all levels, as one of the people we spoke to put it. It is hardly surprising then, that riots are breaking out with increasing frequency all over the country, whether as the result of a power cut or a lost football match or to protest against the bad state of the roads, the lack of housing etc. These riots are now spreading to some neighbourhoods in Algiers. The only place where there is free expression and discussion are the teachers' rooms or the rest rooms in high schools or hospitals, for example. Information is controlled; misinformation has become the rule in many newspapers of all kinds. The two main daily independent papers that have their own publishing infrastructure are El Watan (a French-language paper) and El Khabar, (published in Arabic). They regularly testify to the repression that independent unions suffer from. Journalists talk about the heavy social pressure that exists all over the country nowadays. After a long period that was characterised by great lethargy, the demands are increasingly numerous.

Strikes in the education sector

The independent trade unions in the education sector are truly representative of the sector, essentially because they are the only ones to really stand up and fight. In 2003 and 2004 a strike that they organised had an almost 90% following in Algiers and in certain other regions.

In Autumn 2009, on 15th of November to be precise, at the initiative of CNAPEST, the other independent unions came out on strike, and this was largely supported by the education sector.

On 24th February, the independent union CNAPEST, along with another primary school trade union, UNPEF, started a new strike. The authorities broke the strike by manoeuvres that demonstrate the means used to increase repression. One week earlier, the SNAPEST, with the support of public declarations launched a strike on their own; this strike was a failure. SNAPEST (which is actually a power-controlled "clone") did not participate in the one called on the 24th...

On March 9th, the CNAPEST members of the teachers' union (Independent secondary and technical school teachers' union) decided to suspend their strike. This strike was massively supported throughout the country, and had lasted for two weeks. The strikers' demands concerned allowances, management of social funds and working conditions (salaries that are derisory they are so low, annual medical check-ups for teachers...).

The inter trade-union committee of independent unions in the education sector now appears to be divided, and the manoeuvres by the union clones as well as the repressive machinery put in place by the ruling powers have weakened the movement.

Strike in the health sector

On 23rd November 2009, the SNPSP and the SNPSSP called for strike action, and the health sector professional came out on strike, and only maintained a min-

imum service that they had organised. The strike was declared unlimited on 21st December. The demands concern the re-evaluation of pay scales, allowances and staff housing.

In the health sector, just as in education, the law courts in Algiers declared the strike illegal. A campaign of defamation was orchestrated by the authorities to discredit the movement. There was a threat to withdraw the union's accreditation and remove strikers from the register as well as holding back their salaries. On February 10th 2010 a sit-in in front of the presidential palace was violently attacked by the police, and the mobile forces; women were violently shoved around, according to El Watan on the 11th of March. When this report went to press, the health professionals are still on strike: it is the longest strike in the history of the Algerian social movements. In this case too, there are reports on the pressure that is being brought to bear, and the many threats made by the authorities to call off the strike.

Women's rights: an evaluation by the Women's committee of the SNAPAP

The main struggles that women are facing are violence and the various forms of harassment that women suffer from at work. There is no law to protect them from these aggressions! Those who have the courage to file a complaint are generally convicted by the courts for defamation, sometimes with a suspended prison sentence. They tend to lose their job and have little hope of finding a new one. The Committee has just developed a questionnaire on harassment in the workplace, and they intend to promote it extensively in the course of a campaign to raise awareness on the subject. The representative of the Committee states that the situation is even worse in the multinational companies. There are even more cases of administrative and sexual harassment there. Meryem Medhi, who has been on hunger strike for 79 days (since 9th December 2009) contributed to publicising the working conditions

in these firms. She was fired from British Gas due to her trade union activities (cf further information lower in the text). Although the law states that there should be gender balance, this is not implemented: in the Senate, for example, only 4 out of 48 Senators are women; in the Parliament, only 25% are women, and in local government, 13%. Yet 54% of the electorate are women.

Modern slavery and the repression of all protests

Whereas trade union rights and social movements are being broken in the public sector, the situation is far more catastrophic still for those who are trying to demand a minimum of rights in the subsidiaries of the multinational companies that are present in the south of Algeria, which is where the oil and gas fields lie. The workers there in the multinationals have no real rights. This leads to extended working hours (12 hours per day rather than 8, for example, as well as overtime rarely being paid). They are also subjected to disrespectful behaviour and insults. Given this situation, the workers in several companies decided to stand up for their rights. The struggle of two of them has been given extensive press coverage since 2009, including outside Algeria (Meryam Medhi and Yassine Zaïd), many others have also stood up for their rights and have created a trade union chapter of UGTA (although it is not possible to create an independent union in the private sector). They all lost their jobs. Given these attacks on union rights and more widely on workers' rights, a national committee to defend workers' rights will be set up, affiliated to SNAPAP, in order to defend and support workers whose conditions in multinationals in the south of Algeria are so difficult.

Translation from French into English: Judith Hichtman

Russia

«A Day of Anger»

There have been an increasing number of demonstrations in various cities in Russia since the beginning of this year. People are rising up to protest against the brutal increase in the cost of living, income and other tax as well as the drop in salaries. Unemployment is also affecting an increasing number of people. The shock wave struck in Kalinigrad, where over ten thousand people took to the streets on January 30th to demonstrate and demand a reduction in the road tax that had been increased by 25% by the regional authorities, as well as to demand an economic renewal policy for the region and an end to the “dictatorship of the ruling party” (United Russia) and the resignation of the regional Governor, Guergui Boos. As economic difficulties increase in most regions, with water rates increasing, the cost of gas and electricity becoming prohibitive for most people, the demonstrations of several thousand people have taken place in many different cities (Angarsk, Irkutsk, Arkhangelsk, etc.). They have been mainly aimed at local and regional authorities, nepotism and corruption, as well as the “vertical powerhouse” introduced by Vladimir Putin, and aimed at making local power even more inaccessible to the population at large. The feeling of discontent with laws and behaviour of civil servants and the political elite who show no respect for people has progressively been aimed at the Prime Minister ex-President Putin.

So when the opposition coalition in Kalinigrad announced a mass meeting planned for March 20th, several networks and social movements relayed the slogan to hold other actions all over Russia in solidarity with them.

Contrary to what most of the media stated, there was no liberal right-wing “Solidarnost” movement behind the “Call of the 20th of March” for “A day of anger”, but networks that are more or less well-known, such as the Russian Drivers’ Federation, the Movement of Active Citizens of Russia (TIGR) or the Union of Co-ordinating Soviets of Russia (SKS). Whatever the case, the call to action led to huge mobilisation: all sorts of demonstrations took place on March 20th in almost 50

different cities. And, most importantly, they were jointly organised by broad local coalitions that brought together dozens of different associations, local social movements and the opposition political parties.

Of course the figures for the demonstrations may appear to be low: about 4000 people in Kalinigrad, 3000 in Irkutsk, 2000 in Vladivostok, 1500 in Saint Petersburg, 1000 in Ijevsk and around 500 in many other cities (Astrakhan, Moscow, Penza, Tiumen, etc.). But the geographical scope of the mobilisation of citizens proves that grass-roots citizens’ movements are joining together and trying to make their voices heard at federal level. And the unity in the slogans “Citizens should have control” “No to the political monopoly of United Russia” “Let’s take back control of our city” show that a shared political culture is growing. Even if the protests are aimed primarily against local authorities (starting with regional governors), as well as at Putin, in his capacity as federal head. “Putin resign!” was written on most of the banners and placards.

Massive arrests in Moscow

In the capital, the organising committee of the “Day of Anger” (neighbourhood committees, movements for the defence of the Khimki forest, joint investors who had been led up the garden path, inhabitants of homes, Left Front, “Soldiarnost” and others) all decided to ignore the ban on demonstrating in the city centre, and on Saturday at 3pm almost 500 people turned up to demonstrate at Pushkin Square, prepared to defend their right to demonstrate. (The main slogan in Moscow was “Loujkov, Mayor of Moscow, out!”). The Square was taken over by the armed police and people were arrested very quickly, once the first speeches started. The demonstrators did hold out for almost an hour, playing cat and mouse with the police and they even managed to demonstrate on some of the other large streets. The outcome was however that at least 70 people were arrested, some of them in brutal manner. The Constitution, that one neighbourhood committee activist

was waving in the air did not help her: she was carried away just like the others.

Mandarine demonstration in Kaliningrad

In Kaliningrad, the westernmost city in Russia, where the wave of mobilisation started, the demonstration had been forbidden by the local authorities. This created a lot of waves and tension in the local opposition coalition. Anonymous calls to meet in the Central Square (where an agricultural fair was scheduled to be held) with mandarines (the symbol of the Governor, G. Boos) led to people turning up as if by magic on the 20th of March. And as if "by pure coincidence" almost 4000 people showed up at the designate time, between 1 and 2 pm, waving mandarines. The police did not intervene - after all, what action could they take against mandarines? And the demonstrators dispersed, pleased to have made fun of the authorities.

Vladivostok: The opposition united against «United Russia»

In Vladivostok (in the Far East), where the first demonstrations of the Dan-y of Anger took place, over 2000 people congregated in the Central Square, that they managed to occupy after a long struggle in negotiations with a broad coalition that included the Communist Party, the Active Citizens Movement (TIGR) Labloko, the Drivers' Association as well as a local political movement "Freedom and Local People's Power". The anger, similar to the other demonstrations, could be read on the placards waved by the demonstrators. "Down with arbitrary power!" "Do away with corrupt civil services!" "Russia is a vast country: no wonder we are not heard!" At the end of the demonstration, the organisers passed on the symbolic flame to the other towns: "Novosibirsk, Saint Petersburg, Kaliningrad, Yes! Yes! Yes! Power, No! No! No!"

Irkutsk: the preservation of the Baikal

The main theme of the demonstration in Irkutsk was to preserve the Baikal area and the local population's right to self-determination concerning the methods for developing the region. This mobilisation had been spearheaded by groups of local ecologists for several months, mobilising and uniting opposition forces against to reopening of a paper manufacturing plant that releases its effluent into Lake Baikal. This included the Drivers' movement and the local inhabitants in favour of self-management of "Narodny Kon-

tol". Over three thousand people turned out to demonstrate, essentially against Vladimir Putin, who initiated and defends the reopening of the plant. But many other issues were also raised, particularly those of low pensions and the dilapidation of housing conditions.

It was also in Irkutsk that there were the greatest fears of an attempt by the liberal right to recuperate the citizen's mobilisation. Boris Nemtsov, leader of the "Solidarnost" movement (and ex-minister under Boris Eltsin in the 1990s) had come on a special trip to speak during the demonstration.

Saint Petersburg: forum of the local social fora

The Communist Party had decided to hold a separate demonstration in Saint Petersburg (in which around 400 people took part). The demonstration organised by the social movements included 33 groups, committees, networks, including a strong movement against the construction of the "Gazprom" building, and brought out over 1500 inhabitants. The good-natured atmosphere and camaraderie during the demonstration led to a unanimous decision to strengthen the co-ordination between movements and create a co-ordination centre for social movements and local inhabitants.

Slogans were similar to those in the other cities, against the monopoly of the "political power of the ruling party", against the confiscation of power by bureaucrats, for a city that belongs to the citizens, and calling for the resignation of the regional governor, Valentia Matvienko.

Friday 26th March 2010

Carine Clément

Translation from French into English: Judith Hichtman

France

Strike at the TOTAL refinery in Dunkirk

The strike in the Flanders Refinery in Dunkirk started on January 12th. The Total employees were fed up of the lack of respect shown by the oil company's management. They demanded detailed information on the management's exact plans, and that they should stop playing around with the workers' emotions. They demanded that the "5-yearly stoppage" (a general maintenance requirement) be implemented, and that the refinery start work for a new 5-year period.

Why 5 years? Because that allows a period for developing, consulting and constructing a potentially viable industrial project with the employees. The hypothesis of professional change was not a taboo; but this is something that could only be considered in a context of providing guarantees for the Total employees, for the companies to whom work is sub-contracted, and by taking on board the idea that professional change should not rhyme with worker's exclusion!

An important strike

The strike by the workers in the Flanders Refinery has had both national impact and importance, not only because the movement affected all the Total refineries, of course, but also because the national movement started in Dunkirk in mid-January.

The strike in the Flanders Refinery is one of those exemplary movements, from which we can learn and highlight the strengths and weaknesses so that we can all become stronger tomorrow. Châtelleraut in 2009, that of Continental in Clairoux or the struggle in Phillips in Dreux in early 2010 (this struggle has been going on for several months!). And there

are also all the struggles that get little or no coverage, including in activist circles, and that can testify to the workers will to resist and to stand up for their rights... and to win new rights, better working conditions, higher pay. Because these struggles, our struggles, are not just to defend what we already have.

But when strikes lead to open, non-sectarian discussion in general assemblies, and the workers start speaking about "what needs to be changed", they are not far from asking themselves the question "What kind of society would we like to have?" and "How can we break with the current forms of organisation in society?" We need to bear in mind that this organisation is based on the exploitation of workers by a tiny minority: employers and shareholders.

And it bothers a lot of people when workers take their own affairs in hand in whatever way: the employers, the right-wing politicians, those who continue in various ways to support the - bad - tradition of scab unions, but also in another form all those who have taken on the specific job of speaking and even wanting to take decisions on behalf of the workers.

This might all seem as though we are deviating from the subject of the Total strike. But that is far from being the case!

- A refusal to allow themselves to be destroyed by decisions taken by others, and by purely financial considerations.
- A strike managed by the workers themselves, through General Assemblies; workers took their own decisions on the initiatives that were taken, and who decided that management no longer

had any role to play in the refinery that it was no longer in fact managing.

- Stronger solidarity with their colleagues in the other Total sites that transformed the strike into a national movement with renewable strike actions. Many people wanted to see this strike become a “testimonial” action.

That’s what the Total strike is all about!

An active strike

In this plant, SUD is the majority union. The strike was managed by an inter-union committee of SUD/CGT/FO, and two daily general assemblies allowed all the workers to take part in the decision-making process, to define the actions and share information.

From January 12th, there was a strike picket at the refinery gates. Many demonstrations were organised in Dunkirk and Paris. Those that took place in front of the Total headquarters in La Défense (Paris) clearly showed that the management refused to meet the delegation of striking workers or their unions, and they set the police on the workers. After 3 weeks of strike, the strikers warned: “If Management persists with their refusal to meet the workers, we intend to take over the site; it belongs to us!” And this is indeed what happened, with the workers inviting the management to leave and to limit themselves to a few offices that they generously allowed them to use.... whereas the union flags and the strikers banners hung from the front of the refinery.

National strike

When the strike in Dunkirk was one month old, the CGT, CFDT, FO, CGC and Solidaires trade union federations of the chemical sector called for a national movement in all Total refineries. This led to the national extension of the struggle; it was considered by the Dunkirk strikers to be an important moment. The generalisation of the strike was not only based on the question of solidarity. The Total workers had plenty of reasons for going on strike, and rightfully so.

Sadly, after five days of daily voting to pursue the strike in General Assemblies,

the CFDT federation, followed the next day by the CGT called for the strike to be called off.

The agreement that SUD failed to sign failed to take the basic reasons for the conflict into consideration – the support and solidarity for the employees in the Flanders Refinery that was under threat of closure. The main demand was that of upholding the “major stoppages” (for regular general maintenance that were scheduled for the following month, followed by the continued refinery activity on the site for the period that would allow for an in-depth consideration of the planned industrial reconversion.

Although the Total management mentioned that 5 other refineries would be preserved, there was no mention made of the level of activity or of the number of jobs that would be preserved on these five sites. Finally the “discussions” did not include any obligatory results and totally failed to take the initial demand of preservation of the activity of the Flanders Refinery into account.

Calling off this national strike movement was a bad thing for the striking workers of Dunkirk. It took some time to understand why the strike was called off, even though it had definitely reached a critical point in terms of the balance of power with the Total management and with the government. It will be necessary to collectively evaluate all of this.

A strike against exploitation

But for the moment the important thing is to continue supporting the striker in Dunkirk. All the more so because we can count on many sources to support us: locally, of course as well as regionally and at national level. This is what is at stake: we need to build a wall of solidarity around our comrades in Total.

We are facing a wall of money, of cynicism, of inhumanity. Total’s profits for 2009 were almost 8 billion euros (and 2009 was the year of the economic crisis!), after having made 13.9 billion euros profit in 2008.

And the shareholders of Total want us to believe that they have no choice other than to close down the Flanders Refinery!

There is indeed an alternative choice, and it is very simple: keep the refinery open, guarantee the future of the workers (both Total and sub-contractors) and too bad if it costs the shareholders a little money!

Thanks to the work of the Total employees, including those in Dunkirk, the shareholders pocketed 5.4 billion euros-worth of dividends in 2009; this is almost 3 times more than in 2000. On the basis of that alone they should be able to survive, even if the Flanders Refinery does not close down.

Meanwhile the definitive closure of the refinery would have very serious consequences for the Total workers as well as the sub-contractors and workers' families.

The exploitation of the workers to the benefit of the shareholders is a common occurrence. It is this phenomenon that explains the crisis that is being used to try to convince us that we should accept the situation as it is, or even worse.

No! We refuse to accept! We shall not resign ourselves to this! We refuse to accept the violence of employers and social injustice!

Because the crisis is that of the capitalist system, a system organised on the basis of our exploitation. We need to confront this by unifying our resistance, bringing together all those who really want to see things change.

Strike and unified trade union actions

The question of trade union unity is a clear issue. The fact that this is not simple was again demonstrated by the Total conflict at national level. There was an inter-professional call to strike and demonstrate by CGT-CFDT-UNSA-FSU-Solidaires at national level for the 23rd March.

This day is obviously not an end to itself. The Solidaires unionist leaders are available to build a national inter-professional movement, linked to the reality and the social situation that we have already mentioned, including an evaluation of the strategies used in recent years in the various struggles.

Trade unionism is responsible for proposing actions that allow us to win, not just

to count our numbers. We know that this is something shared by many collectives of activists in unions other than Solidaires.

What we need is to bring together all those who are prepared to take on social confrontation, who are not in denial about the reality of class struggle. In other words, all those who would like to see genuine trade unionism; because what is trade unionism if not the collective organisation of workers as a social class, in order to defend their interests and create social change? The rest can at the best be called social support, of varying degrees.

What we want to build needs to be done with the workers; it is not something between activists, and even less a struggle for pseudo-power between trade-union organisations or within trade-union organisations.

We do not wish to examine, comment on or criticise what is happening; we want to do things for ourselves! And we shall do it together! Together like the workers of the Flanders Refinery!

The Total workers laid the first stones in the "wall of solidarity". We now need to lend a hand. Let us help and provide the Total workers with support. What we need to do is to take up the call, support it, make it heard and act to help implement the workers' demands: carry out the maintenance works now, and get the refinery started up again once this work has been carried out.

The Solidaires trade union has taken a national stance on this issue. We are well aware of the fact that many other collectives of activists, trade unions, associations and politicians will follow the lead.

SUD – Total

15th march 2010

*Translated from French by Judith Hitchman, France

Turkey

A Brief History of TEKEL Struggle

The public sector in Turkey is always seen as the best employment opportunity for people who are looking for a secure job. But with the neo-liberal policies which are going on for some time in Turkey, public sector is now mostly known by worker resistances against its precarious employment policies. The people who used to be most sure about their future, are now not certain if they will have a job next year. And that's why we start to hear more about the resistances from public sector, last year young university academicians revolted against a law article called 50D which will result with loss of their jobs and unsecure jobs just like the article 4c which TEKEL workers are resisting for a few months now. Even the numbers and letters change between 4C and 50D, the main logic is same, more precarious jobs for every sector of workers; it is same for Phd graduate academicians or tobacco factory workers.

4-C, Another Word for Precarity

TEKEL, the government monopoly (by the way the word "tekel" itself means "monopoly" in Turkish) of tobacco and alcohol is in the privatization program for many years. The company broke down into small parts and privatized partially for long time. Most recently, the tobacco part of the factory which consists of 43 factories in 21 cities, is sold to British American Tobacco in 2008, at that time there were some resistance too, workers shut them down to the factory. But that resistance was very small and didn't get much support by the trade union. Actually, after the privatization, the BAT Company thanked to the Union for their cooperation with a press ad. After the privatization, the company closed all the factories except one and sacked the 12 000 TEKEL workers. With the beginning of this year government proposed TEKEL workers jobs in other public sector establishments with less than half of their current salary under Article 4-C of public officers law.

4-C is introduced by government in 2004 as a new legislation for workers who lost their jobs after privatization. According to this all of these workers could be employed in the temporary jobs in public sector which is called article 4-C in public officials law. Right now, there are 70 000 workers who are working under article 4-C with no job security and social rights. The TEKEL workers revolted against this legislation and they asked at least to be employed in other public sector organizations with their current salary and social rights. On December 15, a march to Ankara took place from every city which has TEKEL units. And on the 4th day of the resistance, police brutally attacked the workers which created a huge support for TEKEL workers and give more visibility to their situation.

The TEKEL neighborhood or "Sakarya Commune"

This attack can be considered as a turning point for TEKEL resistance. After that, workers went in front of their trade union confederation, Turk-Is's headquarters. They have created shelters in the streets around the Union building. And turned that neighborhood into a "Commune". Sakarya, the neighborhood which is known for its bars, cafes, restaurants and has a very central place in the daily life of Capital of the Country, is now known as "TEKEL neighborhood". Some even named it as "Sakarya Commune". TEKEL workers and their families started to live around their Union Confederation building. And the Kurdish and Turkish workers who are coming from very different places of the country started to live and fight together in the same area against their common enemy, "precarity". This is one of the important points of the TEKEL resistance.

Obviously the President of the Confederation who in the past never felt necessary to hide his support for governing party AKP, didn't have this in his mind. The pressure from the below

was too high that the trade union bureaucracy didn't find any other solution than acting as they are supporting this struggle. This is another important point of the TEKEL resistance. This resistance is developed from the below, in one point workers made referendum between each other in order to decide if they will go on struggling or quit. But it wasn't that easy. During one of the demonstrations, workers took control of the stage with the slogans of "General Strike" against trade union leadership. Many times they asked for resignation of the President of the Confederation during the small demonstration in front of the Turk-IS headquarters. So TEKEL workers wasn't only fighting against the Government but they were also fighting against their own bureaucracy.

The General Strike which never happened

In the end the calls of general strike made by workers and left wing political groups was heard by the trade union leadership and a general strike call made by four Trade Union Confederations for 4th of February. And they learned that organizing a general strike needs more than just saying the word. The so called general strike was a disaster. Except a few very small examples nobody stopped work and daily life went on as nothing happened. Actually it was foreseeable that there won't be a general strike on that day when you consider how organized the working class in Turkey. After this, a very big demonstration organized in which many people from all over the country went to Ankara and spent a night together with TEKEL workers in "TEKEL neighborhood". This happened in a time when Prime Minister is threatening the workers by saying that police can attack the tents and remove them from the street. Actually these sort of declarations made several times by various public officials. Sometimes it gets as ridiculous as this; once a public official told that "the TEKEL workers are polluting the environment that's why they need to remove them from the area."

Government also made another statement saying that all the sacked workers must accept their new jobs in other public sector establishment with 4-C status before the end of February otherwise they won't be able to apply for 4-C status after that time. They tried to force workers to choose between a work with half of their salary (with no social rights) and unemployment in a country where there are millions of unemployed people. Of course some workers, choose to go back to their home countries to sign the contract because they were afraid of being unemployed and

none of them has the luxury to be unemployed for a long time. But this number was always very limited.

In the end of the month, High Court's decision came to help of the trade unionists. The high court's decision which extends the time frame to apply for 4-C status is used as an excuse to finish the resistance in Ankara and they turned back to their home towns. This court decision is sold as a victory by trade union bureaucracy. And actually workers also needed something like that because everybody was too tired after more than two months and they needed to turn back to their daily life. After this decision which doesn't change the situation of the workers but only gives them some more time, a declaration made by the trade unions, said that they are leaving now but they will come back to Ankara in April and they will organize a general strike on 26th of May with a set of demands.

The Battle of 1st April

And when the 1st of April arrived many people with TEKEL workers traveled to Ankara for a demonstration in front of the Turk-Is again. But Ankara police this time never let anybody to enter there, actually they even stopped buses in the entrance of Ankara. During the day there were clashes with the workers and their supporters against the police. Police turned Ankara into a battleground. They have invaded the once "Sakarya Commune" or "TEKEL neighborhood" and they were determined to defend it with their life.

Right now, it seems that TEKEL resistance is finished but it gave very important experiences and lessons which some of them are explained above. Most importantly it gave a new excitement to radical left of the country which feels almost dead for many many years. Many of the left wing groups went to Ankara in order to support TEKEL workers and many of them were expecting too many things from them. Of course, it will be unfair to expect TEKEL workers to change the whole destiny of the left which stays silent for so long time. But at least they have created a very important example and now there are other factories who are in privatization stage and their workers will be offered with 4-C status too. For example, sugar factory workers. We will see if the lessons learned from TEKEL can help the sugar factory workers.

Eyup Ozer

Farmers and civil society groups denounce World Bank proposal for win-win land grabbing

Via Campesina, FIAN, Land Research Action Network and GRAIN, together with over 100 allies, are issuing a loud appeal to stop the current wave of land grabbing that is taking millions of hectares of farmland away from rural communities across Africa, Asia and Latin America. Their appeal coincides with the release of a new World Bank report that confirms the massive extent of the current land grab assault and puts forward seven "principles" to make these land deals socially acceptable. The Bank's strategy will be presented in Washington DC at a Roundtable on April 25, co-hosted by Japan, the United States and the African Union, and at the World Bank's Annual Land Conference on April 26.

In a statement, the movements and organisations denounce the Bank's proposals as an attempt to "reduce the risk of social backlash" while pushing ahead with the take-over of agricultural land by corporate investors. "The World Bank's principles," the groups argue, "aim to distract from the fact that today's global food crisis will not be solved by large scale industrial agriculture, which is what all of these land acquisitions are about."

A breakfast media briefing will be held on Monday, April 26 at 7:45am at the Bread Line Restaurant (1751 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20006). Representatives of the National Family Farm Coalition/Via Campesina and GRAIN will be present to explain why win-win landgrabbing, as proposed by the Bank, is impossible and what steps are required to solve the global food crisis.

On Sunday April 25, from 2:00pm to 3:00pm, groups will be in front of the Millennium Challenge Corporation offices at 875 15th St. NW, where the official Roundtable event will be held, to inform delegates of the position of social movements.

22 April 2010

JAPAN

Against USA Bases

There was a big rally of some 90,000 persons in Yomitan, Okinawa from inside and outside of Okinawa today, including Nakaima, governor of Okinawa and all mayors in Okinawa prefecture, who opposed relocation of US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma within Okinawa or the country.

Participants issued a statement calling for immediate closing and relocation of Futenma US Base outside Okinawa or the country.

The rally was a record-high participation in Okinawa expressing public opinion against US Base. In 1995 some 85,000 got together protesting the rape case of a schoolgirl by US servicemen.

Today on 25th April, Okinawa was turned yellow. The organizing committee called on all inhabitants in Okinawa to use 'yellow' for a protest color by wearing yellow stole, holding a yellow handkerchief in their hand or hanging yellow cloth under eaves, for instance, in order to deliver their will of a yellow card to the government.

Relocation of Futenma Base is a critical issue between US and Japan.

Today's popular protest could force Japanese PM Hatoyama to reconsider the proposed plan of offshore land reclamation planned under the 2006 Japan-US agreement or relocation in Tokunoshima, Kagoshima near Okinawa.

Recently, the voices of reconsidering the security alliance are coming out here in Japan.

Yoko Akimoto

ATTAC Japan

World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth

PEOPLES AGREEMENT

Today, our Mother Earth is wounded and the future of humanity is in danger.

If global warming increases by more than 2 degrees Celsius, a situation that the “Copenhagen Accord” could lead to, there is a 50% probability that the damages caused to our Mother Earth will be completely irreversible. Between 20% and 30% of species would be in danger of disappearing. Large extensions of forest would be affected, droughts and floods would affect different regions of the planet, deserts would expand, and the melting of the polar ice caps and the glaciers in the Andes and Himalayas would worsen. Many island states would disappear, and Africa would suffer an increase in temperature of more than 3 degrees Celsius. Likewise, the production of food would diminish in the world, causing catastrophic impact on the survival of inhabitants from vast regions in the planet, and the number of people in the world suffering from hunger would increase dramatically, a figure that already exceeds 1.02 billion people. The corporations and governments of the so-called “developed” countries, in complicity with a segment of the scientific community, have led us to discuss climate change as a problem limited to the rise in temperature without questioning the cause, which is the capitalist system.

We confront the terminal crisis of a civilizing model that is patriarchal and based on the submission and destruction of human beings and nature that accelerated since the industrial revolution.

The capitalist system has imposed on us a logic of competition, progress and limitless growth. This regime of production and consumption seeks profit without limits, separating human beings from nature and imposing a logic of domination upon nature, transforming everything into commodities: water, earth, the human genome, ancestral cultures, biodiversity, justice, ethics, the rights of peoples, and life itself.

Under capitalism, Mother Earth is converted into a source of raw materials, and human beings into consumers and a means of production, into people that are seen as valuable only for what they own, and not for what they are.

Capitalism requires a powerful military industry for its processes of accumulation and imposition of control over territories and natural resources, suppressing the resistance of the peoples. It is an imperialist system of colonization of the planet.

Humanity confronts a great dilemma: to continue on the path of capitalism, depredation, and death, or to choose the path of harmony with nature and respect for life.

It is imperative that we forge a new system that restores harmony with nature and among human beings. And in order for there to be balance with nature, there must first be equity among human beings. We propose to the peoples of the world the recovery, revalorization, and strengthening of the knowledge, wisdom, and ancestral practices of Indigenous Peoples, which are affirmed in the thought and practices of “Living Well,” recognizing Mother Earth as a living being with which we have an indivisible, interdependent, complementary and spiritual relationship. To face climate change, we must recognize Mother Earth as the source of life and forge a new system based on the principles of:

- harmony and balance among all and with all things;
- complementarity, solidarity, and equality;
- collective well-being and the satisfaction of the basic necessities of all;
- people in harmony with nature;
- recognition of human beings for what they are, not what they own;
- elimination of all forms of colonialism, imperialism and interventionism;
- peace among the peoples and with Mother Earth;

The model we support is not a model of limitless and destructive development. All countries need to produce the goods and services necessary to satisfy the fundamental needs of their populations, but by no means can they continue to follow the path of development that has led the richest countries to have an ecological footprint five times bigger than what the planet is able to support. Currently, the regenerative capacity of the planet has been already exceeded by more than 30 percent. If this pace of over-exploitation of our Mother Earth continues, we will need two planets by the year 2030. In an interdependent system in which human beings are only one component, it is not possible to recognize rights only to the human part without provoking an imbalance in the system as a whole. To guarantee human rights and to restore harmony with nature, it is necessary

to effectively recognize and apply the rights of Mother Earth. For this purpose, we propose the attached project for the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth, in which it's recorded that:

- The right to live and to exist;
- The right to be respected;
- The right to regenerate its bio-capacity and to continue it's vital cycles and processes free of human alteration;
- The right to maintain their identity and integrity as differentiated beings, self-regulated and interrelated;
- The right to water as the source of life;
- The right to clean air;
- The right to comprehensive health;
- The right to be free of contamination and pollution, free of toxic and radioactive waste;
- The right to be free of alterations or modifications of it's genetic structure in a manner that threatens it's integrity or vital and healthy functioning;
- The right to prompt and full restoration for violations to the rights acknowledged in this Declaration caused by human activities.

The "shared vision" seeks to stabilize the concentrations of greenhouse gases to make effective the Article 2 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which states that "the stabilization of greenhouse gases concentrations in the atmosphere to a level that prevents dangerous anthropogenic inferences for the climate system." Our vision is based on the principle of historical common but differentiated responsibilities, to demand the developed countries to commit with quantifiable goals of emission reduction that will allow to return the concentrations of greenhouse gases to 300 ppm, therefore the increase in the average world temperature to a maximum of one degree Celsius.

Emphasizing the need for urgent action to achieve this vision, and with the support of peoples, movements and countries, developed countries should commit to ambitious targets for reducing emissions that permit the achievement of short-term objectives, while maintaining our vision in favor of balance in the Earth's climate system, in agreement with the ultimate objective of the Convention.

The "shared vision for long-term cooperative action" in climate change negotiations should not be reduced to defining the limit on temperature increases and the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, but must also incorporate in a balanced and integral manner measures regarding capacity building, production and consumption patterns, and other essential factors such as the acknowledging of the Rights of Mother Earth to establish harmony with nature.

Developed countries, as the main cause of climate change, in assuming their histori-

cal responsibility, must recognize and honor their climate debt in all of its dimensions as the basis for a just, effective, and scientific solution to climate change. In this context, we demand that developed countries:

- Restore to developing countries the atmospheric space that is occupied by their greenhouse gas emissions. This implies the decolonization of the atmosphere through the reduction and absorption of their emissions;
- Assume the costs and technology transfer needs of developing countries arising from the loss of development opportunities due to living in a restricted atmospheric space;
- Assume responsibility for the hundreds of millions of people that will be forced to migrate due to the climate change caused by these countries, and eliminate their restrictive immigration policies, offering migrants a decent life with full human rights guarantees in their countries;
- Assume adaptation debt related to the impacts of climate change on developing countries by providing the means to prevent, minimize, and deal with damages arising from their excessive emissions;
- Honor these debts as part of a broader debt to Mother Earth by adopting and implementing the United Nations Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth.

The focus must not be only on financial compensation, but also on restorative justice, understood as the restitution of integrity to our Mother Earth and all its beings.

We deplore attempts by countries to annul the Kyoto Protocol, which is the sole legally binding instrument specific to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by developed countries.

We inform the world that, despite their obligation to reduce emissions, developed countries have increased their emissions by 11.2% in the period from 1990 to 2007.

During that same period, due to unbridled consumption, the United States of America has increased its greenhouse gas emissions by 16.8%, reaching an average of 20 to 23 tons of CO₂ per-person. This represents 9 times more than that of the average inhabitant of the "Third World," and 20 times more than that of the average inhabitant of Sub-Saharan Africa.

We categorically reject the illegitimate "Copenhagen Accord" that allows developed countries to offer insufficient reductions in greenhouse gases based in voluntary and individual commitments, violating the environmental integrity of Mother Earth and

leading us toward an increase in global temperatures of around 4°C.

The next Conference on Climate Change to be held at the end of 2010 in Mexico should approve an amendment to the Kyoto Protocol for the second commitment period from 2013 to 2017 under which developed countries must agree to significant domestic emissions reductions of at least 50% based on 1990 levels, excluding carbon markets or other offset mechanisms that mask the failure of actual reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

We require first of all the establishment of a goal for the group of developed countries to achieve the assignment of individual commitments for each developed country under the framework of complementary efforts among each one, maintaining in this way Kyoto Protocol as the route to emissions reductions.

The United States, as the only Annex 1 country on Earth that did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol, has a significant responsibility toward all peoples of the world to ratify this document and commit itself to respecting and complying with emissions reduction targets on a scale appropriate to the total size of its economy.

We the peoples have the equal right to be protected from the adverse effects of climate change and reject the notion of adaptation to climate change as understood as a resignation to impacts provoked by the historical emissions of developed countries, which themselves must adapt their modes of life and consumption in the face of this global emergency. We see it as imperative to confront the adverse effects of climate change, and consider adaptation to be a process rather than an imposition, as well as a tool that can serve to help offset those effects, demonstrating that it is possible to achieve harmony with nature under a different model for living.

It is necessary to construct an Adaptation Fund exclusively for addressing climate change as part of a financial mechanism that is managed in a sovereign, transparent, and equitable manner for all States. This Fund should assess the impacts and costs of climate change in developing countries and needs deriving from these impacts, and monitor support on the part of developed countries. It should also include a mechanism for compensation for current and future damages, loss of opportunities due to extreme and gradual climactic events, and additional costs that could present themselves if our planet surpasses ecological thresholds, such as those impacts that present obstacles to "Living Well."

The "Copenhagen Accord" imposed on developing countries by a few States, beyond simply offering insufficient resources, attempts as well to divide and create confrontation between peoples and to extort developing countries by placing conditions on access to adaptation and mitigation resources. We also

assert as unacceptable the attempt in processes of international negotiation to classify developing countries for their vulnerability to climate change, generating disputes, inequalities and segregation among them.

The immense challenge humanity faces of stopping global warming and cooling the planet can only be achieved through a profound shift in agricultural practices toward the sustainable model of production used by indigenous and rural farming peoples, as well as other ancestral models and practices that contribute to solving the problem of agriculture and food sovereignty. This is understood as the right of peoples to control their own seeds, lands, water, and food production, thereby guaranteeing, through forms of production that are in harmony with Mother Earth and appropriate to local cultural contexts, access to sufficient, varied and nutritious foods in complementarity with Mother Earth and deepening the autonomous (participatory, communal and shared) production of every nation and people.

Climate change is now producing profound impacts on agriculture and the ways of life of indigenous peoples and farmers throughout the world, and these impacts will worsen in the future.

Agribusiness, through its social, economic, and cultural model of global capitalist production and its logic of producing food for the market and not to fulfill the right to proper nutrition, is one of the principal causes of climate change. Its technological, commercial, and political approach only serves to deepen the climate change crisis and increase hunger in the world. For this reason, we reject Free Trade Agreements and Association Agreements and all forms of the application of Intellectual Property Rights to life, current technological packages (agrochemicals, genetic modification) and those that offer false solutions (biofuels, geo-engineering, nanotechnology, etc.) that only exacerbate the current crisis.

We similarly denounce the way in which the capitalist model imposes mega-infrastructure projects and invades territories with extractive projects, water privatization, and militarized territories, expelling indigenous peoples from their lands, inhibiting food sovereignty and deepening socio-environmental crisis.

We demand recognition of the right of all peoples, living beings, and Mother Earth to have access to water, and we support the proposal of the Government of Bolivia to recognize water as a Fundamental Human Right.

The definition of forests used in the negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which includes plantations, is unacceptable. Monoculture plantations are not forests. Therefore, we require a definition for negotiation purposes that recognizes the native forests, jungles and the diverse ecosystems on Earth.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples must be fully recognized, implemented and integrated in climate change negotiations. The best strategy and action to avoid deforestation and degradation and protect native forests and jungles is to recognize and guarantee collective rights to lands and territories, especially considering that most of the forests are located within the territories of indigenous peoples and nations and other traditional communities.

We condemn market mechanisms such as REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) and its versions + and ++, which are violating the sovereignty of peoples and their right to prior free and informed consent as well as the sovereignty of national States, the customs of Peoples, and the Rights of Nature.

Polluting countries have an obligation to carry out direct transfers of the economic and technological resources needed to pay for the restoration and maintenance of forests in favor of the peoples and indigenous ancestral organic structures. Compensation must be direct and in addition to the sources of funding promised by developed countries outside of the carbon market, and never serve as carbon offsets. We demand that countries stop actions on local forests based on market mechanisms and propose non-existent and conditional results. We call on governments to create a global program to restore native forests and jungles, managed and administered by the peoples, implementing forest seeds, fruit trees, and native flora. Governments should eliminate forest concessions and support the conservation of petroleum deposits in the ground and urgently stop the exploitation of hydrocarbons in forestlands.

We call upon States to recognize, respect and guarantee the effective implementation of international human rights standards and the rights of indigenous peoples, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples under ILO Convention 169, among other relevant instruments in the negotiations, policies and measures used to meet the challenges posed by climate change. In particular, we call upon States to give legal recognition to claims over territories, lands and natural resources to enable and strengthen our traditional ways of life and contribute effectively to solving climate change.

We demand the full and effective implementation of the right to consultation, participation and prior, free and informed consent of indigenous peoples in all negotiation processes, and in the design and implementation of measures related to climate change.

Environmental degradation and climate change are currently reaching critical levels, and one of the main consequences of this is domestic and international migration. According to projections, there were already about 25 million climate migrants by 1995.

Current estimates are around 50 million, and projections suggest that between 200 million and 1 billion people will become displaced by situations resulting from climate change by the year 2050.

Developed countries should assume responsibility for climate migrants, welcoming them into their territories and recognizing their fundamental rights through the signing of international conventions that provide for the definition of climate migrant and require all States to abide by determinations.

Establish an International Tribunal of Conscience to denounce, make visible, document, judge and punish violations of the rights of migrants, refugees and displaced persons within countries of origin, transit and destination, clearly identifying the responsibilities of States, companies and other agents.

Current funding directed toward developing countries for climate change and the proposal of the Copenhagen Accord are insignificant. In addition to Official Development Assistance and public sources, developed countries must commit to a new annual funding of at least 6% of GDP to tackle climate change in developing countries. This is viable considering that a similar amount is spent on national defense, and that 5 times more have been put forth to rescue failing banks and speculators, which raises serious questions about global priorities and political will. This funding should be direct and free of conditions, and should not interfere with the national sovereignty or self-determination of the most affected communities and groups.

In view of the inefficiency of the current mechanism, a new funding mechanism should be established at the 2010 Climate Change Conference in Mexico, functioning under the authority of the Conference of the Parties (COP) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and held accountable to it, with significant representation of developing countries, to ensure compliance with the funding commitments of Annex 1 countries.

It has been stated that developed countries significantly increased their emissions in the period from 1990 to 2007, despite having stated that the reduction would be substantially supported by market mechanisms.

The carbon market has become a lucrative business, commodifying our Mother Earth. It is therefore not an alternative for tackle climate change, as it loots and ravages the land, water, and even life itself.

The recent financial crisis has demonstrated that the market is incapable of regulating the financial system, which is fragile and uncertain due to speculation and the emergence of intermediary brokers. Therefore, it would be totally irresponsible to leave in their hands the care and protection of human existence and of our Mother Earth.

We consider inadmissible that current negotiations propose the creation of new mechanisms that extend and promote the carbon market, for existing mechanisms have not resolved the problem of climate change nor led to real and direct actions to reduce greenhouse gases. It is necessary to demand fulfillment of the commitments assumed by developed countries under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change regarding development and technology transfer, and to reject the “technology showcase” proposed by developed countries that only markets technology. It is essential to establish guidelines in order to create a multilateral and multidisciplinary mechanism for participatory control, management, and evaluation of the exchange of technologies. These technologies must be useful, clean and socially sound. Likewise, it is fundamental to establish a fund for the financing and inventory of technologies that are appropriate and free of intellectual property rights. Patents, in particular, should move from the hands of private monopolies to the public domain in order to promote accessibility and low costs.

Knowledge is universal, and should for no reason be the object of private property or private use, nor should its application in the form of technology. Developed countries have a responsibility to share their technology with developing countries, to build research centers in developing countries for the creation of technologies and innovations, and defend and promote their development and application for “living well.” The world must recover and re-learn ancestral principles and approaches from native peoples to stop the destruction of the planet, as well as promote ancestral practices, knowledge and spirituality to recuperate the capacity for “living well” in harmony with Mother Earth.

Considering the lack of political will on the part of developed countries to effectively comply with commitments and obligations assumed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, and given the lack of a legal international organism to guard against and sanction climate and environmental crimes that violate the Rights of Mother Earth and humanity, we demand the creation of an International Climate and Environmental Justice Tribunal that has the legal capacity to prevent, judge and penalize States, industries and people that by commission or omission contaminate and provoke climate change.

Supporting States that present claims at the International Climate and Environmental Justice Tribunal against developed countries that fail to comply with commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol including commitments to reduce greenhouse gases.

We urge peoples to propose and promote deep reform within the United Nations, so that all member States comply with the decisions of the International Climate and Environmental Justice Tribunal.

The future of humanity is in danger, and we cannot allow a group of leaders from developed countries to decide for all countries as they tried unsuccessfully to do at the Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen. This decision concerns us all. Thus, it is essential to carry out a global referendum or popular consultation on climate change in which all are consulted regarding the following issues; the level of emission reductions on the part of developed countries and transnational corporations, financing to be offered by developed countries, the creation of an International Climate Justice Tribunal, the need for a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, and the need to change the current capitalist system. The process of a global referendum or popular consultation will depend on process of preparation that ensures the successful development of the same.

In order to coordinate our international action and implement the results of this “Accord of the Peoples,” we call for the building of a Global People’s Movement for Mother Earth, which should be based on the principles of complementarity and respect for the diversity of origin and visions among its members, constituting a broad and democratic space for coordination and joint worldwide actions.

To this end, we adopt the attached global plan of action so that in Mexico, the developed countries listed in Annex 1 respect the existing legal framework and reduce their greenhouse gases emissions by 50%, and that the different proposals contained in this Agreement are adopted.

Finally, we agree to undertake a Second World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in 2011 as part of this process of building the Global People’s Movement for Mother Earth and reacting to the outcomes of the Climate Change Conference to be held at the end of this year in Cancun, Mexico.

April 22nd, Cochabamba, Bolivia

Enlazando
Alternativas



2010

Cumbre Alternativa de los Pueblos

Call to the Peoples' Alternative Summit, Enlazando Alternativas IV ((Linking Alternatives). Madrid (Spain), 14th 18th May 2010,

In May 2010, the Presidents and Heads of State of the European Union (EU), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) will meet in Madrid under the Spanish Presidency of the EU. The "Old Continent", restructured today as the Europe of capital and war, will seek, at this Summit, to push policies and mechanisms favoring finance capital and the big transnational corporations, the plundering of natural resources and the privatization of public services disguised as promises of development. This Summit will take place under the shadow of a financial, economic, environmental and social crisis that is causing increasing unemployment and precarity in Europe and poverty and social exclusion in Latin America.

In Europe, social movements and organizations witness a continuing advance of the Right, and an increasingly powerful and aggressive attack on the labour, economic, political, social, cultural, and environmental rights that have been won in the past. The recent approval of the Lisbon Treaty — in an anti-democratic way which denied the direct participation of the people — will favor the interests of transnational corporations through free trade agreements and the liberalization of investments, to the detriment of the rights of the peoples and the environment. This Fortress Europe, militarized, xenophobic and inhumane, with less public services and more privatizations is not our Europe. To the Europe of capital, war and crisis, we counterpose solidarity among peoples.

In LAC countries the resistances of the social movements continue to develop. Alongside some Latin American governments, they struggle to defend their sovereignty and, despite difficulties and contradictions, undertake new political projects for social change. These efforts are attacked by criminal actions such as the coup d'état in Honduras, which poses a serious threat for the entire continent. The election of US President Barack Obama has not led to a change in US policy in the region — as demonstrated by the installation of US military bases in Colombia. In a similar way, two hundred years after independence, the EU attacks the processes of regional integration, using the Spanish government and transnational corporations as its flagship. Disguised as cooperation and development aid, the new galleons of the reconquest seek to consolidate their domination of the region through free trade agreements.

The biregional EuropeLatin America and Caribbean network, Enlazando Alternativas, together with other networks, is mobilizing for the fourth time to create a biregional political space, as we did in Guadalajara, Mexico (2004), Vienna, Austria (2006) and Lima, Peru (2008). The Peoples' Alternative Summit, Enlazando Alternativas 4, scheduled to take place from 14th to 18th May 2010, aims to strengthen emerging popular resistances and new convergences and solidarities between our peoples. Despite the criminalization of social movements, it will aim to build a biregional political space for mobilization.

We are calling on all the social networks and organisations, trades unions, political forces and civil society movements to join the preparation process and participate in Madrid in the Peoples'

Alternative Summit, Enlazando Alternativas 4 in defense of peoples' sovereignty, human rights, participatory democracy, labour rights, the rights of women and indigenous peoples, social justice, the defense of the environment in the face of climate change, and the establishment of peace.

We have shown that we are not invisible. Gandhi once said: "First they ignore us, then they mock us, then they fight us, then we win". Now they are fighting us.

Please, sign the call in:

or send an Email to: red.enlazandoalternativas@gmail.com

<http://www.enlazandoalternativas.org/spip.php?article534>

Traditional life-style and local development

One of the most complex and difficult issues facing the indigenous peoples on our planet is how, or indeed whether or not to reconcile their traditional life-style with what can be considered true sustainable local development. I recently had the very great privilege of spending a week visiting my Maasai friend Adam Kuleit ole Mwarabu in Parakuyo, Tanzania. I had met Adam in Tunisia last year during the work I did with the civil society lobby at the negotiations on FAO Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, and had greatly admired his way of reconciling tradition and modernity. After all, there aren't many people who can stand up in front of a UN meeting in full Maasai traditional dress (which he always wears) and make a Powerpoint presentation... I took the opportunity of a visit to my Kenyan son Ruwa, north of Mombasa last October, to hop on a plane from Mombasa and fly down to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and travel by bus to visit him and his family...

All too often, our vision of sustainable local development is culturally clouded by Western concepts of progress, and fails to take the issues of the wisdom of local traditions on board. Worse still, many indigenous peoples are buying into so-called "modernity", to the detriment of their traditional practice. And the combination of outside exploitation of mineral and land resources, human greed, climate change and loss of biodiversity and of the natural balance of traditional ecosystems all add up to a kind of local development that is ultimately anything but sustainable.

But education can be seen as part of the way forward. This article tries to tell some of the story of the Maasai population of

Parakuyo, a small village approximately 60km from Morogoro in the Kilosa district of Tanzania, of Adam Kuleit ole Mwarabu and his family, his colleague Pololet Mgema, and Peter John Mruma, Headmaster of Parakuyo secondary school. It is the result of some very privileged time spent there last November. The village has a population of more than 4000 inhabitants keeping livestock such as cattle, sheep, goats and donkeys in an area of 30,000ha.

A traditional society based on a harmonious balance between men, women and nature: a little background information.

Few people are aware of the complex traditional balance of Parakuiyo Maasai society. They are pastoralists, with land that is traditionally a common good. Their territory covers both Kenya and Tanzania. Their society is based on traditions that are transmitted from one age group to another. It has an open-minded, humanist basis, with a structured profound spiritual wisdom, knowledge of medical virtues of plants and trees, and a social practice anchored in honour, loyalty, sharing and respect. Their society is also based on the wisdom of mediation and conflict resolution rather than aggression.

Their pastoral practice is anchored on a deep historical knowledge of their land and the alternating dry and rainy seasons. It used to include cohabitation with wildlife, and a naturally balanced difference between the way that cows graze (they eat the long grasses), and other animals that eat only the shorter grass and browse the acacias trees and other plants. Drought is not a new

phenomenon in these regions, but the historic access to highland pastures alternating with grazing the steppe in the plains used to mean that ecosystems and cattle survived. Contrary to the loudly expressed opinions of many so-called development agencies, the Maasai never destroyed the land. Quite the opposite: their rotating grazing systems were a mighty factor of preservation! Until very recently they were a wealthy people, with herds of many thousands of heads of cattle, even though they do not necessarily attach much traditional importance to money per se as they have always used a barter system and paid livestock for dowry and peace making.

The Maasai have progressively become marginalised and dispossessed of their lands. They have been excluded from their traditional grazing lands such as the Mara (now the famous Maasai Mara game park in Kenya), and Ngorongoro Crater in Tanzania. For a people to whom land is a communal territory containing resources, rather than a resource to be appropriated by individuals, (or the State) the above are totally at odds with the way in which traditional Maasai have always governed by social and political conventions designed to reduce the risk of unpredictable climate and semi-arid conditions. The balance of culture and nature enabled the Maasai to live in harmony with other creatures on their lands.

Colonial and post-colonial land reform frequently granted private land rights to both natural wildlife reserves and parks (to be used to exploit tourism), and introduced Western style cattle ranching on the best lands that were allocated to both black and white elites.

An example of one of many land-grabs is illustrated by one of several incidents that took place in 2009 (previous similar incidents took place in 2006). Non-pastoralist communities massively evicted pastoralists in Tanzania from their traditional lands with governmental support and collusion. They introduced modern intensive cattle ranches aimed at exporting meat. Farmers

entered land that was not theirs, gained deeds to the land, and started to farm. The government supported them, stating that the Maasai were uneducated and poor. Cows were impounded and died of hunger and thirst. There were physical fights over land, and even deaths. Maasai homes were burnt. Access to water for grazing became a serious issue. Cows were rounded up, and the Maasai had to pay 30,000 Tanzanian shillings (about 18 euros) a head as a fine for “damaging the environment” and 1,500,000 TZS (880 Euros) to put them into trucks that they had to rent (a further expense) to remove them from the “camps”. During the evictions, traditional leaders and the Maasai Bishop Jacob Mameo of ELCT Morogoro diocese went from village to village, organising traditional meetings to organise advocacy. The evicted nomadic pastoralists informed members of the parliaments, the European Union, the United Nations, the African Commission on Human & Peoples’ Rights and Local governments of great violation of human and animal rights, but the impact of this information has yet to be felt on the ground.

In Parakuyo village itself there are several public standpipes and flush toilets in the village, and some non-traditional houses even have their own showers and flush toilets. Young girls can now go to school and not have to walk more than a couple of hundred meters to draw water for cooking: a major impact on their access to education. There is also a primary school. Vicky, Adam’s wife is a teacher there. The financial crisis has meant that her salary has been cut, adding further to their financial difficulties. Their daughter, Winnie, lives about an hour’s drive away with Vicky’s parents, so that she can attend Kindergarten school, as there is none in Parakuyo. Her parents pay someone to take her to school on his bicycle every day, and only see her during the holidays and once a month... Their son, Longishu, is still a toddler, and full of the joys of a life full of love and relative (if closely supervised) freedom. They live in one room in a

house provided by Vicky's school. Internet connections are an acrobatic business, and Adam (who is very tall) often has to put his computer on a series of chairs on top of the table to get a signal... As a Junior Elder, and much-respected leader, Adam is constantly consulted on all sorts of matters when he is at home.

From considerable wealth (their cows) the Maasai were quickly reduced to a destitute community: typically, people went from owning from 300 cows to nothing overnight. Children were out of school, with parents who could no longer afford to pay the school fees. This was of course not only unconstitutional, but also a violation of the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous People's Rights, Human Rights and also animal rights... The Prime Minister created a commission in 2007, but over two years later, the report still has not been published. The government position has remained one of prioritising foreign investment in land and tourism... The regions of Arusha, Rukwa, Morogoro and Mbeya have been the most affected. A population of 10,000 pastoralists have lost more than 300,000 livestock. The affected families have been left by the government to die of hunger and disease.

Fighting against the odds

The Parakuiyo Pastoralists Indigenous Community Development Organisation, was founded by the community as an informal NGO. It uses traditional Maasai leadership as a natural form of governance. In 2006 it became a formal structure to enable it to receive outside funding for local projects. It continues to do much successful work at international level in terms of advocacy and defending Maasai and pastoralists' rights. It is a member of PINGOs Forum, a national platform established in 1994 to defend indigenous peoples', pastoralists' and traditional hunter-gatherers' rights. The four objectives are human rights, land rights, education (both secondary and higher) and capacity building.

The heart of the village project is the Parakuyo Secondary School. It was founded

in 2005, and opened in 2007. There are 220 pupils. It is the only Parakuiyo Maasai secondary boarding school in Tanzania. It has been essentially community-funded by the Maasai families whose children attend the school (90%). There is also an annual grant of 20,000 shillings for every child who attends. There are classrooms and dormitories for forms 1-3. (The secondary school system includes forms 1-4). There is an almost equal gender balance, with 45% girls and 55% boys attending. 90% of them come from pastoralist families. Five years ago, very few girls attended, but there has been successful awareness-raising of the importance of education, supported by the traditional elders. Parakuyo Secondary School was built for Parakuiyo Maasai children in the Morogoro and adjacent regions. 90% of the children in the secondary school are Parakuiyo Maasais.

The school also uses traditional approaches to help young people develop their sense of community responsibilities, such as allocating them plants and trees to tend. After school, the day pupils also participate in traditional activities of herding and village life.

There are many challenges facing the school, some of them urgent. Those children who have gone through forms 1-3 now have no classrooms or dormitories for form 4. They are currently out of school. There are no science labs or equipment. The kitchen, little more than a sheet of galvanised metal over an open fire, uses wood rather than gas or solar energy to prepare meals, not an optimal ecological solution by any means. Apart from trying to raise funds for the much-needed classrooms and dorms, there is also an adult education project...

As the article says, Maasai communities today are facing multiple challenges: human rights issues, climate change, land grabbing, economic survival and the inevitable migration not to new pastures and grasslands but towards the major cities and tourist resorts, with all that this implies. Whatever the future impacts of

government policy or climate change on the pastoralist community, the emphasis in Parakuyo is on education, both through the modern school system and Maasai traditions that are part of the Parakuiyo project. It is an important element that will help these young people to preserve their identity and face whatever the future holds in store.

** There are two spelling variations used in this article: Parakuiyo for the Maasai community, Parakuyo for the village and the school.*

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Original article in English

http://pingos.moportfolio.com/about_us
<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/drip.html>