



“The economic crisis is transformed into revolutionary crisis”

An interview with Savas Michael-Matsas (EEK, Greece)

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1) Which are the main characteristics of this crisis? And which, you think, are going to be the main consequences?

1. The current world capitalist crisis, the worst from the 1929 Crash and the Great Depression, as the capitalists themselves have to admit, marks the failure of the so-called finance globalization of the last three decades. The contradictions of capitalism were not resolved neither by the fictitious capital expansion world wide nor by the collapse of the so-called “actually existing Socialism; they were ‘globalized’ and after a series of ever worsening international financial shocks and economic earthquakes (1983, 1987, 1997-2001), finally exploded in 2007-2008. The over-expansion of fictitious capital failed to provide a long term viable way out to the crisis of capital over-accumulation that had led in 1971-73 to the break down of the Bretton Woods Keynesian framework of post war stabilization and expansion of world capitalism. Even worse: it prepared the ground for an unprecedented crisis that no central intervention by the State(s) or the central banks of US, UK, EU or Japan are able to control. The existing unbalances fueling the crisis are just unmanageable: when the international market of derivatives approaches the fantastic sum of US \$ 586 trillion



and the global GDP of the entire world is about US \$ 50 trillion, no State intervention by itself or coordinated can stop the collapse of the gigantic debt pyramid.

The attempts and calls to a return to Keynesian policies, not only by those right wingers who were defenders of neo-liberalism up to now but as well by the majority of the Left (which also was adapted until this moment of truth to the fetish of “globalization and “neo-liberalism”) are totally futile and reactionary: they cultivate illusions and lull the masses to prevent the unstoppable social revolts of the exploited and oppressed.

All the strategies followed by capitalism in the last century- either Keynesian State-ism or anti-Keynesian ‘neo-liberalism’ – demonstrated their limits and failure; thus, the nature of our imperialist epoch as an epoch of historic decline and decay of the capitalist system is re-asserted.

Nobody can underestimate the social and political consequences of the crisis. The fall of world economy into recession and depression, the bankruptcy of gigantic companies and entire Nation-States, mass unemployment, over-intensification of the exploitation rate are dynamite in the social foundations of capitalist societies, both in the center and in the periphery.

Capital is a relation, not a thing. Comrade Jorge Altamira of the Partido Obrero is absolutely right stressing that *“No es un problema de números, es un problema de relaciones sociales y de relaciones internacionales. No se resuelve con ‘paquetes’ sino con un colapso de las relaciones sociales y con la transformación de estas relaciones sobre nuevas bases”*. The economic crisis is transformed into a political one and the latter into a **revolutionary** crisis. This last consequence- the **revolutionary** implications of the current world crisis- is denied vehemently by most in the Left, particularly by those who denied the developing crisis and they had accused up to now the PO of Argentina or the EEK in Greece and our international organization, the Coordinating Committee for the re-foundation of the Fourth International (CRFI) to be “catastrophists”.



2) The crisis is far from being just reduced to a economic level and faster is becoming political. Is the working class and its revolutionary prepared to make front to this situation? Can you analyse, particularly, the situation of the European left?

2. There is no doubt that there is no still an adequate political preparation by the international working class and its vanguard to face the challenge of the current crisis; but this undeniable fact should not and will not paralyze the revolutionary tendencies that are propelled by the crisis and have now unprecedented opportunities to prevail among the masses in revolt. But to take advantage of these opportunities it is absolutely necessary a theoretical, programmatic, political, and organizational *revolutionizing of the revolutionary organizations* themselves.

In Europe there is already an uneven but real radicalization of workers' and youth struggles (for ex. in France, in Germany, in Greece) against the ravages of capitalism. The deepening recession in the Euro-zone, and at the heart of EU economy, Germany, plus the centrifugal forces fuelled by the world credit crisis fragmenting the EU edifice accelerate and exacerbate social tensions and conflicts. But the situation of the European Left is pathetic and despicable. Long ago the social democrats or the Stalinists have abandoned any link with the struggle to overthrow Capitalism, and they became the defenders of the capitalist order. The so-called "far left", although in some cases benefit from the loss of influence of the Socialist or Communist Parties, moves to the right, to a reformist direction while important sections of the masses move to the left. The example of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) in France is characteristic: while in the last elections had very positive results, occupying a new space in the Left after the collapse of the French CP, it decided to abandon any historic connection with the revolutionary traditions of Trotskyism and the Fourth International and to dissolve itself, in January 2009, in a vague, amorphous "New Anti-Capitalist Party", in which the demarcation line between reformists and revolutionaries is completely blurred. Such "broad anti-capitalist parties" have already miserably failed; either they split or collapsed or became indistinguishable for



reformism in other countries in Europe: the SSP in Scotland, Respect in Britain, the Left Bloc in Portugal, the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark etc. The debacle of the Party of Rifondazione Comunista of Bertinotti in Italy, after joining the capitalist Prodi government- a party which was considered by many in the far left, including the LCR, as the political head of the “movement of the movements” in Europe, shows clearly the political bankruptcy of this perspective of “re-groupment” on a non revolutionary basis ending with class collaboration with the bourgeois political regime.

After the reflux of the international revolutionary tide of 1968-77 associated with May 1968, and above all after the collapse of Stalinism and the implosion of the USSR in 1989-91, a majority in the international and European Left abandoned or postponed in the most remote future a revolutionary prospect, accepting liberal capitalism as an unchallengeable historical horizon for the time being and adapting to bourgeois democracy. For them, the historic circle opened by the October revolution was definitively closed. For us, on the contrary, the unresolved contradictions of declining world capitalism continue to drive a non linear, full of zigzags, but real development of the world socialist revolution initiated in 1917, which remains the basis for a politics of universal human emancipation. We have not to abandon the task started in Russia and betrayed later by Stalinism but to continue it and complete it on a world scale, under new historic conditions, and in renewed ways.

In Europe too there are, of course, minority revolutionary organizations, including our comrades of the Partito Comunista dei Lavoratori (PCL) in Italy or our own EEK in Greece, which oppose any accommodation with capitalism and “Popular Front” policies and fight for a revolutionary program and perspective, for workers’ governments and a United Socialist States of Europe. We are confident that the future belongs to the uncompromising forces of social revolution.

3) There is not very much information of the situation of East Eurpe and in particular Russia. In your opinion can this crisis implied an actualization of the



regional and national conflicts? Russia seems to be one of the countries more affected by the crisis, what this implies to the zone?

3. Quite early, we have insisted that capitalist restoration in the East is confronted with enormous contradictions both internal and external, above all with the fact that these countries had to re-integrate into a world system which was itself in decline and crisis. The previous international 1997 crash centred in Asia had led to Russia's default in 1998 and to the transition from Yeltsin's bankrupt liberal frenzy to Putin's growing State control over the strategic sectors of the economy, first of all energy. The upturn in the world economy in 2002-2006, including the rise in oil prices, helped the stabilization of Putin's regime as well as the integration of a number of the East European countries in the European Union. Now, the new international financial maelstrom destabilizes completely the situation. Hungary was momentarily saved, at the last minute, from declaring default by the intervention of the European Central Bank and the IMF. But the list of the former "socialist" countries facing State bankruptcy today is long. It includes not only Bulgaria and Romania but even strategically important countries like Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Russia itself and China are part of the world problem.

Although there is and will continue an exacerbation of national conflicts like those seen in the Caucasus, *social* conflicts will come forward. The main problem is the political desert left behind by the collapse of Stalinism, atomization and the lack of mature, organized political forces of the proletariat. In Russia most of the Left either capitulates to Putin or to its tiny liberal opposition or to both. But in the new historic situation and as the popularity of Putin's "strong State" "patriotic" policies are undermined by the developing crisis, new forces of social struggle will come at the centre. The last years, in Russia particularly, a young generation came into political life searching radical left solutions and a new internationalism. Revolutionary developments in Western Europe and in Latin America will have an enormous impact in this generation but also to the other popular layers where still collectivist traditions are alive.



4) Can you explain what is the role played by your party at Greece and internationally?

4. Our Party, the Workers Revolutionary Party-EEK, the Greek Section of the CRFI, is active in the main cities of the country in the social mass movements, in the trade unions, among the most oppressed layers and among the youth. With our Press (Nea Prooptiki-New Perspective), our trade union factions, our youth organization OEN (Organization of Revolutionary Youth), we intervene constantly in every important struggle. The radicalization of the last two years, with a mass wave of students' occupations of all the faculties all over the country in 2006-2007 and a series of General Strikes of the working class, our Party could achieve significant gains both politically and organizationally.

With other organizations of the revolutionary left, we have formed the Front of Radical Left (MERA), which intervenes the last decade in all battles both electoral and, above all, extra-parliamentary.

Following the NATO war against the former Yugoslavia, in 2000, we founded together with comrades from Turkey, former Yugoslavia, Albania, and Romania the Balkan Socialist Centre "Christian Rakovsky", which fights against imperialist intervention as well against all local chauvinist ruling classes from a Balkan Socialist Federation. As the Balkans are in the door of the Middle East and in the soft underbelly of Russia, the actual developments of the international crisis- the Palestinian Intifada, the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon etc.- made necessary to extend the intervention of our Centre and include internationalist forces fighting in the Middle East and Russia.

But revolutionary struggle cannot be limited on a national nor even a regional scale; it is by necessity international. For us, the building of EEK is unthinkable without the struggle for a revolutionary workers International. For this fundamental reason, we fight more than a decade now together with our comrades of the PO in Argentina, the comrades all over Latin America (Uruguay, Chile, Venezuela, Bolivia,



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Mexico), the comrades of the PCL in Italy and of the DIP in Turkey, the comrades in Finland, in Denmark, in Britain, in Russia and in the Middle East to re-found the Fourth International.

Athens, October 20, 2008