

An Interview with Takis Fotopoulos on the London bombings and the tasks of the antisystemic movement today*

What caused the London bombings? Muslim blind hatred, the clash of civilizations or the wars in the Middle East?

I classify the views which talk about a clash of civilizations, blind hatred and the rest as the system's ideology, which is repeated by the reformist Left. The bombings, to my mind, constitute an integral part of the cycle of political violence. This cycle always begins with systemic violence, which may be political, military or economic and is directed by the economic and political elites. This violence leads to political counter-violence, which has spread to many parts of the world today, as a result of the huge dimensions that systemic violence has taken. Any movement or regime which is not integrated swiftly into the New World Order of capitalist globalisation faces brutal military intervention, irrespective of international law niceties. 'Terrorism' has developed from within this cycle of systemic violence and counter-violence, and may take the form either of 'popular' terrorism or 'individual' terrorism. Too often nowadays 'terrorism' takes the form of blind violence, something that is hardly surprising given the huge asymmetry of power between the political elites and those resisting them. The young Arab activist has no qualms about killing Western civilians when s/he sees women and children being maimed everyday by the transnational elite in Iraq or Afghanistan and by the Zionists in Palestine. However, the bombings in London were aimed not only at revenge but also at exerting pressure on the British public to demand the withdrawal of British troops from Iraq.

How do you think the British will react?

They will react differently to the Spaniards, in my view. The Mediterranean peoples are not as easily amenable to the hegemonic ideology propagated by the mass media as the British are. Don't forget that the British were not only colonialists but world-rulers as well. The average Briton has always been an oppressor, not a victim of oppression, at the international level. It is, therefore, easier for Britons to identify themselves with the elites as far as world affairs are concerned. I am afraid, therefore, that although the British people were split over the war in Iraq, there is now the danger that a very large proportion of them may identify themselves with the elite's ideology and propaganda and may give the elite the opportunity to create a regime with even greater control over the population than before. We have already seen the introduction of even harsher so called 'anti-terrorist' legislation in Britain, with a view to its being extended it throughout Europe via the European Union.

But London was considered to be the best-policed city in the world. Don't these events express the failure of this logic?

The average British citizen is trapped in a cul-de-sac. S/he sees that the 'war' against terrorism is not effective but, within the framework of his/her logic, which takes the present system for granted, s/he cannot see any alternative solution. I am afraid that many Britons will develop a 'New Yorker's' kind of mentality, i.e. "let's unite against the common enemy" – the British elites and the mass media controlled by them do everything they can to create this kind of mentality, even with references to second world war experiences! – instead of turning against the real culprits of the bombings, i.e. the elites and the Labour and Tory parties which represent their interests. All this is occurring in addition to the anti-Islamism, to which the propaganda about the 'evil ideology' cultivated by the elites inevitably leads, – a propaganda which has already led to attacks against the Muslim communities and is bound to enhance the vicious cycle of violence further, if it gains momentum.

The European Union has responded as if it already had the new, harsher anti-terror measures up its sleeve ...

I am not surprised at all by this. There is a lot of evidence already to suggest that the 'war' against Iraq had in fact been planned from the first day of the Bush administration, well in advance of 9/11. It is obvious that there is a cycle. The transnational elite, as I call it, through its US membership which is militarily dominant within it, had pre-planned the 'war' against Iraq and the more general restructuring in the Middle East, as well as the 'war' against terrorism. 9/11 was simply the pretext for launching these so called 'wars'.

And the causes of all this?

The real causes of the intensification of systemic violence should be sought in the rise of neoliberal modernity which succeeded the statist modernity of the social democratic consensus. When post-war statism, as developed in the period 1945-1975, came into conflict with the rapidly expanding internationalization of the market economy, this inevitably led to the collapse of social democracy and the institutionalization of neoliberalism by Thatcherism and Reaganism. This is how neoliberal globalisation developed, which implies a direct attack against the peoples' conquests of the past decades and which consequently led to the intensification of political violence so that the inevitable popular reaction could be checked. The transnational elite's attempt to spread neoliberal globalization all over the world and in particular the attempt to integrate into it the so-called 'rogue' regimes and movements in the Middle East which were not keen to be integrated was, therefore, doomed to lead to conflict. What we see today is the spreading (through economic, political and, in the last resort, military means) of capitalist neoliberal globalisation all over the world. The transnational elite is completely on the loose nowadays since a strong antisystemic movement at the international level has yet to be developed, while the Soviet bloc, which in the past was able to constrain this elite's ambitions, has collapsed.

Those seeking a strategic response (including you) to this attack are accused of sectarianism, isolation and the negation of the need for unity by the reformist Left.

I think it is utterly silly to talk about unity in general, as the reformist Left does. Unity against what and whom? If the target is neoliberal policies, as reformists maintain, then this target is meaningless since neoliberal globalization is neither a conjectural

phenomenon nor a matter of policy. It is a systemic phenomenon which therefore cannot be reversed through just a change in government or in the model of administration of power. In the present international framework of open and liberalised markets, even if, say, Lafontaine and the radical Left were to be elected in the forthcoming German elections, they would have to follow more or less the same policies implemented today by neoliberals and social-liberals alike. The kind of reformist policies proposed by these radical trends within social democracy have no chance at all. Equally utopian are the dreams of some social democrats which suggest similar policies at a pan-European level. Today, even at the economic bloc level, there is no viable possibility for the European, say, capital, and the multinationals controlled by it, to be isolated from the rest of the world market. It is only, therefore, within the framework of an organised attempt to overthrow the internationalised capitalist market economy that one could talk about a really alternative policy to the present policies. In other words, the sort of policies suggested by the reformist Left are utterly utopian (in the negative sense of the word, much more so than the antisystemic strategies which *it* condemns as ‘utopian’! It is, therefore, the reformist Left which mainly torpedoes the unity of the Left, either ‘objectively’ or deliberately, as when for instance it adopts the crucial choices of the system (like the European Union), and in essence is supporting the system and playing the role of the ‘good’ opposition, in exchange for the massive promotion it receives by the systemic mass media—in effect, its lifeline.

Do you see the need for unity of the antisystemic forces against capitalism and reformism?

Yes, very much so, provided that this takes the form of a global movement. The only way out of the present multidimensional crisis is the creation of a ‘frontal’ international movement consisting of antisystemic forces united against the present system. These forces should agree on a platform that will include at least the following: first, an analysis of the present reality which sees neoliberal globalisation as a systemic phenomenon and not as the result of ‘bad’ policies which are reversible within the system—as the reformist Left maintains—and second, an emphasis on the need to overthrow neoliberal globalisation, something that presupposes directly challenging the present system. Within such an antisystemic front, each movement and group would retain its own autonomy as regards its views regarding the form a future society should take. And this is very important because it is not enough merely to criticize—you also have to propose an alternative social system in order to persuade people to join you in a fight against the system. This has always been the big problem of the anti-globalization ‘movement’—something which led the reformist Left, which is hegemonic within it through the World Social Forum which it controls, to resort to the equivocal rhetoric of «Another world is possible», which could mean everything and nothing.

Yes, we see today that a process of institutionalization and compromise has already taken roots in the antiglobalisation movement. Do you see any alternative?

This institutionalization is a process which began when the antiglobalisation movement was still in its early stages, and today it is intensified. The reformist Left, through the Social Forums which it controls, has proceeded to the formulation of some concrete proposals which, however, constitute in essence another version of the present world, a ‘capitalism with a human face’. The very composition of the institutionalised World Social Forum movement, which consists mainly of Non-Government Organisations (i.e. organisations

usually adopting the crucial choices of the elites), as well as bureaucratic trade union leaderships, guarantees this kind of development. Given, however, that systemic economic violence (and consequently political-military violence) will inevitably intensify in the future within the process of neoliberal globalization, it is highly likely that this process will lead to serious conflicts with the elites. Working people and citizens in general, seeing that party politics is a cul-de-sac, could well be led to potentially antisystemic stands. This is why the creation of an antisystemic movement, i.e. an international front which would unite all antisystemic forces and would give a real outlet to the current growing dissatisfaction and indignation, is imperative today. If this does not happen, then the outcome will either be a massive passivity, or easily-oppressed insurrections – both common phenomena in today's world scene.

* This interview was published in the Greek Leftist newspaper **PRIN** on 17/7/2005.