

Current Concerns

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English Edition of Zeit-Fragen

Sri Lanka – Negotiations Based on International Law and the Human Rights Required!

thk. For more than 25 years war has been going on in Sri Lanka. This war claimed thousands of victims and represents a result of British colonial rule. For a quarter of a century the Tamils have been fighting for an independent state and thereby claim their historical right, because up to the British conquest of the island they had had their own kingdom, thus their own state, in addition to the other two Singhalese kingdoms. This was no longer granted to them after the British had left in 1948. On the contrary, the majority of the Singhalese took over the rule, and with British support, they established a state in which the Tamils were treated as second-class citizens and discriminated against in many respects, e.g. in politics and education. Despite the behavior of the Singhalese, the Tamils initially advocated a federal state, however without any success. The Tamils tried to resist peacefully, but the discriminating conditions did not change so that in 1982 the assaults led to armed resistance against the continuous suppression. Since that time,

war has prevailed in Sri Lanka with different intensity, and has by now claimed many victims, particularly among the civilian Tamil population. By mediation of mainly northern European states, an armistice was negotiated between the Tamil army (LTTE) and the Singhalese army, which was however broken one-sidedly by the Singhalese army in November 2006, menacing to solve the “Tamil problem” with military help. For some weeks now voices could be heard that demand an immediate end to the fights and accuse Sri Lanka of severe violations of human rights and of humanitarian international law.

Some months ago, Sri Lanka expelled all UN observers and NGOs abroad, journalists were not granted admission to the theaters of war or were even assassinated in some cases. There must be no witnesses for the current genocide and the international community is kept at bay by all means. Navanethem Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights unmistakably expressed this in a media report on 29 January 2009: “The lack of ac-

cess for independent monitors, humanitarian workers and the media only adds to concerns that the situation may be even worse than we realize.” Furthermore, she refers to the critical situation in Sri Lanka: “While the government has made military gains on one hand, the rule of law has been undermined on the other.” She accuses the government: “It is the government’s duty to provide safety to all Sri Lanka’s citizens, whatever their ethnic origin or political views. That means not only protecting civilians during military operations in the north, but also ensuring space for journalists and human rights defenders to seek out the truth and expose abuses.” Mrs Pillay ends with the following sentence: “A strenuous effort needs to be made to tackle the core problems that have fuelled this conflict for a quarter of a century, in order to bring peace and prosperity and restore fundamental rights and freedoms for all Sri Lankans in all parts of the country.”

The demands are clear; the situation may not be solved with the help of the military

forces. There must be a negotiated solution, which is based on international law and the human rights. The community of states is obliged to become active. Due to its strategically important position for the great powers, particularly for the USA intending to control the Asian area, we allow genocide to happen, if it is not stopped immediately by the international community. However, it is not the point here to internationalize the conflict under the cover of violations of human rights so that the USA can then implement their strategic interests. International law knows different methods, how a country, which commits war crimes, can be put under pressure effectively by peaceful means.

In the following, we publish a letter by the US-American international law advocate and fighter for human rights, Karen Parker, to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, in which she decidedly and highly alarmed reports on the substantial war crimes in Sri Lanka and calls for a political solution of the conflict.

HUMANITARIAN LAW PROJECT International Educational Development

United Nations Office
154 Fifth Avenue
San Francisco, California 94118
Phone and fax : 415.668.2752
Email: ied@igc.org

3 February 2009

Madame Navanetham Pillay
United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights
By email to RColville@ohchr.org,
jray@ohchr.org

Madame,

International Educational Development (IED), a non-governmental organization on the Roster (Secretary-General’s list), joins our sister organization the Association of Humanitarian Lawyers (AHL) to thank you for your statement of 29 January 2008 regarding the dire situation of Tamil civilians in the north of Sri Lanka. As you know from previous contacts and communications, we are two of a very few NGOs that specialize in humanitarian law, and together for 26 years have been seeking to bring the long conflict in Sri Lanka between the Sinhala forces and Tamil people and their forces to a peaceful and equitable conclusion. At the present time, the situation has deteriorated from being serious to being beyond catastrophic for the Tamils. We hope your statement will be followed by concerted international action to prevent their annihilation.

As you know, since our previous submissions to you about the situation, several hospitals and civilian “safe” zones have been the target of military actions by the Sri Lankan forces. Those Tamils who have been “freed” are in fact being held

in detention camps where they are decidedly not free to come and go. In addition, a number of Tamil fishing villages and farm communities have been ethnically cleansed and their inhabitants now also in detention camps. Food and medicine are non-existent or in very short supply in all areas, and the government authorities are preventing adequate resupply. Under these circumstances, we cannot expect Tamil civilians to turn themselves over to the Sinhala army. We draw your attention to the Statute and Elements of the International Criminal Court, which provides that restricting food and medicines for the civilian population is part of the crime of extermination. Clearly the situation has invoked for a over two years a duty of the international community to act to prevent genocide and to ensure that victims of armed conflict receive the aid to which they are entitled without regard for nationality, ethnicity or any other discriminatory basis. Our organizations join many others that consider the situation one of “red alert” for genocide and have done so for some time. Officials in some governments, such as Norway’s Deputy Foreign Minister, have also condemned this as genocide. In this regard we have sent numerous communications to Special Advisor Deng, whose mandate includes the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities and we still await any comments from him. Obviously it is too late to prevent genocide and mass atrocities, but all the tools of the international community are essential to alleviate some of the suffering.

Due to a number of factors, including (1) the geopolitical interests of the United States in the Tamil areas for military bases; (2) the resulting labeling of the conflict as terrorism – to the detriment of the Geneva Conventions and all other treaty-based and customary rules of humanitarian law; and (3) the shrill con-

demnation by Sinhala politicians against any international actors displaying even the slightest sympathy for the Tamil people, many are intimidated from speaking out. Anti-terrorism laws in some countries are a huge barrier to civil society, which is normally willing to act according to the Martens clause “dictates of the public conscience.” Aid organizations have been ordered out or fled in fear for their lives. Journalists have been assassinated in alarming numbers. Now the authorities are threatening governments and UN officials in ways unimaginable to civilized people.

We note you made reference to reports of child soldiers. We continue to be distressed that certain groups continue to invoke the situation of child soldiers when there has never been any indication of more than a handful of members of the LTTE under age 15, and no indication if any of these actually participated in combat. As you know, the international age for combatants is 15, not 18. While the LTTE or any other combat force may voluntarily adopt a lower age, there is no legal compulsion to do so. Attached, please see a written statement we recently submitted to the Human Rights Council, following a number of oral statements and reports, on this point. This undue emphasis on a possible few soldiers (the situation is nothing at all like the situation with the Lord’s Resistance Army or the conflict in Liberia) has been used, in our view, to demonize the LTTE for political ends and has keep the plight of hundreds of thousands of children in dire need of food, shelter, medical care and protection from military actions by the government forces from being addressed.

As you know from letters we have written to other mandate holders and forwarded to you, the Sinhala authorities continue to refuse to resolve the “Tamil question” except by military means,

which, of course, will not justly resolve it. We note here that the Sinhala authorities continue to stress publicly that Sri Lanka is a Sinhala State and the Singhalese will govern. The international community must insist that there is a plan acceptable to all the people of Sri Lanka, negotiated upon after a cease fire. In our view, there will be no just resolution without outside mediation.

The only way to save the Tamil people and ensure that their full rights are afforded and not trampled by Sinhala control, as they have been since independence, will be if the international community acts very strongly and immediately. We can only hope that your statement will be a catalyst for the type of action that is needed, and that you will follow it up with demands that the Sri Lanka government allow you or a representative to visit the affected areas with no restrictions. This is no time to allow the Sri Lankan authorities to refuse the just demands of mandate holders in accordance with international law. In this regard, we also urge all, including you, actively to seek out representatives of the Tamil people in the very large Diaspora and to meet with those who seek an audience. They are in the Diaspora because they fled oppressive Sinhala regimes, and are in constant communication with their relatives still on the island. Their views are most important, and must form part of any just solution.

Again, thank you for your action regarding Sri Lanka. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to help you in your work.

Most sincerely yours,
Karen Parker, JD

Chief delegate, International Educational Development (Roster)
President, Association of Humanitarian Lawyers

“It is High Time to Acknowledge my Father as a Prisoner of War”

US President Barack Obama Must Keep his Pre-election Promise and not Turn Tariq Aziz over to the Iraqi Regime

An interview with Ziad Aziz, son of Tariq Aziz, the former Foreign Minister of Iraq

ef. On 15 February, Tariq Aziz, former Iraqi Foreign Minister should be handed over to the Iraqi authorities by the US occupying forces in Iraq, although he is threatened by an illegal show trial followed by execution. And hardly anybody in the West is protesting against this. Whereas in a lot of western media the truth is obtrusively turned upside down, talking only about the “success” of the US policy in Iraq, reality in this oppressed country is really different. Breaches of law and severest violations of human rights under the eyes of the occupying power, promoted and conducted by them, are on the agenda. The case of Tariq Aziz is but one of the many cases.

However, it is still possible to stop this and prevent further injustice. Dealing with the former Foreign Minister’s case and that of his fellow prisoners should follow legal principles and the international humanitarian law. This would be a signal to prevent further injustice. Therefore, the new US President Barack Obama is obliged to keep his pre-election promise and treat all inmates of US prisons following constitutional principles, even if they are imprisoned outside the US. The following interview with the son of the seriously ill prisoner documents this impressively.



Tariq Aziz

also sent appeals to James Baker, to the UN, to the US and the Iraqi authorities.

With the help of our friends, especially in Europe and America, we tried to get a clear picture of what is going on in Bagdad right now. After Obama has been elected as president he promised he will close all the prisons outside America. Camp Cropper, where my father is right now in prison, is under American administration but situated outside America. Our friends try to get my father and the others acknowledged as prisoners of war. In this case, it will not be allowed to anybody, especially the American authorities, to turn them over to the Iraqi government.

Have the media in the Middle East picked up his case?

No. Nobody cares what is going on with the prisoners in Iraq since Saddam Hussein was killed more than a year ago. Before, American media representatives came to the court room with their cameras. Everybody saw what was happening in the court. Now after they have killed Saddam Hussein, the Americans are no longer present in the courtroom.

especially the American people and the people from Europe. They know my father, they know his case. He worked in the Iraqi government for more than 35 years dealing with all the information sectors and culture sectors and foreign affairs sectors. He never dealt with any interior sectors like security service or military issues or the secret service. This is why we try to send this kind of letters to the new American government to find a solution to my father’s case. If he is going to stay in prison for one more year, he is going to die, because as I told you before, his health is in a very bad condition. There is no medical care from the American authority. If they are going to turn him over to the Iraqi government, that would mean his death. They try to find a way to kill him.

As far as we know there is no trial with a lawful and fair procedure to be expected. What could be done for your father at this stage and by whom?

The American government must find a solution. They are the people who are responsible, they invaded Iraq, and detained my father and the others therefore they are prisoners of war. There is a Geneva Convention according to which they are not allowed to hand them over to any other people. They cannot detain them for more than one year. However, they have already imprisoned my father for five years now with no charge. Now he faces charges by the Iraqi regime, but actually there is no case against him.

So the American government must find a solution...

Yes, of course, because they are responsible for everything now. Everybody knows what George Bush has done with Iraq. There is a new government now and Obama promised they are going to finalize everything. We want

Current Concerns: What is your father’s situation right now? What is his state of health?

Ziad Aziz: You know he has been in prison for six years now. He spent five years with no official charge. None of our family members was allowed to visit him since May 2006. And now the American authority tries to hand over my father and his fellow prisoners to the Iraqi authorities. It means they are going to kill them because everybody knows who runs Iraq now. You asked me about his health: There is no health care at the prison and my father has a lot of health problems originating from the war but we have no idea what exactly is happening to him. Because I told you none of our family members visited him for more than three years.

Not at all. Hans-Christof von Sponeck and a few of my father’s friends tried to help us. They sent letters here and there. Recently, we sent a letter to the new American government, to Barack Obama and others, to get support for my father and the other prisoners. The regime in Bagdad now tries to charge my father in every case they establish in the Iraqi High Tribunal Court in Bagdad. So now he is facing three charges against him, two of them are new. However, nothing has come up against him so far, nobody mentioned his

How do you see the involvement of the ICRC in your father’s case?

The Red Cross here in Jordan did a good thing for us: We send a parcel to my father every two to three months. The Red Cross took our small bag; however, it took them more than one month until they were able to hand it over to my father. This is one thing we benefit from the ICRC. We have been dealing

What do you expect after Tariq Aziz and his fellow prisoners will be turned over to the Iraqi authorities on February 15?

Everybody knows what happened to President Saddam Hussein when the Iraqis took him over. Moreover, everybody knows that the Islamic Dawa Party, the party of Prime Minister Maliki, tried to kill my father on February 1, 1980. And now Mr Maliki rules the country, he became Prime Minister and he is the judge. He controls all the courts in Iraq.

name in either of the three cases before. This is the situation right now.

No one cares about his fate?

No.

Denis Halliday and Hans-Christof von Sponeck have always provided the media with information about Tariq Aziz. They have

with the ICRC for five years and a half, they receive things from our family and they try to send them to my father.

You have also written to Barack Obama and asked for a humane treatment of your father. Has he ever replied?

We tried to focus on my father’s and the others’ case because everybody knows my father,

to find a solution for the Iraqi case. Prior to this they must terminate this Court. Beforehand and above all. Then they can find a solution. They must find a way to solve this problem.

Thank you very much for the interview. •

How has the international community reacted so far?

... as of 14 February 2009	
Number Of Iraqis Slaughtered In US War And Occupation Of Iraq	1,311,696
Number of U.S. Military Personnel Sacrificed (Officially acknowledged) In U.S. War And Occupation Of Iraq	4,243
Cost of U.S. War and Occupation of Iraq	\$596,629,206,506
Source: www.informationclearinghouse.info	

The Effects of War Mitrovica

bha. The internist Dr Nebojsa Srbljak is the founder of the non-governmental organization „Angelo misericordioso” with headquarters in Mitrovica.

Seven years ago he started working on the effects of uranium weapons which had caused a heavy increase of malignant tumors, particularly lung cancer. The area’s inhabitants are frightened as they assume uranium to have got into the food chain. According to Dr Srbljak there is a real explosion of tumor diseases in his region. After having trained as a specialist in Belgrade, he returned to Mitrovica. Diseases of this kind mainly affect 20-50-year-old people. We are talking about the people living

north of the river Ibar. „Between the years 1997 and 1998 we recorded a peak of lung cancer diseases affecting persons at the age of 72 to 75; between 1999 and 2000 we have the 45-year-old forming the top group”, says Dr Srbljak. The urological diseases have gone up, too. Patients’ examinations have shown that they do not have any genetic predispositions for diseases with cancer. In 1999 the majority of those men suffering from cancer were to be found on the Albanian border and on the outskirts of Klina. The Italian soldiers also fell sick rapidly. Barely 18 months after their (military) operation in Kosovo they developed symptoms of leuke-

mia. Apart from cases of lung cancer we found an increase in the incidence of leukemia. Nobody should try to tell me that stress has caused these diseases. „Stress, smoking and poverty were prevalent in Serbia before 1999”, says the physician. „Experts of the WHO came to see us in March 2001. To this day we have not heard anything of them.”

Why does the world not sympathize with the suffering people? The perpetrators’ mercilessness speaks volumes.

Source: www.osservatorioalcani.org „Il male del Kosovo”, 11.11.2008

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The US-Israeli Programs of Annexation and Destruction of Palestine

by Noam Chomsky

On Saturday December 27, the latest US-Israeli attack on helpless Palestinians was launched. The attack had been meticulously planned, for over 6 months according to the Israeli press. The planning had two components: military and propaganda. It was based on the lessons of Israel's 2006 invasion of Lebanon, which was considered to be poorly planned and badly advertised. We may, therefore, be fairly confident that most of what has been done and said was pre-planned and intended.

That surely includes the timing of the assault: shortly before noon, when children were returning from school and crowds were milling in the streets of densely populated Gaza City. It took only a few minutes to kill over 225 people and wound 700, an auspicious opening to the mass slaughter of defenseless civilians trapped in a tiny cage with nowhere to flee.

Terror as a doctrine

In his retrospective "Parsing Gains of Gaza War," "New York Times" correspondent *Ethan Bronner* cited this achievement as one of the most significant of the gains. Israel calculated that it would be advantageous to appear to "go crazy," causing vastly disproportionate terror, a doctrine that traces back to the 1950s. "The Palestinians in Gaza got the message on the first day," Bronner wrote, "when Israeli warplanes struck numerous targets simultaneously in the middle of a Saturday morning. Some 200 were killed instantly, shocking Hamas and indeed all of Gaza." The tactic of "going crazy" appears to have been successful, Bronner concluded: there are "limited indications that the people of Gaza felt such pain from this war that they will seek to rein in Hamas," the elected government. That is another long-standing doctrine of state terror. I don't, incidentally, recall the Times retrospective "Parsing Gains of Chechnya War," though the gains were great.

Denial of food to honour Sabbath

The meticulous planning also presumably included the termination of the assault, carefully timed to be just before the inauguration, so as to minimize the (remote) threat that *Obama* might have to say some words critical of these vicious US-supported crimes.

Two weeks after the Sabbath opening of the assault, with much of Gaza already pounded to rubble and the death toll approaching 1000, the UN Agency UNRWA, on which most Gazans depend for survival, announced that the Israeli military refused to allow aid shipments to Gaza, saying that the crossings were closed for the Sabbath. To honor the holy day, Palestinians at the edge of survival must be denied food and medicine, while hundreds can be slaughtered by US jet bombers and helicopters.

US vetos – protection of massacres

The rigorous observance of the Sabbath in this dual fashion attracted little if any notice. That makes sense. In the annals of US-Israeli criminality, such cruelty and cynicism scarcely merit more than a footnote. They are too familiar. To cite one relevant parallel, in June 1982 the US-backed Israeli invasion of Lebanon opened with the bombing of the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, later to become famous as the site of terrible massacres supervised by the IDF (Israeli "Defense" Forces). The bombing hit the local hospital – the Gaza hospital – and killed over 200 people, according to the eyewitness account of an American Middle East academic specialist. The massacre was the opening act in an invasion that slaughtered some 15-20,000 people and destroyed much of southern Lebanon and Beirut, proceeding with crucial US military and diplomatic support. That included vetoes of Security Council resolutions seeking to halt the criminal aggression that was undertaken, as scarcely concealed, to defend Israel from the threat of peaceful political settlement, contrary to many convenient fab-

Extracts from International Humanitarian Law

Protection of the civilian population

Art 51.

1. The civilian population and individual civilians shall enjoy general protection against dangers arising from military operations. To give effect to this protection, the following rules, which are additional to other applicable rules of international law, shall be observed in all circumstances. [...]
4. Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited. [...]
5. Among others, the following types of attacks are to be considered as indiscriminate:
 - (a) an attack by bombardment by any methods or means which treats as a single military objective a number of clearly separated and distinct military objectives located in a city, town, village or other area containing a similar concentration of civilians or civilian objects; and
 - (b) an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.

Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977

Prohibition to deprive the population of objects indispensable to survival

Art 54. Protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population

1. Starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited.
2. It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as food-stuffs, agricultural areas for the production of food-stuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive.

Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977

Prohibition of collective punishments

Art 4 Fundamental guarantees

2. Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the following acts against the persons referred to in paragraph I are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever: [...]
- (b) collective punishments;

Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), 8 June 1977.

rications about Israelis suffering under intense rocketing, a fantasy of apologists.

Israeli Army always "purposely attacked civilian targets"

All of this is normal, and quite openly discussed by high Israeli officials. Thirty years ago Chief of Staff *Mordechai Gur* observed that since 1948, "we have been fighting against a population that lives in villages and cities." As Israel's most prominent military analyst, *Zeev Schiff*, summarized his remarks, "the Israeli Army has always struck civilian populations, purposely and consciously [...] the Army, he said, has never distinguished civilian [from military] targets [...] [but] purposely attacked civilian targets." The reasons were explained by the distinguished statesman *Abba Eban*: "there was a rational prospect, ultimately fulfilled, that affected populations would exert pressure for the cessation of hostilities." The effect, as Eban well understood, would be to allow Israel to implement, undisturbed, its programs of illegal expansion and harsh repression. Eban was commenting on a review of Labor government attacks against civilians by Prime Minister *Begin*, presenting a picture, Eban said, "of an Israel wantonly inflicting every possible measure of death and anguish on civilian populations in a mood reminiscent of regimes which neither Mr Begin nor I would dare to mention by name." Eban did not contest the facts that Begin reviewed, but criticized him for stating them publicly. Nor did it concern Eban, or his admirers, that his advocacy of massive state terror is also reminiscent of regimes he would not dare to mention by name.

Eban's justification for state terror is regarded as persuasive by respected authorities.

As the current US-Israel assault raged, Times columnist *Thomas Friedman* explained that Israel's tactics both in the current attack and in its invasion of Lebanon in 2006 are based on the sound principle of "trying to 'educate' Hamas, by inflicting a heavy death toll on Hamas militants and heavy pain on the Gaza population." That makes sense on pragmatic grounds, as it did in Lebanon, where "the only long-term source of deterrence was to exact enough pain on the civilians – the families and employers of the militants – to restrain Hezbollah in the future." And by similar logic, bin Laden's effort to "educate" Americans on 9/11 was highly praiseworthy, as were the Nazi attacks on Lidice and Oradour. Putin's destruction of Grozny, and other notable attempts at "education."

American protection of war crimes

Israel has taken pains to make clear its dedication to these guiding principles. NYT correspondent *Stephen Erlanger* reports that Israeli human rights groups are "troubled by Israel's strikes on buildings they believe should be classified as civilian, like the parliament, police stations and the presidential palace" – and, we may add, villages, homes, densely populated refugee camps, water and sewage systems, hospitals, schools and universities, mosques, UN relief facilities, ambulances, and indeed anything that might relieve the pain of the unworthy victims. A senior Israeli intelligence officer explained that the IDF attacked "both aspects of Hamas – its resistance or military wing and its dawa, or social wing," the latter a euphemism for the civilian society. "He argued that Hamas was all of a piece," Erlanger continues, "and in a war, its instruments of political and social control were as legitimate a target as its

rocket caches." Erlanger and his editors add no comment about the open advocacy, and practice, of massive terrorism targeting civilians, though correspondents and columnists signal their tolerance or even explicit advocacy of war crimes, as noted. But keeping to the norm, Erlanger does not fail to stress that Hamas rocketing is "an obvious violation of the principle of discrimination and fits the classic definition of terrorism."

Demonization of Hamas ...

Like others familiar with the region, Middle East specialist *Fawwaz Gerges* observes that "What Israeli officials and their American allies do not appreciate is that Hamas is not merely an armed militia but a social movement with a large popular base that is deeply entrenched in society."

Ultimate aim: destruction of Palestinian society

Hence when they carry out their plans to destroy Hamas's "social wing," they are aiming to destroy Palestinian society. Gerges may be too kind. It is highly unlikely that Israeli and American officials – or the media and other commentators – do not appreciate these facts. Rather, they implicitly adopt the traditional perspective of those who monopolize means of violence: our mailed fist can crush any opposition, and if our furious assault has a heavy civilian toll, that's all to the good: perhaps the remnants will be properly educated.

For they know what they are doing

IDF officers clearly understand that they are crushing the civilian society. Ethan Bronner quotes an Israeli Colonel who says that he and his men are not much "impressed with the Hamas fighters." "They are villagers with guns," said a gunner on an armored personnel carrier. They resemble the victims of the murderous IDF "iron fist" operations in occupied southern Lebanon in 1985, directed by *Shimon Peres*, one of the great terrorist commanders of the era of *Reagan's* "War on Terror." During these operations, Israeli commanders and strategic analysts explained that the victims were "terrorist villagers," difficult to eradicate because "these terrorists operate with the support of most of the local population." An Israeli commander complained that "the terrorist[...]has many eyes here, because he lives here," while the military correspondent of the "Jerusalem Post" described the problems Israeli forces faced in combating the "terrorist mercenary," "fanatics, all of whom are sufficiently dedicated to their causes to go on running the risk of being killed while operating against the IDF," which must "maintain order and security" in occupied southern Lebanon despite "the price the inhabitants will have to pay." The problem has been familiar to Americans in South Vietnam, Russians in Afghanistan, Germans in occupied Europe, and other aggressors that find themselves implementing the Gur-Eban-Friedman doctrine.

... because US-Israel does not acknowledge the Palestinian's right to exist

Gerges believes that US-Israeli state terror will fail: Hamas, he writes, "cannot be wiped out without massacring half a million Palestinians. If Israel succeeds in killing Hamas's senior leaders, a new generation, more radical than the present, will swiftly replace them. Hamas is a fact of life. It is not going away, and it will not raise the white flag regardless of how many casualties it suffers."

Perhaps, but there is often a tendency to underestimate the efficacy of violence. It is particularly odd that such a belief should be held in the United States. Why are we here?

Hamas is regularly described as "Iranian-backed Hamas, which is dedicated to the destruction of Israel." One will be hard put to find something like "democratically elected Hamas, which has long been calling for a two-state settlement in accord with the in-



(picture: zvg)

“The US-Israeli Programs ...”
continued from page 3

ternational consensus” – blocked for over 30 years by the US and Israel, which reject the right of Palestinians to self-determination. All true, but not a useful contribution to the Party Line, hence dispensable.

Crimes pass with little notice

Such details as those mentioned earlier, though minor, nevertheless teach us something about ourselves and our clients. So do others. To mention another one, as the latest US-Israeli assault on Gaza began, a small boat, the Dignity, was on its way from Cyprus to Gaza. The doctors and human rights activists aboard intended to violate Israel’s criminal blockade and to bring medical supplies to the trapped population. The ship was intercepted in international waters by Israeli naval vessels, which rammed it severely, almost sinking it, though it managed to limp to Lebanon. Israel issued the routine lies, refuted by the journalists and passengers aboard, including CNN correspondent *Karl Penhaul* and former US representative and Green Party presidential candidate *Cynthia McKinney*. That is a serious crime – much worse, for example, than hijacking boats off the coast of Somalia. It passed with little notice. The tacit acceptance of such crimes reflects the understanding that Gaza is occupied territory, and that Israel is entitled to maintain its siege, even authorized by the guardians of international order to carry out crimes on the high seas to implement its programs of punishing the civilian population for disobedience to its commands -- under pretexts to which we return, almost universally accepted but clearly untenable.

Again looking the other way–
the West’s complicity

The lack of attention again makes sense. For decades, Israel had been hijacking boats in international waters between Cyprus and Lebanon, killing or kidnapping passengers, sometimes bringing them to prisons in Israel, including secret prison/torture chambers, to hold as hostages for many years. Since the practices are routine, why treat the new crime with more than a yawn? Cyprus and Lebanon reacted quite differently, but who are they in the scheme of things?

Who cares, for example, if the editors of Lebanon’s ‘Daily Star’, generally pro-Western, write that “Some 1.5 million people in Gaza are being subjected to the murderous ministrations of one of the world’s most tech-

nologically advanced but morally regressive military machines. It is often suggested that the Palestinians have become to the Arab world what the Jews were to pre-World War II Europe, and there is some truth to this interpretation. How sickeningly appropriate, then, that just as Europeans and North Americans looked the other way when the Nazis were perpetrating the Holocaust, the Arabs are finding a way to do nothing as the Israelis slaughter Palestinian children.” Perhaps the most shameful of the Arab regimes is the brutal Egyptian dictatorship, the beneficiary of most US military aid, apart from Israel.

“The use of force is excessive and indiscriminate, and its ultimate aim is extortion”

According to the Lebanese press, Israel still “routinely abducts Lebanese civilians from the Lebanese side of the Blue Line [the international border], most recently in December 2008.” And of course “Israeli planes violate Lebanese airspace on a daily basis in violation of UN Resolution 1701” (Lebanese scholar Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, “Daily Star”, January 13). That too has been happening for a long time. In condemning Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 2006, the prominent Israeli strategic analyst *Zeev Maoz* wrote in the Israeli press that “Israel has violated Lebanese airspace by carrying out aerial reconnaissance missions virtually every day since its withdrawal from Southern Lebanon six years ago. True, these aerial overflights did not cause any Lebanese casualties, but a border violation is a border violation. Here too, Israel does not hold a higher moral ground.” And in general, there is no basis for the “wall-to-wall consensus in Israel that the war against the Hezbollah in Lebanon is a just and moral war,” a consensus “based on selective and short-term memory, on an introvert world view, and on double standards. This is not a just war, the use of force is excessive and indiscriminate, and its ultimate aim is extortion.”

Terrorist methods and
the West’s hypocrisy

As Maoz also reminds his Israeli readers, overflights with sonic booms to terrorize Lebanese are the least of Israeli crimes in Lebanon, even apart from its five invasions since 1978: “On July 28, 1988 Israeli Special Forces abducted *Sheikh Obeid*, and on May 21, 1994 Israel abducted *Mustafa Dirani*, who was responsible for capturing the Israeli pilot *Ron Arad* [when he was bombing Lebanon in 1986]. Israel held these and other 20 Lebanese who were captured under undisclosed circumstances in pris-

on for prolonged periods without trial. They were held as human ‘bargaining chips.’ Apparently, abduction of Israelis for the purpose of prisoners’ exchange is morally reprehensible, and militarily punishable when it is the Hezbollah who does the abducting, but not if Israel is doing the very same thing,” and on a far grander scale and over many years.

Israel’s regular practices are significant even apart from what they reveal about Israeli criminality and western support for it. As Maoz indicates, these practices underscore the utter hypocrisy of the standard claim that Israel had the right to invade Lebanon once again in 2006 when soldiers were captured at the border, the first cross-border action by Hezbollah in the six years since Israel’s withdrawal from southern Lebanon, which it occupied in violation of Security Council orders going back 22 years, while during these six years Israel violated the border almost daily with impunity, and silence here.

Racist double standards

The hypocrisy is, again, routine. Thus Thomas Friedman, while explaining how the lesser breeds are to be “educated” by terrorist violence, writes that Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 2006, once again destroying much of southern Lebanon and Beirut while killing another 1000 civilians, was a just act of self-defense, responding to Hezbollah’s crime of “launching an unprovoked war across the U.N.-recognized Israel-Lebanon border, after Israel had unilaterally withdrawn from Lebanon.” Putting aside the deceit, by the same logic, terrorist attacks against Israelis that are far more destructive and murderous than any that have taken place would be fully justified in response to Israel’s criminal practices in Lebanon and on the high seas, which vastly exceed Hezbollah’s crime of capturing two soldiers at the border. The veteran Middle East specialist of the “New York Times” surely knows about these crimes, at least if he reads his own newspaper: for example, the 18th paragraph of a story on prisoner exchange in November 1983 which observes, casually, that 37 of the Arab prisoners “had been seized recently by the Israeli Navy as they tried to make their way from Cyprus to Tripoli,” north of Beirut.

Of course all such conclusions about appropriate actions against the rich and powerful are based on a fundamental flaw: This is us, and that is them. This crucial principle, deeply embedded in Western culture, suffices to undermine even the most precise analogy and the most impeccable reasoning.

As I write, another boat is on its way from Cyprus to Gaza, “carrying urgently needed medical supplies in sealed boxes, cleared by customs at the Larnaca International Airport and the Port of Larnaca,” the organizers report. Passengers include members of European Parliaments and physicians. Israel has been notified of their humanitarian intent. With sufficient popular pressure, they might achieve their mission in peace.

After withdrawal from Gaza: “Scorched
earth and people with neither a present
nor a future”

The new crimes that the US and Israel have been committing in Gaza in the past weeks do not fit easily into any standard category – except for the category of familiarity; I’ve just given several examples, and will return to others. Literally, the crimes fall under the official US government definition of “terrorism,” but that designation does not capture their enormity. They cannot be called “aggression,” because they are being conducted in occupied territory, as the US tacitly concedes. In their comprehensive scholarly history of Israeli settlement in the occupied territories, Lords of the Land, *Idit Zertal* and *Akiva Eldar* point out that after Israel withdrew its forces from Gaza in August 2005, the ruined territory was not released “for even a single day from Israel’s military grip or from the price of the occupation that the inhabitants pay every day [...] Israel left behind scorched earth, devastated services, and people with neither a present nor a future. The settlements were destroyed in an ungenerous move by an unenlightened occupier, which in fact continues to control the territory and kill and harass its inhabitants by means of its formidable military might” – exercised with extreme savagery, thanks to firm US support and participation.

US military technology for the sadistic
and cowardly torture of a caged people

The US-Israeli assault on Gaza escalated in January 2006, a few months after the formal withdrawal, when Palestinians committed a truly heinous crime: they voted “the wrong way” in a free election. Like others, Palestinians learned that one does not disobey with impunity the commands of the Master, who continues to prate of his “yearning for democracy,” without eliciting ridicule from the educated classes, another impressive achievement.

Since the terms “aggression” and “terrorism” are inadequate, some new term is need-

“... They will Bring Upon Themselves a Bigger Shoah ...”

All Illegal Occupations Must End!

by Dahlia Wasfi

Holocaust denial is anti-Semitic. But I’m not talking about World War II, *Mahmoud Ah-medinijad*, or Ashkenazi Jews. What I’m referring to is the holocaust we are all witnessing and responsible for in Gaza today and in Palestine over the last 60 years. By definition, a holocaust is a mass slaughter of people or a thorough destruction involving extensive loss of life, especially through fire. There isn’t a more accurate description of the hell that US-armed and –funded Israeli Occupation Forces are unleashing on the people of Gaza at this moment. Since Arabs are Semites, US-Israeli policy doesn’t get more anti-Semitic than this.

If you think I’m being grandiose, let us look at the words of *Matan Vilnai*, Israel’s Deputy Defense [sic] Minister, from February of this year: “The more Qassam [rocket] fire intensifies and the rockets reach a longer range, they will bring upon themselves a bigger shoah because we will use all our might to defend ourselves.”¹ In Hebrew, “*shoah*” refers to the Jewish Holocaust of the 1940’s. But massive airstrikes are not self-defense if you are the aggressor. That goes for the whole stupid so-called “War on Terror,” in which not a single one of its victims had anything to do with the events of September 11, 2001. That goes for the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan; that goes for Israel in Palestine.

And that goes for Germany in Poland. In 1940, the Germans began massing Polish Jews into ghettos prior to their deportation

to extermination camps. The largest one was the Warsaw Ghetto, where an uprising – a Jewish insurgency – began in 1943. Today, Gaza is essentially a large ghetto, with a population of around 1.5 million living on about 139 square miles. Israel controls Gaza’s land border, airspace, water, maritime access, and the flow of goods including food and medical supplies. Since June 2007, Israel has imposed a blockade on the people of Gaza, slowly starving them to death, slowly killing them by denial of medical care amidst intermittent gunship airstrikes. These crimes against humanity are, of course, in violation of the *Geneva Conventions* – international law established after World War II in the spirit of “never again.” Unlike in Warsaw, Gaza is not the staging area for the extermination camps; Gaza is the extermination camp.

Qassam rockets fired from Gaza as retaliation for Israeli F-16 airstrikes are the equivalent of the Molotov cocktails used by the resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943. Like the small arms of the Polish Jews, they are no match for the sophisticated weaponry of the invading army. This is why the death toll is so high for the people on the ground in Gaza, and minimal for Israelis. The mainstream media is depicting this as an “all-out war,” as it depicts the illegal occupation of Iraq. But in both cases, you have a starving, essentially unarmed people being assaulted with F-15s/F-16s, cruise missiles, de-

pleted uranium, cluster bombs, tanks, and artillery. This is not war; this is mass murder; this is genocide. And it is American military, financial, and political support that makes this bloodletting possible.

From North America to Germany to Cambodia to Rwanda to Palestine to Iraq, mass murder is wrong. When Americans are looking for whom to blame, we cannot blame the victims. Yes, there are many players involved and many governments turning a blind eye to genocide, but don’t we brag about how much better we are than that? Shouldn’t we stop being complicit in these supreme crimes against humanity? All we have to do is abide by our own laws, which include all signed international treaties and agreements. We must end our illegal occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and stop funding and providing armaments for the illegal occupation and stealth of Palestinian land. In the words of *Rachel Corrie*, a 23 year old American college student who was murdered in Rafah by the Israeli Occupation Forces on March 16, 2003:

“Just want to write to my Mom and tell her that I’m witnessing this chronic, insidious genocide and I’m really scared, and questioning my fundamental belief in the goodness of human nature. This has to stop. I think it is a good idea for us all to drop everything and devote our lives to making this stop. I don’t think it’s an extremist thing to do anymore. I still really want to dance around to *Pat Be-*

natar and have boyfriends and make comics for my coworkers. But I also want this to stop. Disbelief and horror is what I feel. Disappointment. I am disappointed that this is the base reality of our world and that we, in fact, participate in it. This is not at all what I asked for when I came into this world. This is not at all what the people here asked for when they came into this world ... So when I sound crazy, or if the Israeli military should break with their racist tendency not to injure white people, please pin the reason squarely on the fact that I am in the midst of a genocide which I am also indirectly supporting, and for which my government is largely responsible.”

Let us heed her brave wisdom, and end illegal occupation. If we fail to act, then the next time someone flies airplanes into American buildings, let us not ask ignorantly, “Why do they hate us?”

• *Dahlia Wasfi was born in the United States in 1971 to an American Jewish mother and an Iraqi Muslim father. She earned her medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1997. Dr. Wasfi speaks out in support of immediate, unconditional withdrawal of American forces from Iraq and the need to end the occupation “from the Nile to the Euphrates.” Her website is www.liberatethis.com.*

Source: INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE, December 31, 2008, <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article21576.htm>

¹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/29/israelandthepalestinians>

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ed for the sadistic and cowardly torture of people caged with no possibility of escape, while they are being pounded to dust by the most sophisticated products of US military technology – used in violation of international and even US law, but for self-declared outlaw states that is just another minor technicality. Also a minor technicality is the fact that on December 31, while terrorized Gazans were desperately seeking shelter from the ruthless assault, Washington hired a German merchant ship to transport from Greece to Israel a huge shipment, 3000 tons, of unidentified “ammunition.” The new shipment “follows the hiring of a commercial ship to carry a much larger consignment of ordnance in December from the United States to Israel ahead of air strikes in the Gaza Strip,” *Reuters* reported. All of this is separate from the more than \$21 billion in U.S. military aid provided by the *Bush* administration to Israel, almost all grants. “Israel’s intervention in the Gaza Strip has been fueled largely by U.S. supplied weapons paid for with U.S. tax dollars,” said a briefing by the New America Foundation, which monitors the arms trade. The new shipment was hampered by the decision of the Greek government to bar the use of any port in Greece “for the supplying of the Israeli army.”

Israel – serving as a forward base for US aggression

Greece’s response to US-backed Israeli crimes is rather different from the craven performance of the leaders of most of Europe. The distinction reveals that Washington may have been quite realistic in regarding Greece as part of the Near East, not Europe, until the overthrow of its US-backed fascist dictatorship in 1974. Perhaps Greece is just too civilized to be part of Europe.

Were anyone to find the timing of the arms deliveries to Israel curious, and inquire further, the Pentagon has an answer: the shipment would arrive too late to escalate the Gaza attack, and the military equipment, whatever it may be, is to be pre-positioned in Israel for eventual use by the US military. That may be accurate. One of the many services that Israel performs for its patron is to provide it with a valuable military base at the periphery of the world’s major energy resources. It can therefore serve as a forward base for US aggression – or to use the technical terms, to “defend the Gulf” and “ensure stability.”

Weapons tests against defenseless targets – bonus for US military corporations

The huge flow of arms to Israel serves many subsidiary purposes. Middle East policy analyst *Mouin Rabbani* observes that Israel can test newly developed weapons systems against defenseless targets. This is of value to Israel and the US “twice over, in fact, because less effective versions of these same weapons systems are subsequently sold at hugely inflated prices to Arab states, which effectively subsidizes the U.S. weapons industry and U.S. military grants to Israel.” These are additional functions of Israel in the US-dominated Middle East system, and among the reasons why Israel is so favored by the state authorities, along with a wide range of US high-tech corporations, and of course military industry and intelligence.

Israel apart, the US is by far the world’s major arms supplier. The recent New America Foundation report concludes that “U.S. arms and military training played a role in 20 of the world’s 27 major wars in 2007,” earning the US \$23 billion in receipts, increasing to \$32 billion in 2008. Small wonder that among the numerous UN resolutions that the US opposed in the December 2008 UN session was one calling for regulation of the arms trade. In 2006, the US was alone in voting against the treaty, but in November 2008 it was joined by a partner: Zimbabwe.

US and Israel voting against the peoples’ right to self-determination

There were other notable votes at the December UN session. A resolution on “the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination” was adopted by 173 to 5 (US, Israel, Pacific island dependencies, the US and Israel with evasive pretexts). The vote reaffirms US-Israeli rejectionism, in international isolation. Similarly a resolution on “universal freedom of travel and the vital importance of family reunification” was adopted with US, Israel, and Pacific dependencies opposed, presumably with Palestinians in mind.

In voting against the right to development the US lost Israel but gained Ukraine. In voting against the “right to food,” the US was alone, a particular striking fact in the face of the enormous global food crisis, dwarfing the financial crisis that threatens western economies.

There are good reasons why the voting record is consistently unreported and dispatched deep into the memory hole by the media and conformist intellectuals. It would not be wise to reveal to the public what the

record implies about their elected representatives. In the present case it would plainly be unhelpful to let the public know that US-Israeli rejectionism, barring the peaceful settlement long advocated by the world, reaches such an extreme as to deny Palestinians even the abstract right to self-determination.

Norwegian doctor in Gaza: “All out war against the civilian population”

One of the heroic volunteers in Gaza, Norwegian doctor *Mads Gilbert*, described the scene of horror as an “All out war against the civilian population of Gaza.” He estimated that half the casualties are women and children. The men are almost all civilians as well, by civilized standards. Gilbert reports that he had scarcely seen a military casualty among the 100s of bodies. The IDF concurs. Hamas “made a point of fighting at a distance – or not at all,” Ethan Bronner reports while “parsing the gains” of the US-Israeli assault. So Hamas’s manpower remains intact, and it was mostly civilians who suffered pain: a positive outcome, according to widely-held doctrine.

These estimates were confirmed by UN humanitarian chief *John Holmes*, who informed reporters that it is “a fair presumption” that most of the civilians killed were women and children in a humanitarian crisis that is “worsening day by day as the violence continues.” But we could be comforted by the words of Israeli Foreign Minister *Tzipi Livni*, the leading dove in the current electoral campaign, who assured the world that there is no “humanitarian crisis” in Gaza, thanks to Israeli benevolence.

Mr Obama, where does racism begin?

Like others who care about human beings and their fate, Gilbert and Holmes pleaded for a ceasefire. But not yet. “At the United Nations, the United States prevented the Security Council from issuing a formal statement on Saturday night calling for an immediate ceasefire,” the “New York Times” mentioned in passing. The official reason was that “there was no indication Hamas would abide by any agreement.” In the annals of justifications for delighting in slaughter, this must rank among the most cynical. That of course was Bush and *Rice*, soon to be displaced by Obama who compassionately repeats that “if missiles were falling where my two daughters sleep, I would do everything in order to stop that.” He is referring to Israeli children, not the many hundreds being torn to shreds in Gaza by US arms. Beyond that Obama maintained his silence.

A few days later, under intense international pressure, the US backed a Security Council resolution calling for a “durable ceasefire.” It passed 14-0, US abstaining. Israel and US hawks were angered that the US did not veto it, as usual. The abstention, however, sufficed to give Israel if not a green at least a yellow light to escalate the violence, as it did right up to virtually the moment of the inauguration, as had been predicted.

Desecration of corpses to cover up the own crimes

As the ceasefire (theoretically) went into effect on January 18, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights released its figures for the final day of the assault: 54 Palestinians killed including 43 unarmed civilians, 17 of them children, while the IDF continued to bombard civilian homes and UN schools. The death toll, they estimated, mounted to 1,184, including 844 civilians, 281 of them children. The IDF continued to use incendiary bombs across the Gaza Strip, and to destroy houses and agricultural land, forcing civilians to flee their homes. A few hours later, Reuters reported more than 1,300 killed. The staff of the Al Mezan Center, which also carefully monitors casualties and destruction, visited areas that had previously been inaccessible because of incessant heavy bombardment. They discovered dozens of civilian corpses decomposing under the rubble of destroyed houses or removed by Israeli bulldozers. Entire urban blocks had disappeared.

The figures for killed and wounded are surely an underestimate. And it is unlikely that there will be any inquiry into these atrocities. Crimes of official enemies are subjected to rigorous investigation, but our own are systematically ignored. General practice, again, and understandable on the part of the masters.

US double standards: Good are those who are corruptible

The Security Council Resolution called for stopping the flow of arms into Gaza. The US and Israel (Rice-Livni) soon reached an agreement on measures to ensure this result, concentrating on Iranian arms. There is no need to stop smuggling of US arms into Israel, because there is no smuggling: the huge flow of arms is quite public, even when not reported, as in the case of the arms shipment announced as the slaughter in Gaza was proceeding.

The Resolution also called for “ensur[ing] the sustained re-opening of the crossing points

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on the basis of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access between the Palestinian Authority and Israel”; that Agreement determined that crossings to Gaza would be operated on a continuous basis and that Israel would also allow the crossing of goods and people between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The Rice-Livni agreement had nothing to say about this aspect of the Security Council Resolution. The US and Israel had in fact already abandoned the 2005 Agreement as part of their punishment of Palestinians for voting the wrong way in a free election in January 2006. Rice’s press conference after the Rice-Livni agreement emphasized Washington’s continuing efforts to undermine the results of the one free election in the Arab world: “There is much that can be done,” she said, “to bring Gaza out of the dark of Hamas’s reign and into the light of the very good governance the Palestinian Authority can bring” – at least, can bring as long as it remains a loyal client, rife with corruption and willing to carry out harsh repression, but obedient.

Where news are not subjected to censorship

Returning from a visit to the Arab world, *Fawwaz Gerges* strongly affirmed what others on the scene have reported. The effect of the US-Israeli offensive in Gaza has been to infuriate the populations and to arouse bitter hatred of the aggressors and their collaborators. “Suffice it to say that the so-called moderate Arab states [that is, those that take their orders from Washington] are on the defensive, and that the resistance front led by Iran and Syria is the main beneficiary. Once again, Israel and the Bush administration have handed the Iranian leadership a sweet victory.” Furthermore, “Hamas will likely emerge as a more powerful political force than before and will likely top Fatah, the ruling apparatus of President *Mahmoud Abbas’s* Palestinian Authority,” Rice’s favorites.

It is worth bearing in mind that the Arab world is not scrupulously protected from the only regular live TV coverage of what is happening in Gaza, namely the “calm and balanced analysis of the chaos and destruction” provided by the outstanding correspondents of al-Jazeera, offering “a stark alternative to terrestrial channels,” as reported by the “London Financial Times”. In the 105 countries lacking our efficient modalities of self-censorship, people can see what is happening hourly, and the impact is said to be very great. In the US, the “New York Times” reports, “the near-total blackout [...] is no doubt related to the sharp criticism al-Jazeera received from the United States government during the initial stages of the war in Iraq for its coverage of the American invasion.” *Cheney* and *Rumsfeld* objected, so, obviously, the independent media could only obey.

There is much sober debate about what the attackers hoped to achieve. Some of objectives are commonly discussed, among them, restoring what is called “the deterrent capacity” that Israel lost as a result of its failures in Lebanon in 2006 – that is, the capacity to terrorize any potential opponent into submission. There are, however, more fundamental objectives that tend be ignored, though they too seem fairly obvious when we take a look at recent history.

UN, Security Council, International Criminal Court – irrelevant to Israel

Israel abandoned Gaza in September 2005. Rational Israeli hardliners, like *Ariel Sharon*, the patron saint of the settlers movement, understood that it was senseless to subsidize a few thousand illegal Israeli settlers in the ruins of Gaza, protected by the IDF while they used much of the land and scarce resources. It made more sense to turn Gaza into the world’s largest prison and to transfer settlers to the West Bank, much more valuable territory, where Israel is quite explicit about its intentions, in word and more importantly in deed. One goal is to annex the arable land, water supplies, and pleasant suburbs of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv that lie within the separation wall, irrelevantly declared illegal by the World Court. That includes a vastly expanded Jerusalem, in violation of Security Council orders that go back 40 years, also ir-

relevant. Israel has also been taking over the Jordan Valley, about one-third of the West Bank. What remains is therefore imprisoned, and, furthermore, broken into fragments by salients of Jewish settlement that trisect the territory: one to the east of Greater Jerusalem through the town of Ma’aleh Adumim, developed through the *Clinton* years to split the West Bank; and two to the north, through the towns of Ariel and Kedumim. What remains to Palestinians is segregated by hundreds of mostly arbitrary checkpoints.

A language awakening memories on historical abysses

The checkpoints have no relation to security of Israel, and if some are intended to safeguard settlers, they are flatly illegal, as the World Court ruled. In reality, their major goal is harass the Palestinian population and to fortify what Israeli peace activist *Jeff Halper* calls the “matrix of control,” designed to make life unbearable for the “two-legged beasts” who will be like “drugged roaches scurrying around in a bottle” if they seek to remain in their homes and land. All of that is fair enough, because they are “like grasshoppers compared to us” so that their heads can be “smashed against the boulders and walls.” The terminology is from the highest Israeli political and military leaders, in this case the revered “princes.” And the attitudes shape policies.

The ravings of the political and military leaders are mild as compared to the preaching of rabbinical authorities. They are not marginal figures. On the contrary, they are highly influential in the army and in the settler movement, who Zertal and Eldar reveal to be “lords of the land,” with enormous impact on policy. Soldiers fighting in northern Gaza were afforded an “inspirational” visit from two leading rabbis, who explained to them that there are no “innocents” in Gaza, so everyone there is a legitimate target, quoting a famous passage from Psalms calling on the Lord to seize the infants of Israel’s oppressors and dash them against the rocks. The rabbis were breaking no new ground. A year earlier, the former chief Sephardic rabbi wrote to Prime Minister *Olmert*, informing him that all civilians in Gaza are collectively guilty for rocket attacks, so that there is “absolutely no moral prohibition against the indiscriminate killing of civilians during a potential massive military offensive on Gaza aimed at stopping the rocket launchings,” as

the “Jerusalem Post” reported his ruling. His son, chief rabbi of Safed, elaborated: “If they don’t stop after we kill 100, then we must kill a thousand, and if they do not stop after 1,000 then we must kill 10,000. If they still don’t stop we must kill 100,000, even a million. Whatever it takes to make them stop.”

“Terrorism”: self-serving declaration for racism and genocide?

Similar views are expressed by prominent American secular figures. When Israel invaded Lebanon in 2006, Harvard Law School Professor Alan *Dershowitz* explained in the liberal online journal “Huffington Post” that all Lebanese are legitimate targets of Israeli violence. Lebanon’s citizens are “paying the price” for supporting “terrorism” – that is, for supporting resistance to Israel’s invasion. Accordingly, Lebanese civilians are no more immune to attack than Austrians who supported the Nazis. The fatwa of the Sephardic rabbi applies to them. In a video on the “Jerusalem Post” website, Dershowitz went on to ridicule talk of excessive kill ratios of Palestinians to Israelis: it should be increased to 1000-to-one, he said, or even 1000-to-zero, meaning the brutes should be completely exterminated. Of course, he is referring to “terrorists,” a broad category that includes the victims of Israeli power, since “Israel never targets civilians,” he emphatically declared. It follows that Palestinians, Lebanese, Tunisians, in fact anyone who gets in the way of the ruthless armies of the Holy State is a terrorist, or an accidental victim of their just crimes.

It is not easy to find historical counterparts to these performances. It is perhaps of some interest that they are considered entirely appropriate in the reigning intellectual and moral culture – when they are produced on “our side,” that is; from the mouths of official enemies such words would elicit righteous outrage and calls for massive preemptive violence in revenge.

Moral depravity – worse than deliberate murder

The claim that “our side” never targets civilians is familiar doctrine among those who monopolize the means of violence. And there is some truth to it. We do not generally try to kill particular civilians. Rather, we carry out murderous actions that we know will slaughter many civilians, but without specific intent to kill particular ones. In law, the routine prac-

tices might fall under the category of depraved indifference, but that is not an adequate designation for standard imperial practice and doctrine. It is more similar to walking down a street knowing that we might kill ants, but without intent to do so, because they rank so low that it just doesn’t matter. The same is true when Israel carries out actions that it knows will kill the “grasshoppers” and “two-legged beasts” who happen to infest the lands it “liberates.” There is no good term for this form of moral depravity, arguably worse than deliberate murder, and all too familiar.

Olmert: “our people’s eternal and historic right to this entire land”

In the former Palestine, the rightful owners (by divine decree, according to the “lords of the land”) may decide to grant the drugged roaches a few scattered parcels. Not by right, however: “I believed, and to this day still believe, in our people’s eternal and historic right to this entire land,” Prime Minister Olmert informed a joint session of Congress in May 2006 to rousing applause. At the same time he announced his “convergence” program for taking over what is valuable in the West Bank, leaving the Palestinians to rot in isolated cantons. He was not specific about the borders of the “entire land,” but then, the Zionist enterprise never has been, for good reasons: permanent expansion is a very important internal dynamic. If Olmert is still faithful to his origins in Likud, he may have meant both sides of the Jordan, including the current state of Jordan, at least valuable parts of it.

Dayan: “You will live like dogs, and whoever will leave, will leave”

Our people’s “eternal and historic right to this entire land” contrasts dramatically with the lack of any right of self-determination for the temporary inhabitants, the Palestinians. As noted earlier, the latter stand was reiterated by Israel and its patron in Washington in December 2008, in their usual isolation and accompanied by resounding silence.

The plans that Olmert sketched in 2006 have since been abandoned as not sufficiently extreme. But what replaces the convergence program, and the actions that proceed daily to implement it, are approximately the same in general conception. They trace back to the earliest days of the occupation, when Defense Minister *Moshe Dayan* explained poetically that “the situation today resembles the complex relationship between a Bedouin man and the girl he kidnaps against his will [...] You Palestinians, as a nation, don’t want us today, but we’ll change your attitude by forcing our presence on you.” You will “live like dogs, and whoever will leave, will leave,” while we take what we want.

Against any international law: terror under American protection

That these programs are criminal has never been in doubt. Immediately after the 1967 war, the Israeli government was informed by its highest legal authority, *Teodor Meron*, that “civilian settlement in the administered territories contravenes the explicit provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention,” the foundation of international humanitarian law. Israel’s Justice Minister concurred. The World Court unanimously endorsed the essential conclusion in 2004, and the Israeli High Court technically agreed while disagreeing in practice, in its usual style.

In the West Bank, Israel can pursue its criminal programs with US support and no disturbance, thanks to its effective military control and by now the cooperation of the collaborationist Palestinian security forces armed and trained by the US and allied dictatorships. It can also carry out regular assassinations and other crimes, while settlers rampage under IDF protection. But while the West Bank has been effectively subdued by terror, there is still resistance in the other half of Palestine, the Gaza Strip. That too must be quelled for the US-Israeli programs of annexation and destruction of Palestine to proceed undisturbed.

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Noam Chomsky is a Professor of Linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) having revolutionized the concepts of language and understanding/reasoning in the 1960s. Likewise he is one of the most prominent castigators of the current world order and the US imperialism.

Source: chomsky.info, January 19, 2009

Jews in New York Protest Against Israel’s Politics

by Alex Kane

About 900 New York City Jews participated in a twenty-four hour protest outside the World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency offices on 3rd Ave. between 40 and 41st St. in Manhattan, calling for justice for the Palestinian people and an end to the occupation of Palestine.

The demonstrators came in waves throughout the day, with some braving the cold and sticking it out overnight. The action was the latest in a series of Jewish protests speaking out for peace in Israel/Palestine and against the continuing blockade of the Gaza Strip. In a recent action on February 11, Jews Against the Occupation dropped banners that read “Free Palestine” in 5 different locations. [...]

The World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency were targeted for its unwavering support of the Israeli government’s actions and policies. [...]

Throughout the day, as the demonstrators held up signs that read, “Jews Say No to the Siege of Gaza,” and “Jews Say Justice for the Palestinian People,” protesters enacted and spoke about what a day in the life of a child living in Gaza is like.

The protest was organized by a newly formed group of Jewish peace activists called “Jews Say No.”

The election of a “right-wing government [in Israel] will expose what has happened at the core of Israeli society,” said Gayle Kirshenbaum, who said she came to the protest because as a mother of a seven-year-old, she “found it intolerable to watch the Israeli Army bomb Gaza’s children.”

The recent elections in Israel saw the Kadima Party, headed by Tzipi Livni, barely edge out Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud Party, but

the makeup of the next governing coalition remains unclear. Both Netanyahu and Livni wholeheartedly supported the invasion of Gaza. The extreme right-wing Yisrael Beiteinu party, or “Israel Is Our Home” party, came in third place. Their candidate, Avigdor Lieberman, has proposed that all Israeli citizens take a “loyalty test,” and in 2006, he called for executing any Arab members of the Knesset who met with the democratically elected Hamas government.

Police presence throughout the day remained low.

Solidarity statements in support of the demonstration from activists in Israel and Palestine were read during the protest. One statement by Nabila Espanioly, the director of the Al-Tufula Center for Women and Children in Nazareth, read, “As a Palestinian citizen of Israel I join you in your demand: not in my name, not with my tax money. After the election in Israel, I believe today it is more important than ever to sound your voice.” Another statement read came from Ruchama Marton, the President and Founder of Physicians for Human Rights in Israel, and read, “When Jews, especially American Jews, say NO to what the Israeli government is doing, it is a beacon of hope for the Israelis, Jews and Palestinians who oppose Israel’s war mongering policy.”

“The unwillingness of Israel to adhere to international law is disturbing,” said Alan Levine, a civil rights lawyer. “International law doesn’t excuse Israel or any other country.”

For more information and photos, visit <http://jewssayno.wordpress.com>. Source: <http://nyc.indymedia.org/ori/2009/02/103502.html>

“... This May Have Been a bit Careless”

Are Researchers at the LHC of CERN Playing with Fire?

cc. In the Summer of 2008 CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, launched an experiment that met with considerable criticism. A major incident in September 2008 led to an interruption of the experiment. The fact that until now the concerns voiced by various scientists have not been considered and examined in appropriate manner is above all unintelligible and questionable. Similar attempts by politicians to start a serious debate have also been met with disregard. Daniel Vischer, member of the National Council (Green Party, Zurich), and 11 cosignatories submitted an interpellation (request for information to the Swiss Federal Council) entitled “The LHC experiment of CERN – No concerns?”, that dealt with several questionable aspects of this experiment. It raised the issue of the risk of a “dangerous and undemocratic tendency of development in the scientific dialogue”, the problem of a lack in public debate on the purpose, perils and legitimisation of this experiment, and the fact that CERN enjoys absolute immunity, preventing it from prosecution but also from taking responsibility in the case of damage done to the people living in Geneva and its surroundings. The interpellation states as its rationale: “Switzerland financially participates in the LHC-project, hence the Swiss Federal Council holds at least joint responsibility for security, regulated compensation and a sufficient pluralism in the scientific dispute.”

The following article addresses further objections. It reveals that the problems leading to the interruption of the experiment and the way they were dealt with, including the failure to address the concerns of external physicists, more than justifies the call for this issue to be debated more openly.

npa. The Large Hadron Collider LHC at CERN, currently switched off because of an emergency which unfolded without warning by its security systems, is expected to be functioning again in June 2009. On September 19th 2008 there was an explosion on the site. It was caused by a faulty electric connection between two of the huge magnets in the accelerator ring system.

Currently there are thorough cleaning and fixing measures being carried out. It became apparent that the security outlets were too small – and they still are. The resulting

pressure was “beyond design.” That means in plain words: Nobody pictured this sort of scenario even under worst case conditions. Right now improvements throughout the accelerator ring are getting installed. An official announcement states that time until June 2009 is not sufficient for those improvements to be completed in the whole ring, and that therefore the start of the experiment has to be postponed until 2010. But one gets the impression that security is not very high on the physicists’ agenda considering that only those parts damaged by the explosion will have the improvements installed and the remainder is due only in winter 2009/2010! Nevertheless the system will be switched on in summer, only without applying the maximum energy level. Who will accept responsibility for any further unforeseen events?

The analysis of the accident seems to show that there were warning signs but according to James Gilliers, spokesman at CERN, it was only retrospectively figured out how to interpret them. Still there would have been enough time for appropriate measures, claims the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” on 6./7. Dezember 2008, as usual quite biased towards the LHC. No reason to be reassured, indeed. Moreover nobody had imagined that those electric cables would turn out to be a major risk factor. “In retrospect many a physicist at CERN will have wondered if this may have been a bit careless”, the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” comments.

Now things like electric cables and security outlets do sound familiar after all. The experiment which is meant to start at the LHC at CERN in June 2009 is something less familiar, though. And again the CERN team involved does not “believe” that this experiment might be dangerous whatsoever. What does their believe rest upon? Up to now all warning voices were simply ignored – and where shall we go from here?

In this proposed LHC experiment energy levels will be reached that were unheard of so far in any particle accelerator. Possibly this will lead to the creation of microscopic black holes. This possibility is seriously discussed throughout the scientific community. But nevertheless a hot discussion starting from this point seems to be banned: the CERN team refuses to realize in a stubborn, pig-headed and fanciful way that all even re-

motely possible disastrous consequences of black hole formation have to be addressed, taken into consideration and be dealt with in risk management analyses. A scandal. Independent scientists openly challenge those security assertions at CERN.

There are no experiences with micro black holes so far, all statements about them are based on theories, hypotheses and modell calculations with certain parameters and axioms. Some physicists voiced their serious concerns with modell calculations pointing at possible consequences that are anything but harmless. Independent scientists have come forward with scenarios which are by no means less plausible in themselves than those predicted by CERN. Considering many open scientific questions independent researchers demand to postpone the experiment and to lead an open, honest discussion instead without any taboos.*

One of the independent scientists is the German expert for particle astrophysics Rainer Plaga, who developed a theory of micro black holes**. According to Plaga it is conceivable, that micro black holes, which might be created in the LHC, would be “quasi stable”: They could grow somewhat in a fraction of a second and stay stable afterwards for several years. “Stable“ under these conditions means, that surrounding matter would be absorbed and turned into energy, which would constantly radiate from the microscopic black hole, leaving its mass stable. This constant radiation emanating from the black hole could turn out to be more disastrous than the actual growth by the uptake of surrounding earth, the so called accretion.

Plaga illustrates his theory with one possible scenario: Under certain conditions a black hole with a mass of 1kg could be created and stay stable for 3 * 10¹⁷ years (i.e. 300 000 000 000 000 000 years). Its radiation per second would equal 12 Mt (mega tons) of TNT! That is the same amount of energy as if major hydrogen bombs would explode next to the CERN every other second! And there could be more than one black hole being created in the LHC, in fact the CERN could turn into a “factory of micro black holes.” The resulting radiation could be greater than a million times the total seismic power of the planet earth. Plaga predicts catastrophic consequences such as a magnitude of global warming like never before and worldwide earth quakes.

Do the managers and physicists at CERN have everything under control? Is it justified to keep playing with such enormous energy powers if scientists from all over the world voice their warnings and stress the absolute uncertainty of what might happen in the proposed LHC experiment, if both harmless results and total disaster are discussed within the scope of current physical theories? Why should the LHC experiment, “the greatest experiments of all times”, be carried out so fast and at all costs, circumventing all scientific and political discussions and security concerns?

In fact in this case the precautionary principle, as laid down in several international law treaties (such as the UN declaration of Rio about environment and development 1992) and also in the European Union contract of Maastricht (18 out of 30 CERN member states belong to the EU), should be applied. The precautionary principle is regarded as the public political guideline of choice in all situations which are potentially hazardous to health or environment. It requires action to reduce risks well before there is “proof” of exactly how dangerous the situation might be, if it could turn out to cause irreversible harm. This is especially true in scenarios where science is unsure, provided “according to current state of knowledge [...] there is suspicion of danger or the potential for concern” (Guidelines for environment precautionary protection, German Federal Government 1986).

Rainer Plaga compares CERN’s approach with entering new territory and only watching out for potentially interesting discoveries but not for possible dangers. He suggests security measures to minimize the risk of unwanted consequences in the starting phase of the experiment. Methodologically similar measures were taken in other areas of fundamental research under comparable circumstances. This should be discussed, too. Postponing the experiment could create the necessary timeframe for this discussion, especially since the technical security measures that everybody agrees upon now will take until spring 2010 anyway.

* See Zeit-Fragen Nr. 31 of 28.7.2008 and www.lhc-concern.info
** “On the potential catastrophic risk from metastable quantum-black holes produced at particle colliders”, http://arxiv.org/PS_cache/arxiv/pdf/0808/0808.1415v2.pdf

Expert Opinion, or: If it Gets Irresponsible to Risk Possible Consequences

Experts of the IAEA had testified for the RBMK reactor to be utterly safe and harmless not long before one of them blew up in Chernobyl on 26 April 1986. Reality proved them to be wrong, with consequences of catastrophic dimensions. The helium accident at the European Nuclear Research Facility CERN in Geneva, which had been caused by a faulty electric contact according to CERN, is a reality, too. The emergency did not unfold in unknown physical territories consisting of theories and hypotheses like those to be entered in the planned LHC experiments. Cryotechnics, data link and high current technics are calculable methods that have been successfully used for decades in countless applications. The fact that even in this area human mistakes and insufficient security measures can lead to substantial – in the case of CERN only financial, thank goodness – consequences, is proof enough: The physicists and engineers at CERN are not in control of the known, and we should be inclined to trust them handling the completely unknown? Never! To some degree the collective playing spirit may be understandable, and some of them might hope for the nobel prize. But especially in the case of CERN, scrutinizing environmental safety of the particle accelerator and its risky experiments is even more important than that of, say, a new motorway, a waste incinerator or a big airport. And this should not be carried out by people in some way or another connected to CERN scientifically, economically, politically or in terms of administration. Legal gray zones and safe havens are created here by

the multinational character of CERN. Who will be held accountable if things get utterly messed up like in Chernobyl, and how much will be paid for any damage done to the people?

Miscalculations, systematic misinformation, and hopes for profit in business and politics circles have caused countless people to suffer and even die from nuclear accidents, asbestos, weapon manufacturing etc. in recent decades. As far as applications of genetic engineering and nanotechnology are concerned, areas in which the boundaries of reliable knowledge have been trespassed long ago, policy makers prefer to believe in the propaganda of potential profiteers and their experts. That’s how easy it gets, if scientists and their sponsors in politics and business are not held accountable for any damage.

The former (Bavarian) Minister President Strauss fully trusted his experts and declared to the concerned people: “The (nuclear waste reprocessing) plant at Wackersdorf is as safe as a bicycle spoke factory.” Are there possibly speculations on some spin-off for new weapon principles based on anti-matter that might make it even easier to subdue mankind? Ernest Rutherford, one of the pioneers of nuclear physics, nobel prize laureate and teacher of Niels Bohr and Otto Hahn already knew: “Some fool in a – nuclear - laboratory might blow up the whole universe.”

Prof Dr Dr hc Edmund Lengfelder,
Otto Hug Strahleninstitut – MHM,
Jagdhornstrasse 52, D-81827 München

Radiation Protection: CERN Environmental Monitoring

The surroundings of CERN are monitored firstly by the “Commission de Sécurité du CERN” (1), and secondly by two external bodies, the Swiss “Office Fédérale de la Santé Publique” (OFSP = Federal Health Agency FHA) (2) and the French “Institut de Radioprotection et de Sureté Nucléaire IRSN”.

(1) describes in detail what emissions were produced via the air and waste water in 2005 through the operation of the Iso-lde accelerator; monitors are fitted at the emission points to detect alpha, beta and gamma emissions permanently. The immisions are also measured using local dosimeters (ionisation chambers and rem counters) in the surroundings of CERN, and activity determined in soil and plant samples. Radionuclides and their activity are listed (exhaust air and waste water for the whole of 2005), such as 33 GBq H-3, 6,1 MBq iodine isotope, 6,8 TBq beta/gamma radionuclide with half life < 1 day. The doses occurring in the surroundings amounted in 2005 to 4% of the maximum of 0,3 mSv/a, hence 0,012mSv/a; in 2004 the figure was 0,014mSv/a.

At the same time as these monitoring measurements, the OFSP launched the “CERN Point Zero” measuring campaign, which serves to “clarify the radiological situation in the surroundings of CERN” (2,3) in the light of the start-up of the LHC. Additional measuring equipment and processes were set up for this purpose: thermo-luminescence dosimeters for gamma radiation and neutrons, ionisation chambers, gamma spectrometry for aerosol filters (main nuclide Be-7), water (Zn-65)

and sediments from the Rhone, vegetables from the surroundings, including H-3 in wine. The measurements and the results are described in detail in (2).

The results show that according to the official publications the evidenced traces of radioactivity are considerably below the maximum set for radiation doses and hence do not constitute a hazard for the environment or the population.

The launch of a special “monitoring programme” might suggest that the operator and the administration cannot entirely exclude the possibility of increased radioactive effects on the surroundings as a result of the operation of the LHC. This leads to the question of whether the CERN surroundings were not already regularly and sufficiently monitored during all the years and why a new programme is needed.

A short report on the conditioning and storage of CERN’s radioactive waste is contained in (4). One further comment: Apparently there was no accelerator still in operation in 2006/2007.

A team of experts

- (1) Rejets et environnement du CERN, P. Vojtyla and D. Wittekind, in: *Radioactivité de l'environnement et doses de rayonnement en Suisse 2005*, Ch. 8.5, pp. 108 - 112, 2006
- (2) *Environnement du CERN*, S. Estier et al., *ibid.*, Ch. 8.6, pp. 113–116
- (3) (Swiss) Federal Health Agency (FHA), “CERN Point Zero” measuring campaign. 15.10.2007
- (4) International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), *NEWMDB Report*, Reporting Group BAG: Site Structure CERN, IAEA 6.9.2007

Gardens in Our Cities

Subsistence Farming Can Contribute to Self-Supply and to Cross-Cultural Dialogue

by Elizabeth Meyer-Renschhausen/Germany

Although, since last year, the total urban population in the world is more than 50%, we are facing a quasi paradox, because contrary development at the same time. Since the rich countries do not want to grant the same wages and living conditions to the inhabitants of the countries in the South, which they allocate to themselves, their progress virtually turns against them: In the context of globalization our jobs emigrate to the so-called peripheries. In addition, rationalization and the new international division of labor turn ever more people out of their jobs. In our Western countries, workers and farmers are likely to lose or give up their jobs; in the Third World countries, university graduates in particular do no longer get any jobs. But also farmers there are under pressure.

[...] In fact, we are facing the phenomenon of shrinking cities, worldwide. The large cities of the rich North and West, of Northern America and Europe, are getting poor. The cities lose their inhabitants, because the better off people move into the so-called exurbs, where they can raise their children in their own house with garden in the countryside. The cities are losing their inhabitants due to de-industrialization. Unemployment is not only high in East Germany, but is constantly growing in the Ruhr district, as well. The former automotive city and capital of the Ford empire, Detroit, hosts almost exclusively poor blacks, African Americans. Philadelphia, richest city of North America at the time of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 is now one of the poorest cities in the USA.

Only if we admit this void and refrain from putting a gloss over this shrinkage process, the new emptiness offers us a chance, says

Holger Lauinger in his beautiful film about the creative handling of depopulation and the developing wasteland that he calls “new ground.”¹

This development can especially be well observed in the USA. The North American society is possibly already closer to the end of its history, than is visible from outside. Walking or cycling through the ghettos and slums in the cities, one can observe an astonishing extent of decay, poverty, misery, and ugliness. The wilderness in these quarters differs in nothing from similar dumping ground quarters in many cities of the “South”, the “Third World”. Poverty will soon be a hard reality for a third of the American population. According to statistics, 10 per cent of the Americans even today go hungry. Neither the administration in Washington nor the municipalities show any inclination even to develop concepts to fight the need of the low-income earners.

At the same time, however, the ongoing crisis which can be observed since the 1970s, leads to amazing paradoxes. Since the early 1970s “Community Gardens”, or neighborhood gardens, were founded everywhere in the cities. While at first this was a kind self-help movement against the depressing decline of debris properties, inner-city vegetable farming has been the aim for the last twenty or twenty-five years. Since the 1990s we face a second wave of “Community Gardens” founding: In the midst of decayed quarters new “green” neighborhood and self-help movements develop incessantly, dominated by the marginalized outsiders themselves. Maybe the “Community Gardeners” are so successful, because they start off from the grassroots. Social adventurers – common-

ly called “artists” and “activists” – together with slum ghetto kids, are cultivating inner-city wasteland and grow vegetables. The young people are mostly colored or migration kids. Together they establish local vegetable markets for the poorer people who are under-supplied with fresh food.

With their actions, the African American slum inhabitants suddenly discovered themselves as part of a worldwide ecological movement. They are extremely proud of being able to contribute to the sustainability of our world. Owing to this form of “community gardening” and “subsistence farming in the city”, many young people of disadvantaged minorities emerge from the ghettos – mentally and very often literally – for the first time in their lives. The ongoing crisis is taken as a chance. This new garden movement, this new commitment for subsistence combined with climate protection and fresh vegetables for the homeless people, probably contributes more to the re-establishment of peace in the city centers than a thousand prevention programs. This common cultivation of wasteland can also be observed in other countries, e.g. in South America and everywhere in the world. In South Africa social female workers teach the inhabitants of poor settlements, how they can successfully cultivate potatoes, beans and tomatoes about their huts. Migrants to the cities do gardening everywhere, since they seldom have sufficient income, in Africa, for example. They mostly do their gardening “illegally” on fallow ground at riverbanks, along roadsides and in backyards. They pasture their cows, sheep and goats on the center-strips of highways. This is a kind of informal economy, which the state and municipalities are not interest-

ed in, because it is not taxable and contradicts the urban elite’s obsession with a good reputation.

A new garden movement has developed since the middle of the 1990s in Europe as well, practically a “new social movement”, i.e. the movement of “intercultural gardens” and “guerilla gardeners”. Just when the good old-fashioned allotment gardens began to be discredited – although they were perhaps the best result of the November revolution of 1918 – the first community gardens were started here. When in 2000 we held an international “Garden Conference” at the Humboldt University, there was a lot of excitement about starting something mysteriously new, despite the adverse circumstances like creaking old lecture-rooms and bad microphones at the university.² The organizers and the “AG Kleinstlandwirtschaft” (Workshop Small-Scale Farming) were overwhelmed with inquiries for help concerning the more or less ‘wild’ gardening here or there. They were asked whether they could give some advice on how to acquire a piece of cultivatable land or how to handle one or the other gardening problem. At the end of 2002, the “Stiftung Interkultur” (Foundation Interculture) developed out of the group “Anstiftung” (Incitement) in Munich, a foundation aiming particularly at the promotion of these new gardens. Since then it has coordinated the networking of these gardens and supported each new garden with a small starting loan of 1000 to 3000, so that a new group of gardeners can purchase soil, spades, fences and watering cans.

¹ A trailer to the film can be seen in the Internet at www.neuland-denken.de
² cf. <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~garten/>

Intercultural Gardens in Peripheral Regions of East and North-East Germany

In the following, I want to introduce you to some of these new “intercultural gardens”, and to be more precise, primarily from the North-Western as well as from Eastern German regions. Let us start at the most western edge of the republic, at East Frisia, a region which was regarded in West Germany as so far behind the times, that it was known to most of the German citizens merely as the scene staging Friesish jokes. There was hardly any industry, and the unemployment rate has always been very high. Today, the unemployment rate has hardly declined, however, this area is suddenly spotted as a good place because it enables people to lead a pleasant life with house and garden. If necessary it maintains one jobless partner of two – in short because of the high quality of life thanks to a high personal contribution work potential around the house and yard.

emr. In Aurich, the former seat of the East Frisian “chiefs” close to the “waterkant”, Vietnamese gardens were developed thanks to an initiative of a physician in 1997. The municipal authority provided a 11 hectare piece of fallow land at the outskirts – a marshy meadow. Although the first plots had been allocated to ten families from four different nations, a purely Vietnamese garden had taken shape after only one year.

“Little Saigon”, Aurich, Eastern Frisia

As the ongoing development of the garden and the drainage of the marshy land was realized by the installation of trenches and footbridges, the garden was soon called “Little Saigon” by the people of Aurich.

In the third year the Vietnamese gardeners began to sell their surpluses on the weekly market and at mobile street stands. Today they have created a regular clientele, and the population of Aurich enjoys the privilege of being provided with asiatic vegetables biologically cultivated.

The co-operation partners of the garden project are the City of Aurich, the regional hospital and a cercle of physicians, the district’s protestant churches, private donators

as well as the Stiftung Interkultur (Foundation Interkultur).¹

Intercultural Garden Neubrandenburg

On 1 October 2004, after a lengthy planning period on the part of the actives an intercultural garden was finally officially opened in Neubrandenburg in Southern Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The first sod was turned by Neubrandenburg’s mayor Dr Paul Krüger, the garden was baptised “national garden”.

On the initiative of Soziokulturelles Bildungszentrum Neubrandenburg (SkBZ), an intercultural garden was developed here on a piece of land of 4000 square metres situated in the deprived area Reitbahnviertel. Interested gardeners from 10 nations – amongst others from Togo, Argentine, Thailand – received more or less equally sized pieces of land, assigned by lot. The land is under cultivation since spring 2005.

The Intercultural Garden tries to realize integration by joint work in nature and by building activities. It is a walking garden, a vegetable and school garden as well as an educational garden and a place of relaxation and common feasts. Working on the project Intercultural Garden brings all age groups and nations together, the work has influence on existing projects, ecological ideas initiate new projects permanently, it teaches social competence to all partners involved. This garden again is supported by a completely different local network, namely by the Bürgerhaus at Reitbahnsee, financed by EU money in co-operation with several schools, the Urania (Adult Education Centre), the Political Asylum Home Neubrandenburg, the University of Applied Sciences Neubrandenburg as well as the Stiftung Interkultur.² [...]

The “International Community Gardens” in Göttingen

In 1996 the “International Community Gardens Göttingen” were built up by the initiative of refugees from war-torn Bosnia together with Germans. Migrants with secured residence wanted to take their lives into their own hands. In 1998 the International Commu-

nity Gardens as a registered association were founded by the members of the project. Until today the association consists of 50 members from 19 countries. About 280 people are working in this project, altogether. Due to their own work as well as their language and literacy courses and self-designed educational work for the environment, new fields of activity and experience are emerging for the members of the project. Native and non-native families as well as singles with different ethnical-cultural backgrounds and from different milieus, life forms and age groups became involved into the International Community Gardens. In 2000 the International Community Gardens won the open contest “New concepts of educational work for the environment of the Federal Environment Ministry” and were funded comparatively generously for a period of 2 years by the then green dominated Federal Ministry for Environment Protection and Nuclear Safety. The received money was not spent and thus they were almost overwhelmed with prizes by enthusiastic fellow citizens. So in 2002 the Göttinger Community Gardens were awarded the integration prize of the German Federal President, in 2003 the agenda-21-prize for the implementation of the goals of the town’s local agenda 21, in 2004 the prize for civil social commitment worthy of imitation by the “Alliance for democracy and tolerance”, in 2005 the environmental prize by the Lower Saxony Environmental Foundation. [...]

Urban Agriculture worldwide

Despite an increasing urbanization, sufficient income is far from guaranteed for those who migrate to the cities. In Ethiopia, nearly 95 per cent of the city dwellers live in slums without running water and sewer system. 80 per cent of the urban population in Africa are not or not sufficiently employed, hence make nothing or not enough money to be able to live in dignity. Hence, the new city dwellers living in slums all over the world are extralegally growing vegetables on urban fallows in the framework of an “informal economy”: Urban Agriculture worldwide. Facing the ne-

cessity of a worldwide sustainability process in the sense of the Rio de Janeiro Agenda 21, this urban agriculture can become an opportunity for a new climate policy. Because, even if urban agriculture can cause ecological issues or has to deal with such issues, gardening within cities is increasingly seen as a new opportunity. The new youth movement “Guerilla Gardening” – a form of wild gardening – considers itself being a part of a new global sustainability movement. Simultaneously, it is an important contribution to a furtive global “One World Movement”. In the sense of a sustainable usage of natural resources which represent a common human heritage and belong to us all, they try to preserve green fallows in cities by using and tilling them as gardens. Doing this can have a positive effect by generating a gardening attitude that will affect various aspects of life.

[...] Working in a garden requires a knowledge which can not be learned from books because it is knowledge bound to activity. Only if the activity and the things connected to it are preserved, the knowledge will be preserved. Being active in a garden can contribute largely to considering our life a good life – namely, when the garden enables us to activate abilities which would otherwise lie fallow due to unemployment, migration and poverty. The garden sets a timetable. Pleasure and burden are close together. Gardening enables us to combine our property and our contribution with the common goal. Common usage of fallow land, water and seeds reminds us of the forgotten institute of common land. The joint effort follows the principle: Sharing makes more of it.

¹ Contact through: Vietnamesische Gärten, Aurich, Dr med Gerhard Stauch, Parkstr. 62, 26605 Aurich, Tel. (04941) 87590, Email: info@pathologie-aurich.de

² Contact person: Mrs Gerlinde Brauer-Lübs, Soziokulturelles Bildungszentrum Neubrandenburg e.V., Haus der Kulturen, Wiekhaus 18, Ringstrasse 2, 17033 Neubrandenburg, Tel. and Fax: +49 395 570 64 53, Email: skbz-arche.e.v@t-online.de; www.skbz-nb.de

La ONU y la OTAN

¿Qué seguridad y para quién?

por Hans Christof von Sponeck, ex Secretario general adjunto de la ONU

En los documentos de la ONU el mundo está en orden. En junio de 1945, 51 estados miembros firmaron la Carta de las Naciones Unidas. Pocos años más tarde, se establecieron dos grandes pactos internacionales sobre derechos civiles, políticos, económicos, sociales y culturales; le siguieron importantes convenciones sobre tortura, genocidio y derechos de la mujer y del niño. A fines de 2008, después de largas negociaciones, los estados miembros firmaron el primer acuerdo sobre bombas de dispersión; lamentablemente con limitaciones exigidas por unos pocos estados, entre ellos Alemania.

La existencia de un derecho internacional amplio demuestra que los gobiernos, en todas partes del mundo, saben lo que es importante para la seguridad humana, y lo que es necesario proteger.

Desde 1945 se ha violado el derecho internacional repetidamente. Para numerosas personas, los derechos esenciales a alimentación, salud, vivienda, educación, trabajo, libertad de opinión resultan inaccesibles. Se hicieron guerras, y siguen haciéndose, sin respetar la Carta de la ONU, por ejemplo en Yugoslavia, Iraq y Palestina. Se tortura, se practica el genocidio, acuerdos sobre armamento son ignorados, riquezas no reemplazables del medio ambiente son saqueadas. Transacciones financieras y económicas incontroladas, sumadas a la avaricia, han provocado una crisis mundial sin precedentes. El pragmatismo reina. Los principios se dejan de lado. Ética ha devenido una palabra extranjera. La mentira política aumenta. La cesura entre ricos y pobre se agranda cada vez más. Las perspectivas de vivir y sobrevivir se han tornado aún más desiguales. Esto resulta, en gran medida, de la falta de voluntad política para consagrarse al bien de la mayoría y no al bienestar de unos pocos, así como la negligencia resultante con respecto al derecho y la ley. A la ONU le resulta difícil realizar su misión.

El siglo XXI bajo el signo de rechazar la doble moral

Por tanto no es sorprendente que, en el mundo entero, el siglo XXI esté bajo el signo de la confrontación y el rechazo de la doble moral. Las alianzas occidentales, como la OTAN, son desafiadas por nuevas alianzas¹ con miembros importantes como Rusia, China e India. «Un nuevo reparto» es la frase clave. Poco antes de su muerte en 1964, *Dag Hammarskjöld*, el gran hombre de la ONU,² dijo con gran preocupación que «en la lucha por el honor, poder y beneficios deben encontrarse caminos para poder salir de la jungla húmeda y embrollada».

Mirando hacia atrás, a comienzos de 2009 podemos constatar que desde la fundación de la ONU en 1945, dos sistemas han fracasado: el comunismo y el capitalismo. La búsqueda de un máximo de ganancias a costa de los demás, la deshonestidad y el etnocentrismo son algunas de las causas.

La ONU en una encrucijada

El mundo de los 192 estados miembros de la ONU ha llegado a una encrucijada. Un camino conduce hacia un mundo que se concentra en el bienestar de la comunidad, la reducción de conflictos y la paz, es decir en una vida en dignidad y seguridad humana, de progreso social y económico para todos, igual donde vivan – así como lo prevee la Carta de las Naciones Unidas. El otro camino es la continuación del «gran juego» por el poder, como en el siglo 19, el cual, en el siglo 21, se está convirtiendo en la empresa más peligrosa y envolvente que se haya conocido jamás. En este camino se trata presumiblemente de democracia, en realidad se trata de poder, control y explotación.

Nunca hubo un dividendo de la paz

El dividendo de la paz previsto al fin de la guerra fría, nunca se logró. En 2007, los presupuestos militares de todos los estados miembros de la OTAN han alcanzado, con 1,2 mil millones de dólares, un nuevo récord. Solo el presupuesto militar de EE.UU. cubre un 50% de esa suma; los países de la OTAN cubren un 70%.³ En el mismo año la suma destinada a la ayuda para el desarrollo es de 103 mil millones de dólares,⁴ es decir un 8,3% del gasto militar.

Desde 1969, se espera de las Naciones Unidas que los países industrializados provean para la ayuda al desarrollo, un bajo porcentaje del 0,7% de su producto interno bruto. De hecho, ese monto fue del 0,3% para 2008.⁵ Este desequilibrio extremo entre los gastos militares y los de ayuda para el desarrollo, demuestra que no se pone el acento en el mejoramiento de la seguridad humana, – acorde a los objetivos de desarrollo⁶ del milenio de la ONU – sino en la seguridad del estado. Los que consideran tal comparación como fuera de lugar, no quieren entender que el fortalecer la seguridad personal contribuye de manera decisiva a eliminar las causas de los conflictos en el mundo. No quieren aceptar que la seguridad militar, por medio de alianzas e intereses propios de los estados, aumenta y profundiza las causas de los conflictos

ONU y OTAN: bien común o intereses de occidente

Una comparación de los mandatos de la ONU y la OTAN muestra claramente el contraste entre los objetivos de esas dos organizaciones. En los 63 años de existencia de la ONU, su misión no ha cambiado. La ONU fue fundada para mantener e impulsar la paz en el mundo. La OTAN existe para asegurar los intereses propios de sus 26 estados miembros. Su misión, definida en el *Tratado de Washington de 1949*, era inicialmente la defensa de los estados miembros. A fines de la guerra fría en 1989, esa misión parecía estar cumplida. Sin embargo, los miembros de la OTAN quieren mantener la alianza occidental, y eso justificó la búsqueda de un nuevo rol para la OTAN.



Delante de la ONU en Nueva York. «La ONU no debe servir como taller de reparaciones políticas. El desafío actual es el retorno a los principios de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas.» (Foto pl)

La OTAN del siglo XXI es incompatible con la Carta de la ONU

En el año 1999, la OTAN confirmó que quería sentar nuevas bases por medio de un concepto estratégico diferente. Se quería pasar de una alianza militar estrictamente defensiva a una amplia alianza para proteger las fuentes vitales para los países miembros. Además de la defensa de las fronteras de los estados miembros, se fijaron nuevos objetivos como el acceso a las fuentes de energía, el derecho de intervenir en «movimientos de una gran cantidad de personas» y en zonas de conflictos lejanas a los estados miembros. La disposición de permitir el ingreso de nuevos estados, sobre todo los que habían pertenecido a la Unión Soviética, muestra cómo ha cambiado el carácter de esa alianza militar.

El tratado de Washington de 1949 reconocía la Carta de las Naciones Unidas como el marco jurídico obligatorio de la OTAN. Pero el monopolio de la ONU sobre el recurso a la fuerza como figura en el artículo 51 de la Carta, fue rechazado por la doctrina de la OTAN de 1999. El sector de intervención, limitado hasta entonces al espacio euro-atlántico, fue extendido por los estados miembros de la OTAN al mundo entero, y provisto de una estrategia de intervención global. En la reunión cumbre de Budapest del 3 de abril de 2008, la OTAN declaró que quería «hacer frente a los desafíos del siglo XXI con todas las posibilidades de su misión». Hay que agregar, que el acuerdo de Washington del año 1949 había sido ratificado por los parlamentos de los países miembros; con ello tiene validez como derecho internacional, contrariamente a las estrategias y doctrinas dictadas por la OTAN posteriormente.

Acuerdo ONU-OTAN: graves peligros para la paz

A pesar de esas decisiones de la OTAN, que visiblemente beneficiaban sólo a una pequeña minoría de estados miembros de la ONU, el secretario general de la ONU *Ban Ki-moon* y el de la OTAN, *Jaap de Hoop-Scheffer*, firmaron un acuerdo el 23 de septiembre de 2008. Ese proyecto no había sido presentado al Consejo de seguridad. En el acuerdo, por obvias razones formulado en términos muy generales, se trata de una «ampliación de consultas» y de un «trabajo operativo conjunto» por ejemplo, para el «mantenimiento de la paz» en los Balcanes y en Afganistán. En caso de amenaza o de desafío, los dos secretarios generales se comprometían a actuar en común.

En la actual época de confrontación, se espera del Secretariado de la ONU un alto grado de neutralidad política. El acuerdo ONU/OTAN no es para nada neutral y tendrá graves consecuencias para el trabajo en beneficio de la paz. El embajador de Rusia para la OTAN en Bruselas, *Dmitry Rogozin*, considera el acuerdo de la ONU con la OTAN – una estructura militar-política – como «ilegal»; *Serge Lavrov*, ex embajador ruso en la ONU en Nueva York y actual ministro del ex-

terior, se mostró «escandalizado» que un acuerdo tal haya sido firmado en secreto y sin consultar.

Acuerdo ONU-OTAN ¿compatible con la Carta de la ONU?

Se cuestionan importantes aspectos:

El acuerdo entre la OTAN – una alianza militar que posee armas nucleares – y la ONU ¿es compatible con el artículo 2 de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas, que exige que los conflictos se resuelvan pacíficamente? ¿Es posible distinguir las intervenciones de la ONU de las de la OTAN, si tres de los cinco miembros permanentes del Consejo de seguridad son también miembros de la OTAN? ¿Cómo pueden ser perseguidos por la justicia futuras violaciones del derecho que cometa la OTAN? Una entidad como la OTAN, que bombardeó Serbia y Kosovo en 1999 sin un mandato de las Naciones Unidas, y en contravención del derecho internacional, ¿es un asociado adecuado para la ONU?

El mandato de la ONU hace innecesaria a la OTAN

Una apreciación del acuerdo ONU/OTAN debería considerar también, que la OTAN es una reliquia de la guerra fría; que la OTAN, como alianza occidental, se ha ganado la desconfianza de la mayoría de los otros 166 países miembros; que es un objetivo de la OTAN, imponer por la fuerza armada sus intereses energéticos y de política de poder contra otros países de la ONU; que EE.UU., un miembro dirigente de la comunidad de la OTAN, ha ignorado constantemente y sin ningún escrúpulo a la ONU, y ha violado el derecho internacional de la ONU.⁷ Finalmente, hay que recordar que la Carta de la ONU prevee un «comité de estado mayor encargado de aconsejar y asistir al consejo de seguridad en todo lo concerniente a «recursos de orden militar necesarios para salvaguardar la paz mundial y la seguridad internacional».⁸ Como consecuencia, si los estados de la OTAN se preocuparan del bien común y no de los intereses de un pequeño grupo de estados, un mandato de la ONU haría innecesaria a la OTAN.

Es urgente que uno o varios estados miembros soliciten a la *Corte internacional de Justicia* de interpretar el acuerdo ONU/OTAN del 23 de septiembre de 2008 conforme a su estatuto.⁹

La opinión pública mundial tiene el derecho de presentar una tal solicitud y de obtener una respuesta. Recordemos que en el preámbulo de la constitución consta: «Nosotros, el pueblo de las Naciones Unidas ... decididos a crear las condiciones necesarias para mantener la justicia y el respeto a las obligaciones fijadas en los acuerdos ...» El preámbulo de la Carta no dice: «Nosotros, los gobiernos.»¹⁰

Ésta sería una respuesta a la pregunta concerniente al camino que debería seguir la comunidad internacional. Quien quiera servir a la paz y a la reducción de conflictos,

Siete desafíos actuales

Resumiendo, son siete los desafíos actuales:

1. El progreso de una reforma fundamental de la ONU como objetivo mundial. El multilateralismo en interés de la humanidad, puede ser realizado.
 2. Retorno a los principios de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas. La ONU no debe continuar siendo sólo un taller de reparaciones políticas.
 3. Reconocimiento e impulso de la seguridad humana como prioridad para una supervivencia digna. La seguridad militar no puede reemplazar la seguridad humana.
 4. Respeto del derecho internacional. No puede haber responsabilidad política sin responder por las consecuencias de las acciones.
 5. Rechazo de la libertad (anarquía) de mercado. El orden, la observación y el control son una garantía y no un peligro para la democracia.
 6. Urgencia de una declaración de la ONU contra la doble moral. La reducción de derechos especiales para las alianzas es una condición para la solución de conflictos y sirve a la paz.
 7. Elaboración de principios para una ética de la información de los estados y los gobiernos, así como de los medios. La mentira organizada debe ser perseguida.
- Finalmente, es necesario hacer un llamado a la opinión pública: para interpelar continuamente a la política, y para participar más activamente en los hechos actuales. *Dag Hammarskjöld* hablaba de «negociaciones con uno mismo».

Hans Christof von Sponeck

Venezuela está por emanciparse del neoliberalismo

El presidente Hugo Chávez ha hecho mucho en los últimos años

Entrevista con Walter Suter, antiguo embajador suizo en Venezuela*

Después de que América Latina fuese el laboratorio de ensayo del neoliberalismo estadounidense, en los últimos años se constata un creciente movimiento de emancipación protagonizado, sobre todo, por los pueblos y sus representantes políticos electos. Eso se observa sobre todo en el afán de libertad respecto de los EE.UU. y en la autonomía consciente en las cuestiones económicas. La elección de Evo Morales como presidente de Bolivia, de Hugo Chávez en Venezuela, Rafael Correa en Ecuador, Fernando Lugo en Paraguay o Lula da Silva en Brasil fueron pasos decisivos en esta dirección, que han conducido también a más cohesión y responsabilidad en la población. Los medios occidentales no informan, por lo general, de una manera objetiva acerca de los desarrollos en los países latinoamericanos. Current Concerns tuvo la oportunidad de hablar con el antiguo embajador suizo en Venezuela y profundo conocedor de América Latina, Walter Suter. En la entrevista siguiente nos da información sobre los desarrollos y cambios en Venezuela.

Zeit-Fragen: Antes de la elección de Hugo Chávez hubo años de relativa inestabilidad, cambios de gobierno, intentos de revueltas y golpes militares. Ahora la situación es más bien estable. ¿Cómo ha conseguido Venezuela afianzar más estabilidad?

Walter Suter: Tras la elección de Chávez en 1998 surgió rápidamente mucha resistencia, y durante cuatro años tuvo que defenderse constantemente contra toda clase de intentos por derrocarlo. Esto culminó, sobre todo, en los intentos de golpes de Estado. El más destacado fue el de abril de 2002, en el que Chávez fue rescatado de la base, por la población, especialmente en Caracas. Los habitantes de los barrios, las zonas más pobres, bajaron, llegaron al palacio y exigieron que volviera a ser puesto en libertad. Cuando, tras su vuelta, quiso reconciliarse con sus adversarios,

se tomó como un signo de debilidad. Medio año más tarde, en colaboración o más bien en complicidad con el sindicato oficial, se lanzó el knockout, una huelga de sabotaje con la pretensión de echar a Chávez en seis días. A los dos meses se fueron ellos, y él todavía sigue ahí. Vino entonces la tranquilidad. Pero habían pasado ya cuatro años. En estos cuatro años el gobierno no pudo trabajar realmente, hasta entonces no pudo realizar sus programas y comenzar su trabajo propiamente dicho.

Se empezó con las *misiones sociales*: programas de salud, iniciados con médicos cubanos, seguidos de programas de educación. Desde entonces los programas se han ampliado, profundizado e introducido a niveles más altos. Los más destacados son la asistencia sanitaria de base en los barrios y el acceso a la educación. Entre ellos está la alfabetización, por un lado, pero también el echo de que muchas personas, particularmente en el campo y en los barrios pobres que antes no tenían acceso a la formación pueden terminar hoy su educación escolar. Esto es muy bueno. Así se ha creado cierta estabilidad en la base. Efectivamente, por primera vez el gobierno pudo hacer algo a nivel social por los hasta ahora perjudicados y excluidos. Sí, todavía se está en los comienzos, pero éste es el buen camino.

Sobre la base de la resistencia de Chávez se ha efectuado una consolidación a nivel político. Y eso porque goza de gran credibilidad entre la mayoría de la población de base, como se ha visto en las elecciones a la Asamblea Constituyente, en el referén-

«Efectivamente, por primera vez el gobierno pudo hacer algo a nivel social por los hasta ahora perjudicados y excluidos..»



dum sobre la Constitución y en el referéndum sobre su Presidencia. Este es su capital. Una mayoría de la población lo percibe como auténtico, lo cree. En diez años les ha mostrado que su preocupación por mejorar la suerte de los perjudicados y por introducir en la sociedad más justicia social, es sincera y auténtica. Así lo cree la mayoría de la población, una mayoría que estaba afectada por estos perjuicios. Esto es lo que con toda seguridad constituye su fortaleza.

¿Cómo responde Usted al reproche constante de que Venezuela es una dictadura?

Su legitimidad y la de su gobierno se han confirmado mediante elecciones debidamente celebradas, contempladas, por lo demás, por muchos observadores. Nadie lo cuestiona ya, los resultados son regulares, legales. Así se ha

introducido, naturalmente, estabilidad, puesto que antes ningún jefe de Estado gozó de semejante credibilidad. A menudo sólo ocupaban el cargo por poco tiempo. Los últimos resultados electorales de las actuales elecciones regionales y municipales lo han confirmado. Aunque los partidarios del gobierno hayan perdido algunos gobernadores individuales en relación con la situación anterior, la relación sigue siendo de 17 a 6, es decir el 70% de los gobernadores son partidarios del gobierno. En los puestos perdidos se trata, naturalmente, de puestos problemáticos, como Gran Caracas o Miranda. En las elecciones municipales, por el contrario, la porción de ayuntamientos ocupados por los partidarios del gobierno ha aumentado del 60 al 80%. Es un incremento enorme.

En el marco de la Constitución de 1999, una vez más en consonancia con el Estado de derecho, se lanzó el año pasado el referendo, cuyo resultado se aceptó, a pesar de ser perjudicial para el Presidente. Los resultados electorales fueron aceptados también por destacados adversarios que participaron en el golpe y que, en vez de estar en la cárcel, fuer-

on incluso de candidatos elegidos y aceptados. A principios de 2008 Chávez promulgó una amnistía para todos los que participaron en el golpe. Tan sólo se exceptuaron las personas acusadas de participación directa en los disparos, actos de violencia, etc. Es importante, al menos desde el punto de vista psicológico y simbólico, que tal o cual representante destacado de la oposición haya ganado

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«En diez años les ha mostrado que su preocupación por mejorar la suerte de los perjudicados y por introducir en la sociedad más justicia social, es sincera y auténtica.»

«La ONU y la OTAN»

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debe seguir el camino multilateral y lleno de baches de la ONU y evitar el camino allanado de la OTAN. Como dijo en 1998 el ministro canadiense de relaciones exteriores *Lloyd Axworthy* en el Consejo de seguridad: Debemos encontrar el camino hacia un multilateralismo que conduzca «al beneficio de la comunidad internacional y no al interés personal de unos pocos». Ese camino será largo, porque, hasta ahora, no ha habido un multilateralismo desinteresado.

A partir de 1994, la Uno ha comenzado a utilizar la noción de «seguridad humana». Con ésto quería subrayar la importancia que tiene la realización de los derechos de cada persona en la vida cotidiana, para liberarlo de la angustia y el sufrimiento. Por primera vez en la historia de la ONU, en el año 2000, se determinaron cuantitativamente objetivos para el desarrollo. Esto es un verdadero progreso para fortalecer la seguridad humana. Ocho de los llamados objetivos de desarrollo del milenio para la lucha contra la pobreza, mortalidad infantil y de madres y acceso a la escuela primaria, deben ser logrados entre 2000 y 2015.

«Humanismo militar»:
concepto para encubrir intereses propios
Las Naciones Unidas quieren así recalcar, que además de la seguridad que depende del estado (militar), existe una seguridad relativa al hombre. Los defensores de la seguridad dependiente del estado, cuyo objetivo es la seguridad militar que quieren realizar por medio de alianzas como la OTAN, lo saben. Hab-

lan abiertamente sobre el «humanismo militar» para legitimar sus intereses. Parte de esta tentativa es la interpretación del nuevo concepto «responsabilidad de proteger».¹¹ Ésto es un engaño, ya que se trata de defender intereses propios y no de proteger a inocentes ajenos. Si éste fuera el caso, la situación sería muy diferente en Afganistán, Darfur, Gaza, Goma, Somalia y Zimbabwe.

En todos los ámbitos de la seguridad humana hay progresos. Sin embargo, es improbable que los objetivos fijados sean alcanzados hasta 2015. Para cubrir los objetivos de desarrollo en el período restante – de 2009 hasta 2015 – son necesarios 135 mil millones de dólares, es decir 22,5 mil millones por año.

Quién afirme que es mucho dinero, ignora probablemente, que EE.UU. gasta por año 180 mil millones de dólares para sus tropas en Iraq y Afganistán; o que los países afectados por la crisis financiera y económica, en el término de pocas semanas, pusieron a disposición unos 3 billones de dólares para salvar en sus países a instituciones abusivas que debieran ser reformadas.

Las posibilidades estarían allí – falta sólo la voluntad política

El éxito de los objetivos de desarrollo del milenio de la ONU no es una cuestión de dinero, aún en estos tiempos económicamente críticos. El progreso dentro de la seguridad humana necesita voluntad política para su realización. En las últimas décadas de discusión sobre el financiamiento de la cooperación internacional, siempre se ha señalado que no sería difícil introducir nuevas alternativas financieras.¹² Pero proposiciones de este tipo son ignoradas o rechazadas. Algunos go-

biernos temen que eso acrecentaría demasiado la independencia de organizaciones internacionales como la ONU.

Quien quiera vivir en paz en el siglo XXI no tendrá dificultades en elegir su camino. El acceso a ese camino está abierto. El principio de la ONU, según el cual, las espadas deben convertirse en arados y no lo contrario, sigue siendo el fundamento del progreso humano y de la seguridad.

Este artículo está basado en una conferencia que tuvo lugar el 6 de diciembre de 2008 en Kasel, durante un Congreso para la paz.

Traducción *Horizons et débats*

¹ A las nuevas alianzas pertenecen: a) la Shanghai Corporation Organisation (SCO) fue fundada en 2001 por China, Kazajistán, Kirguistán, Rusia, Tayikistán, Uzbekistán. Su objetivo principal es la seguridad de Asia Central. India, Paquistán, Irán y Mongolia forman parte de la organización como observadores. b) Brasil, Rusia, India y China (BRIC) forman una comunidad de intereses políticos y económicos desde 2001. c) Brasil, India y Sudáfrica forman una asociación que, por divergencias en las tarifas, ha hecho fracasar varias veces la ronda de Doha de la Organización mundial de comercio.

² *Dag Hammarskjöld* nació en 1905 cerca de Lund (Suecia). De 1953 a 1961 ejerció las funciones de segundo Secretario general de la ONU. Murió en un misterioso accidente de avión en Rodesia, cerca de la frontera congoleña.

³ Cf. *Swedish International Institute for Peace Research* (SIPRI) anuario de 2008, 9 de junio de 2008.

⁴ Cf. *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development* (OECD); Aid Targets Slippage out of Reach? DAC 1 Official and Private (Aid) Flows.

⁵ Conforme a una directiva de la ONU de 1969, los países donantes deben poner a disposición el 0,7% de su PNB para el trabajo conjunto de desarrollo. Hasta ahora sólo Dinamarca, Luxemburgo, los

Países Bajos, Noruega y Suecia han logrado ese objetivo.

⁶ En el año 2000 la Asamblea general de las Naciones Unidas ha fijado ocho objetivos de desarrollo para el período que va desde 2000 a 2015. Entre ellos figuran: reducir en un 50% el hambre y la pobreza, acceso a la escuela primaria para todos los niños, igualdad entre el hombre y la mujer, disminución del 66% de la mortalidad infantil y del 75% de la mortalidad en los partos.

⁷ La invasión en Iraq en 2003, Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib y los vuelos hacia los lugares de tortura son algunos puntos claves.

⁸ En su artículo 47, capítulo VII, la Carta establece un Comité de estado mayor que se compone de jefes del estado mayor de cinco miembros permanentes del Consejo de seguridad. A pesar de no haber sido convocado desde 1945, el artículo 47 sigue subsistiendo.

⁹ En el capítulo II, artículo 36 del estatuto de la Corte Internacional de justicia se le otorga a ésta la competencia de interpretar los tratados.

¹⁰ Ver el preámbulo de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas.

¹¹ Ese concepto es mencionado en el documento de la ONU «2005 World Summit Outcome» (A/60/L.1–15 de septiembre de 2005; §138 y §139 así como §79). En ese documento, la Asamblea general deja claramente establecido que sólo el Consejo de seguridad tiene el derecho, de acuerdo al capítulo VII de la Carta, de proteger a las poblaciones – aún por la fuerza – contra el genocidio, los crímenes de guerra, las depuraciones étnicas y los crímenes contra la humanidad.

¹² Entre las propuestas innovadoras del financiamiento mencionamos el «impuesto Tobin», llamado así por el economista americano *James Tobin*. Éste propuso, en 1972, imponer un impuesto sobre las operaciones de cambio internacionales (0,05–1,0%) Los fondos así recaudados deberían disponerse especialmente para financiar la ayuda al desarrollo.

«Venezuela está por emanciparse ...»

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las lecciones a gobernador. Queda así obsoleta la acusación de manipulación electoral, pues de otro modo tendrían que cuestionarse ellos mismos.

Lo que puede inquietar ahora es que el 15 de febrero se efectúa un nuevo referendo para una amplia reforma de la Constitución que prevé suprimir la limitación del mandato presidencial a dos, ahora vigente a dos legislaturas, así como a los demás cargos electos, y permitir su reelección ilimitada.

En nuestros medios se dice con frecuencia que Chávez quiere confirmarse como jefe de Estado de por vida.

Tal vez abrigue este deseo. Pero tendría que ser reelegido, no hay que olvidarlo. Y ahí tienen un campo abierto los adversarios. Tienen que seguir trabajando políticamente y si para 2012 establecen un fuerte antecandidato, en ningún sitio está escrito que el Sr. Chávez vuelva a ser elegido. También podría ganar otro candidato, lo que no se cuestiona.

«A principios de 2008 Chávez promulgó una amnistía para todos los que participaron en el golpe. Tan sólo se exceptuaron las personas acusadas de participación directa en los disparos, actos de violencia, etc.»

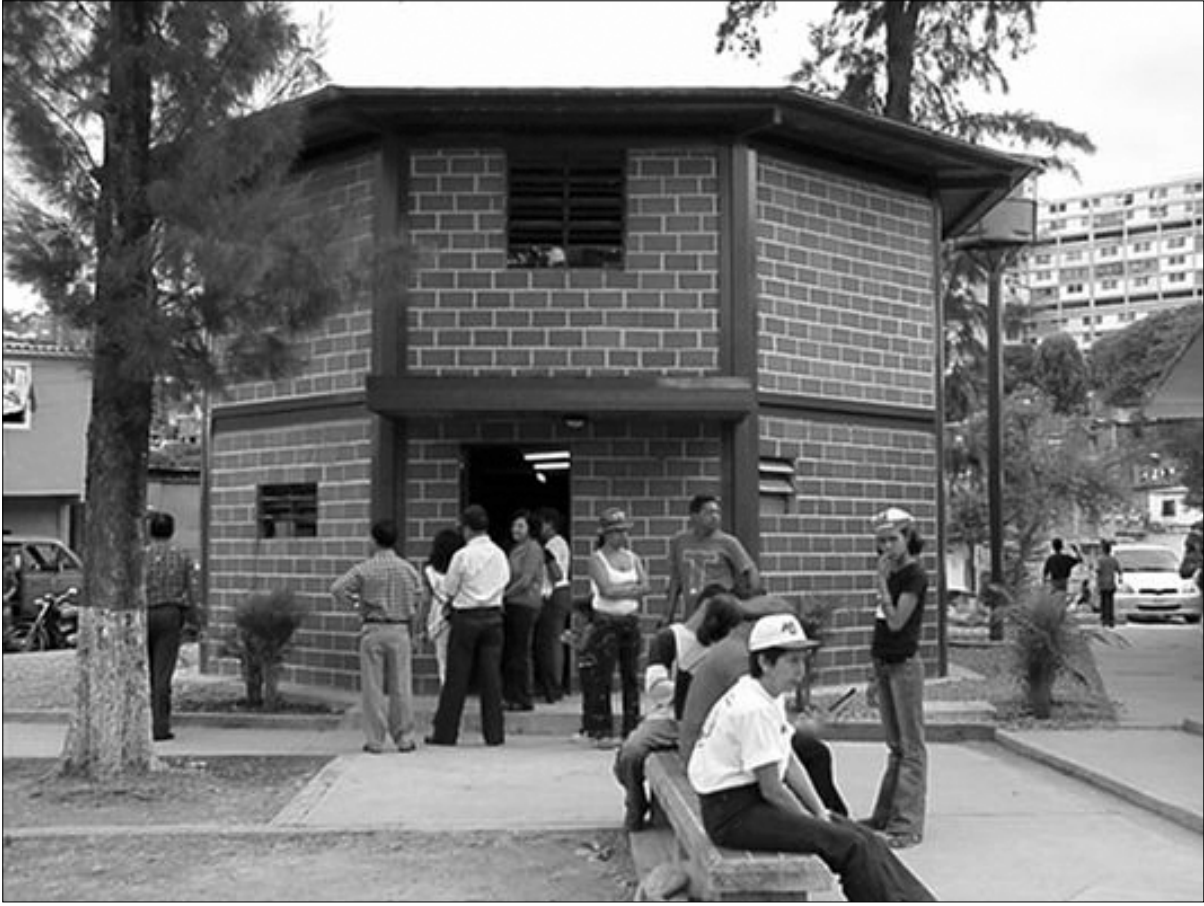
Hay que tener cuidado, eso es muy importante. Claro que el primero que podría volver a ser reelegido sería él. De eso no queremos hablar. Hay claras intenciones de ello, y para eso tiene el apoyo de la mayoría de su partido, el PSUV (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela), que tan exitoso ha sido ahora. Ni siquiera tiene un año (hasta ahora era un movimiento, el Movimiento para la V República (MVR). Medido por el corto espacio de tiempo, precisamente en relación con las elecciones locales, ha tenido un gran éxito. Antes de las elecciones, los *chavistas* tenían mucho miedo a que podrían darse grandes pérdidas. Pero el resultado les ha sorprendido a ellos mismos. Había también *insiders* que, como dijo el director de la campaña en julio, creían que podrían llegar al 60–70%. O sea, que conocen la base. Pero la Oposición no la conoce. Conoce el microcosmos de Gran Caracas y Valencia u otras grandes ciudades. En la industria y el comercio también tienen apoyo, de donde proviene el grueso de sus votos. Pero en el campo no tienen mucha clientela, y la mayoría de la población está tras el Gobierno.

Así que la estabilidad proviene de las medidas sociales y de la resistencia de este presidente. Cualquier otro se habría marchado tras el intento de golpe. También él lo habría hecho de no ser por esta reacción de la base. La primera vez que esto ocurría en América Latina. Algo ha cambiado entonces.

¿Cómo se explica este cambio?

Chávez fue elegido por una mayoría que creía en él y en su proyecto de introducir cambios reales. Cambios significa inclusión de los excluidos, significa justicia social. Este es el programa que siempre ha proclamado él. Empezó ya en la década de 1980, en el movimiento de los jóvenes oficiales. Era un programa socialista. Se creía en él, en sus medidas, que ha intentado llevar a cabo y que respondían a él. A pesar de la resistencia, la mayoría que lo ha elegido estaba convencida de que él quiere realmente el cambio. Y ha dejado bien claro que se resistirá, y ellos quieren mantener a su Presidente. Han tenido confianza en él porque irradia credibilidad y autenticidad. No se han sentido defraudados.

Podíamos observar más de cerca las reformas sociales. ¿Qué reformas fueron éstas? Naturalmente no puedo dar todos los detalles. Lo más importante es en realidad la asistencia sanitaria de base, que se llama *Barrio Adentro*. Es la *atención médica primaria*. Este programa se complementó con pequeñas clínicas en las que se pueden efectuar pequeñas intervenciones médicas, y con centros especiales, como centros de diagnóstico, etc. A eso se suman los antiguos o aún existentes hos-



Ambulatorio típico del programa «Barrio Adentro» en Venezuela. (foto mad)

pitales que ya había antes, pero que estaban muy abandonados. Ahora se han incluido en este programa, se renuevan y amplían, con lo que se tiene todo un sistema. Los casos más complicados se trasladan a los hospitales. Este es más o menos el sistema. Todavía no es perfecto, pero funciona a grandes rasgos, al menos en lo que concierne a la *atención médica primaria*. Y ésta está muy presente en todo el país. Cientos de miles, tal vez millones han visto por primera vez un médico.

¿Es la Asistencia Médica gratuita?

Es totalmente gratuita. Todos estos programas especiales, así como las escuelas, se financian con los ingresos del petróleo. Es algo especial, pues una parte de esos ingresos no va al presupuesto ordinario del Estado sino directamente desde la empresa del petróleo a un fondo especial. Este fondo especial, junto con un fondo de infraestructuras, acumula siempre de dos a tres mil millones, mientras el dinero afluente. Y con este fondo social de la empresa de petróleos se financian directamente todos estos programas. Lo mismo vale decir de la infraestructura, en donde hay gigantescos proyectos, ante todo una red nacional de ferrocarriles, una red de comunicaciones de larga distancia. Está planeada a 25–30 años y abarca 13 000 km de vías por todo el país, un trayecto Norte-Sur, así como la mejora de la infraestructura ferroviaria, del tráfico público cerca de los grandes centros, la ampliación del tráfico de mercancías y la mejora de los medios de transporte pú-

«Cientos de miles, tal vez millones han visto por primera vez un médico.»

blicos en las ciudades. Hasta ahora el transporte público estaba subdesarrollado. Tradicionalmente, esto tenía que ver con la cultura del petróleo: todo el mundo quería tener un automóvil. Pero hay gigantescos proyectos en infraestructuras. Se construyen también carreteras, aeropuertos, uno para Caracas, y esto se financia directamente con el fondo para infraestructuras de la empresa de petróleos. Para nosotros es una vía extraordinaria, pero está jurídicamente afianzada a fin de acortar las decisiones. El financiamiento de los programas sociales y de infraestructuras ha sido sancionado por el Parlamento.

¿Pero no ve un peligro en el petróleo? Existe la teoría de que la bajada de los precios del petróleo puede ser o es un arma. ¿Se apoya el financiamiento exclusivamente en las ganancias del petróleo o se piensa también en ampliar o establecer la producción industrial o la agricultura, que también podrían exportar?

Esta diversificación del aparato productivo está aún en sus comienzos, es muy duro. Se ha empezado sobre todo por encauzar la pro-

ducción agrícola, porque el 80% de los alimentos tienen que importarse, en un país que podría producir de todo. Así era antes, pero ahora tampoco es mucho mejor. Los intentos de hacer avanzar la diversificación mediante la creación de cooperativas, etc., van muy lentos. Los grandes propietarios de tierras que producían algo antes siguen produciendo en parte, pero no supone un aumento del volumen. Para que el desarrollo de cooperativas avance se ha iniciado una misión especial en uno de estos programas de formación: de ella forman parte la alfabetización, la escuela primaria, terminación de la secundaria, formación en las universidades o aprendizaje de profesiones técnicas. Se denomina *Vuelvan caras*. Este programa forma a gente en la profesión de agricultor. Con él se persigue sacar a los jóvenes de los barrios pobres, llegados a las ciudades con sus padres en busca de trabajo, y devolverlos al campo. Esa es la idea, y así, junto con otros que también han sido formados, deben establecer cooperativas, bajo una dirección, y organizar ellos mismos una producción de alimentos. Esto es lo más importante: la diversificación de producciones económicas para que no se dependa únicamente de los tesoros de la tierra.

¿Eso es, pues, parte del programa político?

Naturalmente, también pretenden una producción local, tecnológicamente ambiciosa. Y en este contexto son también muy interesantes los convenios con otros Estados, entre otros acaban de firmar uno con Suiza con el que se puede adquirir *know-how*, tal vez a cambio de petróleo, no lo sé, en todo caso un convenio sobre cooperación económica, tecnológica y científica con el objetivo de fomentar, diversificar también las fuerzas productivas fuera del sector petrolero. Por tanto, hay en marcha esfuerzos, en parte adelantados, pero se puede imaginar que esto podría acelerarse un poquito.

¿Por qué se avanza tan lentamente?

En parte se trata de problemas organizativos y burocráticos. Internamente persisten también resistencias en la administración pública. No es fácil despedir a personas que no están totalmente de acuerdo con Chávez. Así que a los niveles medio y bajo hay todavía mucha resistencia pasiva por parte de los adversarios de Chávez. También la corrupción, denunciada siempre por Chávez, sigue siendo un mal entorpecedor. Es difícil superarla. Requiere tiempo, y no se avanza todo lo que es de desear. Y en parte también se debe a que ciertos Estados, incluso aunque se hayan firmado convenios, no lo soportan con gran entusiasmo y lo dejan exclusivamente en manos de sus empresas. El clima de inversiones tampoco lo estimula la situación mediática internacional. Por lo demás, si se prescinde de Rusia, también hay diversos convenios con España, Portugal, China e Irán. Por lo que respecta a la tecnología punta, los convenios son todavía escasos. Son importantes los establecidos con España y Portugal, pero también con

Austria, Francia e Italia. Aunque se refieren sobre todo a la infraestructura ferroviaria. Lo mismo sería también con Suiza. Estos ensayos se efectúan, y el Gobierno ha expresado claramente que está interesado en ellos. Para ellos tendría que diversificar también la formación, la formación profesional, para que con este sector de la producción se logre más autonomía, más soberanía. El programa existe, pero es duro. El programa social, en cambio, avanza muy bien.

¿Cómo se encuentra hoy la distribución de la tierra?

Hoy como ayer, en el campo sigue habiendo muchas tierras estatales. El porcentaje está entre el 30–40% de tierras del Estado que no se trabajan, como ocurría antes. Los *polígonos agroindustriales* se abandonaron. Para los responsables de la cúpula es más fácil llegar al dinero a través de los ingresos del petróleo. En realidad todavía hay muchas tierras estatales. Y la mayoría de los terrenos no están en manos de pequeños campesinos, sino en las de grandes latifundistas. Sobre la

base de la reforma agraria se ha empezado a expropiar algunas tierras sin cultivar y a ponerlas a disposición de colectivos como las cooperativas. La tierra está ahí para avanzar la producción agrícola. Es perfectamente posible. No es que la tierra cultivable esté exclusivamente en manos de los latifundistas, no es cierto. Hay mucha tierra del Estado. Podría hacerse algo con la existente.

¿Qué es lo que impide un desarrollo más rápido?

Uno de los peligros es cierta burocratización, advertida una y otra vez por Chávez. Es muy difícil superar ahora todo esto. Se intenta dando poder a la base, a los afectados en el campo: las comunidades de los ayuntamientos deben tomar ellas mismas el asunto en sus manos. Así, sobre la base de la Constitución se crearon los *consejos comunales*. No es nada artificial. Los afectados tienen la posibilidad de elaborar sus propios proyectos, pero en un proceso abierto para el que se reúnen. Estos proyectos, que de momento tienen que ver sobre todo con la infraestructura, también deberían ser de tipo productivo, claro está, y hay muy pocos de esos que puedan someterse al dictamen y aprobación del Gobierno central. Como he podido ver yo mismo, hasta ahora se han podido aprobar un 80% de los proyectos presentados. La autorización se devuelve con el dinero a las comunidades. Éstas administran el dinero a través de un pequeño consejo interno, elegido entre sus propias filas, y no por una sola persona.

Antes, cuando el alcalde disponía él solo del dinero, existía un problema permanente en la producción. Sigue habiendo alcaldes elegidos, pero ahora están sometidos a este

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control. No pueden disponer directamente del dinero, de los gastos. Eso se hace a través de los *consejos comunales*, donde la participación de la base es muy importante. A la larga, esto debería conducir a que, gracias a este control social, se reduzcan los casos de corrupción y con ello, tal vez, también la resistencia interna de ciertos burócratas. De este modo debería romperse un poco la burocratización puesto que así se reparte en unidades muy, muy pequeñas.

En un *municipio* existen varios consejos comunales. Pueden ser pequeños vecindarios,

«Venezuela está por emanciparse ...»
Continuación de la página 11

barrios, etc. Así queda muy descentralizado. Con esta estructura descentralizada se intenta ahora ganar el control social y dominar un poco la corrupción y atraer al mismo tiempo a los procesos de asesoramiento y decisión de a todas las personas afectadas. Participación significa tomárselos en serio. Antes eran meros receptores de órdenes, sin voz propia, y han recibido esta voz, y esto refuerza, naturalmente, la autoconciencia de estas personas. Esto lo he vivido yo mismo *in situ*, y lo sé de buena gente de confianza que dicen que en el campo se empieza a sentar el pie. He visto lo que puede verse. Existen, mientras tanto, las televisiones comunales, donde por la noche se retransmiten en directo esas sesiones, esas asambleas comunales. Así, pues, se intenta ser muy transparente.

Hay en eso cierto paralelismo con la autonomía comunal de Suiza.

Sí, en caso de interesarle especialmente a alguien, esos somos nosotros, puesto que conocemos el principio y sabemos lo que es, y, viceversa, de ahí proviene también el interés por un Estado pequeño. Son naturalmente, principios interesantes de la democracia directa, de la participación, que en el papel van más allá con los referendos electorales de los mandatarios, etc. La participación es muy importante y con ella, creo yo, existe la oportunidad de que se rompa la corrupción generalizada o de que se pueda reducir. Ha empezado el hecho de que los funcionarios han dejado de ser en la práctica los señores o príncipes locales. Todo esto está en marcha.

Pero esto no sólo ocurre en el campo, también es muy posible en la ciudad. Y, mientras tanto, tales y cuales alcaldes de la oposición han notado que no es algo tan malo. La participación es una buena cosa, con ella se gana también una fuerte base electoral. Ésta es en sí una forma que, a la larga, beneficia a todos. A la larga, mientras afluya el dinero, es seguro que podría contribuir a una buena estabilidad, porque entonces todo estaría más o menos anclado en la base, en el sentido de que todos estarían o podrían estar implicados de algún modo mediante la participación directa. Así lo subrayan también Chávez y otros, que esta *corresponsabilidad* introducida por la nueva Constitución, que no sólo significa derechos, sino también deberes, era muy importante: todos queremos participar y sostener juntos la responsabilidad en la construcción de la sociedad. Y el objetivo, como

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siempre, es la justicia social. No debe haber más excluidos. Nadie habla de nivelación de clases, sino de cierta justicia social. Las medidas que se han introducido, especialmente en estos consejos comunales, empiezan a poner pie en tierra.

¿Qué significa este desarrollo para el país? El proceso principal de estabilización. Ahora estamos todavía en el comienzo. Se trata de una fase enteramente nueva, la hemos abordado. 500 años de autoritarismo. Lo que ahora ocurre es un cambio de paradigma, un cambio cultural, que no se consume de un día para otro, claro está. Pero los seres humanos son más listos de lo que se piensa, no hay que subestimarlos. Pues notan que ahora se les respeta realmente en su dignidad, en su ser, como sujetos del Estado, no como objetos. Esto modifica, naturalmente, su actitud espiritual, la conciencia, el ser consciente, y no sólo el vegetal, el subconsciente. Esto es ya un cambio gigantesco que, a la larga, contribuye a la cohesión de la sociedad y, con ello, también a cierta estabilidad.



Sesión de un «consejo comunal» en el campo. (foto mad)

En esta fase inicial, en cuyo proyecto aún se debaten, hay dos puntos que tal vez sean importantes para la ulterior estabilización. Uno estriba en que este Presidente todavía puede seguir un mandato más. La razón principal de que se intente aprobarlo mediante referéndum es que la Constitución sólo prevé dos mandatos para cada Presidente. Quiero subrayarlo una y otra vez. Pero en este caso se trata de Chávez. Y es evidente, tiene la mayoría, que quiere que se quede porque es el garante para esta fase inicial. En América Latina todavía seguimos aprendiendo de este cambio, existe poca experiencia y ejercicio en la asunción de responsabilidad y en la descentralización de la responsabilidad. Antes hubo cierta gente que mandaba y otra obedecía. Y el garante está ahí, dando impulsos.

En muchos Estados no son raros los largos periodos de Gobierno. Y nadie ha hablado de dictaduras.

Hay que señalarlo. Hay 17 o 18 Estados de los EE.UU. en los que la posibilidad de ser reelegido no se cuestiona. De todos modos no es seguro, como tampoco puede serlo para él ni para ningún otro. Aunque en principio sea posible no tiene ninguna garantía de que sea elegido. Ahora sabemos que el sistema de elección está absolutamente confirmado, no sólo interna sino también externamente por la misión de la UE. Una de las razones para su reelección es que posiblemente continuará esto, porque ante los ojos de la mayoría es el garante seguro. Está estrechamente vinculado a esta cultura, es un líder genuino, un líder natural, cosa que no gusta aquí. Pero debemos de intentar verlo con ojos latinoamericanos. No con ojos etnocéntricos europeos. Ellos están en otra fase, no han tenido la revolución burguesa. Aquí se intenta hacer el ensayo o dar directamente el salto del feudalismo a la modernidad. Esto significa naturalmente «on va brûler les étapes» (se van a quemar las etapas, N. del T.). Claro que esto

«Son naturalmente, principios interesantes de la democracia directa, de la participación, que en el papel van más allá con los referendos electorales de los mandatarios, etc.»

es un poco peliagudo. En esta fase juegan un gran papel los impulsoadores, ahora digo los líderes que dan los impulsos, y para los ojos de los interesados y afectados son una especie de garantía.

¿Cuál es el otro punto que quería mencionar?

El segundo punto está relacionado naturalmente con el petróleo. Aquí sólo puedo decir que el Gobierno ha sido muy cauteloso con los presupuestos. Hasta hace un año, el presupuesto estatal se basaba en un precio de 35 \$ por barril, y en los últimos tiempos han recaudado mucho. Pudieron acumularse los fondos sociales, así como las reservas de divisas en el Banco Central, etc. Hace un año adaptar-

on el precio. Después de que durante mucho tiempo el precio fuese muy alto, esto es,

«Pues notan que ahora se les respeta realmente en su dignidad, en su ser, como sujetos del Estado, no como objetos.»

60 dólares como base, no 100, estamos ahora en 40 dólares. Cuando hace dos o tres semanas estuve con el Ministro de Planificación, a quien conozco bien personalmente, le planteé la pregunta y me dijo: «Hemos diversificado con mucho cuidado, y acabamos de decidir adaptar el Presupuesto para el próximo año, o sea, rebajarlo un poco. Rebajaremos también este precio de referencia en nuestro Presupuesto. Es decir, haremos algunas reducciones en el programa, pero no hay ningún plan para suprimir algunos de estos programas sociales, sino que deben proseguir con algo menos de intensidad. Algo menos rápidos.»

Harán adaptaciones ante la preocupación de que hay que ser muy cauteloso y meticoloso con los presupuestos. Hay buenos consejeros en este ámbito, en el Ministerio de Hacienda, hay un consejo económico, son muy buena gente, especialistas que apoyan también el proceso bolivariano, que saben algo del asunto. Hace dos, tres años empezaron a retirar sus depósitos de los EE.UU. , a salirse del dólar, y se han ido en gran parte a Europa. Se quiere seguir probando, claro que en la confianza de que el precio no se desplome por los suelos. Y según su evolución, se volverán a elevar las aportaciones al fondo social.

En este marco, lo que es posible, intentan alcanzar los objetivos con los medios del presupuesto. Este es el trasfondo, ingresos del petróleo, presupuesto, y si es posible reelección, claro está. La posibilidad de ser reelegido no está garantizada. Tampoco consta en la Constitución que «El Sr. Chávez debe ser elegido de por vida». Veo aquí un cambio fundamental en América Latina, es una revolución pacífica unida con el Estado de derecho. No es ninguna dictadura. Se celebran elecciones. Y esto conlleva sus gastos, puesto que los adversarios pueden participar, siempre que no se retiren como en 2006. Esta circunstancia llevó a un Parlamento compuesto en un 100% por miembros fieles al Gobierno. Y así será durante los dos próximos años. Entonces volverá a haber nuevas elecciones, entonces podrán volver a entrar. Así, y mediante las últimas elecciones locales, se ha consolidado notablemente el poder del Gobierno de Chávez. El tiempo de las contiendas violentas parece haber pasado. Son desarrollos democráticos y será difícil alterarlos.

A esto se suma que Chávez tiene una repercusión continental. Parte de los nuevos Gobiernos son consecuencia de lo que ha ocurrido en Venezuela con Chávez. El desarrollo de Venezuela ha mostrado a los perjudicados de los otros estados latinoamericanos que no están fatalmente entregados a las fuerzas internas y externas hasta ahora dominantes, sino que se puede ofrecer resistencia efectiva. Se puede elegir a la izquierda, por ejemplo, y ejercer así mucha influencia en lo que ocurre allí, incluso para una política

«El desarrollo de Venezuela ha mostrado a los perjudicados de los otros estados latinoamericanos que no están fatalmente entregados a las fuerzas internas y externas hasta ahora dominantes, sino que se puede ofrecer resistencia efectiva.»

de solidaridad activa. Existen diversas organizaciones, como *Unasur* (Unión de Naciones Suramericanas) y otras que han influido ya en el caso de Bolivia. En mayo de 2008 se fundó *Unasur* y en agosto se celebró ya la primera sesión urgente en la que todos, incluidos los colombianos, dijeron que no apoyaban los intentos de separación en Bolivia. Ahí no vuelven ya los usamericanos. Algo se despliega en el continente, un refuerzo, una solidaridad, que crece y que, sobre todo, se ha iniciado en Venezuela. Así el proceso tiene repercusiones más allá de las fronteras nacionales.

Gracias por la entrevista.

Traducción: Vicente Romano,
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