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# Neo-Secularism

What are the symptoms of neo-secularism?

Does neo-secularism automatically imply a post-enlightenment societal status?

How does 21st century fanaticism/fundamentalism fit into such a social framework?

What assumptions are involved in asking these questions?

Where does Science stand in relation to the issues?

How can the problems associated with the explosion of digital information and the simultaneous diminution of editorial rigour and factual accuracy be addressed within the context of extremism?

## Somalia: killed by kindness

By Brendan O'Neill

One thing the Spiked/Living Marxism faction usually does competently is denouncing spurious 'humanitarianism' (currently, it seems, being rebranded as 'human security') in geopolitics. This text (re-posted from <http://www.spiked-online.com>) is a useful brief history of the century of Western interference in Somalia that created the 'failed state' pretext for perpetual re-interference. It touches on the crucial question of 'aid' as economically destructive extension of war, although only momentarily. For a full, devastating account of how this works and WHY – i.e. the essential role of 'aid agencies' in the African new enclosures – see Silvia Federici's 'War, Globalization and Reproduction' <http://www.libcom.org/library/silvia-federici>. Also Wildcat's 1994 text 'Development by Other Means' [http://www.geocities.com/nowar\\_buttheclawar/WCSomali.html](http://www.geocities.com/nowar_buttheclawar/WCSomali.html) extends the same history covered here into a class analysis of the last 'humanitarian' invasion of Somalia, emphasising the rationally ferocious local resistance to NGOs and journalists.

Somalia: killed by 'kindness'

The east African state is a case study in how today's humanitarian intervention can be even more lethal than the old White Man's Burden.

If you want to see how new forms of Western military intervention can be even worse than the colonialism of old, look no further than Somalia.

This east African state has, for more than 100 years, been a plaything of the Western powers. It was divided and ruled by the British, French and Italians during the colonial period from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1960s; it was dominated by America in the late 1970s and 1980s, when it became a proxy state in Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan's Cold War against the Soviet Union. After the Cold War, in 1992, it became a stage for 'humanitarian intervention': thousands of US soldiers, including marines, landed on its beaches under the banner Operation Restore Hope, apparently to save Somalis from 'warlordism' and famine. And now it has become the latest outpost in the West's 'war on terror'. America has done an about-face and funded and armed the warlords it fought against in 1992 and 1993, encouraging them to face down the militia of the Islamic Courts Union that recently took the capital Mogadishu.

From colonialism to Cold War intrigue, from humanitarianism to counterterrorism, Somalia has been on the receiving end of every form of Western military intervention over the past century. Each era of intervention shared one thing in common: it screwed the people of Somalia, robbing them of the right to determine their own affairs and dividing them along lines that suited various Western powers. Yet,

if anything, the new post-Cold War interventionism has proved even worse for Somalis than the colonialism and Cold War antics that went before it. Where the old forms of intervention, motivated by Western competition and interest, at least ensured a kind of stability in Somalia, the new forms of intervention, motivated by a combination of moral posturing and irrational fear, have left the country as a dangerous vacuum.

Somalia shows, perhaps more than any other state, that moralism in international affairs can be an even more lethal beast than Western realpolitik.

Thanks in no small part to Hollywood – which released *Black Hawk Down* in 2002, an action-packed, star-studded depiction of the US troops' clashes with Somali militia in Mogadishu in October 1993 – Somalia is best-known in the public mind as the 'humanitarian' venture that went wrong. Eighteen US soldiers and around 1,000 Somalis were killed in the Battle of Mogadishu, when US troops were dropped into the capital by helicopter to wipe out leading 'warlord' Mohammad Farah Aidede. The US military intervention of 1992 and 1993 was justified as an attempt to rein in Somalia's warring clans and, in the words of President George HW Bush, to 'save thousands of Somalis' from famine and the divisive 'bloodletting'. It's worth remembering that, for all the handwringing over Operation Restore Hope today, it was widely supported by commentators at the time.

The most remarkable thing about Bush senior and later President Bill Clinton's claims to be rescuing Somalia from civil war – and the unquestioning attitude to their venture from reporters and pundits – is that Western intervention was the cause of civil conflict in Somalia in the early 1990s. As parts of Somalia descended into violent clashes in 1991 and 1992, the Western media was full of claims that the violence was a consequence of Somalis' 'warlike nature' or a resurgence of tribal blood feuds from the pages of Somali history. And apparently it was up to the more enlightened West – the UN and aid agencies, backed by US military power – to try to put a stop to this backward conflict. In fact, the history that really shaped the conflict in Somalia in the early 1990s was that of European colonialism and American militarism in the east of Africa.

The territory of Somalia was shaped by European colonialism. By the end of the nineteenth century, the colonialists had divided the Somali people into British, French and Italian subjects. Britain had also handed the million Somalis of the Ogaden region over to Ethiopia. The British and Italian regions were brought together as the Republic of Somalia in 1960 – while many other Somalis remained divided under the rule of Ethiopia, Kenya and (until 1977) France. This era of European colonialism, from the end of the nineteenth century through to the mid- and late twentieth century, left Somalis with a legacy of poverty and civil strife. That legacy was built upon and exacerbated by America during the Cold War era.

In 1969, General Mohammed Siad Barre seized power in Somalia. He and his forces capitalised on the popular discontent and anger with the ruling elites sponsored by Britain and Italy. Keen to break the grip of the West over Somalia, Barre cosied up to the Soviet Union: he declared Somalia a socialist republic and provided naval facilities to the Soviets. Meanwhile, Somalis fought against the Ethiopian, Kenyan and French authorities that continued to oversee the old French section and other parts of Somalia, and demanded a united, post-colonial Republic of Somalia.

By the late 1970s, Barre had been won over from the Soviets by the Americans. Following the humiliation of defeat in Vietnam in the mid-1970s, America, under President Jimmy Carter, launched what came to be known as the 'Second Cold War' – where rather than committing troops to bolster its authority in the Third World it sought instead to weaken Soviet influence by sponsoring and arming various different regimes. In 1977, Carter identified Barre's Somalia as one of six Third World states where Soviet influence was most vulnerable. In order to win Barre over, the Carter administration cut

off all its aid to Ethiopia and encouraged Barre to invade the Ogaden region – that land of a million Somalis that had been handed by the British to the Ethiopians. When Barre's forces duly stormed Ogaden, the Soviet Union denounced him, switched its support from Somalia to Ethiopia, and backed Ethiopian efforts – which were also assisted by Soviet-friendly Cuban forces – to expel the Somalis from Ogaden. Then US national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski (who now, remarkably, makes a living from slating the current Bush administration for its war in Iraq) described Somalia as the new defining faultline, no less, between the West and the 'Evil Empire': the US-Soviet détente 'lies buried in the sands of the Ogaden', he declared.

Once it was back in the Western fold, Barre's Somalia was effectively transformed into an American military camp under Carter and Reagan and later Bush senior. In August 1980, Barre signed a defence pact with the Carter administration, giving US troops access to the air and naval facilities at the Soviet-built port of Berbera. The port became a key base for America's 'Rapid Deployment Force', the massive military forces set up by Carter in 1979 and posted around the world to protect America's interests, especially in Korea, the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. America's presence in Somalia allowed it to keep a watchful eye on both the horn of Africa and the Gulf. Barre was handsomely rewarded for his compliance. His increasingly corrupt dictatorship was funded and armed by Carter, Reagan and Bush senior. This period of Western intervention was especially disastrous for Somalis: through Barre, America manipulated and intensified ethnic divisions in Somalia, in order to shore up the ever-more isolated Barre's rule over the country. Barre used American money to buy allies and American weapons to punish enemies. The old dream of a united Republic of Somalia – which motivated Somalis in the 1960s and 70s – was consigned to the dustbin of history.

It was these divisions fostered by the American-backed Barre regime that exploded in the early 1990s. As the Cold War came to an end in the late Eighties and early Nineties, Barre became surplus to requirements – he was no longer needed by the Americans, who no longer much cared what happened to Somalia. In 1991, America pulled out of Somalia and shortly afterwards the Barre regime, which had faced sometimes violent internal opposition since the early Eighties, fell and central authority collapsed. The ethnic divisions exploited by the Americans through Barre spilled into conflict in parts of the country, which soon became split along the lines of the old Anglo-Italian carve-up.

And yet, in 1992 Bush senior had the bare-faced cheek to declare that he was sending forces to Somalia to save the people from famine, division and bloodshed, and later Clinton described the storming of Mogadishu as an attempt to 'bring peace' to the country. It was as if the previous 15 years of American militarisation, and the decades of European colonialism before that, had never happened. In fact, what Western politicians and commentators described as 'warlordism' – clashes between different groups for territory and influence – was the logical consequence of continual and destructive Western intervention in Somalia.

If the civil strife of the early 1990s was a consequence of both colonialism and Cold War militarism, then it was further exacerbated by the 'humanitarian intervention' undertaken by America in 1992 and 1993.

Operation Restore Hope was effectively a stunt, a post-Cold War attempt by America to demonstrate both its military prowess and its moral credentials to the watching world. It was not an attempt to dominate Somalia, as America had in the 1980s, nor to divide and rule it, as European colonialists had in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rather, this was really a media event (as evidenced by the fact that US forces landed on Somali beaches at a time that would coincide with the live evening news, and their landing was apparently carried out twice so that news cameramen could get better shots of it). Restore Hope was part of America's search for a sense of moral purpose after it had been robbed of its big, bad enemy, the Soviet Union.

That is why American officials continually exaggerated the scale of the famine in Somalia, which they claimed to be launching a war against: because this was a staged intervention rather than a genuine attempt to lift Somalia out of poverty. In truth, the worst of the famine was over before American forces arrived, and as some experts have pointed out the interventions by the US, the UN and numerous aid agencies increased poverty and hunger in Somalia rather than alleviating it. For example, the flooding of Somalia with aid effectively destroyed the country's agricultural industry (1). The stunt-like nature of America's war on famine and warlords can be seen in the fact that when 18 of its soldiers were killed in Mogadishu in October 1993, the US hastily withdrew: this was not supposed to be a long-term mission in which soldiers died, but rather a short, sharp boost to America's moral authority.

Yet even though the US intervention of 1992 and 1993 was fairly fleeting, it also internationalised, and thereby exacerbated, the civil tensions in Somalia, paving the way for the civil war in the Republic of Somalia during the 1990s. During Operation Restore Hope, America may have denounced some of the warlords as illegitimate and 'evil', but it implicitly supported or encouraged others. By choosing to transform Mohammad Farah Aideed into the bogeyman of Somalia (often by exaggerating his power and influence), US intervention inflamed those groups that opposed Aideed. According to one report, America went so far as to arm certain anti-Aideed forces, or at least turned a blind eye to their acquisition of arms. In June 1993, a journalist for the Washington Post described it as 'waltzing with the warlords', where American propaganda and manoeuvring gave certain warlords 'too much prominence' and in the process upped the stakes in the Somali civil conflict (2). It is not surprising that, following America's withdrawal after Operation Restore Hope went wrong, the civil conflict intensified rather than giving way to Clinton's 'peace'.

A similar process of internationalising Somalia's tensions is taking place again today, though this time under the rubric of the 'war on terror'. It was recently revealed that Washington has duplicitously funded and armed a collection of eight 'warlord militias' to challenge the Islamists' takeover of Mogadishu. Indeed, the warlord groups seem to be explicitly appealing to international sentiments, naming themselves as the 'Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism', or the 'Anti-Terrorism Alliance' for short. They're also making unsubstantiated claims that the Islamic Courts Union has links with al-Qaeda. This is clearly an attempt to cloak themselves with the moral authority of the international 'war on terror', and it seems to have worked: America is backing them on the basis that anyone is better than radical Islamists (3).

These latest developments show how the 'war on terror' can create the very enemies it was designed to destroy. There may have been ragbag collections of Islamists in Somalia in recent years, but it was no doubt Western fearmongering about the possible emergence of an Islamist force in Somalia, and its support for those who opposed them, which allowed the Islamists to assume prominence and win support (4). Now, Somalia's ongoing civil strife has been co-opted by the 'war on terror', and transformed from local violent clashes over influence in Mogadishu into part of an international war of good against evil, a frontline in the West's obsession with facing down anything that looks or smells al-Qaeda-esque. Such further internationalisation of Somalia's local tensions can only, yet again, up the ante and prolong the conflict. The divisions fostered by old forms of Western intervention are thus deepened by new forms of intervention.

Somalia is a case study in how today's foreign interventions can be even worse than what went before them, leaving the states that they touch in a mess of unpredictable violence and uncertain futures. Colonialism certainly denied Somalis their democratic rights and the ability to develop and move forward, but it at least created state apparatus, law, local authorities, and rulers – both from without and within – who could organise and run the country's affairs (in the colonialists' interests, usually). Even America's Cold War militarisation of Somalia allowed a strongman, Barre, to keep control of the

state's affairs. This was disastrous for a great number of Somalis, many of whom chose to fight against Barre, but it created some semblance of order.

By contrast, humanitarian intervention and its successor the 'war on terror' have left states such as Somalia as a vacuum, with no real or convincing authority or internal political life. These new forms of intervention are less about the West imposing a mission on to Third World states than they are a desperate search for a mission. Humanitarianism is about moral grandstanding, toppling the 'bad guys' in order to make the West look and feel good about itself; the question of who or what will replace the bad guys is rarely addressed. The 'war on terror' is about chasing evil bogeymen in order to make the West feel safe and secure; little consideration is given to what will happen once the bogeymen have been routed. Where Somalia in the past was shaped by the coherent interests of its rulers – divided into British, Italian and French sections under colonialism, and transformed into an American outpost during the Cold War – Somalia today is shaped by the fleeting whims of Western powers seeking some moral kicks. The end result is a kind of neverending conflict, pushed and pulled this way and that way by indecisive and changeable Western powers.

Somalia has had more than enough of both the old and new colonialism: it is time Somalis themselves were left to shape and build the society that they want.

Visit Brendan O'Neill's website here.

- (1) Food aid: for or against?, International Review of the Red Cross, December 1996
- (2) 'Waltzing with warlords', Washington Post, 25 June 1993
- (3) Battle of Mogadishu intensified, Afrol News, 25 May 2006
- (4) See The 'war on terror' self-destructs, by Mick Hume

## **An antibushist future for Europe: DEMORADICAL VS DEMOLIBERAL REGULATION**

By Alex Foti

The answer to the party form conundrum seemed, for a while, to lie in the network. Now it looks like the network is being shoe-horned back into the party form. Here Alex Foti, former organiser of the ChainWorkers, advocates a pink, green and wobbly extension of the mayday network into a card-carrying transeuropean syndicate whose methods are majoritarian and vote-based and whose target is the production of a radical constitution for the EU formulated from below. Seems like the idea of a socialist supra-national state has never been so popular.

Premise: the mayday equation of social stratification

fordism: postfordism = industrialism: informationalism = = blue/white/pink collars:  
service/creative/knowledge workers = =(working class + middle class): (precarious + propertied classes)

Geopolitics and international regulation in the middle 00s

Never a decline of the west has been more apparent. The US and its European major ally, the UK, supported by minor bushist partners such as Berlusconi's Italy and Aznar's Spain, have been inflicting barbarism and worsened ethnic strife to the point of civil war in Irak and elsewhere. The continuous,

structural human rights violations inflicted by the US and its allies, from kidnappings and secret prisons in Europe, down to Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib and Haditha, are a crying shame for all enlightened westerners: progressives have failed at stopping the totalitarian forces – namely the salafi brand of sunni fundamentalism, the neoconservative interpretation of evangelical protestantism, and shia integralism supported by the islamic republic of Iran – that are plunging the world in a clash of civilizations, where reactionary and defensive identities prevail over transnational movements and global issues of environmental balance and social justice.

Of course, the early XXI-century twilight of American neoliberal hegemony and its European ramifications, as framed by the monetarist and pro-corporate philosophy of the EU single currency and market, is not without geopolitical consequences. On one side, Indian and Bolivarian America have possibly dealt a lethal blow to the Monroe Doctrine of unlimited US power on the Southern Hemisphere. On the other side, China and India are rising giants beating the westerners at their own game of globalization. Liberalization of world markets was set in motion in 1971-1973, when the end of international Keynesism was officially proclaimed, and incipient energy crises and financial deregulations started undermining Fordism and the progressive forces that had developed under its wings. The 1980s and 1990s opened the gates to a new, more turbulent world, the world of neoliberal regulation. This was an explicit conservative counteroffensive against the unintended social (and anti-imperialist) effects of postkeynesian regulation, reasserting the right to manage and the economic privileges of financial elites in the new digital, networked, flexible, postindustrial economy. The world of high profits, high rents and low wages, of massive labor market and financial deregulations, of large-scale privatization of public assets, outsourcing and offshoring of manufacturing and services, and widespread tightening of social spending. My contention is that neoliberal regulation is now over: the 1999-2003 international cycle of struggle, 9/11 and 7-7, the bushist rise to power and the invasions of Afghanistan and Irak, repeated financial instability and environmental disaster, have all undermined the political bases of the Washington Consensus that constituted the essence of western policy and geopolitical projection in the 1980s and 1990s. Globalization is yielding to global regionalism, neoliberal multiculturalism is leaving the place to bushist occidentalism, free trade is becoming managed protectionism, while the professed multilateral internationalism of the Clinton era has turned into a one-sided and naked (but failed) attempt to unrivalled world hegemony.

The European bifurcation

The European Peninsula has been shaken like never before by the age of high neoliberalism. The Fall of the Wall, the implosion of Soviet imposed state communism, the resurgence of American militarism in the Middle East, have all reshaped the politics of the Continent like anything that had been seen since Versailles, or possibly even Westphalia. Today, after the French-Dutch no, Europe is larger and weaker than it's ever been. Pro-market forces of Anglo-American inspiration did push for EU enlargement in 2004. But welfare cuts and workfare reforms had already soured public opinion against the EU and its main institutions, Council, Commission, Bank, Parliament (in order of decreasing importance), so by the time the Constitution – which was supposed to provide a new internal and external governance for the Union of 25 members, grant fundamental European rights of citizenship, but also freeze the neoliberal status quo in Europe for ever – was put to vote in France and Holland, it was resoundingly rejected. To the first serious, possibly crippling, crisis of the European project, as developed over half a century by its Christian-Democrat founders, Social-Democrat adepts, and Liberal-Democrat deregulators, institutional responses have been startlingly ineffective. Basically the whole thing will be kept frozen until 2007, when the French presidential elections will have completed the present European political realignment in Old Europe, started with Zapatero in Spain, then Merkel in Germany, now Prodi in Italy. In the meantime major social upheavals have shaken France and Denmark, while social protest against welfare contraction and labor precarization has been on the increase in every major country of the old Union of 15 countries.

Most Old European élites want to stick to EU enlargement, but put the UK and most of Eastern Europe at the margins of the more political, as opposed to the economic, component of European integration. Political integration would instead proceed in so-called Core Europe, basically something like a political Eurozone, give or take a few countries, governed through a federation or confederation of nation-states with unified fiscal, monetary, social policies, and a common foreign policy.

Europe is today facing a fundamental bifurcation for the future of its political economy. The crisis of the neoliberal agenda, unpopular in Europe everywhere, is evident also to European elites. They have responded by tracing what I call a DEMOLIBERAL regulation. Basically it's neoliberalism lite: it is a bit less pro-American, because US-EU interests are no longer coinciding in geoeconomic and geopolitical terms (for instance, Europeans have only to lose from clashing head-front with Islam) but retains a strong commitment to NATO; it invests a little more in public infrastructure and possibly spends on welfare to cushion workers from the vagaries of the labor market, but only as long as people remain under the control of workfare provisions aiming at increasing the productivity of so-called human capital and guarantee social obedience among welfare recipients. This top-down project, to which social movements and radical subjectivities must respond with a grassroots mobilization to shape political Europe as they see fit, has one only, but crucial, merit. It would constitute antibushist counterbalancing for Europe, and would put Atlantic relations on a more equal footing, should bushism be electorally defeated. And muted European neoliberalism could be still preferable to returning to the nation-state with its nationalist and militarist pretensions. Demoliberal regulation not only seeks a new business-friendly social consensus, it opposes the dangerous xenophobic forces that have become a major factor in European politics.

A political answer to European moderates which would take an explicitly multiethnic, egalitarian and ecological road is what I call DEMORADICAL regulation, i.e. a dramatic change in socioeconomic policy thanks to a progressive social bargain imposed from the bottom up (rather than top-down, as in demoliberal regulation) through labor protest, social conflict, participatory democracy. A progressive front that would link leftist/democratic organizations, unions, movements in their common opposition to technocrats, corporations, financial markets and the liberal regulation these would like to re-assert, in order to protect the unequal economic status quo they have gained so much from. But most of all, demoradicalism would be a clarion call to all emancipatory forces in Europe to mobilize against populist xenophobia, anti-immigration hysteria, clerical interference.

Movements, with their faith in street-based and conflict-based democracy, are obvious candidates to be prime actors of demoradical regulation. Unfortunately, the most effective movements have developed in Europe at the nation-state level (look at the French mass mobilization against juvenile precarity), that is, in the national space of politics with its peculiar political traditions and identities. For all the efforts of the Mayday Network or the European Social Forum, both the traditional marxist and/or anarchist left as well as post-Seattle heretic left are deeply hostile to Europe, in whatever political incarnation, past, present or future. Communist parties, now united in the European Left, had traditionally seen the European Community as a bastion of American dominance on the Continent. Anarchists of all sorts repudiate all forms of institutional power with supranational organizations being prime targets for protest and direct confrontation (the more remote, the worse they are). Trotskyites, still blooming in spite of (or maybe because of) their rigid orthodoxy, are committed internationalists, rejecting political Europe and supporting whoever they consider to be an anti-imperialist government (such as Chavez's Venezuela).

On the other hand, Syndicalists, Feminists, Environmentalists, Queers, Precarious have yet to develop a coherent European discourse capable of rendering obsolete more traditional political references on the left. At the institutional level, Greens have almost invariably kept a pro-federal, pro-secular Europe position, but this has been decisively defeated in the French and Dutch referenda. They have

contributed to their ineffectiveness by being too friendly with business interests and liberal élites, too much caught into their environmental PR stunts – something they share with green transnational NGOs – to worry about mounting social inequality, so they have often lost ground to neo-old-left parties such as Die Linke in Germany.

Demoradicalism: neither party nor union, but it takes two to tango

How should a radical European discourse look like? In three words, it should be green, wobbly, pink, in order to be effective. It should lay

out a cogent ecological program to reform society, a creative wobbly strategy to organize and unionize the weak and the excluded, a pink emphasis on non-violent action and gender equality, so to project a queer outlook on the world. It would have to speak to the young, women, immigrants. It would have to address the grievances of the service class, and put to good use the networking talents of the creative class. It would be transnationalist in orientation and multiethnic in composition, for a truly mongrel and mulatto Europe. It would be defiant with (but tolerant of) all forms of organized religion. It would be an obvious antagonist of the securitarian state favored by bushist tendencies. And it would challenge and confront without timidity, but also with cold-mindedness, either fascist, nationalist, xenophobic forces that are resurfacing in many corners of Europe.

But if these are widespread aspirations, antiprecarity/noborder movements lack a strong political identity to reroute the existing European left (with small "l") and provide fresh radical political perspectives to Europe's dissenting youth, precarized by fat corporations, regulated by ineffective technocracies, and burdened by the Continent's rentier gerontocracy that has plunged economy and society in an acute condition of Eurosclerosis. More to point, the mayday network lacks a strong strategy to talk to the flexibilized and the unorganized. The post-cold war generation of the Left shall overcome the twin stale institutions of the XX century's left: union and party. But can you down two old pigeons with one stone? I mean, can a networked movement be an effective substitute for both the two traditional labor and political functions? I think not. We need a substitute for a political party, in order to produce new political identity and ideological discourse, which are at the moment sorely lacking amid mounting intellectual confusion and political sectarianism. And we need a complement for the most militant and innovative sections of labor unionism, so that we can work and organize conflicts together while advancing the specific demands of Europe's precarious generation.

Let me start from the second task. Over the last two years, the mayday network has progressed sufficiently to discuss the founding of a Paneuropean organization federating all media, labor, social activists against precarity that are now working together in the mayday network. On MAYDAY 006, one single, huge yell was heard from Berlin to Los Angeles: "No borders! Stop persecution! Halt discrimination! Fuck precarity! Beat inequality!" It is to me self-evident that MONDO MAYDAY cannot wait any longer. Over the next year, the European mayday will have to network more deeply with sisters and comrades in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Caracas, Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, you name it.

But if you go mondo on mayday, it does not mean that it is any less urgent building a cross-european organization defending the rights of the service class and attacking the privileges of the corporate class. The mayday network has to found a wobbly-like european organization federating all the exploited, recruiting from all gender/ethnic groups and organizing all net/temp/flex workers in one big SYNDICATE OF PRECARIOUS EUROPE. It would be a card-carrying organization with its own funds and subsidized agitators, but a very flat structure, with regional nodes and cross-national hubs. It would have an explicitly formalized internal democracy, which would appoint (and remove) people in executive functions. Yes, members would have to vote on important issues and strategic decisions, with regular online and face2face consultations. I believe global movements won't progress until they

adopt the democratic criteria of public discussion and majority voting. If you say liberal democracy is a fraud, you have to show a radical democracy can actually function. The first transeuropean syndicate would be open to all jobs ranging from cleaners and programmers, to documented and undocumented people, to the flexibly employed and the permanently unemployed, to anybody believing that the best form of social solidarity is supporting labor conflict and opposing the interests of employers and the investing class. It would be unashamedly syndicalist and anticapitalist in its orientation, by supporting and organizing pickets, blockades, and wildcat strikes. The recent huge social rebellions in France and Denmark against precarity and workfare should remind the mayday network that the time to establish a networked organization is now.

The syndicate would be open to all types of radical identities provided they agree on the principle of active non-violence. The syndicate would only endorse non-violent direct action, the kind, for example, that Clown Army (participate in their July 14 revolutionary parade in Paris!) and many pink collectives regularly practice across Europe. Like internal democracy, this principle is crucial for political effectiveness. Today, a time of pitiless war and subjugation of the weak, violent protests either are byproducts of wider non-violent movements or political dead-ends making state repression and media manipulation easier. Violence against property can sometimes be understood, although it tends too to boomerang against radical movements. But violence against people, if it does not occur in response to immediate physical aggression, is not only morally untenable: it is one-way ticket to political suicide.

On the party front, the issue of producing a recognizable radical political identity embodying a sense of historical urgency is a lot more complex and still immature at the moment. But it cannot wait any longer being discussed. As far as I am concerned, I see the need for reaping a distinctive political fruit out of the Seattle-Genova tree. My reasoning is this. If the radical left of 1968 and hippyism gave rise to modern political environmentalism, then the 1999-2003 ebullience should similarly produce a brand-new political label in the longer term. Greens were born out the turmoil of the 60s and 70s. And what new political constellation will soon appear on the sky, following the travails of the early XXI century? The PINK CONSPIRACY. In a larger context, women's emancipation and the end of the patriarchal family with its unequal gender roles, feminist movements, gay mobilizations, queer politics, full civil rights for GLBTs, the assertion of reproductive rights against papist reaction, and equality of access to political representation for women represent an epochal earthquake for western politics. In a movement context, the pink carnival of rebellion was the major innovative form of political expression emerging from the Prague-Goteborg-Genoa cauldron, next to, but separate from, the white overalls and black blocs, the two other distinctive youth expressions of the anti-globalization movement. Pink collars are the present of social work and pink movements are the future of social progress. Let's do a pink alliance of heretic dissenters in Europe! Who knows? It could be the answer to the generalized disaffection with existing political parties and the institutional representation they're supposed to carry out. In Copenhagen's municipal elections, a pink list got almost 10 per cent of the votes. As early political test, it sure is promising. Barroso and Trichet are in bad need of a pink slip: they must be fired and their policies overhauled in the face of widespread social opposition and unrest.

links:

<http://www.weareeverywhere.org>

<http://www.uhc-collective.org.uk/toolbox.htm>

<http://www.eco-action.org/dod>

<http://www.noborder.org>

<http://www.makeworlds.org>

<http://www.ainfos.ca>

<http://slash.autonomeia.org>

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/3909/index/links.html>

## Is global warming a sin?

By Alexander Cockburn

Counterpunch ([www.counterpunch.org](http://www.counterpunch.org)) editor Cockburn notices the historical kinship between 'carbon offsetting' and sale of indulgences in the unreformed Church.

From Papal Indulgences to Carbon Credits

Is Global Warming a Sin?

By ALEXANDER COCKBURN

In a couple of hundred years, historians will be comparing the frenzies over our supposed human contribution to global warming to the tumults at the latter end of the tenth century as the Christian millennium approached. Then, as now, the doomsters identified human sinfulness as the propulsive factor in the planet's rapid downward slide.

Then as now, a buoyant market thrives on fear. The Roman Catholic Church was a bank whose capital was secured by the infinite mercy of Christ, Mary and the Saints, and so the Pope could sell indulgences, like checks. The sinners established a line of credit against bad behavior and could go on sinning. Today a world market in "carbon credits" is in formation. Those whose "carbon footprint" is small can sell their surplus carbon credits to others, less virtuous than themselves.

The modern trade is as fantastical as the medieval one. There is still zero empirical evidence that anthropogenic production of CO<sub>2</sub> is making any measurable contribution to the world's present warming trend. The greenhouse fearmongers rely entirely on unverified, crudely oversimplified computer models to finger mankind's sinful contribution. Devoid of any sustaining scientific basis, carbon trafficking is powered by guilt, credulity, cynicism and greed, just like the old indulgences, though at least the latter produced beautiful monuments. By the sixteenth century, long after the world had sailed safely through the end of the first millennium, Pope Leo X financed the reconstruction of St. Peter's Basilica by offering a "plenary" indulgence, guaranteed to release a soul from purgatory.

Now imagine two lines on a piece of graph paper. The first rises to a crest, then slopes sharply down, then levels off and rises slowly once more. The other has no undulations. It rises in a smooth, slowly increasing arc. The first, wavy line is the worldwide CO<sub>2</sub> tonnage produced by humans burning coal, oil and natural gas. On this graph it starts in 1928, at 1.1 gigatons (i.e. 1.1 billion metric tons). It peaks in 1929 at 1.17 gigatons. The world, led by its mightiest power, the USA, plunges into the Great Depression, and by 1932 human CO<sub>2</sub> production has fallen to 0.88 gigatons a year, a 30 per cent drop. Hard times drove a tougher bargain than all the counsels of Al Gore or the jeremiads of the IPCC (Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change). Then, in 1933 it began to climb slowly again, up to 0.9 gigatons.

And the other line, the one ascending so evenly? That's the concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, parts per million (ppm) by volume, moving in 1928 from just under 306, hitting 306 in 1929, to 307 in 1932 and on up. Boom and bust, the line heads up steadily. These days it's at 380. There are, to be sure, seasonal variations in CO<sub>2</sub>, as measured since 1958 by the instruments on Mauna Loa, Hawaii. (Pre-1958 measurements are of air bubbles trapped in glacial ice.) Summer and winter vary steadily by about 5 ppm, reflecting photosynthesis cycles. The two lines on that graph proclaim that a whopping 30 per cent cut in man-made CO<sub>2</sub> emissions didn't even cause a 1 ppm drop in the atmosphere's CO<sub>2</sub>.

Thus it is impossible to assert that the increase in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> stems from human burning of fossil fuels.

I met Dr. Martin Hertzberg, the man who drew that graph and those conclusions, on a Nation cruise back in 2001. He remarked that while he shared many of the Nation's editorial positions, he approved of my reservations on the issue of supposed human contributions to global warming, as outlined in columns I wrote at that time. Hertzberg was a meteorologist for three years in the U.S. Navy, an occupation which gave him a lifelong mistrust of climate modeling. Trained in chemistry and physics, a combustion research scientist for most of his career, he's retired now in Copper Mountain, Colorado, still consulting from time to time.

Not so long ago, Hertzberg sent me some of his recent papers on the global warming hypothesis, a construct now accepted by many progressives as infallible as Papal dogma on matters of faith or doctrine. Among them was the graph described above so devastating to the hypothesis.

As Hertzberg readily acknowledges, the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere has increased about 21 per cent in the past century. The world has also been getting just a little bit warmer. The not very reliable data on the world's average temperature (which omit most of the world's oceans and remote regions, while over-representing urban areas) show about a 0.5°C increase in average temperature between 1880 and 1980, and it's still rising, more sharply in the polar regions than elsewhere. But is CO<sub>2</sub>, at 380 parts per million in the atmosphere, playing a significant role in retaining the 94 per cent of solar radiation that's absorbed in the atmosphere, as against water vapor, also a powerful heat absorber, whose content in humid tropical atmosphere, can be as high as 2 per cent, the equivalent of 20,000 ppm. As Hertzberg says, water in the form of oceans, clouds, snow, ice cover and vapor "is overwhelming in the radiative and energy balance between the earth and the sun. Carbon dioxide and the greenhouse gases are, by comparison, the equivalent of a few farts in a hurricane." And water is exactly that component of the earth's heat balance that the global warming computer models fail to account for.

It's a notorious inconvenience for the Greenhousers that data also show carbon dioxide concentrations from the Eocene period, 20 million years before Henry Ford trundled his first model T out of the shop, 300-400 per cent higher than current concentrations. The Greenhousers deal with other difficulties like the medieval warming period's higher-than-today's temperatures by straightforward chicanery, misrepresenting tree-ring data (themselves an unreliable guide) and claiming the warming was a local, insignificant European affair.

We're warmer now, because today's world is in the thaw following the last Ice Age. Ice ages correlate with changes in the solar heat we receive, all due to predictable changes in the earth's elliptic orbit round the sun, and in the earth's tilt. As Hertzberg explains, the cyclical heat effect of all of these variables was worked out in great detail between 1915 and 1940 by the Serbian physicist, Milutin Milankovitch, one of the giants of 20th-century astrophysics. In past postglacial cycles, as now, the earth's orbit and tilt gives us more and longer summer days between the equinoxes.

Water covers 71 per cent of the surface of the planet. As compared to the atmosphere, there's at least a hundred times more CO<sub>2</sub> in the oceans, dissolved as carbonate. As the postglacial thaw progresses the oceans warm up, and some of the dissolved carbon emits into the atmosphere, just like fizz in soda water taken out of the fridge. "So the greenhouse global warming theory has it ass backwards," Hertzberg concludes. "It is the warming of the earth that is causing the increase of carbon dioxide and not the reverse." He has recently had vivid confirmation of that conclusion. Several new papers show that for the last three quarter million years CO<sub>2</sub> changes always lag global temperatures by 800 to 2,600 years.

It looks like Poseidon should go hunting for carbon credits. Trouble is, the human carbon footprint is of zero consequence amid these huge forces and volumes, and that's not even to mention the role of the giant reactor beneath our feet: the earth's increasingly hot molten core.