

A Report on The First Global Progressive Forum (FGPF)
”THREE DAYS TO CHANGE THE WORLD”
(Brussels, 27-29 November 2003)

Azril Bacal, Uppsala, Sweden*

A Matter of Perspective

A preliminary effort is firstly made here, to inquire into the ideological background, political aims and practical intentions behind this event. This follows after Gunnar Myrdal, who often provoked us into reflecting on the seemingly obvious fact that, while answers are produced in response to questions, questions arise from values, viewpoints and related perspectives. In this case, the perspective through which I proceed to question, appraise and respond to the FGPF, mainly correspond to the values of the World Social Forum and Attac, two of the most significant transformative social movements of our times, also related with values guiding my engagement in the realms of peace research and freirean education, and the construction of a sustainable Culture of JustPeace. What follows consists of a few selected questions and comments being raised and shared with my fellow readers, as a result from my observations and reflections about the FGPF.

For Whom?

This First Global Progressive Forum, implying more of such forums to follow in the future, gathered a large audience at the European Parliament, with hundreds of participants, mainly from ***social-democratic and socialist parties*** – yet also sufficiently open to include a number of persons selected from the broad realm known as ***”global civil society.”*** A fashionable term, nowadays commonly used to refer to one out of three postulated social actors, playing a major role in contemporary global politics, namely, the ***state*** and the ***market***. In the context of the FGPF, ***”civil society”*** included representatives from: ***NGOs, Trade Unions, Ethical Business and Worldwide Academia.***

Redundancy or Competition with other existing Global Forums?

This ***FGPF*** was clearly conceived as a ***”different kind of forum,”*** intended to simultaneously confront the main problems of globalization - and the ideological/political challenge of two opposite existing projects of globalization, corresponding in turn to two preceding global forums: the ***World Economic Forum, with a focus on the market and the economic and financial (”profit”) dimensions of globalization*** and the ***World Social Forum, with social inclusion, sustainable (environmental) and the democratic dimensions of global human development as its main priorities.***

* *Board Member*, International Peace Research Association (IPRA) - and in its Latin American Peace Research and Education Council (CLAIP), of Research Committee (RC) 10 of the International Sociological Association (ISA), and of the Center for Study and Work on Latin America (CETAL/Uppsala). *Coordinator*, Uppsala Network on the Culture of Peace (NKFFU), *Member* of the International Advisory Council (IAC) of the Hague Appeal for Peace and Justice in the 21st Century (HAP)’s Global Campaign of Peace Education (GCPE). *Member* of the Paulo Freire Institute (IPF) of Sao Paulo, Brazil and its representative in the Nordic countries. *Member* of the International Council (IC) of the World Education Forum. *Founding member* of Uppsala Social Forum (USF) and Attac-Uppsala. *Current academic affiliations*: Visiting Fellow at CRER, University of Warwick, U.K., Sociology Department, Uppsala University. ISEC, Universidad de Córdoba, Senior Lecturer, Course on *”Ethnicity, Norms and Language”* at Stockholm University, Fall/Winter Term 2003. ILO Master’s Program in Development, Torino, Italy, Spring 2004.

Maybe to be expected, the FGPF was likely conceived as a sort of *“third way”* between the polarized agendas of Davos and Porto Alegre (created in 2001 as a grassroot alternative - “from below” to the Davos Project - “from the top”). Likely intended along similar lines to Blair’s “New Labor” policies, ideological/theoretical supported by Giddens in the academic world. A perspective with considerable impact on several European social-democratic and socialist regimes and political parties, including the socialist representation at the European Parliament. Accordingly, the program of the FGPF included some official representatives from both the *World Economic and World Social Forums (WSF)*, and from *Attac*, a growing international social movement (aiming at *“democratizing democracy,”* among other political, economic, social and environmental goals, and co-founder of WSF), in an explicit attempt to engage *them/us* - as significant political and social global *alter egos*.

A New/Old Political Approach to Contemporary Global Political Challenges

In the agenda of the FGPF we were invited to openly discuss *“a new global progressive vision,”* linked to *“an internal process of global political renewal,”* within the boundaries of *“democratic forms of socialism”* (in contrast to totalitarian socialism), from which to respond to the contemporary global challenge of *“reshaping globalisation patterns and strengthening global governance.”* A challenge which is variously approached, according to different existing ideological perspectives, through which such aims and tasks are actually interpreted and acted upon.

Pragmatic Politics: “Wider Progressive Alliances for Change”

For the organizers of this event, the above aims *“will be possible only if wider progressive alliances for change can emerge on a range of significant global issues, beyond party lines,”* including the selected constituencies of global civil society listed above. Last but not least, the organizers ambiguously refer to the existence of *“already several processes in action, on which a global progressive community can build.”* In my view, the latter statement hints at the rapidly *growing World Social Forum, a global social movement* (and still another distinct manifestation of global civil society), challenging “from below” not only the unilateralism of US power politics, but also the traditional hegemony of many established parties, and the prevailing ways of doing politics in world, regional and national arenas.

“New/Old World Order”: Searching for an Alternative Paradigm of Globalization

One may interpret the FGPF, as a partial contribution to the ongoing *international collected effort to search for an alternative global “progressive” paradigm*. A theoretical basis for a predicated “global welfare system” - a model to guide corrective global policy and action, reminiscent of the old aims and agenda of the Brandt Commission (North/South Dialogue). This “new” approach is expected to help to overcome the devastating global social, economic and ecological consequences of the dominant, poorly conceived and unsustainable global economic policies, globalized during the conservative regimes of Ronald Reagan in the USA and Margaret Thatcher in Europe, since around the 1970s and 1980s.

The above process advanced the conditions for establishing the *so-called "new world order"* of the Bush Dynasty in our times. As an aftermath of the Fall of the Berlin Wall 1989 and with it, the downfall of the Soviet Empire, it followed the end of bipolarity and the erosion of multilateralism in world politics. And along with it, emerged the global hegemony of the United States as the only world superpower, able to impose its economic, political, military and environmental agenda, either by "conventional" means or by its unilateral "rule of force."

Neoliberal Globalization as a Culture of Violence and Militarization: Sustainable Human Development, Global Human Security and World Democratization in Peril

The violent military ousting of the democratically elected regime of President Allende in Chile, on a fateful 11 September of 1973, illustrates only too well how this doctrine of "free-marketism" could be implemented by force, breaking international law. What we witness today is another updated version of "*Reagonomics*" and "*Thatcherism*," being pushed as the basis for the prevailing "*New/Old World Order*," by agencies such as the United States Government, transnational corporations (TNCs) and also, by the main regulatory international economic, trade and financial organizations, such as the IMF, the WTO and the World Bank, which remain up to now outside the domain of the UN, as they should.

The *neoliberal creed of market fundamentalism* is today the *dominant ideology*, organically linked with this *transitional stage of capitalist globalization*, along with its *current military doctrine of preemptive defense/war* made explicit by President Bush after 11/9 2001. The *War on Irak*, and the so-called "*War on Terror*," unilaterally declared by the US, during this memorable violent year of 2003, are just but a current version and an extension of old global neocolonial politics.

Under prevailing world conditions, the legitimacy of the UN and the Rule of International Law continue to be seriously eroded, threatening the global possibilities to fight poverty and disease, to advance conditions of human security, democracy, and to implement human rights, sustainable human development and to construct the basis for a global culture of peace.

The World Economic Forum of Davos and Neoliberal Globalization

For the sake of brevity, let us regard the so-called *World Economic Forum*, which gathers at the swiss town of *Davos*, for the past three decades, as representing the expanding interests, power and influence of global capitalism. In other words, it constitutes *the meeting ground for the economic interest, political and military powers seeking to preserve, reproduce and amplify the "impossible world"* we live in, a "privatized" style of global governance, which serves the interests of the few privileged ones, at the expense of the majority of the world population. The WEF and Neoliberal Globalization also correspond to a socially exclusionary and dehumanizing mode of production and consumption, a destructive style of civilization which increasingly threatens the existing biological and cultural diversity of the world, the very basis of the continuing survival and development of human and all other forms of life, on our generous and endangered Planet Earth.

The Global Challenge to overcome our "Impossible World"

The impossible world we live in reflects the negative impact of neoliberal policies. A world ***unnecessarily plagued*** by massive poverty and all its structural negative social correlates of hunger and disease, by a growing gap between haves and have-nots, by environmental degradation, by vast displacement of populations due to violent armed conflicts, by structural violence, by different kinds of terror, by severe human rights violations, by growing threats to the democratic way of life, by racist and other forms of xenophobia, ethnic/cultural intolerance, by restrictive international migratory policies and, last but not least, by growing global human insecurity, as reported in the ***Human Development Reports***, yearly published by the ***UNDP***.

Attac and the World Social Forum Global Movements: Another World is Possible!

In response to the severe problematic social, economic, political, environmental global conditions, outlined above, and linked to neoliberal globalization, various kinds of social movements have emerged in recent years, ranging from protest – to prospective proposals, which resulted in ***Attac*** and the ***World Social Forum Movement***, among other social justice movements. Historically associated, since the year 2001, with the city of ***Porto Alegre***, RGS, in Brazil, claiming that "***Another World is Possible.***" Its hopeful message asserts that we are able to construct another type of human globalization, characterized this time by a Sustainable Culture of JustPeace, based on "Democratizing Democracy," "Sustainable Development," while abiding by the "Rule of Law" and supporting the full implementation of Human Rights. Seeking through this alternative project of globalization to finally deliver the promised fruits of justice, social inclusion, sustainable human development, solidarity, social welfare, quality education, health and human security for All!

The World Social Forum Movement due to its strong appeal to younger audiences, otherwise largely disaffected from established governments, institutions and parties, has become a growing challenge to global capitalism and to the political establishment. Its unexpected continuing growth, resilience and relative success at the global, regional, national and even local levels has triggered a wave of forums of different kinds around the world. ***A new kind of specter*** appears to be rapidly spreading throughout the world, a transformative social movement and force of planetarian scope, raising hope and curiosity in many quarters and concern and worry in a few others, watchful about threats to the status quo, and to the vested interests and privileges it represents and protects.

As a result, coincidentally or not, we witness today the emergence of "***forumitis***," attempts from various interested political and economic corners, to "cash in" and/or to "coopt" the agendas and audiences already engaged in the World Social Forum. In that regard, it is important to be aware of what happened at the so-called "***World Civil Society Forum***," which took place in Geneva, 15-20 July, 2002). Firstly, it tried to present itself as "***the representative of global civil society***," which it was not. Secondly, it also pretended to be a follow-up meeting of the UN "People's Millenium Forum," where Kofi Annan appealed to and invited global civil society to contribute to the UN Developmental Agenda for the New Millenium, which was patently not the case at the Geneva meeting.

To illustrate the kind of global politics which went on at the World Civil Society Forums, above, there was an invited and disciplined group of Cubans at the Geneva meeting, who unsuccessfully tried to manipulate the latinamerican group with their political agenda, who came from Miami. In contrast to what happened during the UN People's Millenium Forum in New York, where the representatives from Cuba came from the Island. In the end, several members of the swedish delegation, regarded the first Global Civil Society Forum at Geneva, as a set-up against the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. In that regard, for an english report on "Geneve against Porto Alegre" by Eva Björklund, available on request, write to: eva.bjorklund@bostadslaget.se

Consequently, I initially felt somewhat doubtful when invited to participate in the First Global Progressive Forum. I actually wondered about why organizing another parallel forum in Brussels, just one week after the regional European Social Forum had taken place in Paris? Why not doing it together as "progressive" forces, supposedly sharing similar political and social aims? Whatever my initial doubts, I decided to attend it - and no regrets about these three intense and stimulating days, though maybe not sufficiently enough to "change the world"...Let us say, that maybe, with somewhat of a drop of humour and humility, we might still need up to four or five more days...to succeed in changing the world for the better. ✍

The World Social Forum as a previous Reference and Political Challenge

At any rate, one cannot begin to make sense of this First Global Progressive Forum, without a due, honest and necessary acknowledgement, of the significant presence and relative success of the World Social Forum Movement, its antecedent in time and as a significant global political challenge.

Personal Acknowledgement

It was thanks to the support from Alvaro Miranda, head of the Center for the Study and Work on Latin America (CETAL), Howard Richards (dear good friend and ally at the International Peace Research Association/IPRA), Ake Zettermark (my very supportive mentor at swedish academic trade union) and Sven H. Svensson, Director of the Brusseles Office of the Swedish Trade Unions (along with his friendly and cooperative staff), that my participation at the First Global Progressive Forum became possible. My warm gratitude goes to each and all of them and to the organizers of the FGPF, who kindly included me among the invited persons. Likely due to my own continuing engagement in the field of peace research and education (and its role in the construction of a Culture of JustPeace) and as a practitioner in sustainable rural human development. I also regard myself as a "progressive" person, on the left in the political scale, as a socialist and a democrat. As a member of a "progressive community," who believes and tries to practice *dialogue* whenever possible - long inspired in my life, peace education and developmental work by *the legacy of Paulo Freire*.

Organizational and Ideological Aspects

The program included *two plenary sessions* with "leading personalities" such as António Guterres, Robin Cook, Mary Robinson, Susan George, Vandana Shiva, Pascal Lamy, Juan Somavía, Nitin Desai, among others; and with Tarja Halonen, president of Finland and co-chair of the ILO World Commission on *the Social Dimension of Globalisation* (assumedly in contrast to its economic and technological aspects). President Halonen gave a keynote speech on this often neglected subject, at the opening session of the Forum.

It also included *eighteen round tables "to determine concrete political proposals and actions"* (assumedly, in contrast to the militaristic and violent approach to world conflicts and problems, as currently implied by the american doctrine of preemptive defense/attack adopted by the Bush government, particularly after 11/9) "to be taken by this *international progressive community - on the most crucial global issues such as United Nations Reform, Trade and Poverty or Global Security.*" In addition to the expected contributions of participants at the above round tables, a final round table took place on Saturday 29th November, to discuss *Global Progressive Strategies.*

A New Global Space for Political Dialogue?

Of particular political significance, this final debate included representatives from the Davos World Economic Forum (José María Figueres), from the World Social Forum associated with Porto Alegre, RGS, Brazil (Francisco Whitaker Pereira) and, additionally, Guy Ryder from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and Pierre Moscovici from the French Socialist Party). The peculiar intended organization of this last panel unveils the conscious commitment to construct a new historical social space for political dialogue at the global level. In the words of Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, MP, former prime minister of Denmark, and Chairman of the Global Progressive Forum, the latter aims at a "*global progressive community capable of building a fairer, more peaceful world.*"

One may obtain a better idea about the political intentions behind the Global Progressive Forum initiative, upon reading a joint statement by the *Young European Socialists (ECOSY) and the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY)*, entitled *Global Progressive Forum – to change the world is possible*, a formulation freely borrowed from the motto of the attac and the world social forum movements: *Another World is Possible!*

In this statement by young socialists, the GPF is viewed as

"...a very decisive activity to unite progressive forces from all around the world and to create a Global Alliance between the different organizations and NGOs that fight for a more just and equal world order. ECOSY and IUSY would like to see a strong commitment from the GPF on a wide range of important challenges that the world faces today...that the forum makes both political and social commitments...to bring them to the global arena and into the worldwide debate."

A View on Civil Society and the World and Regional Social Forums

Coming from the ranks of socialist youth, one may find more more ideological convergence with the positions of both Attac and the World Social Forum concerning global civil society, thus seemingly diverging from the older and more established european socialist regimes and political establishment, at least as stated in the above document, cited below.

"The growth of the international civil society from Seattle to the world peace march against the war in Iraq is interrogating the political progressive forces. It is time to close a gap between political organizations and NGOs so that they work united for a different world

Separate and Equal - as a Complement to the World Social Forum?

Both the political organizations and the NGOs – involved in the world and regional social forums – need unity and sharing common goals while starting from different grounds. The Global Progressive Forum as such contains great possibilities. It does not stand against the World Social Forum but is a complement to it.

Or - the "Best Option" among preexisting/coexisting Global Forums?

It has the ***potential of being a first global meeting place of progressive political and social forces from all around the world. It has the potential to attract a young generation that is looking for a global political actor by whom they can see their projects and dreams be realised.***

Why so many Global Forums?

Since the year 2001 the World Social Forum continues to be precisely this ***"first global meeting of progressive and social forces from all around the world,"*** so why is it that two such "first global meetings" are under parallel construction at this time, if were not for a kind of perceived political competition, for being *"prima inter pares"* – and what it might also entail in terms of defining and controlling the political agenda of our times? It is also significant to point to another political intention made explicit concerning ***"the potential to attract a young generation that is looking for a global political actor..."*** Maybe not surprisingly, the above statements unveil what could be regarded as basic political motives behind the global progressive forum, ***meant not just as a "complement" to the World Social Forum but as the "first" among such global forums, and particularly in view of its great appeal to attract the young generation.***

The main question on the multiplicity of global forums remains, in my view:

Do we really have the time, resources, energy and organizational capacity, to create two seemingly ***"progressive"*** global forums at the same time, bound to enter in competition with each other, in one way or another? Would it not be better in the long view, to ***synergetically fuse both the PGF and the WSF - into one stronger progressive global forum,*** basically sharing the same pluralistic vision of democracy, human rights, justice, solidarity, social inclusion, sustainable human development, as the new common basis for the new possible and better world order and planetarian community?

A shared and honest realization of this situation of ideological/political competition, should not be an obstacle - but yet another valid reason for seriously trying to develop a constructive and honest dialogue between, at least, the FGPF and the WSF, along with other significant "progressive" social actors and agencies of our times; including some agencies of the UN System, such as UNDP, UNRISD, ILO, ECOSOC, HCHR, ACNUR, UNICEF, UNESCO and Disarmament Education, along lines convergent with the ***Millenium Development Goals and the First Decade for a Culture of Peace.***

Returning to the document under review, ECOSY and IUSY maintain that to achieve this, the global progressive forum has to strive towards an agenda for global progress and reform with the aim of establishing a world community, which is just and equal and, moreover, that ***such a progressive agenda has to include the following priority demands:***

Global Governance based on the Reform of the UN and Respect of International Law, Close the North-South Divide through Global Distribution of Wealth, Sustainable Development all around the World, A New Economic World Order based on Free and Fair Trade, A Pre-Emptive Action for Peace, a Globalization based on Gender Equality, A Free Movement of People, Fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa, Free Education for All.

The appeal from the young socialists ends up with the following statement:

”To change the world is possible, if all progressive forces from all over the world show the political will to do so and act accordingly.”

What was meant by the term ”progressive” at the FGPF?

Concerning the political connotation of the term ***”progressive”*** as meant by the organizers of this First Global Progressive Forum, the interested reader may refer to the following sources:

1. ***Europe and a New Global Order, Bridging the Global Divides***, A Report for the Party of European Socialists by Poul Nyrup Rasmusen, written by a team of experts, May 2003.
2. ***Governance in a Global Society – The Social Democratic Approach: Equal Opportunities and Participation for Women and Men, Poor and Rich, Developing, Transitional and Developed Countries***, XXII Congress of the Socialist International, São Paulo, Brazil, 27-29 October 2003.
3. ***Global Progressive Forum – to change the world is possible***, 2003. International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY) with e-mail: iusy@iusy.org and Young European Socialists (ECOSY) with e-mail: ecosy@europarl.eu.int

Personal Comments on the Opening Session

In regard to the opening session on Progressive Global Visions, I could readily identify with most of the views presented by ***Antonio Guterres (Portugal)***, on the need to work together for a vision of a new world, because not being happy with things as they are, illustrated by the global sense of insecurity and by our difficulty in learning from the past, on how this needed common vision for a better world entails a ”new” multilateralism and the need to reform the United Nations, on how to construct a more human and fair world, on recognizing the universal value of democracy and human rights, on supporting the UN Millenium Forum Agenda, on the need to confront the challenges of neoliberalism and unilateralism, on fighting terror while respecting human rights, on fostering ***a new world order based on peace and justice*** and, last but not least, on how the recent events such as the War on Iraq and Global Terror show that unilateralism is wrong, not really effective but counterproductive in working to foster peace and security in the world.

In regard to the views of Robin Cook (UK), I found myself in disagreement with his stance "beyond right and left," which I assume to be in line with the politics of "New Labor," irrespective of his courageous denunciation of Blair's misconduct on the Iraq War.

I still find it meaningful in contemporary global politics, to distinguish between the selfish politics of conservatism and the politics of the left, implying a continuing pursuit of justice and solidarity. Yet, I could also basically agree with his three principles to unify the progressive global vision:

(1) The value of ***Solidarity*** : A vision of a social democracy at global scale, a kind of "international community – an alternative norm to respond to the ideological challenge of neoconservatism, predicated on lowering taxes and market fundamentalism. In that same light, I agreed with his critique of the unfair trade practices of agricultural subsidies in the EU, in order to gain credibility in third world countries.

(2) The value of the ***Multilateral/Political norm guiding Global Decisions on matters of War and Peace***, including the issue of how best to fight terrorism, through collective multilateral and never by unilateral action, thus condemning the policy of pre-emptive strikes. He used the recent case of Iraq as a dramatic example of how ineffective the Bush Doctrine was to bring about global security and, moreover, to condemn the extraordinary invasion of Iraq, lacking proof of link between Iraq and terror. Concluding with the need for a political strategy (thereby rejecting military strategy), actually capable to separate terrorists from the people.

(3) The value of "***equality of all people***" concerning the impact of globalization on the displacement of people, to confront the challenge of global migration by means of a social-democratic policy of equal treatment and no discrimination.

To conclude, Robin Cook stated his view on the EU as a unique experiment, where previously warring neighbours were today joining forces for peace, therefore able to manage the challenges of globalization.

A Comment on the "European Dilemma"

Paraphrasing Myrdal, the above lofty principles outlined by Cook illustrate the nature of the existing ***European Dilemma***, the gap between ideal norms and contradictory policies and practices. For instance, the value of solidarity lies in contradiction with the policies and practices of privatization of social services and natural resources nowadays taking place in the UK, Sweden and Germany. Regarding the second principle, right now there are military troops from Spain, Italy and Poland, under the military command of the US in Iraq, revealing a divided Europe on that front. Last but not least, the EU has recently adopted a very restrictive and discriminatory immigration and refugee policy, at the request of Spain, itself inspired by the latest US migratory policy, intended to curtail terrorism.

The European Dilemma, similarly to the American Dilemma, is likely to remain in place until, and quoting from Myrdal¹

” When power has been assembled by those who have grievances, then it is the time when ideals and the social conscience can become effective.”

In other words, *the European Dilemma as a political challenge also basically constitutes a problem of insufficient participatory democracy in practice*, in terms clearly stipulated by Myrdal, one of the most important theoretical founding fathers of the historical Swedish popular welfare model, nowadays in decline, under the aegis of a social-democratic regime. In my view, *when contemporary social democracies in power implement neoliberal politics we confront the crisis of credibility and legitimacy hinted by Robin Cook, above, when mentioning, for instance, unfair trade practices through agricultural subsidies in the EU.*

A Voice from Attac and the World Social Forum

In the case of **Susan George** (US/France), an earlier member of both Attac and the World Social Movements, I found myself identified with most of her views, as a part of the global social justice movement. Proceeding to briefly summarize and comment on her views: ***If things are wrong, change is necessary, which constitutes a matter of power and politics.***

Then, it is important to ***identify the obstacles*** that lie in the way of changing what needs change, in terms of vested interests and political adversaries: In this case, the United States, illustrating this point by alluding to the unwillingness to sign the protocol on the rights of children, the Kyoto protocol on the environment and, even, violating the principles of the American Constitution itself, a kind of coup d'état by the Bush Administration.

What would then be the ***actual conditions for change?*** In Susan George's view, it would depend on ***Europe, as a potential challenge to US hegemony***, for the first time in history. For geopolitical reasons and economic possibilities, Europe could now produce an alternative model to the US, who invented neoliberalism in the 1950-1960s as an ideology of extreme capitalism.

She raised a question about what model of Europe would be able to respond to the needs and aspirations of the world at large? She envisaged the following ***guiding principles*** for her views on a required ***European progressive vision***:

Available and quality social services for all, including universal health, solidarity, improve the relations and development cooperation with the South, abiding by the Rule of Law and conflict-resolution based on negotiation and not on violence.

On how to overcome existing obstacles in practice? Susan George considered

The need to change the existing draft of the new European constitution, which nowadays embraces competition and not cooperation!

¹1957:70 in Wallerstein, *The Myrdal Legacy: Racism and Underdevelopment as Dilemmas*, lecture at the University of Stockholm, Faculty of Social Sciences, Nov. 10, 1988:32.

Moreover, she stated her belief in the *strength and democratic power of the global social justice movement, to observe, control and correct the policies and practices of social democracies.*

She outlined **seven (7) issues around which political action** could take place, in a context of the broadest political alliances:

- 1) *To integrate the 10 new member countries as fast as possible in the EU.*
- 2) *A kind of Marshall Plan around the Mediterranean and African regions.*
- 3) *Regulate and control untaxed corporate transactions and data.*
- 4) *Tax international financial transactions, technically feasible (the Tobin Tax).*
- 5) *Debt-reduction.*
- 6) *Increase and improve public services (health, education, social protection).*
- 7) *Protection of the environment and clean energy.*

In her **final analysis**, she raised **the choice** between submitting to US imperialism - or attracting more countries to challenge neoliberalism.

In my view, she was able to outline during her own presentation, a coherent and practical action plan, from the perspective of the global social justice and solidarity movement (Attac and the World Social Forum), thus representing **also my own personal voice at the FGPF.**

At the end of the first plenary, **Poul Nyrup Rasmussen** made a plea to continue working together, to integrate politics and NGOs, to bridge the gap between rethorics, policy and action.

Calling for "not losing momentum," to "stay with us" in order to achieve the goals, challenges and difficulties ahead, for "us all to solve together."

He also raised the following questions:

How can a global progresssive community meet peoples' needs, achieve the UN Reform, put Human Rights before frontier rights, help to implement the UN Millenium Forum Goals and how to reconnect politicians, movements and people?

No Dialogue at the Open Debate Session!

At the end of a first plenary, a **session for open debate was programmed**, which was not respected by the moderator, who, moreover, undemocratically gave the word to the appointed representative of the Peoples Republic of China, who was well prepared in advance to deliver, what for me amounted to a statement of sheer political propaganda, elegantly presented, yet in full contradiction with the cause of human rights, as my tibetan friends would certainly agree on. Still another example of the kind of old pragmatic global politics we need to overcome?

Participation and Comments on the Round Table Sessions

1) In terms of my ***participation at the available round tables***, I was able to attend the one on ***Wider Global Security*** on the 27th November, chaired by Alain Richard, PES Vice-president and former Defence Minister of France, where I was already acquainted with Thomas Hammarberg, Secretary General of the Olof Palme Institute of Sweden, was able to greet Sara Horowitz, my dear friend and fellow member at the board of both the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) and its latinamerican branch (CLAIP). Also had a chance to meet and shortly converse with Ilan Halevi, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Palestinian Authority.

My contribution at this round table dealt with ***the urgent need to integrate peace education in all future peace treaties***, as recommended by ***Adina Shapiro to the International Advisory Commission (IAC) of the Hague Appeal for Peace and Justice for the 21st Century (HAP's) Global Campaign of Peace Education (GCPE)***, given the need to overcome by means of peace education, all the accumulated hurts and hatred resulting from the violent conflict situations and its spiral of brutalization. I also made a statement concerning the need to examine and eradicate the ***"root causes of war, violence, terror and insecurity,"*** as suggested by HAP. Such root causes were publicly declared to be "irrelevant" by Spain's president Aznar, during a recent international meeting in London dealing with the problem of global terrorism.

2) Only marginally, could I also attend the final discussion at the round table on ***International Migration***, led by Jan O. Karlsson, MP, former minister for Development Cooperation, Migration and Asylum Policy, from Sweden, an issue where I am particularly engaged as a researcher and activist against xenophobia, racism and ethnic discrimination. In that context, I was able to hand to Lisa Pelling, advisor to Jan O. Karlsson, a document providing evidence and condemning the ***increasingly restrictive migratory policy of Sweden*** (and the rest of Europe, as earlier mentioned) obtained via the Swedish organization known as "No Human Being is Illegal" (*Ingen Människa är Illegal*)

3) During the second round table session on Friday 28 November, I actually managed to attend and partake in three round tables: At the one on ***Cultural Understanding***, led by Raimon Obiols, MEP and Vice-president of the PES Group, I mentioned the need to incorporate within the agenda of this session the subject of the ***Culture of Peace***, strongly supported by Federico Mayor Zaragoza, former Director-General of UNESCO. A topic I have been myself engaged as a practitioner in Uppsala, Sweden, México, Colombia, Brazil, the Hague and the US, since 1998. This session gave me the chance to get to know and to exchange views (and poems) with Chibi Mallat, Jean Monnet Professor, Director of EU Studies Centre, Beirut, Lebanon.

4) At the round table on ***Global Public Goods***, chaired by Keith Bezanson, Director of the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University, my contribution was limited to suggesting a kind of Agenda 21 on Global Public Goods, ***given the increasing tendency to privatize all natural resources***, from water and electricity, to intellectual property rights (TRIPS) granting private control of seeds and the human genoma, of life itself, if multinational corporations succeed in their greed. I mentioned during the above discussion, ***the recent case of Bolivia***, whether Sanchez de Lozada, the former president, was forced to leave power and fly to Miami by the movilized Bolivian people.

Another similar case lies in *the recent attempt by President Fox to privatize oil related industries in México*, a process already initiated in the realm of electricity, in the northern region, neighbouring to the US. Keeping also in mind *the recent debate on the privatization of water in Sweden*, as already taking place in various regions of the world, *under similar neoliberal premises*.

However, just the very name of this commission: Public Goods – amounts to a public recognition that NOT EVERYTHING IS ON SALE! - a good hopeful sign in itself present at the FGPF. It was an unexpected pleasure to meet and to share this session with Ursula Oswald, an old and dear friend, currently chair of the Latin American Council of Peace Research and Education (CLAIP) and professor Francisco Sagasti from Perú, currently at the University for Peace in San José, Costa Rica. This session also enabled me to establish contact with *Sven Sandström, Director of the International Task Force on Global Public Goods*, Stockholm, Sweden, and *with Jakob von Uexkull, Chairman of the Right Livelihood Award Foundation*, also from Sweden, which both of whom I intend to remain in touch in the future.

5) At the round table on *Reform of the United Nations*, led by *Pierre Schori, the permanent representative of Sweden at the United Nations*, my participation was made in the sense, *that the United Nations was once constructed at a specific time and place, under very particular conditions, which do not longer apply to present circumstances, particularly as it refers to the number of permanent members (5) and its veto power at the Security Council*. Being the most powerful UN organ, I regard it as the *"Insecurity Council,"* given the fact that its five permanent members are engaged into the most profitable industry: the *production and sale of weapons, which provide the lethal means accounting for most of the casualties and victims of violent conflicts, atrocities and political repression all over the world, during the past decades*. Another case of the fox providing "security" for the chicken ☹

My argument in regard to reforming the security council goes as follows:

What it was once socially constructed by human beings, is susceptible of being changed, deconstructed and reconstructed, in a democratic manner, responding to the actual needs and demands coming from the Peoples of the World.

Only a deep structural reform of the UN and its so-called "Security Council" will enable the implementation of the developmental goals of the Millenium Forum and its neglected disarmament agenda, global denuclearization, the full implementation of human rights and the construction of a Culture of Peace, as voted by the UN Assembly.

The Personal/Interpersonal Dimension of the FGPF

At the end of this session, I was able to personally introduce *Francisco ("Chico") Wittacker from Brazil, one of the co-founders of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, to Pierre Schorri*, along the dialogical intention commonly shared by the organizers of the FGPF and the WSF. I also had a chance to meet old friends and colleagues, such as Ursula Oswald (México), Sara Horowitz (Buenos Aires) and Lévai Imre (Budapest) from IPRA, as already mentioned, and some more recent acquaintances, such as Lisa Pelling, a highly competent young professional and progressive person, former advisor to Anna Lindh, whom I know from our participation in the Uppsala Social Forum.

Another unexpected and pleasant surprise was meeting with Juan Somavía, currently the Director General at ILO, whom I had not personally met since the mid-1980s, shortly before his return from his Mexican exile to Chile, his home country. Additionally, I met Marcella Binchi, President of the International Socialdemocratic Union for Education, deciding to continue our dialogue in relation to our common interest on peace education, freirean pedagogics and the World Education Forum.

Thanks to the FGPF, I was able to initiate an open and respectful dialogue *with Sven H. Svensson, Director of the Brussels Office of the Swedish Trade Union*, my kind host, concerning the need to explore a more constructive communication between the Swedish Trade Union Movement and the World, Regional, National and Local Social Forums. A topic we decided to further discuss back home, with *Lise-Lotte Lenberg, ombudsman for the international unit of LO, the Swedish Confederation of Labor*. The case in fact being, that after some initial reluctance, *the Olof Palme Institute* of Sweden, closely related to the *LO*, will be *present and has organized some sessions at the IVth World Social Forum to soon take place in Mumbai, India, 16-22 January 2004*.

It is always *very inspiring for me to listen to Mary Robinson*, as it happened at the FGPF. She is a person I highly admire and respect for her integrity, for her effective and coherent work to globally advance the cause of human rights in the world, one of the most significant democratic and transformative forces of our times. Having myself been engaged in the field of *Ethno-development and Indigenous and Minority Rights*, since the 1980s.

There is much more one could comment on the program of the FGPF, for instance, on the views of *Vandana Shiva, Director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, India*, whom I have heard at the World and Regional Social Forums, and with whom I agree on basically every issue. The same applies also to *the views presented by Juan Somavia*, Director General of the International Labour Organization.

Yet I decided to end this report by commenting on one closing remark by Poul Nyrup Rasmussen asserting that, "*We are part of the solution and not part of the problem.*"

Unfortunately, I do not believe that the above is the case, at least not at this present time. If the global progressive vision of the FGPF is going to succeed in the future, *we need to critically and humbly examine, how we all both personally and collectively in Europe, continue to collude, to reproduce, to resist and/or to change, the existing global patterns and problems of poverty, growing socio-economic inequalities, unfair trade, militarism, immigration, growing ethnic/cultural intolerance and discrimination, deterioration of social services and the welfare system, privatization of natural resources and other public goods, and global insecurity, among other social ills we mean to overcome and correct.*

Otherwise, *as a final word of caution, we run the likely risk of continuing to lose credibility and legitimacy*, among the poor people, the unemployed, the marginalized and excluded, *the wretched of the earth*, who remain the majority of the world population. Painfully as it is, we need to honestly confront this problematic issue, as we try to build together a common progressive vision and community.

Another and Better World is Possible!

Azril Bacal, Uppsala, Sweden, 29 December 2003