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**MEMORIAL TRUST**

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98<sup>th</sup>  
**Harold Wolpe Dialogue**  
12 April 2011  
Cape Town

Topic:

**REVOLUTIONS IN NORTH AFRICA  
AND THE MIDDLE EAST**

Speaker:

**Tariq Ali**

Tariq Ali, international and well known author, political analyst and activist will explain the broader context and geopolitical significance of these revolutions and uprisings. Tariq Ali has been a leading figure of the international left since the 60's. He is a long-standing editor of the New Left Review and a political commentator published on every continent. His latest book is *The Obama Syndrome* (Verso). Ali's other recent book *Clash of Fundamentalisms* with its critique of market fundamentalism provides crucial insight to the factors behind the Arab revolts.

The aim of these dialogues is to create a space for open and informed dialogue and debate around key local and global political, social and economic issues facing South Africa.

## Tariq Ali – 12 April 2011

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**Lionel Louw:** Tonight's session is co-hosted by Amandla and the Harold Wolpe Trust.

### **Professor Crain Soudien (Deputy Vice Chancellor of UCT):**

Looking around the room, this is an extraordinary occasion. Welcome to all of you: members of government, NGOs, the diplomatic core, fellow academics and to all of you. This is going to be an incredible treat. I know that there is a great deal that is on our minds from what is going on in the Middle East and the significance of this revolution and the impact on our own country. Tariq has been with us before, we were trying to remember when he'd been here, but I think it's something like 5 or 6 years ago, and I had the hubris to have to reply to him. We were fresh into where our country was going, and he was talking to the state of the world, and the place of South Africa. Tonight he's going to be talking about the Middle East. He comes here to his lecture here this evening with the experience and an intimate knowledge of the countries where these developments are taking place. Tariq is well known to you. He is a celebrated author, a writer and an activist. He has been a leading figure in the left since the 1960s and a long standing editor of the *New Left Review*. He is a sought after speaker and a prolific author. His *Clash of Fundamentalism* is a critique of market fundamentalism and also serves as background to what is happening to the north of us. His latest book is called the *Obama Syndrome*. We are very pleased to have him here and sorry that we couldn't give him an honorary doctorate...he's just received one now from Rhodes University, I'd like to congratulate him now on that. So here we are this evening, this event is jointly hosted by Harold Wolpe and the AIDC.

## Tariq Ali:

Dear friends, colleagues, comrades, diplomats, men women...I am very pleased to be here, and especially pleased to be here because we're once again at a tiny turning point in global affairs. As Crain said when introducing me is that what is taking place in the Middle East is not completely irrelevant to what happens in Southern Africa, in other words do not simply watch the events taking place in North Africa from afar but also look at them, as something that could be thought about here to assist us in moving on and moving forwards in this country's situation. I will return to that later.

What are the principle contours of what is taking place in the Arab world? There are a number of features here. One – 'masses in motion', people taking their own future, looking for a future, taking it in their own hands, and deciding that they want change. And this happens in a part of the world that has been virtually quiet for a long time. In some countries since 1967 in other countries since 1973, there has been a hiatus in the Arab world, the result of one defeat after the other. Defeat in the 6 day war, the defeat that was affected when Egypt completely switched sides and became something different to what it as, and despots of one sort or another sitting on the neck of the Arab masses and not allowing them to move. And in most cases these were despots who were supported by the Western regimes, principally the United States, but also the states of the European Union. And this world had become so familiar, that people thought it could never be changed, and in fact theorists of a neoconservative bent began to argue that the reason this world could not change was that 'Muslims', whatever that means, were not interested in democracy. Islam was genetically hostile to democracy and therefore nothing could change in this world.

The corollary to all that was that the Arab world was the heart of darkness, in which there was only one light that shone, and that was the State of Israel, the only democracy in the Arab world. Well, that particular argument has now fallen by the wayside as in country after country, people are agitating. But, what are they agitating for? They're agitating for change which they could not bring about by any other means in the last 40 years..they're agitating for enshrined democratic freedoms. And, the first of these revolts was triggered off by a social and economic crisis. The outcome of the Wall Street crash of 2008 which finally made its way to the Arab world, slowly, and hit Tunis, a country which has a very high level of education, in which hordes of graduates were out of work, the poor suffered even more than they did usually and the poor store holder unable to pay a bribe set himself on fire that triggered it off. It's true, but anything could have triggered it off, because of course people have burnt themselves to death in all parts of the world before and that has not triggered off uprisings. What triggered it off was a social and economic crisis and large numbers of people, watching a self aggrandizing elite getting richer and richer, an elite living in its own world, and an elite blind to the sufferings of the poor, not caring about what was happening to ordinary people and thinking because they had Western support they could rule forevermore. Because nothing else mattered in this world apart from the support of the West. And that too was shown to be an illusion.

And what happened in Tunisia, and that's where it did start, this great Arab movement that is still in motion, that what happened in Tunisia was that people lost their fear of death. And that is the most important fear that afflicts and is part of the make-up of human beings either collectively or as individuals. And when people as a collective lose their fear of death then they are capable of accomplishing miracles, political miracles, organizational miracles, and that is what happened in Tunisia. And as the dictatorship was tottering, a message came from the French President Sarkozy to his close friend Ben Ali in Tunisia: "don't panic, if you want we are able to provide French special troops who are very good at this sort of business to sustain you." But, before Ben Ali could reply, the movement had taken another step forward, and he had to climb on a plane and seek refuge in Saudi Arabia. Always a good place for despots to seek refuge - because apart from anything else, they can have easy access to their bank accounts. Whereas the Swiss are under some pressure internationally to return the stolen money which despots lodge in their bank accounts to the countries concerned. And that pressure is having a tiny bit of impact.

Now, Ben Ali's departure created an electric wave all over the Arab world. Had he not left and had that movement been prolonged, we don't know what would have happened, but it's the fact that he won, that victory, that success that brought him down that made the Egyptians feel, why not? And there was a psychological aspect to it as well that I often stress and that is often under-estimated. The Tunisians of North Africa are generally regarded in the Arab world as the softest, kindest, most pleasure seeking people there are in that region. And the mood was, *Tunisians have done this???* Who are we then? What's wrong with us? There was a big big discussion in the Arab world. The Tunisians have done it. Well....that took the Arab world by surprise. And suddenly the tiny pickets and demonstrations that had been taken place in Egypt for many years were transformed. After the fall of Ben Ali, the

Egyptian people said 'we are going to get rid of Hosni Mubarak come what may', and the size of the demonstrations grew larger and larger and larger, and the more the repression – and several hundred people were shot dead in Egypt and thousands tortured in this period – but it didn't stop people from coming out. In order to stop the people coming out they would have had to call the army in and mowed down tens of thousands of people in cold blood. And who knows the impact that this would have had on the ordinary soldiers themselves. Whether they would have liked to have opened fire on their brothers and sisters and mothers and daughters who were demonstrating? It was a risky enterprise and the Americans rightly told them not to go for that option. They tried to find other ways to sustain Hosni Mubarak.

And here you have an amazing dialectic. The people want him out, soldiers are allowing ordinary people to climb onto their tanks, some army officers are holding up banners from the democratic opposition and the White House and State Department sends a Special Envoy to Egypt to talk to Mubarak. Who is this guy? This guy is a former US ambassador to Egypt who has subsequently found work in a large public relations enterprise, and one of the clients of this public relations agency is the Egyptian government. So it is true that he knows the country well. And he arrives in Egypt and sees Mubarak and makes his first public statement which is that his advice to Mubarak is to hang on to power. The only time that anti-Obama slogans were raised and after the Americans were cursed in Tahrir Square was after this guy made this statement.

And that lesson went home quite quickly, because they then withdrew him and decided that he had to go, I mean, Hillary Clinton described Hosni Mubarak as "a close life-long friend of this country, and Bill and I regard him as family". Well of course they do. No doubt Tony Blair did as well. He is a part of the family. He gave them free holidays in Sharm el Sheikh. They were all very close these people. The Egyptian masses then forced a change, and Mubarak finally had to be dragged off shaking and screaming and saying "I'm not going" but he went. And so you have two despots toppling. So the movement in Egypt and the movement in Tunis then spread to virtually every country in the Arab world, with the exception of Saudi Arabia.

Yemen, a country where people thought the dictatorship was solid suddenly started to shake. I remember when I was in Yemen a few years ago, and I totally discounted all this nonsense of a huge Al Qaida presence in Yemen as something the military was using to get more money from the US. Some people were not so sure, but I also saw a country that was extremely unhappy. And the essay I wrote for the London Review of Books was entitled "Unhappy Yemen" because I talked to people, I discussed with people particularly in the south but even in the north and they hated this regime, they were fed up with it. And in an area where there had been an atrocity blamed on Al Qaida, I went to that town and talked to people there. So, I said 'tell me, how strong Al Qaida is here? Is there an Al Qaida base here?' One guy heard me asking this question from an official and he came up and took me aside, and he said "Do you want to know where Al Qaida is in Yemen?" I said "Yeah". He whispered in my ear, and he said "there are only 30 or 40 of them and they're all in an office next to the president". So much for Al Qaida and the Yemen. And suddenly in this country, which was supposedly polarized between a pro-Western government and religious extremism, a movement starts in Sana'a, in the north, not in the south where everyone knows that they loath the regime. And the person who triggers off the movement is a very very brave activist, a woman, who has been fighting against the regime, has been in prison, has been locked up and has kept the faith and has kept moving on and has kept struggling and organizing people in small groups and telling them what needed to be done and they did it. And today too, this regime is tottering.

In Bahrain, which is the naval capital of United States in the Middle East, home to its navy, there was a movement because, and it wasn't a religious movement, the young people who came out onto the streets of Bahrain refused to be tarred by religious labels, and the big slogans they shouted in the square was "neither Sunni nor Shia, we are Bahraini, we are Bahraini and we want our freedom." And the people who sectarianised this conflict were the West and the Saudis, who said that the majority of people here are Shias and if we permit democracy here we'll have a pro-Iranian government. So they sent the Saudis in to crush the movement, and Bahrain is today occupied. Its permanently occupied by the US Navy and now it is physically occupied on land by the Saudi military too. And the Saudi military, to make things more complicated, consists to a substantial extent of retired Pakistani and Yemeni soldiers. Because not too many Saudis are allowed to enter the armed forces, lest they learn to use weapons. So that is creating a situation.

Jordan, which has essentially been or a long time an Israeli-American protectorate saw a huge wave of demonstrations including the bulk of tribes that dominate that region, not the urban Palestinians so much this time,

a very interesting development, and joined by many retired generals who said “enough is enough we won’t live like this anymore”. And though they’ve crushed it, they offered money to it, it’s still going on.

Most recently, there has been an eruption in Syria, which is more complex than the other countries, but where now for the past 3 weeks in 6 Syrian cities you have seen people come out, demonstrating, refusing to cow down and being shot dead. And the Ba’ath leadership in Syria had an alternative. Five, six years ago there was a lot of talk about opening up, a lot of talk about reform, a lot of talk about allowing other political formations and parties to exist. And I remember I went to Damascus in 2003 or 2004, I cannot remember which year, and gave a talk to an audience, I said publicly in Damascus, that if the regime does not open up, does not permit other organizations to exist, it will suffer. And it was obvious this debate was taking place inside the Ba’ath party at the time, because many people supported me, some didn’t, some attacked me, but that moment was allowed to pass, and that was a time where people were willing to give that regime the benefit of the doubt. And, now, we shall see whether that regime will survive or not. This particular regime has a very limited social base, which is in a tiny esoteric wing of the Shia faction; the Alawites. All the security chiefs, all the military chiefs, all the air force chiefs are from this tendency to which the Assad family belongs. How long they will be able to hold it is an open question. What makes it more complicated however is that a number of Syrians, who don’t like the regime but say at least they’ve been backing the Palestinians, they’ve been backing Hezbollah, they have been doing something. So, the regime hasn’t lost all support because of its foreign policy. But, ultimately, it is what people on the ground want in terms of their everyday conditions and lives, is what is going to determine what happens in that country. So what we witness is essentially is a region in flux and this domino effect regarding revolutions. I remember very well in the 60s and 70s when we used to debate the United States and their allies, they used to say “We have to stop it in Vietnam otherwise it’ll be a domino effect.” But it never did become a domino effect in Asia and there were few chances that it would. But, what we are witnessing in the Arab world *is* the domino effect.

And this is why there is now a big counter-offensive, which takes place on two levels. The first level is to push things back, hence the Saudi intervention in Bahrain. In order to push it back elsewhere, to try and win credit, in one tiny part of the Arab world, by showing, ‘we’re on the side of liberty’ and sending the bomber jets out to bomb Libya. And that bombing of Libya hasn’t helped. It hasn’t helped the opposition and it’s helped Gaddafi, that’s the truth. What it enabled that regime to do, which was already denouncing the demonstrators as pawns of the West is now to say ‘well, we said this to you. Look, they cannot win on their own, they need the West to do it and we’re anti-imperialist’. Of course it is a lot of nonsense, but they say it and they get away with it. They don’t know what they’re going to do. It’s an incoherent policy. It would be appalling if they sent ground troops but without that they are not going to topple the regime, it is not going to be toppled. So, what we are likely to see in Libya is a new partition, which is the time honored policy of empires everywhere. If they can’t win it, divide it. Africa, Asia, the Middle East, sees all that. So...it is not easy to predict what the exact outcome of these amazing upheavals is going to be. Not simply in Libya, but elsewhere too. For the following reasons and this is what has to be stressed, that the movements that we have seen are very different in character from another wave of social movements, which were the first big rebellions against the neo liberal consensus, the Washington Consensus that took place in the late 1990s and then for most of this century in South America. These were huge social movements in country after country against water privatization, against electricity privatization.

I will never forget sitting in a café somewhere in South America, I think it was Caracas, and watching on television CNN interviewing a poor Peruvian peasant who had been resisting together with tens of thousands of other people, the privatization of electricity. And the CNN reporter, asked this peasant, “who are you people, what are you doing this for, are you attached to this are you attached to that?” and he said “no I’m attached to no one, the only reason we’re doing it is because we know one thing, that if the electricity is privatized, within a few months, most of the villages in the Andes will not be able to afford electricity. And we will be forced to light oil lamps again and that is why we are resisting.” And the social movements against water privatization in Bolivia, against the IMF measures ending subsidies to the poor in Venezuela created a political climate with clear cut anti neo-liberal political demands which enabled new political formations to emerge. That was extremely important, and they emerged, and they fought democratic elections, and they promised people that if we’re elected we’re going to do ‘a.b.c.d.e.f.g.h.i.’ and they were elected in every country and to everyone’s surprise they did ‘a.b.c.d.e.’ And said we’re going to carry on fulfilling the reforms as long as we stay in power and keep the support of the poor.

That sort of sort of social movement does not exist in the Arab world today. And these huge new uprisings have not thrown up new political parties, and the political parties that exist are usually old political parties. What are they? In many countries, they are remnants now of political parties set up by dictatorships. They were trying to wash their

faces, cast off their soiled shirts, and adopt a new persona and character, and denouncing what they'd been up to for the past 30 or 40 years. The other party that is strong throughout the Arab world is the Muslim Brotherhood and it varies, but by and large, leading currents in the Brotherhood have for the last two decades been collaborating with these regimes, especially in Egypt. But, because they've been repressed, because as political parties they have gone into the poor areas of their countries to try and provide some minimal levels of health and education, they have won support. It's not been through getting people to recite the Koran by rote, it's by carrying out social welfare programs in the poor areas. But ask them today how they would like to describe themselves? I remember when I was in Cairo in 2003 I met some of the leaders of Brotherhood, they were doctors, and they said to me, "shall I tell you how we win support? We control the doctors union. And so we provide doctors free of charge, with Brotherhood symbols to go into the poor slum areas and give free treatment." I said "Ok, good but how to describe you? Let's say there's an election and you win a majority what will you do?" And he said, "there will be democratic parties" and then I said "so in other words, what you're saying to me, is that you will be like the Christian Democrats in Europe. Socially and politically quite conservative, and parties not that different except that you will be Muslim – Islamic Democrats." And he said that sounds like a good idea. And quite a lot of them are like that. And they were on their knees in many countries, especially in Egypt before the United States saying, "we are prepared to do business with you, why do you trust these dictators?" And the Turkish model is very important for them. They can take quirky positions on foreign policy for a limited period but in terms of their economic policies; rock solid economic neo-liberalism. Privatize everything. Make money. Get rich. How long they will be able to do it is another question. And that is what the policies of these parties will be, and that is a vulnerable point for them because we are not living at times where the neoliberal message is shining in neon lights in all the cities of the world. People are beginning to see through it.

It has created a huge crisis in Europe: 3 countries nearly went under. Iceland, Ireland and Greece and there is a lot of talk that Portugal and maybe Spain may need to be bailed out. So the crisis is affecting the heartlands of capital. And in these conditions, it is very difficult to say to the poorer parts of the Arab world that this is all fine in a country like Egypt where you have huge unemployment, a rich elite, a corrupt elite, cronyism, gangsterism, no rights ... sound familiar? That's why I said at the beginning watch carefully what's happening in North Africa. In this situation it's going to be difficult for the Brotherhood to simply do what the Turks did twenty years ago and have been implementing for the last 10 years, which is why, we need to have political parties of a new type growing out of social movements and here the South American examples are generally positive in order to move forward.

Fourthly, how has all this affected the United States? Clearly, it took it by surprise. But I would say that US power in the region has been dented, but it has survived. None of these movements – here again the difference with South America is important – none of these movements, in the course of these upheavals, raised any questions about foreign policy except once or twice when necessary, which I think was deliberate on the part of the Brotherhood which was involved and active in these demonstrations. But no one even raised the question which haunts the Arab world which is the Palestinians.

The Israelis of course were very nervous when Mubarak was about to fall. Netanyahu pleaded publicly with the Americans to keep him in power. Right wing Israeli papers denounced the US for abandoning a close friend, an ally. Perhaps they saw something in the future that some of us can't quite see as yet. But there was a huge support for Mubarak. Mubarak's own last phone call to a dignitary was to a member of the Israeli cabinet, they had a long conversation and the discussion and the Israeli cabinet minister went public with it saying the Mubarak is a bit upset with the way that he has been treated – he felt humiliated. This is a guy who's presided over a regime that's been the torture chamber of the Arab world especially since 9/11. Where people picked up in Europe have been taken to Egypt to be tortured there. His vice-president, Suleiman was himself a torturer. And people say that's fine, we don't want to lose Mubarak. I don't think that democratically elected governments when and if they come into being in this world are going to just accept blindly everything that is demanded of them on the front of Israel-Palestine. They're not going to do it. And that means that there will be changes.

Not that all is well within Palestine as well. The PLO leadership caved in, capitulated completely to the Israeli authorities. They are very discredited. They were the other group which wanted Mubarak to stay in power, the PLO leaders. And they brutally repressed demonstrations in Ramallah by Palestinians in solidarity with Egypt. The only country where demonstrations were repressed and people beaten up for demonstrating in solidarity with the Egyptians, was by the PLO in Ramallah. So it's a grim situation in Israel/Palestine. How these changes, if they happen are going to affect it we don't know, but they will certainly open up the debate again. And I think and I've been arguing now for many months with support of anti-Zionist Israelis and Palestinians that you can't have it both ways. You refuse to give the Palestinians a state that means something, instead you offer them tiny disembodied

Bantustans. Though I've been told off by Ronnie Kasrils as referring to them as Bantustans because he says that Bantustans are better than the conditions that the Palestinians live under. But never mind. That's not a state. So having destroyed all possibility of a two state solution, the most minimalist of which was a retreat to the 1967 frontiers...what will happen? There's only one solution left now. Ultimately, by the middle or end of this century which is a single state, and that too is resisted. When people start to organize peacefully and globally for a campaign of boycott and sanction as was waged against apartheid South Africa, everyone, no, not everyone, but the Israeli establishment and the Western establishments get very angry. So, you can't fight violently because you're terrorist and you can't fight peacefully because you're anti-Semitic. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. But, the hope is, if the Middle East really changes, that is my hope, that it will also begin to change many Israelis who live in a bubble world of their own, especially the young generations, that it will change them too, because that's the best way for change, if it comes from within, organically. But, we will see if any of this happens or not.

So in terms of what is taking place in the world, I have to say that what happened for the first ten years after the Washington Consensus was nothing except for the beginnings of something in South America. But, it has since gathered speed and has been gathering speed. Not, I don't want to encourage false hopes or suggest that we have won major victories, because we haven't, but large numbers of people have refused to take the system at face value. And I think that is an extremely important lesson for many many parts of the world, countries in Asia and Africa. And I think if you look at globalization and this turbocharged form of it currently in existence, it has created in many parts of the world, a disaffection with official politics, where many young people feel, it's not worth voting, because voting changes nothing. The parties are the same.

The one exception to this was the Obama election campaign in the United States. I have to admit it was very exciting. What was exciting was young people getting engaged and becoming active in political campaigning and being galvanized by the campaign. But people, especially those who were radicalized by that campaign, are extremely upset, disorientated, depressed, and not just them. You just have to read the *New York Times* or the *New York Review of Books* to see rock solid Democrats expressing criticisms, and some of them quite sharply on issues such as the failure to even implement the limited promises made on Guantanamo, on civil liberties, on the gung ho way that this administration has defended the imprisonment of private Bradley Manning. It angers people because they suddenly see that nothing much has changed. And in fact, if the truth be told, we see a continuity in policy from the Reagan period onwards. Carter carried it on, he started the neoliberalising process, Regan gave it a huge leap, Bill Clinton carried on, Bush carried on, of course with variations, their rhetoric was different, but I'm not that interested in rhetoric. For me, what matters is what politicians do. And one reason that there was so much excitement over Obama, and it was difficult not to be affected by it, was to say that if Obama wins, this will be the first time in American history that a black family will be in the White House that was built by slave labour. And it is difficult not to find that sentiment moving. But once the family is in the White House, it's over and done with. It's been achieved, it's done, we've got a black family – now what? And then you realize, and many people realized, including large swathes of African Americans, that it's not the colour of the skin that matters, but what you do. That has got to be the defining criteria of politics and politicians and leaders everywhere. What do you do? On the economy, and foreign policy: continuity.

In Afghanistan, Pakistan, a part of the world I know pretty well, not just continuity but escalation. On the front of civil liberties, justifying drone attacks on unarmed civilians at a legal convention by the State Department's new legal boss, a close friend of Obama. The new judge, Elena Kagan, appointed to the supreme courts in a session with Congress, said that she did not have too much problem in all cases involving rendition. So then, you know, it's not just people like me, but many other people who just come into politics for the first time who say "what is it about then, what can we do, how can we move forward, if whoever you elect however good they seem, when they come to power they do the same thing?" I think the answer here is that the neoliberal system, deployed by capital since the collapse of the Soviet Union and since the end of that world, has essentially also meant the end of social democracy as we know it. And so the alternatives presented to people don't exist, there is no alternative apart from this system. And mainstream political parties by and large accept that model. Now, when this begins to happen, you have a process of the hollowing out of democracy and democratic institutions because if democracy cannot provide you with the means to have a socio-economic alternative, then what is it all about? That is the question which people are asking.

The South Americans have answered it in their own way. They have radicalized democracy. The Venezuelan Constitution is the only constitution in the world which permits the citizens to deselect a president in mid-term, so that if they feel a president is not doing well, and they raise a certain number of seats .....I thought you'd like that...is

to deselect a president mid-term and the right wing opposition in Venezuela called on people to vote against this constitution. But 75% of Venezuelans voted for it. That same opposition then gathered signatures, many of them were fake but the government said let them go, don't challenge them (we now know that many dead people were revived to sign that petition). But never mind, it happened. The referendum took place, and Chavez won, quite handsomely. But what was good as that it took place, and it empowered the Venezuelan people, even though the Right had done it, to say we can do it, it can be done. And so that form of democracy is quite exciting, but for that you need new constitutions.

And that form of democracy only came about because you had people elected on what I would call radical social democratic platforms, and who won and who implemented that. So, we are not witnessing in the world today revolutions of the old type, we're witnessing mass mobilizations, huge social movements, but nothing that is comparable, for good or bad, to the revolutions of the twentieth century that we witnessed before. That is the situation we are at, and it's a situation we have to reflect on, and understand, and if we learnt the lessons from it, I think everyone can benefit from it in all parts of the world. Because many of the problems that exist are very similar. You can go into any, virtually most countries and corruption is a huge problem. In the United States it's legalized by the lobby system. You know how much people are paying because it is there. And I don't want to say it's better because that's quite disgusting too, and one of the great political scientists at Princeton Sheldon S Wolin has written a very sad book called 'Democracy Incorporated' in which he concentrates on this aspect and says that money dominates politics so completely now in the States that it is now the end of American democracy. People like him are very upset. It's a phenomenon that's global, it happens in different countries in different ways. I have heard people at international conferences getting angry with each other saying 'No, my elite is more corrupt than yours'. The Pakistani civil servant, since then retired, told me once that about six years ago that when the figures came out in the Transparency International figures, and it showed Nigeria was the worst country in terms of corruption and Pakistan second, he said he called his deputies just tongue in cheek and said, 'how did this happen?' And they didn't know whether to take him seriously, and he said 'I thought we were the first in this position, but it seems as if the Nigerians replaced us even there'. They said "well we can't control everything sir" and he said "well, did you offer a bribe to Transparency International?" Of course, as you know, this problem is a serious one.

I'm saying that this is a problem that exists not just here, where it's more shocking because it comes from a government which came to power with huge hopes invested in it, after many years of struggle, and we all know that, and even those of us not in South Africa felt a thrill when the apartheid system finally ended and was finally dismantled. No one wanted to think as that old man walked out of prison, that things might go wrong. What's the deal that was done behind doors, what might they have caved in on? We did not want to think about it, because we said 'at least one huge problem has been removed'. And I think that is the reason why so many South African citizens were prepared to give his government the benefit of the doubt for so long. Because they now lived in a country where no one could stop them from walking in parts of the city where they were previously banned from doing so. It's a horrific thing but it eats you up in side that particular form of discrimination when it's gone on so long. But there's a limit to how long one can use that liberation now to justify what is being done by politicians, elected by people to change their lives, and not much changes, not much changes where it matters, in conditions of everyday life.

Crain has congratulated me on being given an honorary doctorate at Rhodes University. The next day, I ran into some activists in Grahamstown, and they said to me, you know, some of them hadn't been at the ceremony because they were involved in a protest outside the town hall by the township people and the unemployed people's movement. Then one said, in a very jokey but very funny way, "whilst you were giving your speech to the congregation, we were emptying buckets of shit outside the town hall." I said "why?" and they said because the sanitation problems outside the townships are huge, and all the people in the townships are offered are buckets – that is our sanitation system. And how long has the government been in power? And don't tell me there's not money to do it, that is an unacceptable answer. There is money to do everything, money to build huge stadiums to try and build huge walls for visitors who are coming from abroad – money can be found for that but money can't be found to change the conditions in the townships in which people live. And why are these townships even existing? Are we moving towards integration? Unless you move towards socio-economic integration you cannot move towards proper racial integration, in my opinion, it can't be done. And this is a problem which I'm afraid none of the comrades in power have been able to change.

And when you hear stories and read stories of the large scale corruption and cronyism that takes place, I remember the last time in was in South Africa, I was in Pretoria speaking to a foreign office think tank and telling them to be a



tiny bit more radical in their foreign policy, but they were all very proud that Bush had just said Thabo Mbeki was their 'point man' in Africa. And I said do you know what 'point man' means? It's actually mafia talk. And the person who was designated by this foreign office think tank in Pretoria to answer my complaints and criticisms was Mo Shaik (laughter). I promise you I didn't take too much to like. It's awful. But it's not individuals. Corruption is now endemic and systemic. And unless there is a movement from within the ANC and outside the ANC to change the situation it will continue. It will continue. Can't just be left to people at the top now. It really can't, because people are disheartened. You meet them, people are angry, and I'm all in favour of social movements in the townships and elsewhere, but unless they coalesce into something political, with clear cut political demands: a new charter of social and democratic demands that can be fought or in each corner of this country then a lot of the energies and sacrifices that were made, will have been in vain. And I'm very touched when people say to me if only Steve Biko had survived. I wish he had survived, he would have been a strong voice. Or if Chris Hani had not been murdered by the far right in this country, then what would have happened? This is true but it still *individualizes* the problem. That the problem is not simply of having good leaders and bad leaders, it helps to have good leaders, but it is the system over which they provide and on which they sit. And that is something that needs to be altered, and it can be altered, because that's what people want. And it is a minority that does not want any changes.

If there was a referendum next week in South Africa, saying 'should we spend so many billion on transforming the townships, yes or no', I am prepared to bet that 80% of people would say 'yes, do it, do it'. Very few would say no, how could they? But instead prestige projects, all the stuff that goes on....is now becoming sad. And this is a country that we hoped at one point in time, after liberation, would be so strong that it would help the rest of Africa, would be a model for the rest of Africa. That has certainly not happened. And here the contrasts with South America are very sharp, you know. When Chavez was threatened first with a military coup, and then with a strike by the middle class sectors to paralyze this elected regime, I remember speaking to him at this point and I said "what depressed you the most?" He said "the military coup I was not depressed by because I knew that the soldiers would not let them do it" (and that is basically what happened). The soldiers in the barracks told the officers "if you carry on like this we fire our guns at you". He said that the middle class strike which closed down our health and education systems...that upset me, because I thought, we've had it now, people won't be able to take not having basic facilities, no electricity and no water. Anyway, they turned it around. Chavez said, if Cuba hadn't existed, we would have been stuck. And he said, when we asked the Cubans, Fidel said ok – how many doctors do you need? Fidel said we can send you 20 000 doctors within a fortnight. And these doctors came into Venezuela, and set up clinics with their own medicines, brought from Cuba, in the poorest areas of that country. And the opposition said that these were Cuban terrorists come to make a revolution. But they were not terrorists. But they did in fact create a revolution because people said we've never had doctors in our area before ever.

These are small things, but they show what can be done. And what the Arab revolt shows is that an active people, a people which still hopes, because hope is an important emotion, it's an active emotion unlike despair which is a passive emotion which creates passivity. It shows that if people still hope and if people still believe that this country or this region needs to be changed then they can do it. That is what the Arab model shows, even though it is by no means complete. And that is why we can all learn from it. Thank you.

## Questions to Tariq Ali

- 1) How do you see the emergence of COPE, the political party? Is this the politicizing of a social movement? Can you share some thoughts on the recent developments within COPE?

**Tariq:** No, I don't think COPE is a social movement, unless one changes the definition of social movement and then describes it as an upwardly mobile social moment. And I don't, in particular, I mean, I am not a great fan of the Mbeki-faction in the ANC. I think a lot of what we are witnessing today stated off like that under that particular regime, both in terms of internal and foreign policy. COPE does not offer any serious alternative. It's a struggle over power and a division of the spoils party. So I don't really take it that seriously, and clearly Mbeki doesn't either, because otherwise he'd have joined it.

- 2) What you have described is a new thrust/movement within the international working class movement that has been lost since the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in the late 1980s and 1990s and a decline in the prestige of socialism. Capitalism has come under pressure from socialism. The alternatives to neo-liberalism have withered away. Social democracy has shown itself to be incapable of confronting neo-liberalism too. The question is – to what extent are these movements limited in their scope of applicability and the redistribution of wealth. To what extent is there a need to return to Marxism to provide ideological and political guidance for the way forward?

**Tariq:** What role does Marxism play? I mean, I'm summarizing it. Or should it play in these movements? The important for me, as someone who has learnt a great deal from the writings of Marx, is to do it what he did, which is to never never treat it like a religion. After all, he got a lot of things wrong. Many of the predictions of the Communist revolution did not turn out to be true. But, that doesn't invalidate the analysis of capital, and capitalism as a system. But simply saying, a nowadays with many people who have been through the capitalist system, that the solution and the way forward is Marxism is not sufficient. You have to be concrete, and you have to explain to people what you mean and what you will do. That is the interesting development in South Africa because all the other things that you said failed, which I agree with. The one alternative you didn't mention that also failed were the far left groups. You know, they were small, they were tiny. They are still there but they have not survived in a wholesome fashion or even that they have achieved big success anywhere. The other problem is a structural problem, that in much of the US and Europe you have a structural problem that has been part of the neoliberal upsurge, which has de-industrialized these countries. So the actual weight of the advanced working class in advanced capitalist societies is much less now than it used to be prior to neo-liberalism. Which is why you have China today, that is the structural alternation and the centre of the world market has now moved eastwards. The most dynamic capitalist economy today is the People's Republic of China. How that society will end is an open question, we don't know. But at the very least I think they should open up and then they could set up another party called the CCP as well which is the Chinese Capitalist Party. The Chinese don't believe that capitalism is in no way linked to democracy and have shown this to be the case. They are wrong on that – there are movements within China that are going to change this. There are peasant protests and factory occupations taking place.

- 3) Focusing on North Africa. You did not go into the real root causes of the troubles in North Africa and discuss food price inflation. I read that this was the trigger for the revolution. In turn, this inflation was the result of US government agricultural policy, is not the US financial policy the cause of this?

**Tariq:** Perhaps you missed it, I did say that the root causes of the uprising in Tunisia were economic. The large scale unemployment that had been created, the fact that the economy couldn't deliver even what it used to deliver before. There is no big problem there. It is the financial collapses that occurred in Wall Street. They have covered it up with sticking plaster but you can already see the blood underneath the plaster. The situation in Europe is unstable in my opinion. The austerity measures in Britain are just ridiculous anyway. People are using the crisis to push through things that they've wanted to push through on working people things they've wanted to push for a long time. Other things could be cut. Greece, where the bailout has failed - their airline is on the verge of collapse. So, simply being bailed out by the German bank s doesn't necessarily solve the problem, and if the German banks continue to bail these countries out, they will be hit themselves.

- 4) Thank you very much. It was an enlightening perspective. One question is you mentioned that since the 70s there hasn't been a protest coming from the Arab world. I wondered what you thought of the religious revolt –the Iranian revolution for example. And then tied to that, I wondered if you saw a change to that now, in the expression of religion in that area? And the other question I have for you, you mentioned the problem of neo-liberalism. But a lot of these revolts have been fuelled by 'new media' (twitter, facebook), so how you reconcile the fact that new media is based on capitalist formulations in the first place?

**Tariq:** The Arab world – religion. Very important question, and you're right I should have talked about that. What was the character of the Iranian revolution? It was the toppling of the shah. But the social content of the revolution was dictated by the clerics that eventually won out like Khomeini and other people, but you know there were many strands to that revolution. There was a strong secular character to that revolution but they were weaker and were outmaneuvered by the clerics. The clerics came to power and they debated, they discussed, they voted even, they permitted elections within their own camps and there were fights and struggles. But the social and economic basis of Iran didn't change that much, and some of the clerics became fat cats. I mean Rafsanjani, for instance, became a billionaire. In the previous election campaign that he fought against Ahmadinejad, they were both believers in the clerical regime, but the fight was exclusive on the economy. The Ahmadinejad regime had to do something for the poor in the countryside and the Rafsanjani camp saying we are modernizers, we are going to do this that and the other. One of the big things that the Ahmadinejad people did was produce videos, because as you know, Iran has a very lively cinematic culture and some of the best movies being produced these days are by a number of Iranian film directors. The ones I saw were very effective and these videos were distributed to households in Tehran where you had 40-50% unemployment, and these videos showed Rafsanjani's houses. And it was very effective, he was wiped out completely. But Ahmadinejad couldn't move beyond that, so regardless of the religion, Iran has remained the same in terms of its socio-economic base. This is a regime which acts, like the US, in its own interests. So when the US invaded Iraq, the Iranians backed the invasion, they backed the invasion of Afghanistan. They only saw it from their narrow view of being anti-Saddam and anti-Taliban. They then thought that because they had been so good the Americans would do a deal with them ... and if the Americans had been intelligent they would have done a deal with them. After all, if Nixon went to Beijing, then Obama could have gone to Tehran. But it was a difficult time. I've already discussed it when they discussed the Muslim Brotherhood. Al Qaeda is not a problem, any intelligence agency in the world will tell you that. It is not more problematic than any anarchist-terrorists were at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, and much less than the IRA were or the Basque terror group ETA were in Europe in the 1970s or 80s. That is a problem not even used that much.

By 'the new media', what are you referring to (Al Jazeera and facebook). Look, Al Jazeera clearly shows an important role in the first phase of the uprisings simply by showing the images and when the Egyptian government took it off the air, they said that the people could view the images on their mobile phones and people did do that. So that was quite important that that information was being disseminated on what was going on in the Arab world. But, come the second phase and the assault on Libya, the Saudi invasion of Bahrain, I'm afraid that Al-Jazeera became like every other state television station, doing the bidding of the state which funds it. A lot of people working in Al Jazeera are upset about that but that's what it did. As far as mobile phones and the facebook revolution, I don't take that too seriously and I'll tell you why. Whenever people are engaged in struggle, since time immemorial, they find ways to communicate using what they have and what is available to them. And the early slave uprisings that took place in the Caribbean after the French Revolution....how did they communicate? Through drum beats. Drums from one village would wake another village. That is the language they used. How did the French communicate with each other in the eighteenth century? Through couriers, sometimes through pigeons taking messages. And so each movement finds its own way, and this young generation today is very lucky because they can communicate very rapidly because technology has changed. And that is very good and useful. But, it can't be used as a cause of these revolutions - it's an instrument that is used, and even that is a bit exaggerated because Egypt is a country of many millions of people and a large bulk of them are not on facebook, I promise you that. So if facebook had not existed they would have found other means of communicating. And when Mubarak cut off, using the Vodaphone guy, who cut off the texting facility for nearly two weeks, what did that change? Not much. People found other means to do it. So, you should see a movement and understand a movement and separate them from the instruments that they have to communicate and develop.

- 5) You seem to manage to describe the conflict in Israel between Israel and Palestine as exclusively political, as if the conflict there is not born from both parties religious claim to have exclusive rights to the same land. You also claim to know about corruption in South Africa, but how many local governments do you think there are in South Africa?

**Tariq:** I cannot answer your second question. I do not know about local government in South Africa. I don't think that the Israeli-Palestinian debate is exclusively political. The laws in some cases, especially in relation to women's rights and divorce are dominated by the Israeli clerics and rabbis and rabbinical courts but the state itself very specifically is a state which based itself on ethnic nationalism not on the Jewish faith, and of course a lot of the Orthodox Jews were very opposed to the creation of the state who said that it was not permissible. The leadership of the Zionist movement which basically formed that state were social democrats of one order or another. Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan...they were not at all religious, they were implacable nationalists and said we have to create a Jewish state. It was a form of Jewish nationalism which they pushed forward. The concessions they made to the religious people came after the state and that was the deal they did. This was not unlike the deal that Mubarak did with his religious people.

- 6) My question refers to the changes that are taking place in the Arab world, in light of this new wind of changes. It seems like the Algeria is weakened but is not really participating. But if you look back about two decades ago, there was a much stronger opposition from the Algerian people which was crushed. How can those aspirations from two decades ago be contrasted?

**Tariq:** The question someone raised in response to Algeria. Algeria had a very rough time over a decade ago when the French government intervened to stop a general election. Because they thought if the general election was completed the local Islamists would win, which was very likely. But by encouraging the decrepit military regime in Algeria to stop the election and crush the people voting in it, they launched a civil war which was very brutal on both sides. Horrific, horrific atrocities took place in Algeria which were barely reported in the Western media. The French still defend them because they say that if that election was not cancelled, Islamism was not to take over. This notion that Islamism is a monolithic, unified force is wrong. There were internal debates even before the elections. It was not the case that they were in favour of taking away women's rights, which was the French argument (always using some form of demagogy). Half of the FIS did not want to remove women's rights. But, we are going to get rid of this regime. And the French were the main power that move behind the scenes to scupper the elections. There were small demonstrations in Algeria, but nothing on the scale of its neighbors, precisely because people have not recovered from that shock. These political traumas go very deep. But, it wont last forever that regime.

- 7) Thanks very much. I am from Khayelitsha. I would like to know from us what kind of support we are giving to the uprising in Swaziland, what support are we giving now?

**Tariq:** The struggles in Swaziland – extremely important and extremely organic. But, what they also show, is this cult which a modern liberationist movement should not have paid attention to because it is the thing which colonial powers always did which was to encourage tribalism and the role of tribal chiefs and tribal leaders wherever they went they did it they did it. This is essentially something that is a part of colonial strategy. And a modern liberation movement actually has to get over that, and the only way you can get over that is by empowering people by encouraging them to take their lives into their own hands and to say, 'you, each of you, is much much more important than your chiefs'. And that is why I think the struggle in Swaziland and maybe in other places could become important. It is not necessary to go down that old road. It is unconvincing anyway and it is a substitute for real activity and politics.

- 8) What about Saudi Arabia, which for the last 30 years has bankrolled Pakistan, Afghanistan etc. Are we going to see a change there too?

**Tariq:** The question about Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia could crack. Don't think that that regime is stable. It could crack, because the Wahabi sec, which dominates the government and the political culture of that country by no means commands the support o ht majority of people. Just doesn't command it. And if it erupts, it could topple the regime, except that I think the Saudi regime is one regime which I think the West will not allow to fall. And the reason for that is, they haven't completely lost Egypt yet but it's opened up a bit. They might not lose it. And still they are shaken by that. But, the Saudi regime sits on , you know, millions and millions of tons of oil, which the Egyptians don't. The Egyptians were politically, militarily, strategically more important. But the Saudis do and they

play a big part for the US in the region. The US will keep it in power come what may. The huge American military presence in the region is precisely to defend Saudi Arabia and all of these little Imperial petrol stations known as the Gulf States. That is what they defend. And they're not there for a joke. I did not mention oil because I take it for granted. Why this reason is strategically important is precisely because of the oil that rests underneath it. And that has also what's made Islam a political factor in all these discussions.

- 9) The events in the Middle East have been depicted largely as a spontaneous movement by the youth of the country. I'm rather surprised because does it mean there have been no political organizations within these countries. I have lived in the Middle East and there have been many voices that have been opposed to the regime and for the regime. To present it as a people's movement sweeping over the Middle East in a domino effect is rather naïve I think, and I think a deeper understanding and analysis of the situation should be in order. Also, that Libya has been singled out for the West to bomb and not Bahrain seems to have been rather superficially touched. I am interested in the role of France here. Why has it stepped into the shoes of being the international policeman of the Middle East?

**Tariq:** The lady at the back that was saying I was implying that there weren't any political parties in the middle east – I wasn't. There are political parties and I outlined some of the major ones. I did not talk about the smaller ones because, valiant though they are, they have not played a huge part in these movements. The character of these movements in my opinion has largely been spontaneous. There's nothing wrong with that, it's very healthy spontaneity because it means that it is not easy for bureaucrats to crush it. Without spontaneity, you cannot explain the speed at which they spread. By the way, women played a very important part in all these struggles. In Egypt, in Jordan and in Tunisia. And I know that when the Tunisian struggle first erupted, there were lots of people looking with their microscopes to see if there was a single hijab and then they would say 'look, it is an Islamist struggle'. That is how it was sought to be portrayed so that the revolution itself could be downplayed. In Yemen yes, many women did wear the hijab but in Tunis there were very few. But that they played a role there is no question about it, all the evidence is there, and the participants, the women who participated write about it, I think in the *Guardian* a few days ago.

- 10) On Libya – do you agree that this is a tribal conflict, as Robert Fisk says and any suggestion of Benghazi driving militarily towards Tripoli would not happen because this is a tribal issue. Second, what are your views on the rising protests in the West Bank and Gaza to bring the Hamas and Gaza together. Do you like it and do you see hope in it?

**Tariq:** As for the West Bank and Gaza as to whether these demonstrations will grow in size - I hope so because the Palestinians have had a rough time. Not just from Israel but also from their own leadership. It is quite horrendous. And they know it. And, whether the mood will sweep them will depend a lot on what will happen in the neighboring countries.

- 11) Professor this is too important a historic occasion, and you are too powerful an intellectual to get away without telling us more about what has to be done. We are in a difficult position in Southern Africa, a somewhat constipated moment because we are all such aging academics. I'd like to propose a few Hegelian ruptures and challenge you to consider them. The first is to challenge the regional containment. North Africa has resisted its African identity, what we need is a conversation and a radical dialogue, not between elites in five star hotels but one between North and South. There are NGOs here, there are activists here, lets initiate that for 2011, the donors will love it. The second is that gentleman's point about food, food in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is significant, how do we break the generational divide between the old activists and the young ones? The young ones are seduced by glamour on the one hand but they are also concerned about their bodies. They are moved by issues of climate. What about a food charter that begins to bring together all of these issues connected to agro business? The third rupture relates to women activists. There is a commonality between the ultra left groups that you mention and the new elite. There is an African patriarchy that has contained what our movement can achieve. The fourth challenge is around the democracy of constitutions. We keep on setting these Western formulae as a platform from which to move forward but is it time to challenge those and create a new way of moving forward?

**Tariq:** Let me start with our Hegelian friend, and what is to be done, and the answers of that of course are not simple. I am in favour not only of a North Africa and South African dialogue but of a dialogue within South Africa itself.

Often, you have to start from where you are, and strengthen the region as a whole, socially, economically, politically, before that has an impact on the continent. And sometimes continents are so huge it's difficult to think in terms of continental solidarity. Think of Asia! It is a huge huge continent. You have the South East, the North East....totally different! South America is easier, because with the exception of Brazil they all speak the same language. The Arab world is simpler because they too share a common language. That is not the case in many other parts of the world, so it has to be done politically and socially and economically, and that is not an easy way out, especially I have to be honest in this continent which has been wracked by miseries of every sort, and man-created miseries. I mean if you look, none of us have mentioned the Congo today, but what has been going on today is horrendous, much much worse than anything in Darfur, with people trying to divide that country up, with different Western factions backing different gangs, with businessmen hiring soldiers to defend their diamond mining contracts. These are huge problems and I can't give you any easy answers for these. We can hope that answers will emerge. As for the difference between old activists and young activists, I agree, there are big differences. No generation is like its predecessors or like its successors, everything changes. I've always been very critical of people who criticize prior to these uprisings young people for not being like we were in the 60s. That's bullshit I don't like it. Because every generation is created by circumstances in which it grows up and things change. Why are people today more religious than they were in the 1960s/70s/80s. What is this hold that religion has over people in parts of the United States and in parts of the Muslim world etc. But in terms of how the problem will be sorted, the answer is very simple. It will be sorted by biology. Old activists will die. And then the world will be and the young activists to change on their own.

Let me tell you something though, we used to get a real frisson in the 60s when on the marches against the Vietnam war, suddenly a bunch of Spanish civil war veterans would turn up carrying banners that said 'Spanish Civil War Veterans against the War'. And in the US, many marines, especially African American marines who had fought in the Vietnam war and had become dissidents marched on the anti-Iraq war demonstrations with banners that said 'Vietnam Veterans against the War in Iraq'. The problem you refer to will be solved biologically.

With your remarks about feminism etc I agree, I don't have any differences there. In terms of constitutions, look, whatever country you live in in the world, it is no good that constitutions were invented in Europe. It is not accurate. Constitutions of one sort or another existed in societies. If you look at the code of Genghis Khan, the great Mongolian leader, he probably built the largest empire ever. Big open discussions took place, underneath the sky at night, when all used to participate in deciding on a code of conduct, on rules, on how should we operate because they were conquering country after country. So that was an early form of a constitution. So simply because a constitution is an English word does not mean that we don't need a constitution. Of course our constitutions should be bettered. They should be infinitely more democratic. The American constitution after all didn't give slaves the right to vote, as we all know. Britain still doesn't have a written constitution. We cannot ignore the problem because it comes from Europe. My position has always been that we pick up the best we can from any part of the world including Europe and including Africa and everywhere else. We shouldn't become exclusivists because that road doesn't lead anywhere. So don't give up on constitutions, think of creating a better one. Exclusivism can also be dangerous. When I see some of the statements coming out of the Youth League leaders in South Africa, it depresses me, because it's a sign of political bankruptcy, and it isolates the movement. You know, no one used to talk like this during the days of liberation. Black, whites, coloured people who fought against Apartheid, including the person after whom this lecture is named. Wolpe defended Mandela, was his lawyer. He escaped from a prison in 1963, made his way to Tanzania and cocked his nook at the Apartheid regime. No one every said anything about that. The fact that some people want to retreat to exclusivist politics is dangerous and it's a sign that they have nothing real to offer people.

- 12) I believe that capitalism has done a lot to improve the living standards of people in the world. Do you not believe that since you are a socialist prophet, is not a more centralist approach better going forward? Maybe the example of Lula in Brazil as opposed to Chavez in Venezuela?

**Tariq:** The young friend at the back said that capitalism is doing a lot of good things, well, for some people yeah. Its what we call 'socialism for the bankers'. You screw the system up right and proper, you break the law, not a single prosecution of these Wall Street crooks in the US. This is the state that you have been attacking. When the system you are defending collapses you go on your knees and say 'state please help us'. And the state uses taxpayer's money to bail you out.

And yes, Lula in Brazil, he's very different from Chavez in Venezuela. And many people in Brazil including the landless workers movement think that he is wrong on many things. There is a huge problem of landlessness in Brazil and there are huge tracks of land owned by the government which could be made available to the poor in cooperatives or even in individual allotments to solve this problem of landlessness. It has not been done because they didn't want to annoy the IMF and the Consensus. What has maintained Lula's popularity? It's a state measure, the *bolsa familia*. Its not much, but it does give all the people below a certain income level some amount of money so that they do not starve. That's good, I support that. No other Brazilian leader has ever done that. And Lula did it, but it's not enough. The education is in a total mess. Education is a privilege of the rich. The health system is not functioning in that country. That is why in the slums there is large scale violence taking place. And they are now using in Brazil the troops that were sent to Haiti after Aristide was overthrown, those troops who learnt how to pacify in Haiti are now pacifying the slums and favellas in Rio. So I don't need lessons on Lula.

- 13) Thank you very much for your speech, thank you very much for your comments. I am interested in your comments on the challenges facing the Chavez government, the limits to petro-socialism and the rise of croniest elements within the government. And what you think about the somewhat disappointing reaction of Chavez and Castro to Libya.

**Tariq:** Chavez and Castro on Libya. In my opinion, wrong. Wrong. It's a mistake, and the reason why they did it, is no doubt, we know that Gaddafi who allowed his own country to rot, who didn't use the oil wealth of his country to transform it, who insisted on preserving the tribal structures of Libya, precisely so he could hang on to power. He didn't want an educated country, but this guy in order to keep his name as a liberator, he did give Africa a lot of money. He gave the ANC money during Apartheid, he gave the IRA money in the struggle there, he gave the Sandinistas money in Nicaragua, he totally ignored the siege of Cuba and traded openly with Cuba. They see only that side of Gaddafi. And that's they do it, I understand why they do it, but I see it's a mistake. I've said as much in public by criticizing them. I said your responsibility isn't just to defend Gaddafi for giving money to liberation movements (because Chavez is very popular in the Arab world) but your responsibility is to the Arab people to give them alternatives. And the alternatives are visible. And one reason why Chavez is popular in the Middle East and his portrait is carried in many demonstrations is because of what they've done with their oil money, it hasn't gone to the pocket's of politicians. They use it to build schools, to build hospitals, to build universities for those families who could never afford these basic things. It's not a revolution, it's what social democrats used to preach after the Second World War, it appears very radical in this world. And so he is attacked as a populist and it doesn't make sense. These are the policies that have made him popular. So when he explains what he does with his oil wealth, the Arabs say we are sitting on this oil wealth, what is happening to it here?

- 14) Professor, in South Africa we suffer a lot, let me tell you something. The government of South Africa, especially in the Western Cape is busy with gentrification of Sea Point. What I'm asking is, how do you combine these struggles with the struggles of Egypt, because we suffer the same struggles. We are still living in Apartheid. It is only the white people who benefit in South Africa today. But my main question to you is, why does South Africa not learn from the Egypt experience in solidarity?

**Tariq:** The how do you continue the struggle here and in Egypt? Look, these are different countries, different political traditions, completely different political backgrounds. So there are lessons we can learn, and the main lesson is that the masses can make their own history – they may be defeated but they try to learn their own history. This is a lesson that South Africa also understood during the liberation struggle. But no struggle can be automatically replicated in another country regardless of the political conditions that remain there.

- 15) Can you maybe comment on the fact that there are clearly two Africa's – North and South. But, we have similar problems, dictated by our colonial heritage. How do we move away from that and learn from the Egyptian experience in places like Zimbabwe and Swaziland?

- 16) My question is regarding the limits to growth, and the crisis of capitalism as regarding peak oil, on food security and how they play the part in the uprising in North Africa...and what it means for the rest o the world.

The question about Libya, should there be a diplomatic solution? I think there has to be a diplomatic but a democratic solution. That the opposition, whose democratic credentials I am not convinced of at all, they might just be the same as Gaddafi, but might be better at the mood music. But I don't think there's a big democratic movement as such as in Egypt, Yemen and Tunisia. What has to be done is a meeting round the table where they say that the choice is not X or Y, the choice is whether the people have the right to elect an assembly to determine their future. Whether this can happen now I don't know, I fear that what we will see is two awful states. One led by Gaddafi and one which is a Western protectorate. And these squalid protectorates which litter the world are not pleasant places to be, I can tell you that – see the Balkans.