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The winter of 2009-2010 will not be remembered as one of rising expectations. Most people are expecting the worse, in spite of forced assurances made by world "leaders" claiming that the "excesses" of capitalist practice or government policies, in the past of course, have been corrected.

How can it be otherwise when such practices and policies are conceived and carried out within the confines of this system of production and the institutions designed to promote and defend it?

There is nothing radical or revolutionary in this statement. It is simply recognition of how beliefs and interests are necessarily linked.

But it is imperative to say it, because ideology is a powerful arm in the massive effort to convince populations that their interests are the same as those of their masters.

At the present time, the ideological orientation of many of the erstwhile decision makers and leaders has changed. The time of the Reagan-Bush-Blair type of blustering has given way to the slick, Clintonesque Obama type.

There is nothing new here: it is simply the return of the standard "good liberal" approach. It is putting a more "understanding," "humanistic" face on capitalist exploitation at home and imperialism abroad.

We hear that the stock market collapse was caused by bad investment decisions and practices; but we are not told that a system needing to maximize profit by any and all means is driven in this direction.

We are told that the wars in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, in Yemen and elsewhere may be mistakes that are now difficult to rectify; but they do not say that Obama and others must defend the same interests that Bush and others of his ilk defended.

In fact, the catastrophic effects of these decisions and politics are not the result of mistakes. They are logical consequences of the need to defend interests and the system that produces them.

We must face the facts: the ineptness of a Gordon Brown, the manifest cynicism of a Nicolas Sarkozy, the smiling poster-boy vacuity of a Barack Obama are signals that the system has run-out of political resources; its efforts at communication with people have almost reached their limits. We are now in a situation that tends towards some type of radical resolution of the tensions that have accumulated for more than a generation. Cause for optimism?