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FEATURE

SERBIA

The victory of student populism: a conflict of élites and the future of Serbia

Srđan Atanasovski

FEATURE

FRANCE

As 2027 approaches, where does class struggle trades unionism stand?

Léon Crémieux

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USA

On the Eve of the November US Elections

Kay Mann ·

In the closing weeks and days of the November US "midterm election" campaigns, the likelihood that the Democratic party will win enough local elections to give them a majority in the House of Representatives and possibly the Senate, has significantly increased as the Republicans find themselves on the defensive in several formerly "safe" electoral districts including some which have not seen a Democratic victory in decades.

After several years of seeming to be politically invincible, Trump has become increasingly unpopular including even in MAGA circles and is widely seen as a handicap for Republican candidates. Losing control over one or both houses of congress would represent a blow to Trump's domestic and international agenda. A defeat for congressional Republicans will also be a sharp rebuke to Trump himself who has stepped up his efforts to use state power to prevent Democratic party victories through lies about election fraud and non-citizen immigrants voting, attempts to use the courts to limit voting in Democratic areas, and dark threats to send armed ICE agents and even the military to polling stations.

The elections are referred to as "midterm" in reference to the academic calendar and take place at the halfway point of the four-year presidential mandate for many, but not all offices at the federal and state levels as well as elections for state governors. Trump has had a Republican majority in both house of congress which has acted as a rubber stamp for his imperialist adventures and assault on democratic rights, political institutions, vulnerable communities, and the environment. But Trump has pursued his reactionary agenda largely through executive orders that have often overstepped congressional authority. Trump will very likely continue to try to sidestep congress, particularly if the Democrats become the majority party in both houses. The Supreme Court with its conservative majority has largely also acted as a rubberstamp for Trump but has nonetheless shown an independent streak in several important rulings such as on the question of birthright citizenship and on his attempts to intervene in the voting process.

Invincible No More

Trump's slumping political fortunes are largely the predictable result of his own policies, particularly the high cost of living exacerbated by his tariff policies and the Iran war. His Republican allies have mostly sought to distance them from him. His insistence on weak candidates for Senate in South Carolina and Texas where Republicans have held those seats for decades, will likely be seen as major political gaffes in the event that Democrats prevail in those elections which could mean that the Republicans would lose their Senate majority. The billionaires behind Trump have been exasperated by the tariffs which have mostly harmed them, and some sectors such as agriculture and meatpacking, areas with large, mostly Mexican immigrant labor have come to resent the scope of Trump's anti-immigrant campaign. Latinos, a population of which over 40% has voted Republican in recent national elections have recoiled at the violence and cruelty of the ICE terror campaign against immigrant Latino communities.

The anticipated victory of enough Democratics to take over the House of Representatives and possibly the Senate has nothing to do with the

Democrats offering any progressive alternative to Trump's policy. During Trump's worst outrages from the deployment of violent ICE brigades in US cities and the deportations, to the kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores and the looting of the Venezuela's oil wealth, to the attack on trans people, to the war on Iran, no oppositional voices have been milder that those of the congressional Democratic party congressional leaders, Chuck Shumer, leader of the Democratic party delegation in the Senate, and Hakeem Jeffries, Democratic leader of the Democratic delegation in the House of Representatives. It was the Democratic party's slide to right and its embrace of neo-liberal economic and social policies that help make Trump's first victory in 2016 over Hillary Clinton possible. If the Democrats take the majority in the House of Representatives and much more so if they win the Senate majority and thus control both house of congress, they will be under immense pressure to undo Trump's policy faster and more thoroughgoing than they would like.

The Big Tent

There is also a discussion within the Democratic Party and DSA on the relation between the two. Bernie Sanders favors a big tent party with a range of political and ideological currents which would include DSA. The reformist and electoralist currents in DSA are very interested in having a seat at the table. DSA-endorsed Francesca Hong, a Wisconsin state representative who ran and narrowly lost, in the Democratic Party primary for governor spoke in favor of a big tent Democratic party during a televised debate. Hong is now campaigning for David Crowley, who narrowly beat her in the gubernatorial Democratic primary with support from the Democratic party establishment. The conservative big money wing of the Democratic party is largely against giving the democratic socialists a place in the party although some enlightened centrists could very well see advantages in integrating an energetic electoralist oriented left wing which it could control better within the party than without. As gangsters in the Francis Ford Coppola film The Godfather reasoned, one should "keep your friends close, and your enemies even closer." In any event, if all DSA-endorsed candidates for the House of Representatives win their elections, they would have a delegation of seven (there are currently 214 Democrats to 218 Republicans), far too small to have much influence on party policy.

DSA at a Crossroads

Since its rapid growth beginning with Bernie Sanders' campaign for the Democratic Party presidential nomination in 2016, DSA has not endorsed a candidate for President. Currently however, the more pro-Democratic party reformist wing in the DSA leadership seems to favor DSA endorsing a candidate for the 2028 presidential elections and it would be in the Democratic party, very possibly Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Many on the revolutionary socialist left today also support the strategy of using the Democratic party ticket - the so-called "dirty break" with the Democratic party - as opposed to those who support a "clean break" with the Democrats in favor of independent political action. Revolutionary socialists who favor using the Democratic party ballot line see it as a short-term tactic on the road to building a left alternative or Labor party at some point in the future. But as Kim Moody recently put it, this "tactic becomes strategy." Indeed, there are clearly widespread illusions among the largely inexperienced DSA membership about the possibility of transforming the capitalist-run Democratic party into a pro-working class, anti-capitalist party. For many DSA members, running in Democratic Party primaries is a strategy.

The Mamdani Experience

Zohran Mamdani's victory for Mayor of New York city and the good possibilities that DSA endorsed candidates for mayor in Washington DC and Los Angeles could win in November, have put wind in the sails of the strategy of using the Democratic

party ballot line to win primaries and then general elections. But a closer look at Mamdani's experience in office reveals the contradictions and limitations of socialists running as Democratics with Democratic political and material resources.

The victory of Zohran Mamdani in the New York Democratic mayoral primary election which all but assured his victory in the general election has had a big impact on debates on the left and in DSA. In the primary Mamdani faced Andrew Cuomo, the former governor of New York state who was accused by several women of sexual harassment, which made Mamdani's primary victory possible which in turn all but assured his victory in the general election given the strength of the Democrats and weakness of the Republicans in New York city politics. Mamdani appealed directly to working class New Yorkers with a program of rent control, free public transportation, and affordable childcare. Winning the Democratic Party primary gave Mamdani access to considerable political and material resources including the endorsement of centrist Democrat Governor of New York, Kathy Hochul.

But of course, this support came with strings attached. Hochul made it clear that Mamdani's proposal to levy a billionaire's tax on the great fortunes to pay for his programs was off the table. He has also felt politically constrained to retain the former police chief Jessica Tisch, a billionaire in her position even after NYC police aided ICE agents who recently killed a person during a violent operation. To these political constraints preventing Mamdani from acting consistently on behalf of working-class New Yorkers are added institutional constraints facing any mayor. Budgetary restraints prevented Mamdani from supporting the just demand of New York city's paraprofessionals for a one-time ten-thousand-dollar bonus.

Independent Political Action

The Mamdani experience and the debates on the left regarding the use of the Democratic party ballot line is the most recent incarnation of the debate around the question of independent political action. The absence of a mass political party with some sort of institutional connection to the labor movement is a key aspect of American exceptionalism and an important barrier to the independent mobilization of the working class outside of the two main capitalist parties. Revolutionary socialists in the US have long considered the independent pollical organization of the working class and its allies as a fundamental and necessary step to bring the working class out of its atomization and political subordination to the capitalist parties, towards anticapitalist class consciousness, action, and organization. The DSA today has the opportunity to help solve the question of independent working-class political action by educating its members and political audience on the class nature of the Democratic party and agitating on the need for a mass independent socialist or labor party.

However, reformist currents in the DSA leadership particularly the Groundwork and Socialist Majority caucuses have come out in favor of DSA endorsing a candidate for the 2028 presidential election, beginning with endorsing a candidate in the Democratic party primaries. They have launched a campaign to "draft" Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) as candidate in the Democratic party primaries. Some revolutionary socialists like the Bread and Roses caucus in DSA also support an AOC candidacy in the Democratic primaries.

Post-election Period

The post-election period will present a new political terrain. If the Democrats win control of both houses of congress, they will be under enormous pressure to undo the damage Trump has done. Such pressure would likely push the Schumer-Jeffries congressional Democratic party establishment to go further than it would like on issues such as US support to Israel, tax cuts, transgender rights on which they have already shown themselves as unreliable allies, environmental deregulation, releasing the Epstein files, and much of the mostly neo-liberal agenda that Trump and his Republican congressional majority have enacted. Their inevitable hesi-

tancy on these issues will further expose their true nature to those on the left who still harbor illusions on the progressive nature of the Democratic party. The post-election period will also signal the opening of the campaigns for the 2028 presidential elections.

The coming period will also be a crossroads for DSA. Will it chart a course that will bring it and the energy of 135,000, mostly young members into the Democratic party where that energy will be dissipated? Or will it help create an independent political alternative for workers and the oppressed to fight Trump's neo-fascist, imperialist, extractivist neo-liberal attacks and lay the groundwork for a mass labor party outside and in opposition to the two capitalist parties?

The post-election period will also hopefully signal the return of mass anti-Trump protests. With the exception of a recent massive "protect the vote" called by the pro-Democratic party, NGO-dominated No Kings! apparatus, the mass movement has been largely dormant during the last few months as social movement energy was diverted first to Democratic primary electoral activity, and over the last few months, to the general elections.

Milwaukee,
30 October 2026

France

The groundswell that threatens Macron and his world

Léon Crémieux ·

Given the massive turnout (including a multitude of young people) at the few demonstrations that were able to take place on the weekend of October 24-25 in France (some authorized, others not, such as in Bordeaux and Marseille), as well as the one organized against the National Rally congress in Orléans (20,000 demonstrators), it is clear that the social protest movement that began in September reached a turning point on October 17. With the next major event scheduled for November 5, with the call for strikes and demonstrations against all the anti-social measures of the Lecornu government, tensions continue to rise in France. [1]

October 17th was a historic day of mobilization in France, comparable in numbers to the major pension protests of 2023. 800,000 people (550,000 according to the police), more than one hundred declared demonstrations, plus numerous others, undeclared, in towns and neighbourhoods.

A social crisis, with deep roots, is being dramatically expressed today, echoing similar crises in many other countries, always centred on the massive mobilization of youth. And the violence that has erupted in the streets across the country against businesses and institutional buildings, perpetrated by minority groups but widespread in every city, is unfortunately a reflection of the social violence experienced daily by millions of men and women who suffer from precariousness and poverty—a violence constantly exacerbated by the policies of Macron's governments, which target the working class, remain indifferent to social misery, and protect the privileges of the wealthiest people and of large corporations.

The unprecedented nature of the protests

The first characteristic of the current mobilizations is their unprecedented nature, forcefully manifested on October 17th: a massive, even unexpected, surge, a convergence not only of anger but also of very concrete social demands, coming from the Yellow Vest collectives that emerged from the 2018 mobilizations, from high school and university student organizations and coordinating bodies, and from the CGT, FSU, and Solidaires unions. Thus, a broad mix, with young people at its centre, mobilized and self-organized in various ways for over a month. We can say that the current movement is a resurgence of the significant mobilizations that have appeared in the country over the past ten years: the Yellow Vests, the mobilizations in working-class suburbs against police violence and discrimination, and finally, the massive demonstrations by workers against pension reform. The strength of this movement cannot be understood without also considering the role of #MeToo, the mobilizations against social violence, and those against large-scale, unnecessary projects, notably the Sainte Soline mega-basin. In fact, the entire catastrophic record of the Macron governments since 2017 is exploding to the surface, a "supply-side policy", made up each year of 270 billion euros in subsidies and gifts to businesses and the richest layers of society [2], and of deep wounds for the working classes, for social rights, purchasing power and public services, leading today to the most stinging rejection of a president and a government since the beginning of the Fifth Republic in 1958.

The date of October 17th originated from a call on social media, starting on September 8th on TikTok , protesting the high cost of living and soaring fuel prices. Dozens of posters echoing the Yellow Vest movement's themes circulated, organizing rallies in numerous cities across the country, from rural areas to small and medium-sized towns, using en-

crypted messaging. Joining them were the initiators of the "Block Everything" movement, who had already called for a major day of action in September 2025 against the high cost of living and tax injustice. They created a national map of the rallies, which quickly filled most regions and localities. Former Yellow Vest leaders, also active on social media, then took up the mantle.

This proliferation of grassroots calls, outside of any real political or union organization, is the first characteristic of October 17th, bringing together workers and those in precarious employment, often the first to be hit in recent months by heatwaves in inadequate housing, by the soaring price of food, and by the cost of energy. The anger is obviously all the greater because the minority government of Macron and Lecornu is constantly cutting back on social redistribution programmes and has been promising, since the summer, a 2027 budget that once again exempts the wealthy, capital gains, and large corporations from taxation, multiplying exemptions, aid, and subsidies for them, while severely impacting the working class, young people, and pensioners. The Yellow Vest movement in 2018 and 2019 was a profound wave of mobilization across the country, particularly in semi-urban areas. It began in protest against increased fuel taxes, the price of which had already risen sharply in previous years, but quickly broadened to include a rejection of the tax burden and the loss of public services in rural and semi-urban areas, resulting in job losses, hospital closures, and disruptions to public transportation. Essentially, it mirrored the situation experienced in working-class neighbourhoods of major cities. The movement grew by organizing around more than 1,000 Facebook groups, with over 4 million members. Around 3 million people participated in the Yellow Vest protests across the country, expanding their demands to include lists of grievances in their lists of grievances. The Yellow Vest movement witnessed an explosion of police violence, with people maimed by LBD ("sub-lethal" defence weapon) fire or stun grenades: one death, 613 people injured, 23 who lost an eye, five hands torn off. "The police have injured more protesters in a few months than in twenty years." [3] The violent way of dealing with popular demonstrations had already been organized in 2016 by the Socialist government of Manuel Valls in response to the protests against the El Khomri labour law. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Amnesty International have since condemned this violent handling of the demonstrations, the abuses, and the use of "intermediate force" weapons, such as LBD 40s, Tasers, tear gas grenades, and crowd control grenades, described as "sub-lethal" but which have repeatedly become deadly weapons.

The power of the youth movement

The initial strength of the October 17th movement stemmed first and foremost from this deep-rooted popular momentum. Then, of course, came the power of the youth movement, which began in high schools in underprivileged suburbs of France's overseas territories in early September and continued unabated for over a month until October 17th, despite the violence and police repression it faced.

The triggering factor was the poor learning conditions: teacher absences, unsanitary facilities, and overcrowded classrooms, all the more unbearable after weeks of sweltering heat in their homes. Here too, it was a grassroots movement that quickly took hold. Initially, without much resonance in mainland France, blockades began in Mayotte and French Guiana at the start of the school year, in late August and early September, demanding the renovation and ventilation of classrooms, protesting cafeteria prices, and generally denouncing the state of neglect and the feeling of social exclusion—clear demands and great determination.

In France itself, the blockades began on September 17th at a high school in Créteil, in the Paris region, echoing the demands put forward by teachers. There, too, the issues of facilities, but also overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, impossible schedules, and the demand for the repeal of two measures introduced at the beginning of Macron's

first term in 2017-2018: the Blanquer reform (dismantling the academic tracks—literature, science, economics—in high schools and replacing them with "a choice of specializations") coupled with the implementation of a ruthless selection process for university admissions after the baccalaureate, "Parcoursup." This platform closes the door to numerous programmes, excludes students from working-class backgrounds from many higher education pathways, and, for example, in 2026, left 126,000 young people out of nearly 900,000 baccalaureate graduates without a university placement. The verdict is unequivocal: despite a "baccalaureate for all," since 80 per cent of an age group obtains a baccalaureate, 57 per cent of that same group do not obtain a general baccalaureate, the only qualification required for access to university bachelor's and master's programmes. "Parcoursup," with its algorithm, ensures a remarkably efficient form of social sifting. All studies demonstrate the harsh reality of social reproduction, and its intensification since 2020. [4]

Young people in working-class neighbourhoods

Among young people, those in working-class neighbourhoods experience the daily violence of social discrimination, alongside that experienced by their parents and that perpetrated against them by the police. This violence has intensified significantly in the last month with the school blockades, which were criminalized from the outset and classified by the Ministry of the Interior as urban violence, are unfortunately a long-standing issue in the country.

For twenty years, young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods have repeatedly expressed their anger and demands in the face of their exclusion and social marginalization. This began in 1990 in Vaulx-en-Velin, a suburb of Lyon, and again in 2005 when two teenagers, Zyed Benna, 17, and Bouna Troré, 15, were killed in Clichy-sous-Bois, pursued by the police and electrocuted in an electrical substation where they had sought refuge. Several weeks of riots ensued in the neighbourhoods, demanding social justice, avenging the deaths of the two young men, and denouncing police brutality.

This mobilization, instead of being treated by the government as a social issue, was treated as riots of urban violence, perpetrated by "vandals, thugs," and "scum," as the then Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, called them.

"Nothing has changed," as Mekki Daouadji Djilali, president of ACLeFeu , a collective created in Clichy-sous-Bois after the deaths of Zyed and Bouna, reiterated in an interview twenty years later. The collective had drawn up a list of grievances outlining the population's priorities. At the time, 20,000 contributions were gathered from 120 cities. Twenty years later, the problems and priorities remain the same. "Since 2005, all the reforms implemented have been security-focused, not social," adds Mohamed Mechmache, a founding member of ACLeFeu. But, for political leaders, young people from working-class neighbourhoods, especially those from post-colonial immigrant families, cannot be political actors, bearers of social struggles and demands. The same pattern has been repeated several times, for example in June 2023, with the death of Nahel Mezrouk, a 17-year-old killed at point-blank range by a police officer during a traffic stop in Nanterre.

This profound dynamic originating in high schools in working-class neighbourhoods quickly spread to other high schools, universities and, unprecedentedly, to the "prestigious" grandes écoles HEC, IEP, Ecole des Mines explicitly in solidarity against social segregation, [5] 90 per cent of universities blocked the week of October 11-17, universities where more than 100,000 places are lacking to accommodate students .

The demands put forward by the high school student movement have been clear from the start: unions and coordinating bodies have united in their demand for the abolition of Parcoursup and the Blanquer reform, the creation of sufficient positions to address the shortages of teachers, nurses, and social workers, and a €10 billion euro budget

increase to allow for the renovation of school buildings and their adaptation to climate change. The government has so far refused to provide any concrete response to these demands, even treating them with contempt.

But the underlying trend among young people reflects a multifaceted awakening of consciousness. LFI MP Louis Boyard explains the four main drivers of youth politicization:

- -the #MeToo movement and the prominent role played by young women with a feminist culture,
- -global climate strikes,
- -the revolts of working-class neighbourhoods against racism, particularly after the death of Nahel,
- -Palestine and the horror of the genocide committed by the Zionist regime.

All of this calls into question Macron and his world, and his sinister continuity in what the far right promises. [6]

The movement of youth and the Yellow Vest movement converge with the broader social concerns of workers : the lack of response to social needs, inadequate public services, the cost of living, starting with energy and food, and the increasing impoverishment of the working class. The poverty rate (60 per cent of the median income) is 15.4 per cent, affecting 9.8 million people, a rate that has been rising since the mid-2000s. France was once one of the countries with a low poverty rate thanks to its redistribution systems. The dismantling of these systems since the mid-2010s has undermined this safety net.

The combined effects of pension reform, the rising cost of living, job insecurity, housing difficulties, and stagnant or meagre wage increases are creating an increasingly difficult situation for workers and their families. The mobilizations against pension reform in 2023 expressed this widespread discontent and demanded a different social policy. The rejection of Macron's policies and their budgets, which disproportionately impact the working class, was expressed electorally in 2022 and 2024. Successive minority Macronist governments have since survived only thanks to the leniency of the Socialist Party, which saved the adoption of the 2026 public finance and social security budgets and accepted farcical social negotiations with Bayrou and Lecornu that led only to dead ends: in the spring of 2025, Bayrou's "conclave," and in the autumn of 2025, the "suspension of pension reform" and the "conference on pensions and work" justified the Socialist Party's (PS) reprieves granted to Macron's government and made possible a division among the unions. the unions. Indeed, on two occasions, the CFDT, CFTC, and CGC unions seized this opportunity, which led to no government backing down.

This autumn, a new landscape is emerging, and the role of militant unionism could be decisive in the outcome of the current social conflict. Following a joint day of mobilization and demonstrations on September 29th, public sector unions had set November 5th as the date for a future day of action focused on defending public services and increasing the minimum wage and salaries. Many felt that November 5th was too late, given the urgent need to strengthen and support the youth mobilization. Furthermore, October included several key events for the youth movement and the Yellow Vest protests. Solidaires, therefore, preferred to wait until October 17th o make a call for action on November 5th in order to mobilize first during October. And, in practice, the CGT, FSU, and Solidaires unions supported the blockades throughout October, protected the high school student marches from the police, and were present on October 17th. The rest of the national inter-union alliance did not follow the same movement, although many unions, at least the CFDT and FO, were involved locally and through their education federations.

Also, on the 17th, the role of the unions was very important, providing the link to all the other components, and they were not spared by the police forces, as in Toulouse where the front line of the

union procession was hit by grenades, resulting in injuries to four union leaders.

A turning point

Now, we are at a pivotal moment in the movement.

The government and the right wing were completely destabilized by the scale of the high school student movement and the political prominence it gained. For several weeks, they played the card of isolating young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, seeking to discredit and criminalize them, and portray them as being manipulated by La France Insoumise (LFI). The generalization of this movement to all young people was therefore surprising, but Lecornu remained steadfast in his refusal to back down or accommodate the students' demands. The students' interlocutors were the police and the Minister of the Interior. The method was to strike hard through repression, with a systematic smear campaign by the media, systematically stigmatizing young people as vandals and accusing "the far left, supported by LFI, of aiming to destabilize the Republic." The Republican Party even called for the dissolution of La France Insoumise and the imposition of a state of emergency. [7]

The violent crackdown by the police went hand in hand with mass arrests of young people as a form of political propaganda, aimed at deterring them from continuing to take part in the movement: 10,000 arrests, including 7,000 minors, between early September and 17 October. Nights spent in police custody in often appalling conditions, such as those reported in Bobigny; summary court appearances; and prison sentences even at the first hearing for young adults. Arrests have become political tools, previously used against young people in the suburbs in 2005 (5,643 young people arrested) and against the Yellow Vests (6,786 arrests). This mass intimidation and criminalisation has failed to prevent either the continuation or the expansion of the movement, nor its convergence with the trade union movement.

With the current movement, the government has been caught off guard, having assumed that the left and the working classes would be paralysed by the fragmentation of the left and the moderation of the trade union front. Lecornu wanted to be able to continue with a policy and a 2027 budget that would hit the working classes, imposing over 40 billion in cuts to social spending, with attacks on pensioners and young people, and a freeze on civil servants' salaries. These cuts were justified by invoking the unbearable level of public debt, whilst the government refuses to challenge the derisory taxation of capital gains and large corporations, and has approved a 6.5 billion increase in the military budget over two years.

This draft budget went hand in hand with an increasingly security-focused discourse that was increasingly permeable to the proposals and rhetoric of the National Rally.

Destabilised and shaken by the strength of the 17 October protests and the alliance with the militant wing of the trade union movement, Macron and Lecornu re-enacted the tragedy already scripted by the bourgeois leaders of the 19th century, and the great fear inspired by the Paris Commune: the working classes are, above all, dangerous classes; the rabble threatens the right to property; the police and the army must protect our lives and our property.

The images of smashed shop windows and hundreds of shops looted on 17 October in the centres of major cities were the trigger for a terrifying spiral of state repression: curfews in city centres, banned demonstrations, and heavy prison sentences. This spiral, applauded by the far right, was aimed just as much at silencing criticism of the police's inability to protect city centres as it was at trying to paralyse and silence the social movement and to dissociate the trade unions from future protests. Following the example of Zemmour (who blamed 'Arab-Muslim scum'), Retailleau, Ciotti, Bardella – all the leaders of the far right have, for several days now, been engaging in a barrage of racist rhetoric directed at young people and the

protests, finding themselves, surprisingly, in lockstep with Trump and Netanyahu, who denounce 'the Islamic invasion of France'. All the television channels are broadcasting endless loops of footage showing the vandalism of public buildings, shops and burnt-out cars. Day after day, editorialists condemn the intolerable violence suffered by shopkeepers, without ever having paid the slightest attention to, or shed the slightest light on, the working classes' descent into precariousness and the impossibility of making a decent living. This everyday violence has very rarely been given a place in the media. But, caught out by its own security policy, the government has been accused of failing to protect small shopkeepers or even town halls, as in Marseille.

Since then, Macron and Lecornu have been stammering, calling both for order and for a ban on demonstrations, invoking "the Republic in danger and the seditious threat posed by La France Insoumise and its proxies", and, after a month of refusal, rushing into hasty meetings with representatives of the youth movement, on Monday 26th with the Prime Minister, then finally on the 23rd with Macron himself, only to announce that they would provide answers later! On the 24th, dozens of demonstrations were banned by the prefectures, then authorised, diverted from their planned routes, with some bans even overturned by the administrative courts. The authorities are stepping up their crackdown, striking hard, yet at the same time hesitating for fear of revealing their weakness and lack of authority in the face of a movement that persists and remains determined to secure its demands. Today, it is Macron and his government who are caught in a trap, and this makes them all the more dangerous.

The government now fears that the movement, far from running out of steam, will spread like wildfire in the coming days with strikes by workers, particularly around 5 November. Consequently, Macron and Lecornu are continuing to isolate themselves by refusing to make even the slightest concession to young people (...whilst announcing a meeting with youth organisations on Monday 26 October and an 'overhaul' of Parcoursup) and are taking a decisive step towards repression and authoritarianism. During the forthcoming demonstrations, the Minister of the Interior plans to deploy not only the police and the gendarmerie, but also the RAID – a police unit responsible for counter-terrorism operations – and forces from Operation Sentinelle, military personnel also tasked with counter-terrorism operations on the mainland, as well as the BRI (the brigade responsible for combating organised crime)... All this illustrates a hardening of authoritarian tendencies, applauded by the RN and the LR, who are calling for the imposition of a state of emergency with the suspension of civil liberties, but it also reveals the government's political weakness. Over the weekend of 24 and 25 October, dozens of demonstrations have been banned or prevented from following their planned routes through town centres.

So clearly, the movement is heading for a make-or-break moment. Either the police crackdown will succeed in stifling the movement whilst bombarding public opinion with images of 'terror organised by the far-left and LFI', or the protests will converge with sections of the workforce through rallies, joint actions in towns and cities, and, above all, with professional sectors going on strike, particularly around 5 November.

Solidaires has explicitly put forward this strategy by calling for general assemblies in workplaces and raising the prospect of strikes across as many sectors as possible from 5 November onwards. The CGT, through Sophie Binet, has also set its sights on strikes on 5 November and beyond; the FSU is likewise calling for discussions on the follow-up to this day of strike action in workplaces, having already served notice of strike action running until the end of November. Thus, in different ways, these three trade unions are setting out their priorities without allowing themselves to be held back by the pace set by the national inter-union alliance with the other unions (notably the CFDT, FO and UNSA). This is clearly the lesson drawn by the mili-

tant trade unions from the strikes of 2023. This issue is recognised by all the militant elements within the trade union movement.

The threat of the National Rally

Last but by no means least. Everyone on the left understands that the motivation behind the current mobilisation is also the fight against the threat of the National Rally on the brink of political power. There is a growing fear that the fragmentation on the left – exacerbated by the victory, for the time being, of the most social-liberal wing within the Socialist Party (with Glucksman's candidacy) and the rejection of Mélenchon's candidacy by the other partners of the former NFP (the Ecologists, the PCF and Après) – will lead to a fratricidal war on the left and to a victory for Le Pen. The current movement could therefore also shift the political landscape through a grassroots movement, making it necessary to build unity as had been achieved in 2024.

Few people have taken notice, but in Orléans, a broad unity on the left – bringing together the PS and LFI side by side – was forged to call for opposition to the RN's congress on the weekend of 24 and 25 October. In contrast to the current situation on the left, left-wing forces in the Loiret issued a call 'to build a popular and united front'. In order to oppose the RN and "prevent Pétain's heirs from regaining power", they called on "all progressive forces – associations, trade unions and political parties – the cultural sector, and all citizens deeply committed to the democratic values of peace and freedom to join this popular and progressive gathering". [8]

Building a social balance of power capable of forcing Macron and Lecornu to back down is possible, even if this was not the case a few weeks ago, but the energy of all activist forces will be decisive in achieving this. This can and must be combined with the struggle to forge a united political and social front to oust Macron and his clique and prevent the RN from gaining access to the presidency.

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SERBIA

The victory of student populism: a conflict of élites and the future of Serbia

SRĐAN ATANASOVSKI ·

The victory of the Student List in Serbia's parliamentary elections on October 25, 2026, brings to an end fourteen years of dominance by Aleksandar Vučić and his Serbian Progressive Party. With approximately 53% of the vote and a projected absolute majority in parliament, the Student List has achieved a result that, until recently, seemed almost unimaginable. The nature of this victory and Serbia's political future are difficult to grasp through conventional categories—such as government versus opposition, liberalism versus conservatism, or European integration versus national sovereignty.

At the heart of Serbia's political transformation lay a mass student movement, and behind that was a conflict between two elites: the political elite built by the Vučić regime over the preceding decade and a half, and an academic elite that had remained relatively independent of his system of governance. The decisive factor was the latter's ability to forge an alliance with the student movement, which had developed a distinctive form of participatory populism. This alliance enabled the political mobilisation that led to a change in government.

This populist movement did not emerge around demands for a radical transformation of Serbia's economic or foreign policy. In many areas it replicated the existing political consensus, promising that similar policies could be implemented without corruption, organised crime, nepotism, or hiring based on party affiliation. The greatest challenge facing the new government will be to dismantle the clientelist mechanisms of the previous regime while simultaneously demonstrating whether its relatively popular economic model can be sustained without resorting to those same mechanisms of capital accumulation and political control.

A single-party system within a multiparty democracy

One of the most significant features of Vučić's political dominance was the systematic weakening of the multiparty system, even as the formal institutions of parliamentary democracy remained in place. The Serbian Progressive Party sought to incorporate nearly all political actors with significant electoral support. Political organisations and their leaders were offered positions within the ruling coalition—often through guaranteed spots on joint electoral lists—while those who refused to cooperate faced various forms of pressure, marginalisation, and political destruction.

The result was an attempt to establish a kind of single-party system within a formally multiparty democracy. Almost all significant ideological positions found a place within the governing coalition—from nationalist and conservative currents to liberal, pro-European, and socially oriented ones. Ideological conflicts shifted, to a large extent, from the arena of electoral competition to the internal relations of the ruling bloc. Elections increasingly became referendums on the exercise of power and attitudes toward the Vučić regime, rather than contests between alternative political programmes. Opposition parties that remained outside this system failed to build a sufficiently broad social base or to establish a distinct political agenda.

At the same time, Vučić developed an exceptionally extensive party and electoral apparatus. Its functioning relied on political loyalty, control over pub-

lic-sector employment, the securing of so-called "capillary" votes—votes garnered through granular, localised networks—and various forms of pressure on voters. Membership in the ruling party, or a willingness to secure votes for it, became a key prerequisite for obtaining employment, advancing one's career, and accessing public resources. Gradually, this system extended beyond its electoral purpose, becoming a fundamental mechanism for organising social and economic relations.

For a teacher who had spent years on temporary contracts, a healthcare worker awaiting a permanent position, or an employee of a public-sector enterprise, party affiliation could directly determine one's professional future. Similar mechanisms extended into the private sector through business networks, public procurement, and privileged access to state resources. Alongside the major financial scandals reported in the media, corruption became an everyday experience for a large segment of the population. Almost anyone seeking employment, career advancement, or access to certain entitlements could find themselves confronting the consequences of partisan clientelism.

Alongside systemic nepotism, the regime was beset by serious scandals that raised questions about the links between state structures and organised crime. These include the Jovanjica case—which involved the discovery of a large marijuana plantation allegedly protected by members of the security services—and a murder in a Belgrade restaurant, the alleged cover-up of which implicated the then-chief of the Belgrade police. The problem for Vučić was that, once established, the network of loyalties required the ongoing protection of its members. Penalising individuals for criminal activity or corruption could threaten the stability of the entire system, which rested on the expectation that political loyalty would be rewarded and protected.

Consequently, the electoral machinery gradually became a burden for the regime itself. The mechanisms that enabled it to remain in power simultaneously generated increasingly widespread social discontent.

The academic elite that Vučić failed to incorporate

Unlike the political and business elites—which he successfully brought into his fold through a system of mutual interests—Vučić never managed to fully incorporate Serbia's academic elite.

By "academic elite," I mean a broader stratum of highly qualified professionals—professional managers, economists, lawyers, intellectuals, university professors, researchers, and individuals working in non-governmental organisations. Their social authority is based primarily on education, professional qualifications, and experience, rather than on control of the party apparatus. Throughout his tenure, Vučić sought to attract segments of this elite. The appointment of Ana Brnabić to high-level government positions and the rise of Siniša Mali were key elements of this effort. Through figures such as these, individuals from the business and academic worlds, as well as from the NGO sector, were brought into the state administration and political leadership to provide the regime with professional legitimacy and an image of modernisation.

This alliance remained relatively limited and unstable. Universities—with the University of Belgrade at the forefront—never became solid strongholds for the ruling party. University faculty and researchers had long expressed their discontent with the regime, though this dissatisfaction was not necessarily linked to a shared oppositional ideology. Shortly before the outbreak of student protests, the conflict intensified following announcements that foreign private universities might gain access to public funds earmarked for higher education. A model of this kind—similar to certain educational voucher systems—raised the possibility of diverting budgetary resources from public universities to private institutions. The academic community viewed this as a threat that would lead to the further subordination of education to corporate interests linked to political power. Consequently, the conflict between the universities and the regime also affected the immediate material interests of the academic community.

When the roof of the reconstructed Novi Sad railway station collapsed in November 2024, resulting in the deaths of sixteen people, this pre-existing conflict took on an entirely new dimension. The tragedy was widely seen as emblematic of a system in which political loyalty, opaque management, and corrupt relationships had displaced expert knowledge and professional accountability. Regardless of the specific technical causes of the collapse, the question arose as to how a major infrastructure project—touted as a symbol of the country's modernisation—could have been completed without adequate safety oversight.

The student rebellion that followed received broad support from university faculty. This alliance also had a very immediate basis: students and professors already knew one another, met daily within their faculties, and shared the same institutional space. For the students, the academic elite included their own professors, with whom they could communicate and cooperate directly. Despite occasional conflicts surrounding blockades, universities—the University of Belgrade in particular—became crucial pillars of the movement, providing it with institutional, moral, and practical support.

The regime responded to the rebellion by relying even more heavily on party cadres. The formation of Đuro Macut's government, following the political crisis triggered by the protests, did not lead to any meaningful reconciliation with the academic community. Individuals who had failed to demonstrate sufficient loyalty to the party were further sidelined from the government—a dynamic that reinforced a system in which real political power resided within the party's informal hierarchy, while ministers and other formal officeholders enjoyed only limited autonomy.

Student plenaries and the emergence of a populist movement

The student movement that emerged from university occupations developed a distinctive organisational model based on direct democracy. General assemblies were established within the faculties, where students made decisions regarding their demands, protests, and other activities. Participation in these assemblies varied considerably, and over time, informal hierarchies emerged. Working groups tasked with preparing proposals often gained substantial autonomy, while the assemblies would ratify decisions crafted by a relatively small number of active participants. As the movement progressed, the number of students directly involved in day-to-day decision-making gradually declined.

Nevertheless, the plenary assemblies remained the primary source of legitimacy for the student movement. Their importance also lay in their capacity to generate broad social mobilisation. Student marches between cities, multi-day treks, bicycle journeys, mass demonstrations, and complex logistical operations all involved a large number of young people. Many did not necessarily participate in formulating political demands, yet by organising these activities, they became active members of the movement. The student movement allowed them to integrate into a broader political community through collective action, without requiring them to adopt a specific political ideology beforehand.

The students carefully avoided ideological and political stances that might undermine broad social support, and sought to present themselves as a movement representing the interests of society as a whole. Although the organisational model of the plenary assemblies bore affinities to anarchist and horizontalist traditions, its political content was not revolutionary. Broad participation fostered the reproduction of prevailing social attitudes, since only those demands acceptable to a large number of participants could garner support. The radicalism of the student movement lay primarily in its methods of organisation and its challenge to the existing government, rather than in its ideological programme.

The alliance between populism and expert knowledge

The most unusual feature of the student movement was its alliance with the academic elite. In many

contemporary Western societies, populist movements develop in opposition to educated elites, experts, and professional managers. Academic institutions are often portrayed as part of an alienated establishment, detached from the everyday concerns of ordinary people. In Serbia, a mass populist movement embraced the academic elite as a natural political ally. Education, expert knowledge, professional qualifications, and cultural capital became central elements of its political identity.

This was clearly reflected in the way the students were presented to the public. They were portrayed as educated, honest, responsible and capable young people—future doctors, engineers, teachers and specialists. Particular emphasis was placed on the message that they wished to remain in Serbia and build their professional futures in their own country. This narrative resonated directly with the prevailing discontent regarding the Vučić regime. In a society where employment and career advancement depend on political connections, the natural alternative is one that values knowledge, qualifications, and professional competence. The fight against corruption and nepotism thus became the link between the academic elite and the populist base.

This alliance also entailed a certain fetishisation of expert knowledge: the expectation that individuals with the appropriate training and professional qualifications—free from ties to the discredited political class—would be better equipped to govern the country. Such a belief overlooks the fact that expert knowledge in a specific field does not automatically translate into political competence, and that professional elites have their own social interests, which do not always align with those of the majority of the population. Nevertheless, the combination of populist mobilisation and the authority of expert knowledge enabled the student movement to extend beyond the universities and emerge as a serious political alternative.

This was also reflected in the composition of the Student List. Among its candidates were university professors, economists, lawyers, specialists from various fields, and a significant number of individuals from non-governmental organisations.

Why the student movement did not develop a new ideology

When the student movement decided to stop addressing demands to the existing government and instead call for parliamentary elections, it took a step that may at first have seemed like an abandonment of its original logic of direct democracy. However, this decision was consistent with the populist character of the movement. Although based on principles of direct democracy, the student plenums reproduced another dominant social belief: that parliamentary elections are the main mechanism of political change.

At the same time, they kept their distance from existing political parties. This was often explained by the organisational characteristics of the student movement. Since the plenary assemblies had no permanent representatives authorised to negotiate on behalf of the movement as a whole, cooperation with political parties was institutionally complicated. There was also a deeper ideological reason. It was difficult for the student movement to negotiate a common platform with parties that held clearly defined political positions. Cooperating with liberals, conservatives, nationalists, or social democrats would have required the movement to take a stand on issues over which its own base was divided. Its political strength depended on its ability to prevent such divisions from emerging.

The Student List represented what society broadly perceived as political normality. Its core demand was for a state free from corruption, for institutions that functioned properly and for expert knowledge to take precedence over party affiliation. Consequently, the election campaign was largely free from traditional ideological conflicts. Vučić sought to portray the Student List as a political force that would alter economic and foreign policy, jeopardise relations with Russia, or call into question existing social benefits. The Student Slate generally responded that such changes were not their

objective, and that they would implement existing policies with greater effectiveness and responsibility. There was considerably more programmatic continuity between the two major electoral slates than the intensity of their political confrontation might have suggested.

Even when the Student List expressed its opposition to the cheap-labour policy promoted by the Vučić regime during its early years, the distinction was not entirely clear. Over the preceding decade, the regime itself had sought to move away from the image of a country that attracted foreign investors solely on the basis of low wages, promoting instead technological development, investment in science, and more sophisticated industrial investment. There is a substantial gap between political rhetoric and actual economic outcomes, but the conflict centered largely on who was capable of delivering the desired economic model.

A similar logic was applied to foreign policy. The Vučić government sought to maintain relations with the European Union, Russia and China, while avoiding full alignment with any single international bloc. This policy enjoyed relatively broad support within society, leaving the Student List with little reason to challenge it in any radical way. The core electoral choice was much simpler: the continuation of a system based on party loyalty, or its replacement by one that promised professional governance.

A victory with the characteristics of a plebiscite and the defeat of the political establishment

The election results confirmed the strength of this political mobilisation. According to preliminary data from the Republic Electoral Commission, the Student List secured 52.65% of the vote, while the list led by Aleksandar Vučić received 39.22%. Voter turnout was approximately 69%, and seat projections indicated that the Student List could form a parliamentary majority on its own. Vučić's electoral machine managed to retain a substantial portion of its voter base, but it could not match the exceptionally broad mobilisation of voters seeking political change.

The student movement succeeded in turning the elections into a referendum. The vote was framed as a decision as to whether the existing system of government should survive, and this climate effectively eliminated any space for the traditional opposition parties. Most withdrew from the electoral race, and those that remained garnered negligible results. Apart from the two dominant lists, no other list managed to cross the electoral threshold. The student movement thus defeated Vučić and effectively replaced the previous opposition.

This may be the most significant political consequence of the elections. Serbia has not gained a new governing party that represents a clearly defined ideological alternative to the previous administration. A movement whose legitimacy rests on a combination of mass mobilisation, a rejection of corruption, and a reliance on expert knowledge has secured a parliamentary majority.

Real estate development: the drug that fuels Vučić's economic model

The Vučić regime survived thanks to its electoral machinery and clientelist networks, but its political stability also depended on its ability to deliver economic growth, a relatively stable standard of living, and increased purchasing power. The economic policy of the previous government was more complex than is often portrayed within opposition circles.

Over the previous decade, Serbia benefited from certain advantages stemming from its foreign policy stance. Maintaining relations with Russia provided access to relatively affordable energy, while cooperation with China brought in significant investments particularly in industry, mining, and infrastructure. In this regard, Serbia's economic model shared certain similarities with the policies implemented by Hungary and Slovakia. At the same time, maintaining a stable exchange rate for the Serbian currency against the euro served as an

important tool for preserving purchasing power. For a population whose consumption relies heavily on imported goods, and for citizens with loans or other obligations denominated in euros, exchange rate stability held immediate economic significance. The regime also sought to ensure increases in pensions, public sector wages, and various social benefits. Regardless of the actual scope or the distributive effects of these measures, they helped sustain social support for the existing economic model.

Real estate development became one of its most important pillars. Major infrastructure projects, the development of residential and commercial complexes, the Belgrade Waterfront project, preparations for the EXPO due to be held in Belgrade in 2027 and other related urban developments sustained construction activity, created jobs, and contributed to GDP growth. The problem was the economy's excessive reliance on large-scale construction projects—often luxury developments—whose contribution to economic activity largely ended once the work was completed. Furthermore, a substantial portion of the labour was carried out by foreign firms that brought in their own workers and departed after finishing the projects, leaving limited long-term benefits for the national economy.

In Serbia, real estate development also served a distinctly political function. Large-scale construction and infrastructure projects were among the key mechanisms that linked political and business elites. Control over land, urban planning decisions, public procurement, and investment projects created opportunities for the private accumulation of capital. Real estate development thus became one of the mechanisms through which individuals with ties to political power could themselves become capitalists. This model created a strong interdependence among political authorities, investors, and the construction sector. Political control provided access to profitable projects, while those projects contributed to the economic growth upon which the government based part of its legitimacy.

In this sense, real estate development became a kind of drug for the Vučić regime. It made it possible to simultaneously satisfy two key demands: the continued enrichment of a politically connected business elite, and the maintenance of a level of economic activity high enough to keep living standards rising. Each new major project extended the life of this model while, at the same time, increasing the dependence on its continued expansion.

The future of major urban development projects thus took on political significance. The Student List's opposition to plans for the commercial redevelopment of the General Staff complex in Belgrade —linked to the investment interests of U.S. President Donald Trump's family—was a visible expression of the rejection of the previous approach to the management of urban space and public resources. Consequently, the new government will face a serious problem: if it intends to dismantle the corrupt mechanisms of the previous regime, it will also have to change the way one of the key drivers of economic growth functions.

The new government's economic constraints

The Student List presented an ambitious reform programme, particularly in the areas of education, science, culture, healthcare, and social protection. This programme reflects the group's social composition and the significant role played by the academic and professional elite in its development. Fulfilling these promises will require substantial public resources.

One of the assumptions underpinning the new government's optimism is that combating corruption will free up sufficient resources to fund its promised reforms. More transparent public procurement, more rational investment, and a reduction in the misuse of public funds could undoubtedly generate substantial savings. It remains unclear, however, whether these will be enough. Even with a significant reduction in corruption, Serbia would still face low productivity, limited public revenue, a reliance on foreign investment, and structural weaknesses within its national economy.

A potential reorientation of economic development presents a particularly complex challenge. Should the new government attempt to reduce reliance on real estate development and place greater emphasis on export-oriented production, it would encounter limitations stemming from the existing monetary and economic model. Strengthening the competitiveness of the domestic agricultural sector and certain industrial sectors, for instance, could raise questions regarding the true value of the dinar, the national currency. Depreciating the national currency could improve the price competitiveness of exports, but it would also make imported goods more expensive and erode purchasing power. Such a measure would not automatically resolve production-related problems and could have serious social consequences. Preserving purchasing power was one of the key promises made by the Student List. Its populist base does not expect an economic policy that asks citizens to accept a declining standard of living in the name of long-term development goals.

Similar limitations apply to the emigration of young people and those with an educational background. Over the last two years, the student movement has strongly emphasised that young people want to remain in Serbia and build their futures there. However, the emigration of skilled workers is not solely a consequence of corruption or authoritarian rule. The experience of Croatia demonstrates that even EU member states can face large-scale labour emigration, and that the free movement of people within the European labour market can facilitate migration toward wealthier countries.

Therefore, the new government will face a series of problems for which there are no simple technical solutions. Its response to the question of future economic development centres primarily on increasing productivity—one of the most difficult tasks in economic policy—which requires long-term structural change rather than merely a change in political personnel.

Will the populist base control the new elite?

The most important question following the electoral victory is the relationship the new government will establish with the movement that brought it to power. Over the last two years, student plenary assemblies served as the movement's primary source of legitimacy. They determined political demands, methods of mobilisation, and, ultimately, the transition into parliamentary politics. Furthermore, the process of forming the "Student List" demonstrated the movement's insistence on maintaining control over its representatives. The candidates underwent extensive vetting processes regarding their personal histories and professional integrity, with the aim of preventing the nomination of individuals whose pasts could compromise the entire movement. This approach reflected the core political message that power should be entrusted to competent, untarnished individuals.

The entry of some 140 representatives from the Student List into parliament creates an entirely new situation. These deputies will now possess formal political legitimacy, access to state institutions, and the capacity to participate directly in decision-making. They will no longer be mere delegates of a protest movement, but rather holders of parliamentary mandates. The question is whether the new government will continue to recognise the authority of student plenaries and other participatory forms of organisation. The plenary assemblies themselves have already weakened considerably: their activity is declining, and fewer students are participating. If they manage to preserve their organisational structures and their connections to elected representatives, they could function as a mechanism of social oversight over the new government, limiting the autonomy of professional administrators and their ability to implement policies that run counter to the expectations of the movement's electoral base.

There is also the possibility that the connection to the student movement might gradually be severed. In that scenario, the academic elite—who already hold a prominent position within the Student List—could emerge as the dominant political force in the

new administration. Its representatives might begin to behave like the professional political and managerial elites found in Western societies, justifying unpopular measures by invoking economic necessity, fiscal responsibility, or the demands of the market.

The representatives from the Student List hold diverse political convictions. Some lean toward liberal and pro-European positions, others toward conservative or nationalist ones, while some candidates align themselves with socially-oriented policies. As long as the primary objective was to topple the Vučić regime, these differences did not necessarily have to become politically decisive. Once the new government confronts concrete issues—such as taxation, privatisation, public spending, labour legislation, and international relations—ideological conflicts may well become inevitable. It is easy to imagine that liberal, conservative, nationalist, or left-wing groups might gradually emerge within the parliamentary majority. Such an evolution would mark the end of the specific populist unity that made the electoral victory possible and it could pave the way for neoliberal reforms, austerity policies, or other measures that directly threaten the living standards of segments of the population.

Between Political Normalisation and a New Democracy

The victory of the Student List demonstrated that even an exceptionally sophisticated party machine can be defeated through broad social mobilisation. The student movement united a large segment of the population around demands to put an end to corruption, nepotism, and partisan control of institutions. Its core promise was political normalisation.

The immediate consequences of this victory are already visible. From the perspective of Radnički glas (Workers' Voice)—an organisation to which I belong, which works with trade unions in education, research, culture, and other sectors—the shift in political relations was felt almost overnight. Barely a day after the elections, we have already observed changes in the behaviour of certain directors and managers, while questions arise regarding the future of numerous proceedings initiated against employees who opposed the government. A military union, which announced several months ago that it was ceasing its activities due to political pressure, has now issued a new statement suggesting that it might resume its work.

Partisan nepotism was an everyday experience for a large number of employees. For many, the victory of the Student List therefore brings a sense of relief from immediate pressure. The ability to speak more freely at work, to refuse to follow a political directive, or to plan a professional future without relying on party loyalty represents a tangible change. This helps to explain the massive celebrations that followed the elections.

The victory has also opened up the possibility of transforming political representation itself. Here, we encounter what is perhaps the most interesting—and seemingly paradoxical—similarity between the Student List and the Vučić regime. Both, in different ways, displaced the traditional multiparty system, which was based on competition between ideologically defined parties. Vučić incorporated various political options into his governing coalition and subordinated them to the party apparatus and its hierarchy. The Student List brought together ideologically diverse representatives around a common political goal, yet it built its legitimacy through mass participation rather than through a traditional party organisation.

The absence of clearly defined party programmes does not necessarily constitute a weakness of the new political order. Competition between political parties—in which citizens periodically choose among pre-formulated platforms—is not the only possible form of democratic representation. The student movement demonstrated that it could mobilise a vast number of people who had never belonged to political parties nor previously engaged in political activism. Their involvement went beyond protests: they organised the election campaign, protected polling stations, and directly supervised the electoral process. People who had previously

been mere voters became active participants in political life.

The question is whether this form of participation can be sustained following the electoral victory. Student plenaries have already weakened, but the social energy unleashed by the movement need not remain tied exclusively to them. It is particularly significant that many candidates from the Student List are established professionals with no prior political ambitions. Their willingness to accept parliamentary mandates does not necessarily imply a desire to become professional politicians. Viewing a political office as a temporary social responsibility could help establish a different kind of relationship between representatives and those they represent.

Trade unions could play an important role in this process. Unlike student assemblies—whose activity is tied to the shifting composition of the student body—unions possess more durable organisational structures, direct connections to workers, and concrete demands that arise from day-to-day labour relations. In the political space that opens up following the fall of the previous regime, they could establish themselves as one of the voices organised from below.

This would also entail a different relationship with parliamentary power. Trade unions would not have to limit themselves to traditional social dialogue, appeals to government ministries, or occasional negotiations with government officials. They could forge lasting ties with the representatives from the Student List—following the model of the cooperation they developed with student assemblies during the protests—and leverage these relationships to articulate workers' demands and exert pressure on the government.

Such a relationship could offer a way to move beyond the limitations of representative parliamentary democracy. Organised social groups could participate directly in shaping policy decisions and overseeing their implementation. Parliament could then become a space where the demands of the grassroots are articulated, rather than an institution where professional politicians make decisions independently between one election cycle and the next.

The most significant possibility opened up by the Student List's victory lies in the opportunity to free political representation from its exclusive dependence on party competition, and to build a more enduring bond between elected representatives and an active, organised society. The student movement has already demonstrated that mass political participation can exist outside the framework of traditional political parties. Its next challenge will be to show whether such participation can endure when the movement's representatives form the governing parliamentary majority.

27 October 2026

Translated by David Fagan ***International Viewpoint*** *from* ***Viento Sur***.

USA

The People Have Turned Against Trump

Dan La Botz ·

For the last two years, President Donald Trump's Republican Party controlled not only the presidency, but also both houses of Congress, the Supreme Court, as well as many state governments. Trump appeared to be politically omnipotent. Now the American people have turned against Trump and it seems likely that the Republican Party will face defeat in the midterm elections on November 3, breaking Trump's hold on Congress. It is a remarkable reversal of fortune brought about by Trump's own hubris.

In January 2025, when he took office, Trump had an approval rating of 47%, which according to a variety of polls, has now sunk to between 31% and 34%. That is, two-thirds of Americans no longer approve of him. A number of demographic groups, including some that were part of his base, have broken with Trump: young male voters, Latino voters, urban voters, and suburban, that is, more middle class and moderate Republicans. And several prominent Make America Great Again (MAGA) figures, among them congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene and former Fox News host Tucker Carlson, have publicly broken with Trump. MAGA is in disarray.

People have turned against Trump because of his failed policies. In late February 2026, Trump led the United States to join Israel in a war on Iran, and, though only Congress can declare war, Trump went ahead without congressional approval. The U.S. House voted several war powers resolutions trying to restrain the president, but the Senate did not pass them. The war, of course, brought about the blocking of the Strait of Hormuz, which led to higher gas prices. Today, according to several polls, 65% of Americans oppose the president's handling of the war.

Trump's tariffs are also unpopular, with polls reporting that about 63% of Americans dislike them. The tariffs have disrupted sectors of the U.S. economy and led to rising prices for consumers.

Trump has used the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency to carry out violent raids to arrest working class immigrants with jobs, families, and kids in school. These raids that have led to a number of shootings and to the deaths of both immigrants and U.S. citizens, so that today only 33% of Americans support ICE, while 60% disapprove of the agency.

Also, 83% of Americans disapproved of President Trump's pardoning of violent criminal offenders who participated in the insurrection at the Capitol and the attempted coup in January 6, 2021.

Finally, recent polls find that between 60% and 69% of Americans say that they are "very" or "somewhat" concerned about "corruption, self-dealing or conflicts of interest" in the Trump administration. The self-dealing of Trump and his family has finally become a national scandal. "Voters are more concerned about government corruption than any other issue, including high grocery and gas prices," according to the latest CNBC All-America Economic Survey.

We could also mention other issues that have turned people against Trump: his tax policies that benefit the rich, his firing of federal employees, his reconstruction of the White House together with his vulgar "beautification" of its interior.

With his party's election prospects looking dim, Trump has taken some extraordinary measures, unconstitutional measures since under the

Constitution the states and not the president control elections. The Department of Justice is bringing lawsuits against the states and making raids, searches and arrests, allegedly to stop non-citizen voters. And Trump has not ruled out sending ICE agents or soldiers to polling places.

If Trump doesn't interfere in the midterm elections, he may well lose. But fearing he will intervene, last week 7 to 9 million people joined No Kings protests, and they're prepared to defend polling places and the right to vote.

25 October 2026

France

As 2027 approaches, where does class struggle trades unionism stand?

Léon Crémieux ·

The French trade union movement, and more particularly the trade unionism of social transformation, with which the CGT, the FSU and Solidaires explicitly identify, is today confronted with several important strategic questions. [1]

First, quite simply, in the face of a neoliberal steamroller, the question arises of the effectiveness of trade union action, the ability to defend the living conditions, wages, health and housing of the working classes on a daily basis, the effectiveness also of the national mobilizations of recent years in the face of employer and government attacks: the balance sheet of 2023 is still present. The largest social movement since 1995, with massive popular support, took place for several months without managing to build a general strike movement supported by several professional sectors capable of making the government give in.

In the face of reactionary and capitalist forces, what is the reality in trade union action of the fight for its project of social transformation, which includes a frontal struggle against racist and gender discrimination, the consideration of the environmental struggle in the face of the climate crisis and the capitalist headlong rush? Does the relative weakness of trade unionism require, and in what forms, a rapprochement and a permanent front of the trade union forces for social transformation?

This question is posed even more acutely in the face of the rise of reactionary political powers and the threat, in France, of the arrival of the far right in government. This threat also raises the question of the political role of the wing of the trade union movement that explicitly fights for social transformation and therefore major political changes, diametrically opposed to the far right, but acting in complete independence without being subject to the agendas and orientations of the political parties.

It is partly the political splintering on the left that has prevented the mobilization movement around the NFP [2] in 2024 from being prolonged for two years by concerted and complementary action by the parties of the left and the social movement on essential social and economic issues. What role can the trade union movement play in once again taking on the construction of a front of the workers' movement against the reactionary forces, affirming the rejection of the far right and putting forward the essential social demands of the working classes? How can we impose our own word in the next six months, in complete independence and without being the auxiliaries of this or that political party?

There is also the question of organizing, in the wake of the youth movement, a large-scale social response to growing social inequalities, the fall in purchasing power and the salvo of new social attacks against the working classes provided for in the two budget laws presented by Lecornu's minority government.

Significant progress and convergence

The CGT, FSU and Solidaires generally converge on the analysis of the situation and the importance of the crises suffered on an international scale. It is striking to note that the trade union movement has largely evolved in its understanding of the climate crisis and its consequences, which comes on top of

the social and democratic crises, discrimination and the aggressive security approaches of authoritarian regimes. These three unions put these issues, along with those of sexist and sexual violence, at the heart of their concerns.

But this still leaves open in many unions the difficulty of separating themselves from the productivist vision, making the progression of wages and jobs depend, not on social justice and another distribution of the wealth produced, imposed by the balance of forces, but on the growth of capitalist profits, and more precisely on the growth of "one's company".

Many debates remain open on the conversion of production, the fight against useless projects and harmful production, the place of nuclear power in the fight for renewable energies. On this last issue, at the 53rd congress of the CGT in 2023, a majority vote (50.3%), driven by the Mines and Energy Federation, led to the departure of the Confederation from the Ecological and Social Alliance (AES) – *Plus jamais ça*.

Nevertheless, major concrete steps forward have taken place for several years for the integration of these issues and a rapprochement of the CGT with the ecological organizations, around many struggles, such as in Sainte Soline with the Earth and Solidarity Uprisings, and the concrete actions of the employees of the Chapelle-Darblay paper mill or the Total Grandpuits refinery to build responses to social and environmental emergencies by questioning capitalist logics.

It is important to see the place given in Solidaires and the FSU to this work in the AES-PJC with its rupture plan developed in 2021, and to the collaboration with the organizations of the social and trade union movement that founded *Plus jamais ça*. This joint work is obviously very important because it can be the lever for mobilizations and common struggles, a decisive springboard and even an element of strength in the face of capitalist and far-right logics through the ability to link social struggles, defence of common goods, environmental struggles. The rally held around 26 September with the participation of 300 associative, political and trade union organizations is a good omen on this point.

In addition, the CGT and Solidaires, faced with a context of social setbacks and transformation of the wage structure, have been asking themselves for several years the head-on question of their difficulty in developing and being present in the workplace, a difficulty that calls into question its existence as a militant trade unionism. This is even if the CGT welcomes a resumption of unionization in the wake of 2023.

Of course, these questions take different forms in the private sector and in the civil service, and for the CGT, the FSU or Solidaires. The FSU, like the Fédération Sud Education (member of Solidaires), seeks to answer these questions by pushing for the process of rapprochement, of regrouping of the trade unionism of struggle by "the common house". For the moment, the other public service unions of Solidaires do not put forward the same answer and the question of Solidaires' orientation on these questions will be raised again at the congress of the Union syndicale in June 2027.

Overcoming the break-up of work collectives

The logic of the employers and the government is to corset the trade union movement in order to confine it to the structures of "social dialogue" in bodies managed and punctuated by the employers' or ministerial agenda, while cutting back as much as possible on the means of union action in the workshops and offices, in the workplaces, means that can be put at the service of the work of information, mobilization, and the creation of a balance of power. These attacks on cantonment and integration strike at the historical contradiction of the trade union movement in France, and in particular of its combative wing.

In France, trade unionism is strong in its experience and capacity for struggle, but it is weak in terms of members, which affects its financial stabil-

ity (by limiting dues income). Today, the functioning of the trade union is based on only 20 to 30% of its members' contributions (25% for example announced at the last congresses of the CGT Metallurgy), most often well below the situation in unions in other European countries. The rest comes from the AGFPN, the Joint Fund for "Social Dialogue" (since 2014), joint bodies (Social Security, Unedic), collective agreements and various subsidies . Needless to say, this funding ensures the base of the unions, but it is dependent on collective agreements and governmental decisions, with all the risks that this represents.

Trade unionism in France has a history that has differentiated it in several areas from that existing in most European countries. On the one hand, by its political strength, capable of exerting influence on several occasions (1936, 1944/45, 1968) to impose social advances for all workers while pushing for major political changes, capable of mobilizing the exploited on many occasions to oppose major attacks such as those undertaken since 1995 against the pay-as-you-go pension system.

But on the other hand, France, since the first decades of the 20th century, has also been one of the countries where the number of union members has been the lowest (30% at the end of the 1940s, it has remained at a rate of 10% since the 1990s (18% in the public sector, 8% in the private sector). This does not prevent a real representativeness of trade unionism, 58.8% of voters for the 2021/2024 CSE elections [3] (i.e. higher than most political, municipal, regional and legislative elections), and the CEVIPOF (centre of political research) political trust barometer of early 2026 recorded a rate of trust among employees in trade unionism of 45 to 48%, 37% among all respondents, when only 22% of the population said they had confidence in political parties... and 18% in the President of the Republic.

Since the 1980s, the trade union movement in France (like in the rest of Europe) has been hit by the attacks of neoliberal capitalism. The latter has gradually sought to undo all the advances in the social protection system achieved in previous decades, starting with the pay-as-you-go pension system. [4] At the same time, in the private sector as well as in the public sector, employers and the government have profoundly reorganized in the structures of production and network and service activities, with the virtual disappearance of large units in the steel industry, mining, textiles, shipbuilding and repair, but also, for example, in the Post and Telecommunications sectors, the disappearance of the large postal sorting offices and postal cheque centres.

In addition, there has been the outsourcing of production or service units in the automotive, aeronautical construction and chemical industries, with the proliferation of subcontracting companies, both on-site and offshored. This phenomenon also applies to sectors such as the Post Office, the SNCF [railways], air transport, the hospital sector and energy. Taking advantage of certain technological developments, entire activities have been outsourced, relocated, by creating production, distribution and maintenance processes, involving multiple players, including call centres or companies that fully manage the accounting of large companies, for example..

This is also true for building maintenance, cleaning, security and collective catering services, whether in the public or private sectors. In addition, there has been the uberization of many service professions (private hire vehicles, delivery workers and so on). leading to super-exploitation outside of employment law.

In the three public services (state [national government ministries, including education], territorial [local and regional government], hospital), precariousness is clearly increasing. Contract workers represent around 20% of the workforce (not counting the outsourcing to private companies of public action missions which represent a cost for the state of 160 billion, the equivalent of a quarter of the budget). The FSU and Sud Education address these issues in similar terms, worrying about the multiplication of contract workers in national education,

128,000 teaching assistants for students with disabilities in 2024 (10.8% of national educational staff), nine times out of 10 women, nine times out of 10 part-time with an average salary of 900 euros, 58,000 teaching assistants. The common demand is the integration of these staff into the statutory framework.

This fragmentation represents a first strategic challenge for a trade unionism of struggle, which normally aims to organize the greatest number of employees, to establish itself in all professional sectors, and to mobilize the employees of the same sector on common demands. The difficulty, which has been new in recent decades, is that these tasks are made more difficult by the break-up of companies, either geographically or with subcontracting companies, which often weakens a once more important parent company and makes it more difficult to act together in companies that are no longer covered by the same branch agreements.

Despite this, large activity sites with a large number of employees continue to exist, such as the Nantes Saint Nazaire industrial-port complex, which has 28,700 employees, but in 613 different companies around the Chantiers de l'Atlantique (3,800 employees and about 5,800 subcontractors on site), the Roissy airport platform has 95,000 employees in 1,300 establishments; or the "industrial-port cluster" of Marseille-Fos sur Mer, which brings together 42,600 permanent salaried jobs (and around 3,000 temporary workers) in 1,570 establishments; the La Pitié Salpêtrière Paris-13 hospital group, which brings together around 20,000 employees, La Défense [business office complex] 200,000 employees (2/3 of executives) in 2800 companies, 25% teleworking more than two days a week; the Stellantis Sochaux [5] site, with 5,500 permanent employees and 1,000 temporary workers, 2-3,000 jobs at subcontracting equipment manufacturers.

Trade unionism is therefore being hit by a profound change in the organization of economic and social activities, that of the major industrial groups. The still impressive concentration of several sites bringing together tens of thousands of employees no longer makes them "workers' fortresses" similar to those of the 1960s: the break-up of companies, statutes and collective agreements on the same site. The SNCF group now has 284,000 employees spread over 7 public limited companies, but also a growing subcontractor, with, for example, the outsourcing of the maintenance of electrical tracks and systems, two-thirds of which is carried out by the major construction groups such as Vinci, Bouygues or Eiffage, the outsourcing of cleaning by ONET, Nicollin or Challancin.

So, one of the main challenges of trade unionism is to adapt to this reality that has been taking hold for decades. It is no longer just a question of sitting on the bodies of large companies that carry less weight than before, it is necessary to create structures that do not obey the level of negotiations set by the employers, but that can bring together employees from the same site or the same professional activity and to be able to identify common demands that allow them to come together.

Within the CGT and Solidaires, this question of the adaptation of union structures, demands and modes of action to this new reality has been raised for several congresses with more or less conviction and perseverance because the main unions are backed by the parent companies, still benefiting from company agreements or collective agreements that are more favourable than those of the subcontractors but not organising union association structures or unionised structures from external companies.

But experiments in this direction already exist, even if they do not appear in the statutes and the texts of congresses. This is the case, for example, of the *Union syndicale multiprofessionnelle* of Saint Nazaire, created by the CGT in 1999, with the slogan "one site, one status". This approach obviously goes against the trade union support of company management, the adaptation to the structures of "social dialogue" created by the employers, by breaking down the boundaries of status or nationality.

There is also the example of the Roissy inter-union association for the past fifteen years, which brings together structures from the CGT, CFDT, UNSA, Sud Aérien, and sometimes FO. It has led numerous mobilizations aimed at all the employees of the platform against the union repression two years ago targeting CGT and Sud activists, last June against the obstacles put in place by the prefecture to obtain the TCA (airport traffic permit), a badge of authorization to work on the platform.

Here too, the aim is to unify the employees, working as a whole for Aéroport de Paris or Air France, beyond the various companies, to create a common balance of power around common demands. On several occasions, the demand for a common status, a common collective agreement for all the employees of the platform (ground staff, subcontractors, assistance, security, transport and so on) capable of combating social dumping has been put forward. Sud Rail and the CGT Cheminots put forward in apparently similar terms a single status in the entire railway sector.

Other experiences are underway, such as that of the UL CGT of Lorient with the creation of an intercompany union. Dynamics such as these would make it possible to build on the victories obtained locally limiting the impact of the 2023 reform on pensions: that obtained in April 24 at the SNCF with a CGT, Sud, UNSA, CFDT agreement, for the employees of the SNCF Group on early retirements, or that of the CGT Ports and Docks obtained in 2025 on the five years of anticipation of the legal age in the Ports and Handling Agreement. Also, the government's retreat in recent days allows the 140,000 employees of EDF, Engie and RTE to continue to benefit from the "agent tariff" on energy.

The challenge of attacks on trade union rights

The reforms implemented since the government of Hollande [6] have aggravated this difficulty in adapting trade unionism through two rogue laws: first, the "employment law" put in place by the Minister of Labour Myriam El Khomri in 2015 introduced the "inversion of the hierarchy of standards". Employment contracts in a company were, until then, governed by the Employment Code, the national interprofessional agreements (ANI) and the agreements of the branch to which the company is affiliated. Agreements in a company could not be less favourable than the ANI and the sectoral agreements.

The 2015 Employment Law reverses this hierarchy of standards and a company agreement takes precedence over other agreements, and in particular the sectoral collective agreement, in the areas of working hours, working hours, holidays, etc. and the threshold for the increase in overtime has been reduced from 25% to 10%. So a win-win law for the employers who can then impose less favourable rules in a small company without a strong balance of power, and obtaining the "lowest social bidder" becomes the weapon of blackmail, so that the union delegates of a subcontracting company sign an agreement not aligned with the branch agreement, thus "making possible" obtaining the contract from the contractor (this is what happens every year on the Roissy platform for airport assistance companies).

The second nefarious provision came a few months later with the "Macron Employment Law Ordinances" [7] of 2017 which continued and greatly aggravated the El Khomri law on the prevalence of the company agreement (validating company agreements in all areas and imposed on the employee against the clauses of the employment contract without having to justify economic difficulties). Much worse, these ordinances tore the staff representative institutions to pieces. A single structure, the CSE (social and economic committee) replaced three bodies: the works council, the staff delegates and the CHSCT (Committee for Health, Safety and Working Conditions).

The CHSCTs, which had become a formidable weapon to impose health at work, with the right to commission expert opinions and a legal personality, were eliminated by Macron. The SSCT Commissions of the CSE are present only in companies with more than 300 employees and no

longer have this legal personality, nor the possibility of voting on expertise and making the employers pay for it. The elected representatives of the CHSCT had often become very competent specialists in their fields and able to intervene on the working conditions of employees of subcontracting companies. And above all, union action on the ground was undermined by this ordinance by reducing the number of elected staff and the hours of mandate by almost half. Similar attacks took place in the civil service in 2019 with the law on the transformation of the civil service (LTFP).

The concrete result is that the hours and mandates given by election can no longer allow, for example, devoting time to service or workshop rounds, to participate in unionization work. Among the essential victims of this clear cut in union resources are obviously the local unions which make it possible to help, to bring together isolated union members in small companies and to help with groupings for site actions. All this work will be more difficult, while the El Khomri law and the Macron circulars give more means to the employers' managements to put pressure on the employees of small companies.

This orientation of grouping employees beyond their status and their company is therefore of primary importance to fight against the effects of subcontracting and precariousness, against social dumping and the competition between employees. It goes hand in hand with the demands to make subcontractors subject to the conventions and agreements of the ordering company, and that all employees in a branch benefit from the same agreement, aligned with agreements that offer the best social terms.

How to build effective mobilizations?

This work of regroupment and the content of demands partly overlaps with the reflections on the construction of a adequate balance of power during the major mobilizations and the limits experienced in 2023 and, since then, in the construction of a front of struggle for wages, fiscal justice against the succession of austerity budgets. On two occasions, since 2023, the trade union front has cracked, weakened by the support of the Socialist Party (PS) for the government's desperate manoeuvres to continue its policies.

The "Bayrou conclave" [8] in the spring of 2025, then in the autumn of 2025, the "suspension of the pension reform" and the conference on pensions and work, both justified the reprieves given by the PS to Macron's governments and made it possible to disunite the trade union front. Indeed, on two occasions, the CFDT, CFTC, and CGC rushed into this breach, which did not open the door to any government retreat. So, two problems appear. That of the difficulty, for the CGT, Solidaires and the FSU, which put forward the need to build a social confrontation, to reconcile this objective with the unity of an inter-union alignment that does not pursue the same objective and clings to any manoeuvre by the government. Moreover, even on this point, the Secretary of the CFDT, Marylise Léon, at the confederal congress of June 2026, acknowledged a "social dialogue" at half-mast.

In this sense, surely, the structured appearance of a combative trade union front, capable of taking its own initiatives, would be support for imposing a better balance of forces. But the remaining difficulty would be the possibility for this front, even if it existed, to take root in the sectors that weigh in the mobilizations. For the only palpable reality is that the construction of the broadest unitary inter-union front depends on the combative balance of forces built by the mobilization of one sector "setting the tone" for other workers.

The other question, which has been present since 1995, but reaffirmed over the last 10 years with *Nuit Debout* and the *Gilets jaunes*, and obviously during the 2023 movement, is that the fragmentation of employees and the weaker capacity of the unions to structure are reflected in the growing importance of large popular demonstrations, territorial gatherings such as those of *Nuit Debout* or the *Gilets jaunes* (which are also the place and the occasion for the extension of the movement within society to all the fields of struggle), in relation to

the strike. To this is added, unfortunately, the greatest difficulties in the development of self-organization in the workplace.

The whole remaining question is therefore that of the structuring of the mobilization movements which, in recent years, have often been dependent on the deadlines put forward by the national inter-union coordination, which has led it, in order to maintain its unity, to align itself with the least offensive positions, in particular those of the CFDT. It should be noted, however, that on several occasions mobilizations have created their own rhythm during the *Gilets jaunes* or in Sainte Soline [9] in particular. It is obvious that the future of the most powerful mobilizations will depend in part on the capacity to overcome these contradictions.

What action for 2027?

The last question, undoubtedly the most urgent, is that of the ability of the trade union movement, as of the entire social movement, to occupy its full place in a context of reactionary offensive and gradual slide towards a hegemony of the theses and proposals of the far right. This on the eve of a presidential election in which the political left is for the moment "dispersed like a puzzle", despite electoral successes in 2022 and 2024 on a programme taking up a series of demands of the workers and social movements.

Because the reality is there. For the past two years, the capitalist class, the media and social networks in the hands of reaction and a few billionaires, have not stopped promoting the far right and its theses, and demonizing (la France Insoumise in order to discredit and fragment the alliance made within the framework of the NFP in 2024. The social democratic leaders, wanting to isolate LFI and rally towards the remnants of Macronism, have also put all their efforts into breaking up this framework, preventing the perpetuation of an anti-austerity political front. This situation puts the trade union movement and the entire social movement against the wall to deploy a sufficient counter-offensive.

So, what to do? In 2024, the CGT, the day after the dissolution of the assembly, headlined in a press release: "Facing the far right, the Popular Front!", stating that: "to defeat the far right, the world of work needs hope and perspectives that break with Emmanuel Macron's policies". In the wake of this, the CGT, FSU, Solidaires, CFDT and UNSA declared themselves in favour of the rejection of the far right and of the satisfaction of social demands, listing nine social emergency measures. Many associations or collectives of the social movement were mobilizing and demonstrating all over France even before the NFP agreement was built. Obviously, the risk of the RN's arrival is even greater today and the fragmentation of the left, with the desire now of the PS majority to reject any alliance with LFI (and obviously to emancipate itself from the NFP's programme) makes it necessary to quickly build unity in the face of the far right.

So, on the one hand, the situation is more serious and makes it more essential that the trade union movement and the entire social movement now act in complete independence to build a balance of power among the employed and in the working classes as a whole that will make it possible to counter and defeat the far right. From this point of view, the CGT, FSU and Solidaires (but also some CFDT, CNT, FO and UNSA unions) have developed, particularly with VISA , over the last two years work to develop training, action against the presence of the far right in the trade union movement, including preparation for the eventuality of Le Pen's arrival at the Élysée. The anti-fascist organization the Jeune Garde (before it was banned by Retailleau) had also contributed to trade union education and to the protection of demonstrations in the face of threats from the extreme right.

But the trade union movement, like the entire social movement, is facing a major problem. Blocking Le Pen's arrival in government, by fighting her audience among workers, also implies, beyond denouncing the dangers posed by the RN, working to defend a political alternative that meets the main social demands. The vast majority of workers have

always opposed the pension reform and support elementary measures such as the Zucman tax [tax on big fortunes]], attacking the capitalist class, profits and the great fortunes.

It is also the role of the trade union movement to contribute to the defeat of the RN by putting forward, in the coming months, political and social measures that meet the demands of social justice of the working classes, as was done in 2024. The fragmentation of the main parties making up the NFP over the presidential election on the left is now making it difficult to deploy this work in the trade union and social movement. But the trade union movement can play an important role in helping to build a unitive dynamic in the social and political left. Obviously, the start cannot be support for this or that candidate, present or future. But it is urgent that, now and in complete independence, the trade union movement for social transformation manages, as in 2024, on the basis of its own common orientations, to come together in the coming weeks to organize a united campaign to defeat Le Pen in 2027 and for a break with capitalist austerity policies.

The situation is undeniably difficult, but we can evoke the memory of the years 1980/81 when, faced with a deep division on the left, a popular and united campaign, "Union in the struggles", created a salutary wind of unity, contributing to the defeat of the right in the 1981 elections. [10] Of course, the situation today is very different in many aspects, and Mitterrand and the social-liberal governments led by the PS since 1981 have shattered many of the hopes of several generations. It is moreover the balance sheet of this policy, pursued from 2012 to 2017 by Hollande, that led to the NUPES and the NFP being built on a programme of rupture with social liberalism. It is also this record that explains the preponderant place taken by LFI on the left ahead of social democracy in recent years.

But we must insist on a point of similarity: as at the time, it is urgent that all energies come together to defeat Le Pen in 2027. The unions must intervene, with their specific means, in the political-electoral sequence that has already begun and whose outcome will be decisive for the working class.

8 October 2026

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Brazil

Lula's extraordinary victory overnight in Brazil

Iain Bruce ·

Re-elected on 25 October with 51.8 per cent of the vote against the far-right senator Flávio Bolsonaro, Lula achieved a comeback unprecedented since Brazil's return to democracy: never before had a candidate who had been defeated in the first round gone on to win the second. This victory was decided on the streets and on social media.

This is the most important defeat for the far right we have seen anywhere in the world in recent times, and its impact will be felt worldwide. Seeing those millions and millions of people pour onto the streets across this vast country to celebrate was enough to make you weep.

The seemingly impossible turnaround in the second round is not a simple electoral victory. It was won in the streets and on socials. Immediately after the far-right candidate, Flavio Bolsonaro, won in the first round, thousands of mainly very young people took to streets in Niteroi, across the bay from Rio de Janeiro, to demonstrate against the likelihood of a neo-fascist government in Brazil. The same thing happened in cities in the Northeast, the most impoverished region. This was repeated throughout the country in the three weeks between the rounds.

In parallel, younger members of congress from a smaller party supporting Lula's Workers Party, completely revamped the campaign's lacklustre social media presence. 'Lula's Army', a Whatsapp channel launched by Janones of the Rede party, went from 50,000 followers to a million in two days. Now it has 10 million.

The next stage will be difficult, and possibly violent. As I write, Flavio Bolsonaro is refusing to recognise the results and calling on his supporters not to either. He's promising a legal challenge, but last time, when his father, Jair Bolsonaro lost, they invaded the congress and presidential palace. President Trump looks ready to back him.

Even if the immediate threat recedes, Lula's presidency will confront big far-right and traditional right majorities in both houses of congress. If he is not to capitulate completely, he will have to govern with the streets, and with his new found digital army.

This in turn is likely to lead to confrontation. The far right is deeply embedded in large sections of society. And it could draw on the sympathies of at least parts of the armed forces.

What the Brazilian people have achieved can be a huge inspiration for all of us facing resurgent varieties of neo-fascism and the far right in different parts of the world. But they will also need support. We should be thinking now about how to organise that solidarity. The Scottish working class has a proud tradition in this area. 'Nae pasaran.'

But developing our own struggles is also part of building solidarity.

There is little doubt that the kids on the streets in Brazil have been encouraged by what they see in France and the Spanish state. No doubt the Serbian students who just defeated Vucic have been too. A new form of internationalism appears to be taking shape and we need to be part of that.
We live in interesting, if dangerous, times.

26 October 2026

Spanish state

When no one expected it.... the sun has come out

Miguel Urbán Crespo ·

Barely two weeks ago, no one could have imagined that the eviction of an 87-year-old woman from the home where she had lived for more than seven decades could end up precipitating a general election. Much less did we imagine that, along the way, thousands of people would once again occupy the Puerta del Sol [1], one of the most well-known and busiest squares in Madrid; that housing would displace immigration from the center of political discourse; and that a government—which had spent months weathering lawfare, corruption scandals, an offensive by the right, and the rise of the far right—would end up calling a snap election after losing a vote on housing decrees. Yet however hard it may be to believe, that is exactly what happened.

Two weeks that serve to recall one of Daniel Bensaïd's key teachings: history does not advance according to a railway timetable. Politics is also made up of forks in the road, accidents, leaps, and events that suddenly alter a landscape that seemed stable. Bensaïd wrote that revolutions "occur when and where they are least expected. Inevitably untimely." Not because they appear miraculously out of nowhere, but because certain events manage to crystallise contradictions that had long been accumulating beneath a veneer of apparent normality.

Maricarmen's eviction played out in just that way. Clearly, the housing crisis did not begin on September 23rd. Nor did the tenants' unions or the housing movement. For years, there has been an accumulation of unaffordable rents, evictions, touristification, investment funds, wages unable to keep pace with housing costs, and a generation condemned to spend a large share of its income simply to have a roof over its head. At the same time, an organised movement had been patiently built up that had spent years denouncing that situation. What was unforeseen was not the existence of all those ingredients, but the moment they ignited.

As Brais Fernández wrote a few days ago, the housing movement has managed to temporarily bring together two contradictions: one existing between economic growth and the material problems facing a growing segment of the working class, and one separating the promises of progressivism from the results of eight years of government. Prior organisation does not in itself explain the outbreak, but without that organisation, the outbreak likely would not have reached this scale.

In fact, this is perhaps the primary lesson of these past few weeks. Social upheavals are unpredictable. We can analyse the contradictions that make them possible, build up strength, form organisations, and identify grievances, but we never know exactly which event will strike the spark. Maricarmen was that spark, yet none of it would have been possible without the "slow impatience" involved in the socio-unionist building of the housing movement.

A spark that ignited during a period of reactionary advance, when public discourse seemed trapped by an agenda defined by the humanitarian crisis in Ceuta—a time when the right and the far right had succeeded in establishing the language of warfare, speaking of "invasion" and "external threat" and casting the migrant as the enemy. In this regard, Maricarmen's eviction and the subsequent mobilisation have not defeated that reactionary climate. It is best not to delude ourselves. Nothing that took place at Sol appears to have structurally altered the balance of power—yet. However, the conversation has changed, even if only temporarily.

The fact that one of the protest slogans has become "the invaders are the investors" implies—as Jaime Pastor points out—that the framework established in the wake of the Ceuta events has been momentarily overshadowed. For this is no mere rhetorical flourish; it shifts the explanation for the prevailing discontent. In contrast to attempts to justify the housing shortage by blaming poor migrants, the movement points to rent-seeking, investment funds, and the commodification of housing. The targets of blame shift, and in doing so, the potential political response is also transformed. This shift—occurring in a climate dominated for months by a reactionary agenda—constitutes a small political victory in itself.

A parallel with the 15M movement [2] and many differences

The sight of the Puerta del Sol once again covered in tents has made a comparison to the 15-M movement inevitable. This is understandable. Such images are powerful, and political memory often operates through them. Yet, the similarities likely end there. We are not witnessing a new 15-M.

The 15M movement emerged in a different historical moment. Its backdrop was defined by the Great Recession of 2008, the bank bailout, austerity policies, youth unemployment, the Arab Spring, and the loss of credibility of a political system that seemed incapable of providing answers. Its impulse was fundamentally destituent: "they don't represent us," "PSOE and PP—it's the same shit," "they call it democracy, but it isn't." There was no single demand capable of encapsulating the movement, because what was at stake was precisely the entire political system that had emerged from the Transition [3]: the so-called "Regime of '78."

The square also functioned as a massive political school. Thousands of people who arrived without prior affiliation took part in assemblies, committees, endless debates, and forums for deliberation. People went to Sol not only to protest but also to try to understand what was happening and to think collectively about what to do. The square was simultaneously a site of protest, organisation, encounter, and pedagogy. Fifteen years later, the logic is different.

The current movement is focused on a much more specific conflict: housing, and particularly rents. It also involves concrete demands and pre-existing organisations. The Tenants' Union did not originate in Sol. It has been organising, training activists, establishing structures, building strike funds, and tackling specific conflicts since 2017. Surrounding it is a whole constellation of housing unions and assemblies, political organisations, feminist and student collectives, and social movements.

In the 15M, the organisations that came to the square, to a large extent, had to dissolve within it. Now the organisations come to Sol precisely as organisations and express themselves publicly with a visible presence within the camp. This profoundly modifies the character of the encampment.

The 2011 encampment at Sol was more spontaneous, chaotic, contradictory, and difficult to govern. Yet, precisely for that reason, it also possessed an enormous capacity to bring in people who had never considered themselves activists for any cause. It was a public square where political identities were under construction. The current encampment at Sol, by contrast, is rooted in far more defined identities.

Simply put, one could say that the 15M movement was more about pedagogy, whereas this movement is more about agitation and propaganda. That square was fundamentally turned inward: the discussion centered on who we were and what we wanted. Adrián Almazán has described it vividly: in 2011, there was hardly a moment without invitations to join debates, assemblies, or spaces for collective deliberation; in the current encampment, the emphasis lies much more heavily on the public square as a stage from which to project messages to cameras, the media, and social networks. There are hundreds of shops and immense organisational capacity, but—proportionally speaking—fewer spaces dedicated to the kind of endless political conversa-

tion that characterized the indignados movement. This is not necessarily worse. It is different.

Moreover, the demographic the 15M movement appealed to was largely a middle-class facing impoverishment: educated young people—with no future—who had been promised that studying, working hard, and making an effort would guarantee upward social mobility, a promise shattered by the 2008 crisis. Hence the figure of the highly qualified young person—holding multiple university degrees—condemned to unemployment, emigration, or precarious work. And although the macroeconomy is performing better now than it was fifteen years ago, that meritocratic promise has been significantly eroded.

Regarding the current encampment, it is difficult to pin down its sociological makeup, yet there is a substantial difference in how the participants refer to themselves. "Long live the working-class struggle" is a phrase heard at the camp, serving as a way for them to recognise or perceive themselves. Where the landlord and the tenant cease to appear simply as two private individuals freely entering into a transaction, and instead appear as parties to an unequal class relationship. Housing makes it possible to translate seemingly private experiences—failing to make rent, sharing an apartment at age 35, being forced out of one's neighbourhood—into the language of the working class. In this sense, there is an explicit recovery of the concept of class, which was far less present in the initial mindset of the 15M movement.

The 15M movement succeeded in challenging the "Regime of '78" with an extraordinary cross-cutting appeal that, for a time, blurred existing ideological boundaries. People who had voted for the Left or the Right—or who had never voted at all—could identify with the slogan "they don't represent us" and the notion that the system had "swindled" them; this intuitive challenge to the regime was the key to the movement's ability to expand.

The current movement has a much more clearly defined political stance; in a sense, it is not merely a political expression of discontent regarding the housing crisis but also a reactive movement against the rise of the far right. Anti-fascism is an explicit part of its identity; flags or propaganda from leftist organisations are not only accepted but viewed as a natural part of the encampment's ecosystem.

That is why its virtue differs from that of the 15M movement. It cannot trigger a shift of voters between political blocs—at least not in the short term—but it does have the capacity to remobilise a demoralised left-wing bloc, rejuvenate it by incorporating a new generation of activists, restore confidence in collective action, and demonstrate that the reactionary agenda is not invincible.

The context is also the reverse. The 15-M movement emerged after the Arab Spring, when an international wave of uprisings seemed to herald that anything was possible. The current encampment arises after years of the far right's rise, social defeats, and the retreat of the Left. As Brais Fernández points out, that earlier emergence was part of an international climate of offensive action; the current one, by contrast, arises as a reaction to the suffocation caused by a reactionary offensive.

For eight years, Pedro Sánchez has survived practically everything: motions of no confidence, pandemics, wars, lawfare, media onslaughts, right-wing mobilisations, corruption scandals, electoral defeats, and an opposition that has spent years predicting the government's imminent collapse on a daily basis. None of that managed to cut the legislative term short. Maricarmen did.

We must not forget that Sánchez arrived at Moncloa [4] leading a political bloc that had made ending evictions a symbol of the break with austerity policies. Eight years later, his government is calling elections precisely after the eviction of Maricarmen exposed the limits of those promises. Or rather, it was the accumulation of years of contradictions that unexpectedly found—in the eviction—a name, a face, and an event capable of transforming individual discontent into a collective force. For, as Bensaïd reminded us, history remains

open, and events have a habit of arriving at the wrong moment, when no one was expecting them.

11 October 2026

Translated and annotated by David Fagan for ***International Viewpoint*** *from* ***Viento Sur****.*

France

France, October 2026: reasons to believe

Olivier Besancenot ·

On 17 October 2026, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets across France. Starting with young people and secondary school pupils, the mobilisation brought together other sections of society around the issue of the cost of living, outside the traditional trade union and political structures.

The Macronist government responded with repression on an unprecedented scale: a number of people taken into police custody not seen since the start of the secondary school pupils' movement, a partial curfew, the dissolution of organisations now being discussed, and deaths whose circumstances remain to be clarified.

France is not an isolated case. In Belgium; in Italy, where Giorgia Meloni's government has decided to send the army to Milan to suppress the protests; in Albania; in Spain; and in Portugal, where the call for a general strike is on everyone's lips, young people are rising up against governments that serve the wealthiest and are becoming increasingly authoritarian. On the streets of Paris, in particular, impromptu bands struck up *La Marseillaise*, as well as *El pueblo unido jamás será vencido*, *The Internationale* and *Va, pensiero*, the chorus of the Hebrew slaves from Verdi's *Nabucco*, amidst the tear gas. These were all songs of emancipation, steeped in the promises of past struggles, much like the slogan that resonated particularly strongly on 17 October, 65 years after the massacre of Algerians carried out in Paris by the police under Prefect Maurice Papon, who was convicted in 1998 of complicity in crimes against humanity for his role in the deportation of Jews from the Gironde region during the Occupation: 'We are the children of those you did not drown'. [1]

With a cross-sector day of action called for 5 November, Olivier Besancenot looks back with Marx21.ch on this period, its historical roots – from the French Revolution to the Paris Commune – and the reasons to believe in it.

Stéfanie Prezioso: What is new and surprising about the social mobilisation of young people in France and the alliance forged with other sectors of society around the issue of cost of living on 17 October, which points to the crisis of social reproduction?

Olivier Besancenot: What is new and surprising about the mobilisation on 17 October and the alliance that has formed is that it is taking place outside traditional structures. We had already seen social outbursts – whether sector-specific or thematic – that clearly eluded the organisations of the labour movement, be they trade unions, social organisations or political parties – the Yellow Vests, for example. But for a convergence to begin taking place, outside these organisations, between completely different sectors of society, with the support and participation – whether implicit or explicit – of certain structures: as far as I can recall, this is unprecedented.

This explains both the surprise that has caught the political establishment off guard, whilst also highlighting the movement's limitations in terms of democratic organisation. I think this really points to the global crisis we are living through, which is also a crisis of labour movement organisations, to a transformation of society, and to a new type of proletariat which, in fact, is emerging through this sort of experience.

SP: You often refer to the French Revolution and the Paris Commune – and the social and democratic aspirations driven by the working classes – when reflecting on the

events we are witnessing today. Why are these historical references so pertinent?

OB: It is true that my primary point of reference has always been the Paris Commune of 1871, far more so than the French Revolution, which I am learning to discover – or rediscover – through the struggles, particularly that of the Yellow Vests. That movement was a turning point: this history has re-emerged in the mobilisation in a subliminal way – or perhaps not so subliminal after all. The large demonstrations in December, which marched up the Rue de Rivoli to the Place de la Concorde in order to reach the Élysée Palace at any cost and confront Macron there, naturally evoked the great peasant revolts – led in particular by women – who would go and fetch the king from his castle to bring him back, for example, to Paris. Not to mention the French flag, which was not merely an expression of the far-right currents present at the start of the movement, or *La Marseillaise,* sung at the top of people's voices, which I have learnt to listen to in a different light.

This *Marseillaise* can be heard, for example, in schools and in the secondary schools taking part in the protests, particularly in working-class neighbourhoods and the suburbs. So there is an underground history. And when one learns to rediscover it — as I am doing at the moment, notably by reading Jules Michelet's *History of the French Revolution* — one realises that something truly extraordinary did indeed happen: the people, from the grassroots up, put an end to centuries of domination, organisation and the monarchical mode of production, and decided to do away with it all—on several occasions between the storming of the Bastille; the act of going to fetch the king in October 1789 to bring him back to Paris—a mass abduction the likes of which we no longer see; later, by beheading him; and later still, by organising days of insurrection and communalist action.

This inevitably leaves its mark, which, for my part, I had underestimated. We belong to a very distinct current, deeply shaped by the political era that began with the October Revolution of 1917 and ended in 1989, and one realises that there is something profound there after all.

SP: What does the scale of repression in France today – carried out by a supposedly centrist government, which is in no way inferior to that of Giorgia Meloni's far-right administration – tell us about the convergence of the more or less extreme right-wing movements in Europe and around the world?

OB: The scale of the repression is, in fact, absolutely unprecedented. In terms of the number of people taken into police custody since the start of the secondary school pupils' movement, it far exceeds even that experienced by the Yellow Vests movement, which itself had far surpassed the protests against the First Employment Contract (CPE) or those of the 1990s. In fact, working-class neighbourhoods have served as a testing ground for the systematisation of a repressive apparatus that is now being rolled out to every type of social upheaval. This tells us, first and foremost, something about liberalism and its policies, which require an authoritarian turn.

Secondly, it tells us something about the ongoing 'fascisation' – that is what I call it, despite everything, even if the term is open to debate, for it at least has the merit of highlighting what is actually happening: a whole series of measures have already been put in place by the Macronist government, even before the far right has come to power. In July, for example, the presumption of self-defence was granted by law to the police, which is a long-standing demand of the far right.

And there are many more examples like this. In this process, we can also see the extent to which the Macron administration is losing control of its own repressive apparatus. There is therefore a loss of control over the situation and, in this race against time, there is what Daniel Bensaïd called the 'discordance of times': between social time, which is becoming more radicalised, and political time, which is nowhere near that stage.

SP: The media have placed great emphasis on the unprecedented violence of 17 October, which undoubtedly reflects heightened anger. But what surprised us most was seeing hundreds of thousands of demonstrators converging across France, united in their shared rejection of social injustice and the denial of democracy. What conclusions do you draw from that day?

OB: To assess the 17th, it is extremely important to understand the scale of what is happening. I took part in this demonstration, and I have never experienced anything like it in my life, in terms of its sheer size, determination and the mix of people. It was a tidal wave, a human tide. Of course, when you get home in the evening and see the mainstream media and political coverage of these events – which, incidentally, did indeed take place – you get the impression that you weren't part of the same thing. And this, for the time being, is being overlooked in the French political debate, as it is a sense of bewilderment that prevails, alongside the political exploitation of what happened: shops vandalised, and in some cases looted.

But all this cannot simply vanish overnight, for there is something too powerful, too profound in what has just been expressed, and which we have yet to understand: a movement that was organised solely through social media and subsequently supported by a number of organisations.

This points to a new phase, one that throws everything back into question, full of new possibilities, and which – despite the ongoing political unease of the moment, which persists and is catching up with this phase – must give us cause for hope.

SP: The hundreds of thousands of people who have mobilised no doubt feel today that the demonstrations are insufficient to bring a hardline government to its knees, a government that has no qualms about imposing a partial curfew. The call for a general strike is on everyone's lips, just as it is in Spain. What do you think?

OB: The mobilisation will, indeed, lead to an outcome that, by its very nature, we cannot predict.

Nothing is over, because this movement isn't going to stop: it's too deep-rooted, too entrenched. It also has an international dimension. When you look beyond our borders, you can see that, amongst young people, similar events – or events we're tempted to compare – are taking place in Belgium, Italy and Albania. There's also the movement unfolding in Spain. There is also something happening from a generational perspective, which means that this movement will not be halted by the imposition of a curfew or by other authoritarian measures which, I am sure, will not be long in coming – perhaps even the dissolution of a number of organisations; we do not yet know.

The challenge now, in fact, is for the labour movement to take up the baton – that is to say, for the working class to take up the baton. If there is no strength in numbers – in terms of reminding society of the place occupied by workers – then, unfortunately, it will not be enough, and we will not succeed in ensuring that this legitimate revolt leads to a fully-fledged class consciousness, based on partial victories, or at least on a visibility that gives us reason to believe in it. This is what is at stake behind the call for a general strike. A day of cross-sectoral action has been called for 5 November: the challenge now is to ensure that the workers of this country do not remain mere spectators of what is happening, that they are not paralysed by the situation, especially as there are still grey areas.

There is talk of deaths in connection with the demonstrations, without a full explanation; accounts, theories and hypotheses are being put forward, but we have reached this level of gravity. We are therefore only at the beginning, and we are of course eager to see what the future may hold, even though we are, on the other hand, extremely — how shall I put it? — weighed down by the political anxiety of the moment, because we can see that all the ingredients of this period, this grim period in which we are living, are re-emerging.

20 October 2026

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Israel

"The solution will not come from the Israeli elections but from external pressure"

Editors l'Anticapitaliste ·

The NPA-A newspaper, *l'Anticapitaliste* spoke to Nadav, an activist with Tsedek! – a Jewish decolonial collective – ahead of the Israeli general election on 27 October 2026.

Can we expect anything from these elections in terms of Palestinian rights?

Frankly, no. The Palestinian question had already been buried. Today, it's a race to the bottom to see who can be the most against a Palestinian state. I'm not even talking about rights, freedom or resistance: simply about two states, as set out in the Oslo Accords.

A video sums it up: a presenter asks eight representatives from the main political lists – from both Netanyahu's bloc and the opposition – whether they support a Palestinian state. All reply 'no': we will do everything to prevent it. Several accuse their opponents of supporting it in order to discredit them.

Today, it's a race to see who can be the strongest against a Palestinian state.

They all share the same consensus on settlement activity, 'Judaisation' and Gaza. Only Yaïr Golan's Democrats, formed from the merger of Meretz and the Labour Party, say that it might one day be worth considering, but that after 7 October, it would be handing them a gift. The unified list of the so-called Arab parties, comprising Palestinians from 1948, speaks of a Palestinian state. But within the Jewish Zionist camp, no one presents it as a condition for peace any longer. Even close allies on the centre or the Zionist left say that 7 October has 'opened their eyes': there is no question of granting this reward to the Palestinians.

What, then, distinguishes the two blocs?

The usual divisions within Israeli society, now exacerbated. What is new is the inquiry into 7 October. Netanyahu shifts the blame onto the army for what he considers the most violent pogrom since the Holocaust; the opposition holds him responsible. Gadi Eisenkot, his main rival, promises an independent inquiry.

The other issue, which is rallying support among the secular and liberal sections of society, is the conscription of the ultra-Orthodox. Netanyahu wants to maintain their exemption; his opponents want everyone to serve in the armed forces.

The common thread between the two is the army, with its hyper-militarist rhetoric: Eisenkot is a former Chief of the General Staff, and all parties highlight their military experience. The ultra-Orthodox, who do not serve, make a convenient scapegoat. You cannot maintain a settlement without a highly developed army.

The opposition longs for the days when the army functioned better, when 'we were left to our own devices' and when the world didn't hate us. During the protests against judicial reform, a reservist pilot from the liberal elite said, in essence: to continue bombing children, we need absolute trust in our institutions, in the Supreme Court. Because — and I'll add this myself — they protect Israel from international sanctions. Once the system is discredited, soldiers and commanders risk prosecution for war crimes abroad. They want to carry on as before, whilst saving face.

And what about the social and economic issues? The 'rule of law'—with plenty of quotation marks?

They're conspicuous by their absence. Everything revolves around Netanyahu and security. The Supreme Court, which had sparked mass protests, has taken a back seat. The opposition says: let's get rid of Netanyahu, and we'll see what happens afterwards. That does not constitute a political programme.

The anti-Netanyahu bloc has no other agenda regarding the Palestinians and differs little on many other issues

How does the election work?

A single round, using proportional representation. Where it turns into a 'Game of Thrones' scenario is that any votes below 3.25 per cent are discarded. Hence the alliances to clear the threshold, or the micro-parties that siphon off votes to remove them from the count, or withdraw after reaching an agreement. Polls suggest the blocs are virtually neck and neck. Without a new government, Netanyahu remains at the head of a caretaker government.

And what of the United Arab List?

It brings together Ta'al, Hadash – which grew out of the Communist Party – and Balad to clear the threshold. Some anti-Netanyahu lists would agree to govern with them, whilst others refuse: Liberman, a secular ultra-nationalist, will never associate with 'terrorists'. This weakens the opposition.

Balad was disqualified following a motion tabled by Ben Gvir; the disqualification was lifted on condition that its chairman and lead candidate, Sami Abu Shehadeh, withdrew, which he did. The most left-wing party in the Zionist opposition bloc – that of Yair Golan, a former soldier who has called for Gaza to be starved – voted in favour of this motion.

So would it be a mistake to portray the anti-Netanyahu bloc as being to his left?

Exactly. It is 'to his left' only because it is anti-Netanyahu. It has no other policy regarding the Palestinians and differs little on many other issues. It is unclear what policy Eisenkot would pursue: some on his list might well be found among Smotrich's, Ben Gvir's or the Likud's supporters; there are also religious Zionists. Even if they oust Netanyahu, the situation will not change.

For Palestinians, this government has been a disaster, but that will not end with a different government

Netanyahu remains neck and neck with Eisenkot. Backed by Trump, he highlights his so-called successes in Lebanon and Iran, where, according to him, the war is not over and where he alone can continue it.

For Palestinians from '48, the West Bank and Gaza, this government has been a disaster: colonisation, annexation, violence, torture in prisons – everything has been taken up a notch. But this will not stop with a different government. It is unclear what alliances will emerge from the ballot box. We may see elements of his government in a new majority, or people sharing the same ideology.

And what of the peace camp? For a moment, we thought Standing Together would stand for election.

This election shows that what we in France imagined to be the peace camp — a vast illusion — is dead. Standing Together formed itself into a party. Its activists gained visibility during the genocide through their humanitarian actions, by offering Palestinians from '48 a secure channel to send aid to Gaza, despite the repression, and by speaking out about crime within so-called Israeli Arab society, which nobody takes seriously. But it was something of a bubble, and they failed to reach the threshold required to stand for election. The United Arab List shut the door on them: their leaders come from a split within Hadash.

On the Zionist side, the Golan Democrats are projected to win six or seven seats: an extremely meagre haul for the alliance between the Labour Party, which has governed for decades, and Meretz.

And so much the better. Perhaps people will come to realise that there is no alternative to anti-

Zionism – to the end of the State of Israel – if rights and justice are to be achieved in Palestine. This will not come about through a two-state solution, nor through negotiations with chiefs of staff, nor through a response from within, nor through elections. The solution will come from external pressure.

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Translated by ***International Viewpoint*** *from* ***l'Anticapitaliste***.

Italy

Mass protests of youth and workers spread to Italy

Dave Kellaway ·

On the interminable political news and discussion TV programmes here in Italy the pundits are all talking about 'catching the virus' of the huge protests in the Spanish state and France. Hundreds of thousands of students mobilized on 16 October. Tent protests have sprung up in some city squares and there were minority skirmishes with the police in a few places.

On 17 October students joined the national demonstration against the spiraling cost of living called by the General Confederation of Italian Workers (CGIL) – the largest and most progressive of the union federations. Around 100,000 marched in Rome, beyond official expectations. There were more significant incidents in Milan where some shops were looted and some fires started. A police car was burnt out.

In the TV debates you see the same old positions expressed. Both the centre left and the right condemn all violence. The right wing call for a firmer response from the police and condemn the centre left for encouraging the demonstrations and not denouncing the incidents strongly enough.

Much is made of rupture between generations and the sense among many people that their future is looking a lot bleaker than previous ones. The mainstream press and the government are all issuing grave warnings about the risks of things getting out of hand on the general strikes called for 30 October by the rank and file USB unions and those on 20 November by the CGIL. Student organizations have already indicated that they are supporting these days of action and there is a national organizing meeting for students on 23 November.

Spontaneity of youth upsurge

Luciano Cimino, for radical left daily newspaper, Il Manifesto described 16 October student mobilization in the following way:

"No national coordination between cities, no shared platform, no leading organisation – simply the announcement of a date led yesterday to student demonstrations on a scale not seen for years. Tens of thousands of people marched in the capital, two thousand in Florence, five thousand in Milan, and similar numbers in Turin, Naples, Genoa and Palermo. And hundreds more took part in marches in smaller towns, such as Latina, Mestre and Padua. In total, half a million young people took to the streets yesterday with a range of demands: the impact of the 'security decrees' on their schools, solidarity with Palestinians amid soaring rents, the climate emergency alongside the issue of gender-based violence. All united by opposition to right-wing parties that are increasing military spending whilst cutting welfare."

The mobilization was called the 'No Meloni Day' calling out the far right prime minister who has denounced the protesters. You can see a significant degree of spontaneity at this stage. Social media means the message from France and the Spanish state travel fast and then it acts as an effective tool of mobilization.

The idea that there are 'extreme left' organizations behind the movement is just something the government wants people to believe. In that sense there are similarities with what is happened elsewhere in Europe. The Italian radical left is far weaker than in its heyday back in the 70s where it had tens of thousands of activists. Palestine solidarity has certainly played a role also in radicalizing young people before the recent demonstrations.

As in France, you can see too that young people from the poorer urban periphery are involved. They are at times more likely to be targeted by police since that happens anyway in their neighbourhoods and they are more likely to fight back. Consumer capitalism creates it own explosions. Young people are subject o endless advertising that only certain products will make them fully human. They have less money then ever, hardly surprising that when the opportunity arises a small minority will take advantage. As one said on the TV – my father would need two weeks salary just to buy some of this stuff in the luxury shops.

The government response has not been to negotiate or discuss improvements. Instead it has extended its power to put people it deems to be a threat to order in preventive detention. From now on it can also detain minors. New crimes and more severe penalties have been created. Government ministers have made ludicrous accusations today that the hand of Moscow or the Islamists are behind the incidents. It's all about hybrid warfare against the left and Western values because kids are nicking trainers from FootLocker.

Trade union day of action on cost of living

At the end of the CGIL demonstration on Saturday there were many incidents. Fires were started. People attacked shops. A big Feltrinelli book store was invaded, books were scattered and some electronic items were pocketed. Official reports say 80% of those arrested were the previous day there were skirmishes in Turin and Bologna.

Landini, CGIL leader, provided some militant rhetoric at the march in Rome:

> *We are placing ourselves at the service of this process of change to put social justice back at the centre,' because 'this is not the time to ask young people to fight; it is time for us to fight to secure the rights they do not have, and the strike is the most solidarity-based tool there is'. A quote from Giuseppe di Vittorio (founder of the CGIL and member of the Constituent Assembly) is a must: "The working citizen, when alone, is weaker than the capitalist citizen.*
> *(from Il Manifesto, Luciano Cimino 18 October)*

Poverty and inequality

So there is a potential for the demands of young people and of workers in general to come together. Already the south of Italy is being affected by industrial action taken by hauliers who are reeling under the costs of diesel. Poverty and inequality is rampant in Italy. As Franco Turigliatto from Sinistra Anticapitalista (Fourth International organization in Italy) points out on its web site:

> - *The full burden of PAYE tax (80 per cent) falls on the shoulders of workers and pensioners. A jeweller declares less income than a teacher.*
> - *Too many flat-rate taxes for the self-employed, whilst inflation erodes pay packets.*
> - *Reduced spending, steep utility bills.*
> - *The cost of the weekly shop has risen by 24 per cent in five years.*
> - *Electricity prices are up 13 per cent.*
> - *The huge drain of rent, a hidden tax that eats into wages and savings. In Milan, rent amounts to 76 per cent of the average wage; in Rome, 65 per cent.*
> - *Millions of Italians (5.8 million) are foregoing medical treatment due to costs and regional inequalities: the figures on the healthcare crisis. Healthcare spending in Italy has fallen to 6.2 per cent of GDP, a figure below the European average that places our country among the lowest-ranked G7 nations.*
> - *Wages of Italian workers are lower than they were 30 years ago. It is less well known that the current wage agreement system is governed by rules which provide for wage increases linked solely to the price index, without, however, taking into account rises*

> *in energy prices. Not only, therefore, is any real improvement in wages prohibited, but their reduction is actually planned; all productivity gains benefit only the capitalists;*
>
> - *Added to this disgrace is an even greater one: there are millions more workers in precarious or part-time employment, the vast majority of whom are underpaid, and many others working entirely off the books on starvation wages. [1]*

Right wing government stokes fear of other

One tactic the right wing government has been using to divide workers is to actively encourage fear over migration and crime. This works well for a key part of its electoral base which is self employed and small business people. Italy has a much bigger number of smaller family businesses than other European countries.

Fear of the other is also shamelessly cranked up by government passing laws against Muslims wearing the veil or the burka. Islamophobia is stoked and the rightwing split from Salvini's Lega by ex General Vanacci only encourages this. Taxation is modified to reduce its weight on the self employed and business. Attacks on Palestine solidarity is another form of this – the amalgam between anti-Zionism and antisemitism is pursued in further anti-democratic moves.

The febrile political situation is also animated by next year's general election. As is customary in Italy, the government is tweaking the electoral law so that the proportional representation system is modified to give an every bigger 'bonus' of seats to the winning coalition. The rules favour the formation of pre-electoral coalitions with the designation of the potential prime minister. This takes Italy further away from its much more democratic system that lasted until 1993. Meloni favours a more presidential system concentrating even more power in the hands of one individual.

As a result the opposition forces – the Democratic Party (PD) led by Elly Schlein, the Five Star movement (led by ex PM Conte) and the Left/Green Alliance (AVS) – are jockeying for who will lead the opposition coalition. There are some smaller even more moderate currents led by Calenda and Renzi (another ex PM) which may or may not end up inside the broad front. The prime minister designate will be decided by a primary where anyone can vote. Consequently the leader of the largest party does not necessarily win. Schlein's latest declarations tack a little to the left as she criticizes the historic tendency of the PD to make electoral coalitions with the moderate centre. Inside her party three are the 'reformists' who want to do precisely that.

A fighting programme

We still do not know the programme of this centre left opposition. It will not be anything like the policies being proposed by Jean Luc Melenchon and La France Insoumise (LFI – France Unbowed) in France which do have a potential anti-capitalist dynamic. Turigliatto outlines some of the key policies that could repeat that in Italy:

- substantial pay rises, including the minimum wage and a new sliding scale;
- fair and proportional taxation;
- the rejection of increased military spending – indeed, its reduction – and the conversion of arms factories;
- a campaign against the normalisation of war;
- the rights of migrants – which are nothing other than the rights of everyone – and the unity of all workers, putting an end to the disgrace of detention centres;
- strong measures to restore public healthcare and the right to housing.

Of course the left needs to explain that the resources for this have to come from the pockets of the bosses and their profits. Over 40 years they

have grabbed an additional 15 per cent of national income.

The anti-capitalist left in Italy has to build all these movements and the mobilizations on 30 of October and the 20 November. The various demands of the youth and students need to be brought together. A political alternative to the social liberal policies of the socalled centre left has to be patiently built.

Mass mobilizations can help give people on the left hope again.

Speaking to friends and comrades here you feel that a lot could be built if people could overcome the years of demoralization. The revolutionary left used to have a consistent presence in parliament but that has not been the case for a long time now. There is unlikely to be a coalition or current running to the left of the broad front. Nevertheless successful mobilizations could at least prevent a Meloni government mark two. Current opinion polls still indicate this is the most likely outcome if the social balance of forces does not radically change.

20 October 2026

Source: **Anti*Capitalist Resistance**.

PORTUGAL

A new cycle of struggles has begun in Portugal

JOSÉ SOEIRO ·

At the end of last June, the left and the labour movement in Portugal secured an unlikely victory: the government's proposed labour reform, which would have overhauled the Labour Code from top to bottom, was defeated in parliament. Public pressure was so intense – with two general strikes, dozens of protests and a campaign that rallied the majority of public opinion against the government's violently regressive agenda – that the far right, fearful of the electoral consequences of seeing its support for such a thoroughly unpopular proposal through to the end, changed its position and ultimately joined forces with the left to vote down the government's labour reform package.

This struggle ushered in a new cycle of confidence for the popular movement.

The government, which holds a minority in parliament, put labour issues on hold and sought to change the subject. It ensured that the PS abstained on the draft state budget, on the one hand, and, on the other, reached an agreement with the far right on a new rental law which, in practice, virtually eliminates any rights for tenants.

A two-month delay in paying rent can lead to eviction. There is no longer a cap on deposits for renting a property. The number of months' rent a tenant must pay in advance when signing a tenancy agreement has been increased to three. The 2 per cent cap on rent increases has been removed. With this proposal, the rental market – which is used by those unable to buy a home – becomes even more cut-throat, in the eurozone country where house prices have risen the most, where only 2 per cent of housing is social housing, where the rent per square metre has doubled over the last five years, where, on average, people spend 50 per cent of their income on rent for legally registered tenancies alone (that is to say, it is even worse if we take the informal market into account), and where the poverty rate rises from around 15 per cent to 27 per cent when housing costs are factored in.

The rising cost of living, including fuel prices, and the approval (albeit without a final vote yet) of the tenancy law have created the conditions for a new cycle of protests.

On 10 October, a coalition of various groups and associations, called 'Não Dá Mais' ('We Can't Take It Anymore'), organised demonstrations against the rising cost of living in five cities, attended by several thousand people. In the city of Porto, which has the greatest impact in the north of the country, this demonstration coincided with two other protests – in support of Palestine and to safeguard an old market (the Bulhão), which is highly symbolic for the city – and was followed by a call, inspired by events in Spain and the wave of outrage over Maricarmen's death, to set up a tent camp at the end of the rally, occupying the square where it had taken place.

On the first night, around 30 tents were pitched and remained in place. On the second night, there were more than 50. The camp was going to be cleared by the council at the end of the second night. The activists used social media to call for a new demonstration at the same location, with the aim of deciding, at an open-air public assembly, whether to resume the sit-in. On that same day, the Mayor declared that he would be "absolutely uncompromising" if the square were to be occupied with tents again. But not even that deterred the organisers of the camp, who set it up once more, with more people and more support.

At 3 am, with no journalists left in the square, the Government and the City Council, acting in concert, ordered a brutal police charge against a few

dozen peaceful activists who had spent the night in that square. Curiously, this was on the very same day that, 20 years ago, a movement had begun to occupy the municipal theatre located in the same square.

The mobile phone videos shocked public opinion and the city. That very same day, thousands of people flocked to the square in outrage, in a massive demonstration that also made its way to the entrance of the city hall. Not only did the movement explode, but it also began to spark reactions in other cities and a huge wave of solidarity.

Not even the attempts by the Government and some commentators to stigmatise and blame the activists for having 'provoked the police' had any effect.

For the past ten days, the square has been constantly filled with thousands of people in the late afternoon and evening, with cultural events and workshops, whilst the organisers manage the day-to-day running of catering, security and cleaning. A new camp also sprang up in Lisbon last weekend, and in Coimbra. At the trade union demonstration called by the CGTP (Portugal's largest trade union confederation) against the rising cost of living on the 17th, trade union organisations and the 'campers' converged, forming a crowd of diverse ages and social backgrounds, which returned to the square in Porto. That same evening, the Porto camp was re-established with thousands of people, and several hundred spending the night there. A new cycle of protests has begun and will reach its next major national milestone on 14 November with a national demonstration.

At present, it is impossible to predict how the movement will develop. The issue of housing, however, is already at the centre of public debate, even as the government attempts to refocus the debate on 'violence' or the legitimacy of occupying a public space with tents. Progress has been made, notably during the demonstrations on 17 October, in developing a convergence between the housing protests and the trade union mobilisations. The political parties are under pressure to provide answers regarding the housing crisis, and the far right is already beginning to backtrack on its commitments regarding the new tenancy law, which may thus be defeated by popular mobilisation, as happened with the Government's labour reform package. There is also discussion as to what effect the Spanish general strike will have on the timetable and repertoire of struggles in Portugal. Undoubtedly, the inertia has been shaken off and we are facing a new cycle of collective action, with significant youth participation, which is already fostering a new collective consciousness and may have lasting effects on the reorganisation of the popular movement and the balance of power in the country.

20 October 2026

Translated by ***International Viewpoint***.

USA

Millions Join No Kings Demonstrations for Free and Fair Elections

Dan La Botz ·

An estimated 7 to 9 million people joined some 3,000 No Kings demonstrations across the United States on October 17 to encourage voters to vote and to defend the vote. The liberal organizations leading No Kings—Indivisible, the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Federation of Teachers, and Black and Latino voters' group—called for a non-partisan demonstration. Certainly, there were many Independents and some Republicans present, but, like three earlier No Kings protests, this was another massive movement against President Donald Trump. [1]

"I think the president is breaking our country," said Vic Cerra, a Vietnam War veteran, speaking to a reporter in Wheeling, West Virginia. "He's destroying our friendships with other countries; with our neighbors to the north and our neighbors to the south. He's fighting a war we don't need to be fighting. Taking money away from programs that should be helping our people. We need a change and voting is the best way to do it."

With the midterm election coming on November 3, participants' placards, speeches, and chants angrily criticized everything they hate about Trump's last two years: the war on Iran, higher fuel prices, climate change, the firing of thousands of federal employees, the reduction in government health, education, and social welfare programs, Immigration and Customs Enforcement's violent attacks on immigrants, the oligarchy of billionaires, the erosion of civil rights, threats to democracy, the proliferating construction of data centers, the unregulated expansion of artificial intelligence, and the 150,000 Flock cameras that track every movement of our cars.

Carrying a large sign reading "Defend Democracy," Kelsea Bond, a labor organizer and member of the Atlanta City Council, speaking at a rally in Atlanta, Georgia, said, "We need to build a society that works for the working class, not the billionaires." Her remarks were met with cheers and she went on, "We need an economy, we need a society that is democratically run by working people because we keep this economy running."

This latest No Kings protest was not built around mass marches in the big cities, but rather around local protests everywhere. Wherever they were held, many of those participating were older people in their 60s and 70s while young people were few.

An official No Kings slogan was "Hands Off My Ballot." No Kings organizers, protest participants, and millions of other Americans fear that Trump may try to steal the election or even launch another coup such as the one he attempted on January 6, 2021. The U.S. Constitution gives the states virtually total control over elections, with Congress having some oversight, and the president no role whatsoever. The Trump administration, however, has been trying to get access to the voter rolls of 31 states, supposedly to ensure that non-citizens are not voting. Trump has also suggested that ICE agents or the military might be sent to polling places on election day in violation of the federal laws that forbid armed people at voting sites. These are seen as efforts to intimidate voters and keep them from casting their ballots. They could also be the first step in a coup, leading to the seizure of ballots and a declaration that the election is invalid.

So, the key slogan of the demonstrations was "Vote Early." Some 47 of the country's 50 states permit early voting, getting the ballots into the hands of trusted state and local officials to collect and count them fairly. In this way, protecting the vote from Trump's shenanigans.

Esther Rodríguez, 73, participating in Denver, Colorado said, "I'm going to do everything I can to participate in active resistance against what is happening in this country. We have to preserve our democracy."

Portugal

Thousands of young people launch a housing protest in Lisbon

Esquerda.net ·

The slogan is "Can't manage anymore? Then pitch your tent!" Protesters gathered in Rossio Square and set up their tents to demand solutions guaranteeing the right to housing. In Porto, a popular assembly brought together thousands of people and decided to re-erect tents in D. João I Square. [1]

The vast majority of those participating in the encampment are young people who, in their statements to the media, testify to the impossibility of becoming independent and leaving their parents' home, even though they already have a degree and a job. Parents are often cited as examples to illustrate how much the situation has changed in recent decades: while a couple's salaries were once sufficient to rent or buy a home with a mortgage, today, children do their accounts and realize that it's nothing more than a dream.

The protesters are not holding back their criticism of the current government, which has adopted measures that benefit only landlords and real estate funds through tax exemptions: the recent amendment to the rent law, passed in its first reading [2] with the support of the far-right Chega party, weakens tenants. Their criticism also targets statements made by members of the government last week in response to the Porto encampment, with the Prime Minister calling the social movements selfish, and a minister asserting that the government will not heed the cries of the street.

Once the Rossio square was occupied, a popular assembly was held, rich in testimonies about the housing crisis. The slogan "the people united will never be defeated" was heard, and *Grandola, Vila Morena* [3] was sung several times .

In Porto, thousands of people once again decided to spend the night in D. João I Square

The encampments in Portugal began on Saturday October 10th in Porto, where, despite police repression, D. João I Square was the scene of gatherings and nighttime assemblies throughout the week. That Saturday, thousands of people gathered again in the late afternoon, in solidarity with the right to housing movement, but also to protest against the police intervention early Thursday morning.

During the public meeting held in the early evening, it was decided to put up tents to spend the night on site.

"It was an unequivocal vote, almost unanimous. People are outraged and want to support us. More and more people are joining us," said Cristiana Leal, one of the organizers of the demonstration, who called for "more people to come and help the government hear the cries from the street: Lisbon is crying out, Porto is crying out, and in Faro too, there has been a strong mobilization."

17 October 2026

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Italy

Paris calls? Rome answers!

Eliana Como ·

Paris calls? Rome answers! This was the announcement made by Maurizio Landini, General Secretary of the CGIL, from the podium in Piazza del Popolo at the end of a major national march. It will be a day of natural solidarity with the students, just as is currently happening in France.

Paris calls? Rome answers! We are truly delighted that today's magnificent Via Maestra [1] march, on Saturday 17 October, concluded with the announcement that the CGIL [2] will call a general strike for 20 November, alongside the European student movements who, on that day, will down tools and take to the streets in many cities to protest against rearmament, austerity and war.
For us, this is a convergence that is as natural as it is necessary, centred on the slogans that students are also championing in our country.

Between now and 20 November, we have the time needed to organise the general strike in workplaces and across the country: any other mobilisation we take part in between now and then will help to spread a climate of revolt and hope – that very atmosphere we began to breathe during yesterday's student marches.

Any emphasis on violence, in relation to this autumn, is misleading and deceptive: young people demanding a future for all are not violent. As in Paris, it is police repression that is extremely violent; it is an act of violence to prevent the olive harvest in the West Bank; it is also an act of violence that was perpetrated yesterday against the ANPI [3] in Rome, which was excluded from the commemoration of the 1943 raids [4] by those who claim to transform the memory of the deportation into an alibi for colonial and genocidal policies and who, for this reason, ally themselves with the political and moral heirs of those who carried out the deportations.

17 October 2026

Translated by ***International Viewpoint*** *from* ***le Radici del Sindacato***.

Solidarity with Ukraine

You can't defend peace when there is no peace to defend

Colin Long ·

The Australian Greens' new national leader, David Shoebridge, might think he is taking a principled position on Australian defence policy and peace, but that's far from the case. In an interview with the Sydney Morning Herald, Shoebridge said that Australia should not provide any military support to Ukraine, should wind back US access to bases in Australia and scrap the AUKUS agreement. I'm with him on the latter two, but on Ukraine he is effectively calling for the destruction of Ukraine and the mass murder of its people.

Peace is the fundamental business of the left. But peace does not mean mindless pacifism. When countries come under attack from aggressors, they are entitled to defend themselves. Ukraine is entitled to defend itself. There is no point acknowledging that Russia is an aggressor against Ukraine and calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops, but then objecting to the supply of weapons to Ukraine. Objecting to Ukraine receiving weapons from wherever it can get them is doing Putin's work for him. Putin won't stop if Ukraine is unable to defend itself. The war would certainly end – but only with a subsequent crushing of Ukraine and hundreds of Bucha massacres. And then Putin will set his sights on the next victim – the Baltic states, Finland, Georgia, Sweden? Would Shoebridge object to weapons supplies to those countries?

There is a big difference between stopping weapons supplies to an aggressor or stopping arms going to countries before war has broken out, on the one hand, and stopping supplies of weapons to a country that is under attack, on the other. The former might end a war or stop it breaking out. The latter just guarantees that the victim loses. There is no peace to defend in Ukraine. There is a war and killing to stop. And while the war might end if the victim is unable to defend itself any longer, how is that a just peace? And ending the war on Russia's terms won't end the killing. It will just allow the killing of Ukraine and its people to continue in "peace".

There is no practical or ethical difference between someone who supports Putin's aggression towards Ukraine and someone who claims to oppose it but won't support Ukraine's right to defend itself. It's like seeing an innocent person being beaten up on the street, yelling at the aggressor to stop but grabbing the arms of the victim and holding them behind his back while the thug continues to punch him in the face. This ethical inconsistency completely undermines Shoebridge's objections to Australia's dangerously subservient relationship to the US. Why would anyone trust the Greens' judgement on Australia's own defence policies when Shoebridge shows such poor judgement on Ukraine's right to self-defence?

In November, the International Network of Solidarity with Ukraine is sending a Solidarity Convoy to Ukraine. We'll be taking generators, stoves and other equipment to help Ukrainians get through another harsh winter under Russian bombardment. You can donate here. We won't be taking weapons because we don't have authority or the resources to do so. But we fully support Ukraine's right to obtain arms to defend itself.

I hate hearing about the destruction being wrought in Ukraine, about the hundreds of thousands of sol-

diers from both sides being killed and wounded on the frontlines, the civilians, including many children, suffering and dying because of Putin's war. But expressions of dismay about war and love of peace are fine for comfortable Greens politicians from inner-city Sydney. They are of no use to people enduring daily drone terror attacks.

Shoebridge claims to oppose Putin's invasion and says the Greens support "basic humanitarian and civil assistance" to Ukraine but not the supply of weapons. This is mealy mouthed cowardice. Should others supply weapons? If they do, are they less principled than the Australian Greens? Are the Greens better than those who advocate for or supply weapons for Ukraine's defence? Or do the Greens hope that others supply weapons while they keep their hands clean with "humanitarian and civil assistance"? What is the point of such assistance if Ukraine is defeated and occupied by Russia? Or do the Greens think that everyone should be as "principled" as them and that no-one should supply weapons? Again, the result of that, of course, would be Ukraine's defeat by a Russia determined to eradicate it from the map.

It is rather ironic that Shoebridge's call to end weapons supplies to Ukraine replicates similar calls from the Trump regime and all the European far-right parties. What colour do you get when you mix red, brown and green?

Anti-imperialism should be consistent. Aggression by one state against another should be resisted wherever it occurs – Israel's relentless aggression against Palestine and other countries; the US's aggression towards Venezuela, Cuba and numerous other states; Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Ukrainians have a right to self-determination and self-defence. No geopolitical alliances, no complaints about NATO, no "western imperialism", no false narratives about the Ukrainian government's ideology: none of these justify the invasion of one sovereign nation by another and the killing of hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians.

Russia is an aggressive petro-state determined to impose its nationalistic, imperialist agenda on neighbouring states. It is, alongside Trump's USA, the centre of the global far-right ecosystem of ethno-nationalism, Christian extremism, anti-LGBTQ prejudice, and anti-democratic politics. Putin's regime is supported by far-right, anti-union parties and individuals all over the world: Farage's Reform UK; Le Pen's Rassemblement National, the Alternative for Germany, members of Pauline Hanson's party, including Malcolm Roberts, the Freedom Party of Austria, Orban's Fidesz in Hungary, the UK's Tommy Robinson, the US's Tucker Carlson, and many more.

Ukrainian unions and leftists are highly critical of their government's policies towards the nation's workers. But they support the war effort. Unionists and leftists are on the front lines. Workers bear the burden on the homefront in hospitals, on the railways, in fire and rescue services. They support their nation's struggle. They can oppose their government's domestic policies in a way that would get them only vicious repression in Russia. They ask only for our solidarity and our support – including the supply of weapons.

Imperialism should be resisted everywhere. Australia's role in it as a satrap of the US needs to be recognised and resisted. We can oppose AUKUS and support Ukraine's right to self-defence. You can show real practical support for Ukraine's workers and unions, and for its struggle for national independence, by supporting the International Network in Solidarity with Ukraine's Solidarity Convoy to Ukraine.

3 October 2026

Source: **Radical Civility**

Spanish state

Spanish Housing Crisis May Bring Down Socialist Government

Dan La Botz ·

[Bilbao, Spain, October 15, 2026] Hundreds of thousands have marched in Spain in recent weeks to stop evictions, in opposition to housing speculation, against rising rent, and to demand more housing. One woman's eviction sparked the movement. [1]

On September 23 María del Carmen Abascal, 87, was evicted from the home where she had lived for 70 years. A lower court ordered her return to her home, but the Spanish Supreme Court overturned that ruling and she died in a hospital on October 7. Those events came to symbolize the housing struggle and brought the people of Spain into the streets.
There have been massive marches and occupations of public spaces in Madrid, Barcelona, and other cities, including here in Bilbao, the largest city in Euskadi (the Basque Country). Some local housing activists, about fifty of them, have set up an encampment, a tent city, in front of the massive, squat, neo-baroque Arriaga Theater in the heart of Bilbao.

These housing activists who have been spending their nights in tents now for three weeks, though the encampment is about to end because, according to a young activist interviewed by VoxPopuli, they can no longer continue the fight in this way, "we're tired, we're burned out," though he promises that they will participate in the protest march this weekend and in the general strike called for November 11 by the labor unions.

I enter the encampment, ask if someone can speak with me, an American leftist journalist, and a young man named Mikel offers to talk, though he prefers not to use his last name.

"We established this encampment three weeks ago as part of our fight for housing. We also join with the unions in the marches and rallies. We believe that housing is a basic right. People are entitled to decent housing."

In fact, Article 47 of the Spanish Constitution states that all Spaniards have a right to "decent and adequate housing," though this is a "guiding principle" rather than a legal right that can be enforced. So, in 2023, Spain adopted a Housing Law intended to regulate rents, protect tenants, and curb speculation. This year, a new housing law intended to stop evictions of the vulnerable, protect tenants, and cap rents was adopted, then rejected, then re-approved a weaker measure.

Mikel, however, feels that both Euskadi's autonomous government, headed by centrist President Imanol Pradales, as well as the Spanish government, led by Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez of the Socialist Party who has been in power for eight years, have failed the people.

The housing crisis led President Sanchez to call snap elections which will take place on November 29, thinking the movement, including the general strike, could assure his victory. Now, however, it seems they could lead to his defeat and a victory for the rightwing People's Party and the far-right Vox party but he would rather be fighting over housing than over immigration.

"They talk about improving the housing situation, but they haven't done it," says Mikel, "They don't intervene to control the housing market. There's a disenchantment with the parties of the left."

In fact, over the past decade both the Spanish and Euskadi governments, have failed to resolve the housing crisis. According to the Bank of Spain there is a shortage of between 750,000 and more than a million homes. The global and Eurozone crises of 2008 and 2009 led to bankruptcies and evictions as what Mikel calls "vulture funds" moved in to take over housing being abandoned by former owners. Those financiers have continued to dominate the market. Speculating, but not building homes. In addition. social and public housing accounts for only about 2.5% to 3.3% of Spain's total residential stock, compared to about 10% for the European Union and as much as 20% in Sweden.

The Spanish far right parties blame the housing crisis entirely on immigration. In the last decade, Spain's population grew from 46.42 million to 49.8 million, a growth of 3.38 million, all of it the result of immigration. But in that decade, Spain built only 800,000 to 850,000 new homes when hundreds of thousands more were needed.

The increased demand for housing has led to the rising rents. And it is true that with the Socialist Party's liberal immigration policies the immigrant population grew rapidly. Still, it is those immigrants who made it possible for Spain to maintain and expand its population, since the country has one of the lowest birthrates in the European Union, with a fertility rate below the generational replacement level. Those immigrants from Latin America and Morocco have also been an important factor in the success of Spain's economy relative to the rest of Europe.

The problem isn't immigration, it's wages, volunteer several activists in the encampment who are listening to Mikel and me as we talk.

"I used to work in public transportation," says one woman. "With those wages there is no way to keep up with rising rents."

Another woman says, "With my wages it would be impossible for me to ever pay off a mortgage."

And, according to economic studies, they're right. Rents have been rising seven times faster than wages, and today working people in Spain use 50% of their wages to pay their rent, while not long ago they used only 30%.

"We need rent freezes," says Mikel. "We're not asking for anything extravagant," he says, "we just want decent housing."

16 October 2026

Souce: ***New Politics***.

KENYA-FRANCE

Workers' internationalism in action

PAUL MARTIAL ·

The struggle for the rights of Kenyan workers at the French multinational digital services company is being organised from Nairobi to Paris.

This is a fine example of an international struggle. The CGT's telecommunications branch, in collaboration with Kenyan organisations, with the support of legal experts and drawing on academic research, has issued a formal notice to the company Téléperformance.

Social conditions in tatters

Although little known to the general public, Téléperformance, part of the TP holding company, is a French multinational employing over 400,000 staff worldwide. Through a series of acquisitions, TP has diversified, moving from call centres specialising in customer relationship management to visa processing and social media moderation.

The CEO receives a fixed annual salary of $2,625,000, plus a variable component of the same amount, whilst most employees in France barely earn slightly more than the minimum wage. Finally, as Hadrien Clouet, an MP for La France insoumise (LFI), pointed out in his question to the National Assembly in 2024, the 340 interventions by the labour inspectorate since 2016, the 60 on-site inspections to verify compliance with labour regulations, the 150 letters of observation, the dozen reports and the eight formal notices give an idea of the working conditions that may prevail within this company.

Employees at risk

As one might expect, this social abuse is found wherever the company operates. In Kenya, it has no qualms about employing undocumented migrants, which allows it to keep employees under pressure, particularly as, in that country, it is the company's responsibility to carry out the necessary formalities with the authorities to regularise their status.

Whilst social security contributions are deducted from wages, they are paid late, or not at all, causing hardship for employees and their families, particularly when it comes to accessing healthcare. Any dissenting voice is punished, especially when it comes to trade unionists.

Finally, employees responsible for moderating social media are subjected to a constant stream of content and must identify, within a matter of tens of seconds, the applicable rule to decide whether to remove a post. Added to this pressure are the traumatic effects of exposure to extremely violent content. The psychological support offered by the company falls far short of what is needed. Seeing the company psychologist takes time, at the risk of failing to meet productivity targets. Many employees also have doubts about the confidentiality of these consultations. This is the price employees must pay to ensure a 6.35 per cent return for shareholders.

International mobilisation

In collaboration with two Kenyan organisations – the Data Labellers Association, which supports data workers, and The Oversight Lab, which defends human rights in the field of new technologies – the CGT [major French trade-union confederation] has served a formal notice under the 2017 Duty of Care Act.

The company, whose profits amounted to 497 million euros in 2025, has three months to take measures to ensure the protection of employees and compliance with legislation on work permits and trade union rights. Failing this, the union will take

the matter to the relevant courts. This is a model example of a workers' response to corporate off-shoring policies.

15 October 2026

Translated by ***International Viewpoint*** *from* ***l'Anticapitaliste***.

South Africa

"The reason you are poor is not another poor person"

Amandla! ·

Amandla! talked to Thapelo Mohapi, General Secretary of Abahlali baseMjondolo, about the stand they have consistently taken against xenophobia. [1]

Amandla!: You represent people in shack settlements. They face desperate shortages of jobs, housing, land, water. You name it, they suffer a shortage of it. Why do some people come to believe that migrants are responsible for those problems?

Thapelo Mohapi: I lived through the 2008 xenophobia. I lived through the 2015 xenophobia. Xenophobia in South Africa has been here for quite some time. But people or grassroots on the ground are not the ones that are causing it.

I'm going to talk about something very practical. I lived in the community of Briardene informal settlements, and in 2010 we had a shack fire. A lot of people lost their possessions, including migrants from Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe who were living there and renting. And we took a collective decision that, because people were facing an emergency which led to their homes and their property being destroyed, everyone from now on must not pay rent. People must start rebuilding, because government was not there to assist people to rebuild their homes. And we did that. And people from Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe were no longer renting from South Africans. They were now actually owning their own pieces of land in the informal settlements.

That was not a good thing, according to officials of the municipality. Together with the ruling party and other right-wing political parties that exist in the country, they tell people who are living in informal settlements that the reason why they are not getting services is because of migrants. There's a blockage, and there's running human waste because we allowed migrants to come. They say the sewage was made for a certain number of people. Now, here are more migrants that are coming in, and they were not part of the budget. And then that starts hate against migrants from people in the community. That's where people then start this discussion to say we want services from the municipality, but the municipality cannot service the community because there are more people than there were when this small township was planned. And then they start to say, "Okay, let's get rid of these people so that we can get services from the municipality."

People live in harmony and peace amongst themselves, regardless of which country they come from. It is when the government, through officials, through politicians, come into the community and says, "The reason why you're not getting your services is because of a brother and sister from another country that came to this country looking for better opportunity." And yet they are like any of us who come to the cities to look for better opportunities; we are coming from the rural areas where there is deep poverty.

South Africans are not xenophobic. It is when politicians who have influence and officials of the municipalities come to divide the communities and blame migrants for their failure.

The Franz Fanon School in the eKhenana settlement in KZN. We have a deep political education that we go through before anyone becomes a member of Abahlali baseMjondolo... And that's why, when we speak, our members listen; because they know that they have a principled position from the leadership through our political education. (Photo: Abahlali baseMjondolo

A!: What do you say to a member of Abahlali baseMjondolo who says to you, "Yes, I accept chasing foreigners won't solve unemployment or clinic queues. We understand it won't solve all our problems, but let's start somewhere.

TM: First and foremost, we have a deep political education that we go through before anyone becomes a member of Abahlali baseMjondolo. Our vision is to struggle for a just and equal society where everyone is treated with respect, and their dignity is recognised. And when we say dignity, we mean human dignity. We are not saying South African. We are not saying African. We are saying human dignity of all humankind. So we must treat every human being as a human being, not as a human waste that needs to be dumped everywhere. I don't believe that a piece of paper should be the one that recognises if you are a human being.

Capitalism is the reason why human beings are categorised as belonging to somewhere. But human life is more important than profit. Human life must be recognised as the main thing. Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu. We believe that Unyawo alunampumlo. One day, if I go to Zimbabwe, I expect to be treated like a human being, so I must treat that human being the same way when he comes to visit me. Socialism is about that. It's about humanity. It's about looking after each other. It's about treating another human being as a human being, and that life is more important than anything else.

I'm saying this on the back of having people in KZN being killed as a result of this rise of the right wing that has taken place. Someone from Malawi was burnt alive in Mayville. Why would you do something inhuman like that because somebody was born in another country?

A!: Absolutely. But what is very striking in South Africa today is that Abahlali baseMjondolo is like the last tree still standing in the storm. Almost all the other trees have been blown down. There is so little resistance to xenophobia. How do you stand in the storm when everybody else is falling right, left, and centre?

TM: Fascism is something that has been created by the capitalist to say, while they loot, "Let's allow the brothers and sisters who live in Africa to fight amongst themselves, so that we continue to loot the minerals in these countries." We work with the Congolese Solidarity Campaign, and they say to us, "Comrades, we are not here to live in your country, but we are here to ask you, as Abahlali baseMjondolo, to help us to go back to the Democratic Republic of Congo, because our resources have been looted there. So, if we form a coalition and work together as Africans, one day, in that country that is ravaged by civil war, you will be able to visit it. I will be the first one to welcome you and say the reason why we are here is because of the revolution that was started in South Africa by Abahlali baseMjondolo. We need your help, just like how we helped you to fight against apartheid. So we can go back into our country in peace and harmony."

We say to a comrade who believes that things could be better if migrants have left: 300 Ghanaians were flown out of the country. No jobs were created. We had the most deportations of migrants in this country recently, and what happened to our unemployment rate? It increased. The enemy is giving us wrong information so that we fight amongst ourselves.

No African brother or sister who comes from Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Mozambique has caused the problem that we have. That is caused by neoliberalism, which has made profit more important than human lives. Unemployment is created by neoliberalism, so that those who own the means of production are the ones who choose what price to pay for those who are selling their labour to them. That is not humanity. It's thinking about profits before the people.

A!: If we analyse this xenophobia, who benefits from it? Who do you think is behind it? It's generated somewhere and for some purpose.

TM: Without any doubt. The leader of March and March, Jacinta Ngobese-Zuma, does not live in an informal settlement. She doesn't know what the issues of people who are living in informal settlements are. I come from the informal settlement. I know what it's like to have my house burned down. To lose the photos and memories of my grandparents. That's what poverty deprives us of. So when I defend humanity, I defend it on the basis that I have lived the experience. When somebody from a privileged life comes to the poor and says the reason why you are poor is because of another poor person, I disagree with that.

We have grants that are not actually covering what a human being in South Africa needs. An average family in South Africa needs more than R5,000 to buy groceries. We are only getting R370, and that doesn't cover anything in this country. Our economy is stagnating. It doesn't go anywhere. We have a few billionaires who are richer, while the poor continue to be poor. We have 11,000 children who are dying of malnutrition in a country that is rich. A country that has mineral resources, a country that has plenty of food, and that food is thrown away, and that food is not distributed to the people that need it. The issue of housing continues to be a crisis. There are more informal settlements that are being built every day. We have a problem of leadership; we have a problem of political will, but we also have a problem of a government that continues to employ a neoliberal policy.

We had the most deportations of migrants in this country recently, and what happened to our unemployment rate? It increased. The enemy is giving us wrong information so that we fight amongst ourselves.

A!: What is the right direction to take to persuade the mass of people, not the hardened xenophobes, maybe, but the mass of people who are being led astray? How do we gain the initiative to do that?

TM: The rise of the right wing has been allowed because 'each one teach one'—a political conscientisation that we've had during the UDF—has gone away. We no longer meet and discuss political issues in our communities, which will result in actually teaching the young ones about the struggles that we have faced. So the organic organising that was there back in the days of the UDF—where we had street committees, where we had political education on the ground—is no longer there.

Abahlali baseMjondolo has political education, which we have come from this weekend, with leadership. When we launch a branch anywhere, we do a political education at a branch level. We do political education for the leadership, and we ensure that the leadership runs its meetings, conscientising the people on the ground. And that's why, when we speak, our members listen; because they know that they have a principled position from the leadership through our political education. And that has lacked a lot. When you want to destroy a nation, you destroy the culture of that nation. And I think Cyril is an ambassador of destroying the culture of political education in our country and promoting capital.

A!: You refer to the national liberation struggle, which is what it was — a struggle to liberate the nation; a single nation, not Xhosas and Zulus and 'Coloureds'. Now that positive view of a nation is being transformed into a view where we keep everybody else out. Do you think that there is a danger to the nation from this xenophobia? Today they want to keep out Zimbabweans and Malawians. Tomorrow, in Durban, they will want to keep out Xhosas?

TM: Yes. We may think this is xenophobia, but it's also tribalism. The fact that you have amabutho, which was Shaka's army at the time, being in the forefront of these marches is an indication. It was happening during the time of Shaka's army in the 80s, when Inkatha used the very same method to destabilise the province of Natal, and many people died as a result of that. And they were killed by people who were called amabutho, who were actually traditional Zulu people.

Among the first people who were killed in the recent violence was a young Tsonga-speaking South African in the Western Cape. Sometimes you will hear people say that, once we are finished with these migrants, we must deal with these Sothos; we must deal with these Xhosas. And some officials of the municipality will say, "Why are you here? Your municipality is not functioning. Why are you moving to this part of the world?" So, here in KZN, first they come for the migrants who are born in another country, and then later they will deal with people who are South Africans.

We did not fight against apartheid because we were Zulus or Xhosas or Sothos. We fought because we were Blacks and we were being deprived of the right to be South African by a regime that did not recognise our existence as Black people in this country. But today there are people who want to divide the very same people who fought against apartheid into tribes.

The leader of March and March, Jacinta Ngobese-Zuma, does not live in an informal settlement. She doesn't know what the issues of people who are living in informal settlements are. I come from the informal settlement. I know what it's like to have my house burned down. (Photo: Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp)

A!: What would you say to the organisations of the Left, to the organisations of the working class and the popular movement, that they should be doing now to take us out of this disastrous state that the country is being plunged into?

TM: I think the most important thing right now is for us to go back to who we are and remind ourselves where we come from. We need to have an agreement as the Left about how we fight against what makes us poor, what oppresses us. There are many petty things that have divided the Left. Major trade unions in this country are not working together because of petty issues that have existed in the past. We need to go back to that grassroots organising. Abahlali baseMjondolo is an example of how you organise at a grassroots level. We have political education that is grassroots, on the ground, and we educate our people in the language and in the simplest way that we can, so that they understand the struggles that we are facing.

30 September 2026

Source Amandla!.

Belgium

To defend our future, against austerity and repression: everyone in the streets alongside the youth!

Gauche anticapitaliste/SAP Antikapitalisten ·

After a scorching and deadly summer for the working classes, the mobilizations for decent, free and democratic education that began in June are back in full force!

In June, the government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation forced through its reforms to dismantle education: increased working hours for teachers in upper secondary education, increased tuition fees for higher education, and cuts to budgets for school infrastructure (just a few weeks after heat waves that turned classrooms into veritable ovens).

Youth at the heart of the movement and the target of repression

The Degryse government hoped that summer would quell the mobilization, but for several days now, actions have been multiplying and intensifying throughout Wallonia and Brussels. At the heart of this movement: a sacrificed, forgotten, and scorned youth who refuse to have their future stolen from them. Faced with an increasingly elitist education system that is desperately under-resourced, and with ever-widening inequalities, the government persists in its austerity measures. Secondary school students are on the front lines of this struggle and are showing us the way! They are demanding decent conditions for learning and studying, with adequate equipment, but also better working conditions for their teachers and more staff. They are also denouncing the price increases, particularly for public transport passes and tuition fees, in the face of already widespread precarity, especially among young people.

The level of repression was extremely high during the June protests, particularly against young people of colour and those from working-class neighbourhoods, but the escalation in recent days has become increasingly brutal and alarming. Several dozen arrests had already been made across Wallonia by the middle of last week, including several judicial arrests and one young person placed in a juvenile detention centre. On Tuesday, the mayor of Dinant banned a gathering organized by students, and on Thursday, the mayor of Liège went even further by prohibiting any gathering of more than three people: serious anti-democratic attacks! At the October 9th demonstration, the repression accelerated even further: more than a hundred arrests and an astonishing use of tear gas and water cannons! A criminal police force acting with the tacit approval of the mayor of Brussels, Philippe Close.

Meanwhile, the right-wing government, with Bernard Quintin and Georges-Louis Bouchez at the forefront, is attempting to silence and discredit the movement, with an obsession about the "rioters." This narrative obscures the underlying causes of the mobilizations and focuses far more on the material damage than on the fierce repression against the protesters , who are often minors . In this respect, we regret that the mainstream media often treat the movement through such a sensationalist lens, relegating the students' demands to the background. The violence the movement may resort to is merely a response to the radical offensive of the right-wing government. The real rioters are those

who dismantle sectors essential to society, imposing precariousness and repression!

Structure the movement in order to endure and strengthen it

Right-wing governments are counting on repression and on exhausting the movement to force their way through. To sustain itself and grow stronger, the youth movement should develop its own tools for discussion and decision-making, completely independent of existing structures (unions, left-wing parties, student unions like the CEF and the FEF). Such spaces would serve as forums for formulating demands and for strategic debates (on the role of violence in the movement, building links with other social and political forces, etc.). This structure would prevent the recent social unrest from quickly subsiding, for example, during school holidays. This grassroots self-organization will be key to keeping the movement alive and democratic.

The movement will also need the support of the unions. The demonstration on October 9th was symbolic of the potential of such an alliance and the road that still lies ahead: on the one hand, young people were present en masse at the demonstration, making it one of the youngest union mobilizations in recent years. On the other hand, the union and youth blocs formed two separate marches, and the unions rushed to the Gare du Midi train station, leaving the young people at the mercy of police repression. The struggle of young people is that of the entire working class, and it is crucial that union leaderships provide support and solidarity to the whole movement!

To defend a just, egalitarian, and democratic society, we demand:

• The complete withdrawal of the education reforms;
• The release of all young detainees and the dropping of charges;
• The resignation of the political figures responsible,, at all levels of power;
• The disarmament and defunding of the police and the establishment of genuine citizens' control;
• Massive refinancing of education and healthcare!

12 October 2026

Translated by ***International Viewpoint*** *from* ***Gauche Anticapitaliste****.*

Spanish state

Maricarmen, the general strike and the threat of an electoral victory for the reactionary bloc

Jaime Pastor ·

Today, renting has finally killed our companion Maricarmen. [1]

Alicia del Río

This statement by one of the spokespersons for the Tenants' Union—the organisation that stood by Maricarmen in her fight against eviction right up to the very end—vividly conveys the shock caused by her death on October 7 among a broad and diverse majority of society, extending even beyond the borders of Spain. The cruelty and the malice—fuelled by falsehoods—directed at her by both the vulture fund and the reactionary political, judicial, and media bloc have been completely exposed, leaving no room for excuses. The rage and indignation that have been evident in the protests against the eviction since September 23rd have now reached unprecedented levels, providing even more impetus for a movement that is growing stronger by the day—as demonstrated by the encampments and new acts of solidarity across the country with the person who has become a symbol of the movement. In all of them—as was written from the Sol encampment—"Maricarmen has been and will be a symbol and an example for all of us, for the protest for decent housing, and for continuing to organise for our rights. She has been the spark that ignited this fire of unstoppable struggle."

This harsh and sad news came after Pedro Sánchez's decision to call a general election for November 29, convinced that the social outcry over housing might offer him the best possible opportunity to remobilise the left-wing electorate and counter the prediction—shared by virtually all polls—of an absolute majority victory for the PP-Vox coalition. [2] It also coincides with the support of virtually all national and regional trade unions for the Tenants' Union initiative to call a general strike, scheduled for November 11.

Sánchez's final decision to call early elections had become virtually inevitable following Junts' [3] rejection of the initial housing decree and with no hope whatsoever that the proposed general budget would secure a parliamentary majority. Sánchez also had to take into account that he was unlikely to face a better set of circumstances in the coming months, given that inflation continues to rise (currently 4.9%) and legal harassment (the Zapatero and Leire Díez cases) [4] as well as issues involving family members, shows no signs of ending. That is why he chose to announce the call for elections with a speech in which he once again employed anti-elite rhetoric and boasted of some of his moderate social measures or of favourable economic growth figures even though these continue to contrast with the deteriorating material living conditions (especially regarding wages, housing, and prices, not to mention healthcare and education) of the majority of the working class.

Furthermore, Sánchez has opted to have the Council of Ministers re-approve—with some modifications—the two decrees [5] that were previously rejected by Congress, aiming to secure approval for at least the first one in the Diputación Permanente (Permanent Deputation or DP [6]) within a month. In doing so, he seeks to demonstrate that he re-

mains responsive to the pressure exerted by the housing movement, attempting to position himself as its ally against the PP, Vox, Junts, and the conservative Unión del Pueblo Navarro (Navarrese People's Union or UPN).

However, staging a comeback like the one in July 2023 will not be so easy this time; the task would be far more daunting now, as the advance of the right—particularly Vox—appears difficult to reverse. Compounding this is the fact that disillusionment with the PSOE-Sumar [7] coalition government has grown substantially among many working-class people, driven by numerous policies—or unfulfilled promises—regarding issues such as housing and the failure to repeal the "Gag Law" over the course of its eight years in office.

The PP and Vox were quick to respond to the snap election call—despite their initial bewilderment—since, prior to the Maricarmen eviction incident, the Ceuta crisis had offered them a more favourable landscape for their racist campaign and their electoral prospects. [8] Alberto Núñez Feijóo, head of the PP and leader of the Spanish opposition, has nevertheless expressed his satisfaction, as he sees himself—"at last"—as the future head of government. Even so, he does not appear entirely convinced, for he has once again resorted to the threat of electoral fraud, following the lead of Isabel Díaz Ayuso (President of the Community of Madrid and the PP) and Vox as loyal vassals of Trumpism. That said, the PP leader is barely heard speaking about policy proposals—beyond wanting to repeal any progressive measures enacted under Sanchismo and his obsession with sick leave—or doing anything other than trumpeting slogans like "PSOE or democracy" or "Spain against the PSOE."

But, once again, it is former Prime Minister Aznar who has spoken most plainly, attributing profound significance to the November 29 elections. He goes so far as to argue that these are the most important elections since the Transition, as the future of the "Regime of '78"—with the monarchy at its helm—is supposedly at stake...

As for Vox, its proclaimed pillars of "national priority, deregulation, and remigration" leave no doubt about its intentions should it come to power: to impose a policy that is racist, aporophobic, sexist, climate-change-denying, and ultraliberal—a stance now confirmed regarding a key issue, the pension counter-reform already announced by that sinister figure, MP José Figaredo, of Vox—the very man who called for the hunting of migrants in Ceuta. So, what awaits us if these parties come to power—amid the rise of the reactionary international, as we are currently seeing in Germany and Brazil—is a genuine counter-reform on the political, social, and cultural fronts.

Meanwhile, the call for elections has caught the national-level forces to the left of the PSOE—which have governed alongside that party—in the midst of a dispute. The conflict centers on who will lead the Sumar coalition—now being renamed the Frente Amplio (Broad Front)—and the question of whether or not to reach an agreement with Podemos. As polls predict, the potential electorate for that political space has shrunk significantly over the past eight years; the total vote share would likely be higher if they ran separately—to the benefit of the PSOE or of voter abstention. Occupying other political spaces are the regionalist left-wing parties (such as EH Bildu in the Basque Country; Bloque Nacionalista Galego, the Galician National Bloc; Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, Republican Left of Catalonia; Coalició Compromís in Valencia; Chunta Aragonesista, Aragonese Union; and Adelante Andalucía, Forward Andalusia)—which possess genuine territorial roots—and will run under their own banners. It remains to be seen what platform and rhetoric they will adopt, in order to assess whether they reflect a desire to shift political direction following the varying degrees of subordination to the PSOE they have maintained until now. Separate cases are those of Adelante Andalucía—a proponent of anti-capitalist Andalusianism—and the Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (Popular Unity Candidacy or CUP) in Catalonia, whose national leadership has decided

not to run, although this decision must still be ratified in an internal referendum.

On the other hand, what is also becoming apparent in these mobilisations is the emergence of a new generation of social and political activists who—alongside significant segments of earlier generations—are articulating a new process of radicalisation that urgently demands a left-wing movement committed to a clean break from, and independence from, the still-hegemonic socio-liberalism. [9]

Prepare and Organise the General Strike

In any case, preparing for the General Strike on November 11 requires the greatest possible unity of action among the organising bodies to establish neighbourhood, workplace, and campus committees across the country—as has already been proposed by the Tenants' Union and various other trade union, feminist, environmental, and social organisations. It must be—as was successfully proposed for the feminist General Strike of March 8, 2018—"a strike involving labour, care work, consumers, and students," although its impact in factories was limited at the time, since the major unions called only for partial, two-hour work stoppages.

Therefore, there are sufficient grounds to believe that the agreement reached regarding this call to action will pave the way for a virtually total work stoppage—an unprecedented scenario on the eve of an election campaign. Moreover, this process is unfolding against the backdrop of a likely "hot autumn" across Europe—a phenomenon not seen in a long time, as we are already witnessing in France and Belgium.

Obviously, there are various currents and strategies within that bloc; therefore, efforts must be made to avoid any instrumentalisation for electoral gain. Instead, this call to action should be grounded in shared objectives that—while rooted in demands for decent housing, fair wages, and fair prices—go further to target a form of capitalism that is rent-seeking, speculative, and predatory.

This mobilisation cannot remain indifferent to the threat posed by an electoral victory for the right—a threat that must be confronted with our full collective strength. Yet, this must be done while asserting the movement's autonomy and its readiness to keep fighting regardless of who holds power, at any level, both before and after November 29. This is all the more true given that primary authority over housing lies with the autonomous communities and municipalities—mostly governed by the PP, and in many cases in coalition with Vox.

We are entering a decisive few weeks in which the reactionary bloc, business associations, and rent-seeking lobbies—emboldened by the blackmailing power they demonstrated against Junts—will not hesitate to use every possible dirty tactic to prevent the General Strike from becoming a success capable of shifting the current balance of power.

10 October 2026

Translated and annotated by David Fagan for ***International Viewpoint*** *from* ***Viento Sur****.*

USA

Mamdani Condemns ICE Shooting in NYC and Israel's Genocide, but Faces Criticism from the Left

Dan La Botz ·

Last week was the end of the New York City's honeymoon with Mayor Zohran Mamdani as he confronted controversies over the anniversary of the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel and an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) shooting of an immigrant. [1]

An ICE agent attempting to arrest Oscar Belgal, a Dominican immigrant, fired seven gunshots into his car, one of them hitting him in the neck, while his five-year-old child sat in the car's backseat. Others were on the street when the shots were fired and another ICE agent walked nearby carrying an assault rifle.

Mamdani issued a statement saying, "This is an unconscionable and incredibly serious situation. I have called the President; when we spoke, I demanded that he end all ICE enforcement actions in our city. I will not stand by while ICE agents terrorize our communities. Abolish ICE."

Thousands of New Yorkers rallied and marched through the city chanting "ICE Out of New York" and "Abolish ICE." Speakers demanded the release of Belgal and for the indictment of the ICE agent involved in the shooting.

Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin, the agency that runs ICE, said that their operation had been lawful and that Belgal had been in the United States for the past three years, during which he participated in "extensive criminal activity."

While Mamdani's statement was consistent with his opposition to ICE, the NYC Democratic Socialist of America (DSA), of which he is a member, issued a statement implicitly critical of Mamdani, saying, "Jessica Tisch must get ICE out of New York and end NYPD complicity with these terrorists. If the Commissioner can't put a stop to these injustices, she must be fired." Tisch is a billionaire worth between $10 and $14 billion who describes herself as a "proud Zionist" and is characterized as a Democratic Party moderate. Mamdani, who inherited Tisch from the previous administration, has been reluctant to remove her.

Seventeen DSA elected officials and nominees signed a letter saying, Tisch "must end police assistance for ICE operations and disband NYPD's Strategic Response Group — and if she won't, she must be fired." The Strategic Response Group is a special NYC Police Department unit that often responds to protest demonstrations and has been criticized for use of excessive force, mass arrests and violation of First Amendment rights.

Speaking at a vigil on the anniversary of the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, Mamdani was booed by pro-Palestinian protestors after he issued a statement saying, "This day is profoundly painful for so many New Yorkers. It marks three years since the horrific war crimes of October 7. On that day, Hamas killed more than 1,100 Israelis and abducted 251 others. We grieve alongside our many friends and neighbors who still carry that unthinkable loss." Some DSA members and Palestinian groups, criticized the mayor, saying in an advertisement for the protest, "Zohran Mamdani campaigned on promises to the Palestine movement. ..Instead, he has repeatedly capitulated to Zionist pressure."

However, Mamdani has repeatedly criticized Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel for the attacks on Palestinians. His October 7 statement went on to say, "The suffering did not begin nor

end that day. It instead continued through the Israeli government's devastating, ongoing genocide in Gaza, in which it has killed more than 74,000 Palestinians—including more than 21,000 children. Even since the so-called ceasefire, more than 1,400 Palestinians have been killed." His use of the word "genocide" infuriated Zionists.

Mamdani finds himself criticized both by conservatives and some socialists, by Zionists and some Palestinians, but his progressive credentials remain intact: Against ICE. And Against Zionism.

France

The start of an unprecedented movement in France

Antoine Larrache ·

The day of action on 6 October was exceptional. With over 90 per cent of universities blockaded, according to the Union étudiante, and 1,800 secondary schools blockaded, according to the Union syndicale lycéenne, the movement is, from the outset, stronger than the 2006 movement against the CPE – the last major, successful youth movement. The future of this movement is perhaps even more significant. [1]

This movement began in working-class neighbourhoods, where secondary school pupils face the harshest study and living conditions in the country, with a lack of resources – including staff shortages and the poor state of school premises – that undermines their ability to study, alongside social discrimination embodied in particular by Parcoursup [2], linked to pervasive racism and authoritarianism. It is the 'unrestrained' repression, in the words of the Minister of the Interior – by which we must understand that the police allow themselves to maim, blind, torture, beat and imprison people... – that has extended the mobilisation to the youth as a whole. Whilst trade union and political organisations have been reluctant in recent years to launch protests, young people can be proud of their united response. Young people are championing the social struggle, the anti-racist struggle and the struggle for Palestine.

A mobilisation to be understood in its context

This mobilisation can only be understood by analysing the social situation and the ongoing political and class conflicts in France. Buying power has deteriorated sharply, particularly due to food and energy prices, whilst the quality of public services is increasingly deteriorating (transport, housing, education, healthcare!), and the government's legitimacy is very low. Protests were planned for 17 October and 5 November to demand improved purchasing power, following an initial day of action (29 September) on the civil service, which met with a mixed response.

The violence perpetrated by the government must also be understood within this context: those in power are afraid; they realised very quickly that the movement could spread and give rise to a widespread expression of social and political anger. They believed that the authoritarian and racist atmosphere would enable them to make this repression acceptable, but they miscalculated. It attempted to curb the mobilisation on 6 October with widespread bans on gathering outside secondary schools – a completely unprecedented and ultra-authoritarian measure – and here too it was both unable to enforce this ban and completely overwhelmed by the scale of the mobilisation. This measure also shows, once again, that the danger of dictatorship does not come solely from the RN. It is even possible that, to resolve the current crisis, the ruling class is prepared to form an alliance between the right and the far right.

And now? Let's build!

An extraordinary movement must consolidate and – without a doubt – will consolidate. The government's attempt to set aside time for debate in secondary schools over the coming days will fail miserably, because it does not meet young people's need to express themselves freely, without institutional constraints, and because the movement has already spread far beyond secondary schools.

To consolidate, several points are essential:

• Demands. The movement must seek to adopt a platform of demands, with a budgetary package at the forefront to lift students out of poverty – for example, 20 billion euros (the FSU [majority teachers's federation] is calling for an emergency plan of 5 billion per year for 10 years) – and a maximum class size of 25 pupils. It must categorically oppose any form of selection: we must put an end to Parcoursup and MonMaster, and return to the principle that 'every student has the right to enrol on the course of their choice at the university of their choice' (the Savary Act of 1984). Other demands will emerge within the movement, concerning resources, teaching methods, Palestine, racism and the environment, even if it will be difficult to give them the concrete strength needed to succeed. The disarmament of the police would be one feasible concrete demand.

• Self-organisation, mass mobilisation and unity. Every movement must strive to maximise the self-activity of the masses. This concern creates constant tensions between self-organisation and the unity of organisations, between the radicalisation of a minority and the need to bring everyone on board, and between the structures of self-organisation and the organisations themselves. It is the responsibility of activists to work towards building democratic frameworks for self-organisation – that is, frameworks which do not merely bring together a minority but constantly seek to mobilise more broadly and in a united manner, which means making compromises. To make compromises and build democratic representation that enables political action, we must seek to establish national coordinating bodies and a central strike committee.

• Make the general strike a real threat. For over 40 years, no movement – particularly a youth movement – has succeeded without making those in power fear the possibility of a general strike. The movement must therefore make it a priority to reach out to workers. Without abandoning the youth sector – we do not remove secondary school pupils from their struggle simply to go and campaign outside workplaces – but with great determination, particularly in discussions about the pace of the movement and in engaging with trade union organisations – from the grassroots to the top. The first step is to organise a strike in the education sector, as blockades by a minority will not be enough and the government will find ways to circumvent them, such as through distance learning.

Beyond the youth movement, activists and organisations have a responsibility not only to relay the key demands of the youth movement, but also to broaden them to include wages, pensions, all forms of income and public services. Demands for a net pay rise of 400 euros and one million new public-sector jobs are measures that can broaden and strengthen the movement.

Building a political confrontation

The mobilisation already has a strong political dimension: it addresses Palestine, racism, class divisions, the legitimacy of the government and Macron. Politicisation is an asset for the movement provided it does not make it lose sight of the need for concrete demands and grassroots actions that strengthen it.

In this struggle, some on the left will seek to sow division by denouncing the trade union apparatuses or politicians seeking election in 2027, or by calling for social revolution. On the other hand, certain organisations will seek to negotiate, to stabilise the situation, or will refuse to call for Macron's resignation.

But politicisation must be the concrete expression, at a given moment, of the movement's level of maturity – Marx said that humanity only poses the problems it is capable of solving. For the time being, it seems possible – both to make gains on specific demands and to highlight the illegitimacy of the government, particularly in relation to the issue of repression – to work step by step on demands such as 'Macron out' or 'Down with the Lecornu government', to broaden the focus to the broader issue of the budget, the conflict between social

needs and the drive towards war, to work towards a general strike (which, as everyone knows, cannot be decreed but must be built), a constituent assembly, and so on, depending on the movement's level of development.

Preparations for the vote on the state budget are already being jeopardised, and that is a very good thing: the movement will put pressure on all political forces. Starting today, we must call on the entire radical left, particularly LFI, to ensure that unity is not merely electoral, but is also social. The budget debate must not remain confined to the National Assembly, as it was last year. The political organisations represented there have a responsibility to forge links with the social movement on the streets.

The current mobilisation calls everything into question: it is a crisis in the sense that a series of contradictions are coming to a head. It can therefore change everything, from the far right Rassemblement National's position to the balance of power between the labour movement and other classes. And the outcome of the presidential election. It must therefore be taken with the utmost seriousness, for victory or defeat (which can take many forms, ranging from negotiations to a left-wing headlong rush) will determine a great deal for the coming months, if not years. All the more so as the protests in Spain, which brought down the government, and in Belgian secondary schools, are helping to pave the way.

6 October 2026

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World Social Forum

World Social Forum: the failure of NGOization

Antoine Larrache ·

The 17th World Social Forum was held in Benin in early August. While it remains an irreplaceable forum for debate, this session was a failure in terms of both numbers and political participation. [1]

Since its first session in Porto Alegre 2001, the World Social Forums have brought together, on average every two years, tens of thousands of people from around the world and from diverse activist backgrounds to debate. Unfortunately, recent editions have only mobilised a few thousand people – with the exception of Nepal in 2024 – and have been largely centred around the host country, with other continents poorly represented. Furthermore, there has been a shift in the nature of participating organizations, with a decline in involvement from trade unions and political parties (which have never been formally integrated into the World Social Forums), and an increasingly prominent role for non-governmental organizations.

The banning of the Forum

This session was affected by pressure from the Beninese government, which decided to ban the World Social Forum. It is difficult to know whether it acted on its own initiative, particularly in the context of the elections held last April, or under pressure from imperialist forces. Their interests are indeed aligned: Romuald Wadagni, the new president of Benin, sworn in on 24 May 2026, succeeded Patrice Talon, whose Minister of Economy and Finance he had been since 2016, and who became President of the Senate on the very day the Forum was able to open. Their ties with international financial institutions, France, the United States, and Israel are well known.

Nevertheless, a few days before the opening, the government announced that the Forum was not authorized. It was unclear at the time whether it would be banned outright or tolerated, but the day before, a more formal prohibition was issued: the university, where the Forum was to take place, appeared to be closed, several activists were expelled, and the West African caravans [2], which had mobilised nearly 500 people who had arrived by bus, were turned back at the border with Togo. Initially, they were allowed to cross the border, but then the police forced them to turn back. The opening demonstration was also banned.

A meeting of volunteers was held on the afternoon of 4 August, and the atmosphere was subdued, despite the activists' efforts to liven up the session. The International Council was virtually absent that day, entangled in negotiations with the government. The Council did not, in fact, establish any relationship of forces with the government, contenting itself with negotiating, no doubt hoping that its docility would convince the authorities to let things slide. Mobilization for the World Social Forum had already been very limited, and no international activist campaign was launched to put pressure on the government and denounce these actions. In particular, no strategy was put in place to openly protest, alongside Beninese organizations, against the ban on the demonstration.

On 5 August, fearing evictions and campus closures, the debates were held semi-clandestinely and self-organized. A WhatsApp group brought together dozens of activists, who reported debates taking place in hotel conference rooms or bars. Thus, the CADTM [3]. maintained its programme, continuing the momentum of its own global assem-

bly held in the preceding days. The silence of the International Council triggered a grassroots response. Late that afternoon, it was announced that the Forum could finally take place starting the following day, 6 August.

A disorganized and very moderate Forum

From then on, the Forum was able to take place under almost normal conditions, but with glaring limitations, not least the reduced attendance of around 3,000 people.

Like all social forums, it gave rise to irreplaceable encounters: activists from completely different backgrounds, trade unionists, members of associations, peasant organizations, and individuals who came were able to exchange ideas informally in the cafeterias, at the "festive intergenerational networking evenings," and during some of the debates. Among those present were trade unionists from the CFDT, Benin, and Mali, members of the Communist Party of Benin, the CRID, and representatives from associations in South America, Canada, and elsewhere.

But the ban caused great disorder: part of the debates had been held the day before in an alternative manner, which led to questions about the need to hold the same debates again.

The space where the forum was held—the vast University of Abomey-Calavi in the northwest of the city, the labour exchange in downtown Cotonou, and a few other halls and bars—was disproportionately large for the number of people present. This severely limited opportunities for interaction, as each organization tended to participate in the discussions it was leading without engaging in other initiatives.

The opening forum was held in the large "Idriss Déby amphitheatre" (several rooms in the university are named after African leaders whose construction was financially supported by their countries). But, like most major sessions, it was dominated by an NGO-like mindset : grand declarations of intent on the need for development, the rejection of war, and human rights, without any mention of the means necessary to confront imperialism and dictatorial regimes.

As with the ban, we witnessed a kind of wishful thinking, the hope that things would resolve themselves without any relationship of forces. A striking example was the Algerian delegation, composed of several dozen people and organized by the authorities, who staged a small demonstration at the university demanding rights for Western Sahara, displaying Palestinian flags, wearing t-shirts reading "Algeria: Another World Is Possible," and chanting the slogan "One two three, long live Algeria!" This action is symptomatic of the lobbying exerted by certain regimes on organizations participating in the World Social Forum. Not to mention the associations that are in reality businesses aiming to sell seeds or handcrafted clothing, with very little militant or protest-oriented substance.

The major absentees were the organizations and activists. Beninese people. A few organizations were involved, but this does not appear to have been the case for the majority, and in any event, the vast majority of the population and students on campus were unaware of the event. We were able to meet with a member of the Communist Party who assured us that only a few highly institutional organizations had been involved, such as the trade union federation close to the government, and that, overall, activist organizations had been neither involved nor consulted.

On the Fourth International side, there were about ten of us, from Belgium, France, Mali, Morocco, Pakistan, Switzerland, and involved in different delegations, in particular that of the CADTM, which organized a very comprehensive programme concerning its preferred area of focus, debt, but also the imperialist powers of the West and the East, debates on the nature of the regimes in the Sahel, the mobilizations of Generation Z, etc. [4]

What are the prospects?

The next World Social Forum (WSF) is expected to take place in Latin America, although the decision has not yet been finalised. This challenging edition serves as a reminder of the importance of social forums. Indeed, there is no comparable framework capable of bringing together tens of thousands of people to debate for several days. Some editions, particularly the early ones, as well as the continental social forums, have played a crucial role in the development of the alter-globalization, feminist, and anti-war movements.

In the preceding period, the decline of international and internationalist struggles certainly hindered the development of coordination frameworks and contributed to the dominance of less radical NGOs in social forums. But the resurgence of international struggles, with the Gaza movement, #MeToo, the climate movement, and the establishment of the Porto Alegre Antifascist Conference, demonstrates that it is possible to build internationalist actions that are rooted in grassroots struggles and independent of state apparatuses.

Various organizations are calling for a renewal of the social forums, which must involve independence from states, engagement with organizations of the workers' movement—particularly in the host country—and grassroots construction. This means seeking funding from below, centrally amplifying major mobilizations, encouraging struggles in the host country, and so on. As in any social movement, maximum transparency, from the bottom up, is a tool for fostering self-activity and the broadest possible participation.

For their part organizations of thw workers' movement should be concerned about their low participation, which contributes to the diminishing influence of demands within the World Social Forum. This is not inevitable; the World Social Forum can once again become a space for coordinating mobilizations, but this requires significant changes in its objectives and functioning. As the social movements of Latin America stated in a declaration: "The World Social Forum was born affirming that another world is possible. Today, faced with the situation we are confronting, we are called upon to affirm something more: another World Social Forum is necessary" [5].

August 20, 2026

Translated by ***International Viewpoint***.

Brazil

Lula and the race for a turnaround

Michael Löwy ·

Michael Löwy answered these questions in writing four days before the first round. When he wrote that we need to buy time, nobody yet knew how Sunday night would end. It ended with Flávio Bolsonaro at 47.03% of the valid votes, 56,104,503 voters, and Lula at 45.16%, 53,879,538. A little over two million votes separate the two, and three weeks separate the country from October 25. In the Congress that takes office in 2027, the PL will have the largest caucus any single party has had since 1988, with 121 deputies, and it elected nineteen senators at once. The PSOL/Rede federation fell 185 votes short of clearing the electoral threshold in Espírito Santo, 1.49% where it needed 1.5%, and lost its share of the party fund and its television airtime. Falling with it were the PDT, Avante and Solidariedade. Of the ten parties and federations that cleared the threshold, only one is on the left.

Löwy is eighty-eight years old, sixty-five of them lived outside Brazil. Emeritus research director at the CNRS and director of studies at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, he has been publishing since 1970, when The Theory of Revolution in the Young Marx appeared. Then came The Adventures of Karl Marx Against Baron Münchhausen, on Marxism and positivism in the sociology of knowledge, and Redemption and Utopia, where Jewish messianism and libertarian utopia appear bound by the same elective affinity. With Robert Sayre he wrote Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity, the book that separated the romanticism that wants the past as destiny from the kind that steals from the past the spark to ignite the future. In The War of the Gods he showed that the PT, the CUT and the MST were born, to a decisive extent, in the ecclesial base communities. He read surrealism in Morning Star, read Kafka in Franz Kafka, Defiant Dreamer, read Weber in The Iron Cage, read Latin America in Marxism and Liberation Theology. In 2001 he signed, with Joel Kovel, the manifesto that founded ecosocialism. And in 2005 he published Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's "On the Concept of History", the reading of the theses from which comes the image that opens this conversation. Revolution is not the locomotive; it is the act of pulling the brake.

In the answers that follow, he rejects the brake applied to a ballot, calls what stands on the other side a false messiah, and recalls a proper name. Luiz Eduardo Merlino, a journalist, twenty-three years old, killed under torture in 1971 on the orders of Colonel Ustra, a friend of his. An amnesty would run over that name.

On January 14, 1919, one day before she was murdered, Rosa Luxemburg wrote that order reigned in Berlin and that this order was built on sand. The revolution would rise again and announce, to the horror of the victors, what it had always said of itself. I was, I am, I shall be. Between 1.49% and 1.5% there were one hundred and eighty-five votes in Espírito Santo. Between yesterday and the runoff there are three weeks. None of these distances is made of stone.

Michael Löwy, was interviewed by Thiago Gama, published by *Outras Palavras*, October, 5th 2026

I begin with the question you must be tired of seeing badly formulated. In *Fire Alarm*, you show that Benjamin inverts Marx's metaphor. Revolution is not the locomotive of history; it is the act of pulling the emergency brake. In Brazil, the image has become common currency for describing catastrophe and almost never for describing an election. So I ask, with all the risk that entails: is a vote for Lula on October 25 an emergency brake in the

Benjaminian sense, or is it exactly the opposite, boarding the locomotive and asking it to go more slowly? And does the concept survive being applied to a ballot, or does applying it there dissolve it?

Michael Löwy – For Walter Benjamin, the emergency brake is a revolution, not a simple presidential election. In Brazil's case, revolution would be a rupture with the foundations of modern industrial capitalist civilization and the beginning of a process of radical change whose horizon would be a new civilization, which I call ecosocialist, based on solidarity, social justice and respect for nature.

A vote for Lula is obviously something far more modest, yet extremely important, because it allows the driver of the locomotive to be someone willing to slow down this suicide train. We need to buy time! Slowing down is essential. The other candidate, Flávio Bolsonaro, is clearly determined to throw more wood on the fire or, if you prefer, more coal into the locomotive's furnace. From the standpoint of preserving the Amazon rainforest, a decisive issue not only for the peoples of the forest but for all of humanity, Lula, unlike his opponent, tries to limit the damage. That is not the case, unfortunately, with the oil of the Foz do Amazonas, which Lula is willing to exploit.

In *The War of the Gods* you established something that Brazilian political science still digests poorly: that the PT, the CUT and the MST were born, to a decisive extent, inside the Church, in the ecclesial base communities, and not in defiance of it. The Lula of 1980 came from the CEBs and from the ABC region. The Lula of 2026 negotiates with the evangelical caucus. What is left of that origin within the party, and does a fourth term still owe anything to it, or has the genealogy become mere history?

Michael Löwy – The legacy of what I would call liberation Christianity, linked to the Church but not necessarily within the Church, still exists in the PT and in Lula's government. But it is far more important in the social movements, in the struggles of residents, peasants, Indigenous peoples, ecologists. The Landless Workers' Movement, for example. Its founders were pastoral agents of the Pastoral Land Commission. From the beginning the MST defined itself as a secular movement, with no religious affiliation, but its political culture and its rituals, such as the Movement's famous "mística," have deep roots in liberation Christianity. Other movements, such as the Homeless Workers' Movement, have many members who are Christians, Catholic or even evangelical. The base communities no longer have the same impact they had in the 1960s or 1970s, but they are still quite present in the popular movements of the peripheral neighborhoods. Besides the PT, other left parties, such as the PSOL, have a significant presence of liberation Christians among their activists.

You are one of the founders of ecosocialism, co-author of the manifesto with Joel Kovel. [1] The Lula government reduced deforestation and, at the same time, pushed the oil frontier toward the Equatorial Margin. In strictly ecosocialist terms, not electoral ones, is this government part of the solution or a more presentable version of the problem? And here comes the discomfort I don't know how to resolve. Does ecosocialist criticism have the right to be voiced in the week of a runoff, or is it precisely this purism that has historically done the right a favor?

Michael Löwy – Lula's program is obviously not ecosocialist, and it has serious social and ecological limits. Oil exploration in the Equatorial Margin, a disaster for the forest, for the local population and for humanity if that oil is extracted and burned, is only the most obvious example. Ecosocialist criticism of Lula is therefore exercised in the first round, in the runoff and after the elections.

That said, we ecosocialists know that a Lula government is infinitely preferable to a government of the Bolsonaro clique, which is ecofascist in character and totally opposed to any social or ecological mea-

sure. Such a government would be directly ecocidal, and a catastrophe for Brazil, Latin America and the planet. It would be a dramatic regression in terms of democracy, Indigenous rights, women's rights, the environment, education, culture, society. It would hand Brazil over to the destructive rage of Donald Trump's United States, the number one enemy of the peoples of Latin America and of nature. Therefore, without any hesitation, ecosocialists will vote for Lula da Silva, who, with all his limits, is the only alternative to the Bolsonarist catastrophe.

In *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*, you and Robert Sayre establish that romanticism forks. There is the restorative way out, which wants the past as destiny, and the revolutionary way out, which steals from the past the spark to ignite the future. Bolsonarism seems to me anticapitalist romanticism in the first key: nostalgia for a lost order, the family, the nation, the barracks, all against modernity without ever touching capital. If the far right has occupied the romantic critique of modernity, what is left for the left? Is there revolutionary romanticism available in the Brazil of 2026, or has the left been left with the role you always feared, that of the party of modernization and administration? And, in this typology, what is a fourth Lula term?

Michael Löwy – Look, romanticism, as Sayre and I defined it in Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity, is a revolt against capitalism in the name of the values of a pre-capitalist past, real or imaginary. Bolsonarism does not fit this definition. It does not criticize capitalism, quite the opposite, and the past it refers to, the military dictatorship, is merely a more authoritarian and brutal form of the capitalist system itself. It is, as in the case of fascism, what the historian Jeffrey Herf called reactionary modernism. It identifies with capitalism, with industry and with modern technology, today artificial intelligence, and rejects only the legacy of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, fraternity. Who are the representatives of revolutionary romanticism in Brazil? Those communists, ecologists, ecosocialists and Indigenous-rights advocates who reject capitalist civilization and believe we have much to learn from the way of life of Brazil's Indigenous peoples. We cannot go back to living in the forest, certainly, but we should study with interest and respect the critique that Indigenous peoples make of the world of commodities in which we live, and the relationship of harmony they maintain with the environment, the trees, the animals, the rivers.

The governing left, the fourth Lula term, belong more to what I would call progressive modernism. Without questioning the capitalist system itself, they seek progressive social reforms. It is a kind of social liberalism. It does not break with the neoliberal model, but tries to do everything possible for the disadvantaged, the poor, the excluded, on the condition of not touching the privileges of the oligarchs. The limits of this policy are evident, but it cannot be denied that it lifted millions of Brazilians out of poverty and carried out important reforms, such as the end of the 6×1 work schedule and the income tax exemption for the poorest.

You edited and defended Mariátegui, and his phrase that Latin American socialism can be neither imitation nor copy, that it has to be heroic creation. What, in the Lulism of 2026, is creation and what is imitation? I link this question to Redemption and Utopia, where you showed the elective affinity between Jewish messianism and libertarian utopia, and the Benjaminian idea of a weak messianic power entrusted to each generation. Does that force still exist in Brazilian politics, or has the messianic migrated entirely to the other side?

Michael Löwy – When it emerged in 1979, under the leadership of the ABC union leader Lula da Silva, the Workers' Party was a true heroic creation. Heroic because it immediately confronted the military regime in the great workers' strikes of those years. Creation because it is neither imitation nor

copy, but something new: a workers' party that brings together the working class, the base communities, left-wing intellectuals, veterans of the class struggle such as Mário Pedrosa and Apolônio de Carvalho, and Marxist, Trotskyist and Maoist groups. A party that manages to integrate all these components into a democratic organization, rooted in grassroots committees. And that would adopt, in 1990, after the fall of the Wall, a socialist, democratic, explicitly anticapitalist program.

Obviously, the Lulism of 2026 is very far from that first version of the PT. It is merely a variant of the so-called progressive governments of Latin America, which manage to carry out some significant reforms but have lost their subversive, anti-systemic dynamic. In Lula's case, the limits are even more evident, partly owing to the control of Congress by the corrupt and reactionary right.

That is exactly where I am going now. Dark Horse, the biopic of a convicted and imprisoned Jair Bolsonaro, financed with money linked to Banco Master, a bank liquidated for insolvency, has Jim Caviezel in his role, the actor who played Christ for Mel Gibson. You have spent your life studying the elective affinity between religion and emancipation. Here there seems to be the exact opposite: messianism without utopia, redemption without emancipation, the face of Christ pasted onto a leader who attempted a coup. Does this have a name in your work? Is it the aestheticization of politics that Benjamin spoke of, or is it a new figure, which the categories of Redemption and Utopia do not reach, because there the messianic still pointed toward someone's liberation?

Michael Löwy – For Walter Benjamin, fascism is a false messianism, and its leaders are figures of the Antichrist, a miserable caricature of liberating messianism. The history of religions, and of politics, is full of false messiahs who present themselves as saviors and redeemers and are nothing but tyrants in the service of the ruling elites. Such is the case of the Jair in question, regarded as a messiah or myth by his admirers, but who is nothing but an obscure horse, a dark horse, mounted by the Brazilian oligarchy. It is worse than the aestheticization of politics that Benjamin referred to, in another context. It is a mythification, a mystification of politics. Jair is far from the only one. His great friend and ally, Donald Trump, is another false messiah, who has the gall to have himself represented, in an image created by artificial intelligence, as a kind of new Christ. Some Roman emperors, such as Domitian, already demanded to be worshipped as dominus et deus. It is an old story.

In 2021, you reviewed in *En attendant Nadeau* the book by Leneide Duarte-Plon and Clarisse Meireles on Frei Tito de Alencar, the Dominican friar kidnapped and tortured by the dictatorship, exiled in France, dead in 1974. Fifty-two years later, a presidential candidate campaigns for the freedom of a man convicted of attempting a coup, and Congress debates an amnesty for the coup plotters. An important part of the Brazilian religious field asks for this amnesty. You, who worked on the Benjaminian thesis that not even the dead will be safe if the enemy wins, what do you say about an election in which amnesty is a platform? What does an amnesty do to Frei Tito?

Michael Löwy – An amnesty for the 2022 coup plotters would be a direct attack on Brazilian democracy and a green light for future military coup attempts. The same goes for an amnesty for Jair Bolsonaro, with an aggravating factor. He never ceased to express his admiration for the military dictatorship and, in particular, for the torturer Colonel Ustra. His amnesty would be an insult to the memory not only of Frei Tito but of all the victims of the military dictatorship, the thousands who were tortured and the hundreds murdered by the barracks regime. Among them a friend of mine, Luiz Eduardo Merlino, a twenty-three-year-old journalist, killed under torture on the orders of

Colonel Ustra. As Walter Benjamin said, if fascism wins, not even our dead will be safe.

Thesis VIII says that the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the state of exception in which we live is the rule. I apply it to the concrete: the hundreds of thousands dead in the pandemic, January 8, the coup plot that has been tried. If Flávio Bolsonaro wins on October 25, is that a rupture, or the continuation of a normality that Brazil's oppressed have always known, and the astonishment is only ours, of those of us who thought we were outside it? And, of your eighty-eight years, sixty-five of them looking at Brazil from the outside, is there a Brazilian specificity here, or is it one more chapter of the wave you have been describing since the nineties?

Michael Löwy – In the history of the class struggle, the rule is domination by the elites. The exception is the revolution of the oppressed: the revolt of the slaves with Spartacus, that of the peasant serfs with Thomas Müntzer, that of the proletarians in the Paris Commune and in the October Revolution. But there are differences within that domination. Fascism is the most violent, barbaric and destructive form of the power of the oligarchies. It is not an exception; it is the most brutal and inhuman form of the rule. That is why we must do everything possible so that the nightmare that was the father's government does not return with the son. Hoping that one day, with the ecosocialist revolution, we can establish what Walter Benjamin called the true state of exception, the emancipation of the oppressed and the exploited.

The neofascist wave is not a Brazilian specificity. It is planetary. It already governs the leading imperialist power, with Trump, and the most populous country on the planet, Modi's India, as well as several countries in Latin America, and it already threatens several countries in Europe. If Brazil manages to stop this catastrophic wave in the October elections, it will be an encouraging sign for the whole world. Otherwise, the whole of the American continent, with the exception of Mexico and Canada, will be under the neofascist boot.

For me, Trump, Bolsonaro and Milei are manifestations of neofascism. It is not a repetition of the Nazi-fascism of the 1930s. We do not have totalitarian states, concentration camps, uniformed shock troops, national-corporatist economic policies. The main difference is economic policy, because neofascism is fanatically neoliberal. But it has in common with classical fascism racism, xenophobia, hatred of communism and of any form of the left, the cult of the Leader and authoritarianism.

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Britain

Burnham – the resilience of Labourism

Dave Kellaway ·

Labour leader Andy Burnham made his first leader's speech to Labour Party conference on 29 September 2026. It was warmly received. [1] Following this Dave Kellaway discusses how there is still some life left in 'Old Labour' policies.

Some organisations and individual commentators in the movement define Andy Burnham as 'Starmer continuity', 'Starmer 2.0' or use the phrase 'new boss same as the old boss'. His conference speech and actions since taking office shows that this sort of analysis is lazy and fails to track significant changes in the political conjuncture. These changes affect how the left has to intervene today in a tactically different way.

Writing these lines a few days after a conference speech that both the mainstream media and most of the Labour movement recognised as consequential, we have heard another reversal of a Starmer policy – juries will not be abolished. Preventing people from opting for a jury trial was an attack on one of the fundamental democratic rights that previous generations fought so strongly for. David Lammy and other Starmer stooges had defended this reactionary change as though it was a mere technical move to relieve the huge court backlog.

Restoring juries

True this decision is not a decisive challenge to Capital or its state but it has a practical, material effect on our ability to organise and take action. Environmental and Palestine activists have been acquitted or had their sentences moderated on a number of occasions in recent years when they exercised their right for a jury trial. An ordinary group of our peers often has a better sense of justice than a judge who has been nurtured by the establishment throughout their lives to defend the status quo.

We welcome this U turn from Labour that is, to a degree, a result of the organised uproar among lawyers and progressive forces generally inside and outside the Labour movement, It should inspire us to keep campaigning to force Burnham to end the pernicious and increasingly embarassing proscription of Palestine Action. According to Novara Media at conference they found few Labour people, even in the leadership prepared openly to defend the proscription. Even Yvette Cooper, one of its authors, did not speak up for it.

Does this mean we are entering into a semi-Corbynist period? Do we think that Burnham's government will present a similar challenge to the interests of Capital that the 2017 Labour manifesto provided? Should we all rejoin Labour? Certainly not.

Even the progressive policies proposed in his speech are still just promises and the proper financing of a national care service, the housing programme, the 16-24 youth training and jobs guarantee and public 'control' of utilities is far from established. A lot of it is a lot further down the road.

Real relief now from the soaring energy prices and the cost of living crisis has not happened despite some minor measures like removing VAT on energy bills. Reform and the Tories will attack hard on such issues. Already dropping the Triple Lock on pensions plays into their hands. [2]

Political situation changing

However both the broad policies and the general hopeful vibe of their presentation is changing politics. Some people on the left were downplaying the

Burnham bounce in the polls but today nobody can deny the evidence. For over a year Reform was averaging up to ten point's advantage over Labour. This month Labour are slightly ahead and winning by-elections. Reform has stalled and its competitors on the right and far right are clawing back its votes.The bounce is also hitting the Greens who are down to around 10% or less in the polls.

A few months ago it was odds on that we could see a Reform or a Reform/Tory coalition. Latest projections suggest a Labour hung majority. You have to ask yourself whether this would have been the case if Starmer had survived. Polanksi would have had a much better chance in Holborn/St Pancras if Starmer had still been at the helm. Projections suggest he will get a respectable score but lose.

We cannot exclude a Reform comeback – their coffers are full and they are spending seven thousand pounds a day on social media. The Burnham project could come unstuck under the pressure of economic crisis and/or international events like the US war of aggression in the Middle East. Recent reports on the way the Mayor of Manchester local economic success story was financed by the Abu Dhabi investment connected to Manchester City football club shows Burnham is no angel when it comes to partnerships with big Capital. The full story has still to come out and he has already slipped up in seemingly downplaying City's financial cheating.

We should not underestimate the very serious consequences for the workers movement of a far right/right government. Not to speak of the retribution that would be handed to refugees, migrants and the Black, Asian and Islamic communities. Of course some people on the left always minimise the differences in governments whether Labour, Conservative or far right so for them the new Burnham government is not that significant.

How activists are responding

We also have to be honest about the impact of Burnham on what we might call the broader vanguard of the movement – the people who keep the trade unions going on the ground, the anti-austerity campaigners in the community, those defending democratic rights and of course the Palestine solidarity movement.

If you talk to these activists – who are mostly not members of left organisations – they do not necessarily have huge illusions in Burnham since they know his history. Many are new members of the Greens. But they do support some of these new policies and agree with the general framework of challenging 40 years of neo-liberalism and taking back even limited public control over the market. They feel a bit of hope. Given the decades of defeats and the weaknesses of the radical left it is understandable that this is the mood.

Working alongside these activists as they campaign to force Burnham to carry through his new promises is important. This is what united front tactics are about as a way of building anticapitalist and ecosocialist influence. If the first thing you say to these activists is that Burnham is just another sell out, that all his policies are a trick and a waste of time you will not only be distorting reality but failing to connect with them.

Limits of Labourism

That does not mean we hide our disagreements with the strategy of Labourism. It relies only on electoral power and negotiating concessions with capital. You can air such differences within the united struggle to win significant changes on care, housing, jobs and public control over the market. We explain that the change will always be limited unless you challenge the system itself, until you build the relationship of forces in the institutions, workplaces and communities that can impose a decisive break with capital.

One left wing paper, Counterfire, had a front page that just listed the 'backing down' by Burnham. Nothing wrong with denoucing his retreats from earlier positions. However It did not distinguish between backing down and radical differences with

the former Starmer line. So for example on council and other homes there have been changes, including in legal moves councils can make and in what housing associations have to do. Then it says he has backed down on net zero and electoral reform, neither of which is accurate, even if you think he might U turn later. Do they expect you can change electoral systems almost immediately? This sort of approach makes engagement with a broader layer of activists much more difficult.

Obviously a smaller number of activists we work with are already very critical of Burnham and Labourism and can be directly attracted to more radical left politics. Socialists have a separate, different conversation with them.

Response to the speech inside Labour and the trade union leadership was generally positive. Labour Hub has a comprehensive round up here. People were positive but not uncritical. Daniel Kebede, the NEU teacher's leader, said resources were needed and that the fragmentation of schools through academisation must end. Most others did not agree with dropping down the triple lock to a double lock. There is also no evidence yet of a surge of people joining or returning to Labour. However these activists are saying the left is finally leading or at least is back inside the debate in a way they were frozen out of under Starmer. Burnham's rhetoric can obviously create illusions that he can bring real change but it can also galvanise activists afresh and open up debates that the left of the movement can be part of. He might find it hard to control a base that wants change.

Engaging with new debates

For people on the left this change in the debate is something we should grasp with both hands. We want to be discussing a national care service which would be free at the point of use, paid for from general taxation. Of course our contribution would be to raise the importance of the people 'receiving' care having the greatest possible autonomy and control. We would want local democratic participation of old, young or disabled people using the service alongside the staff to manage the system in order to achieve the highest quality. These sorts of discussions are much easier to have if the agenda is already about an NHS style financing rather than the current privatised chaos.

We want hedge funds and private companies totally removed from the system. At the moment it is not clear whether the free care would be 'franchised' through some of these profiteers. Burnham's notion of public control can allow private capital back in through the front door.

Another key policy proposal was for a change to a fairer electoral system based on proportional representation. This would be in the next manifesto after a commission report. Most serious people on the left recognise that the present system of first past the post gives a huge advantage to the established parties and makes it harder for newer currents to grow. It has been one of the main reasons why it has been so difficult for the Greens to be fairly represented and for any socialist parties to the left of Labour to break through.

Supporting PR

Both as socialists who want an alternative to Labourism and as consistent democrats we should campaign for this change. Our position should for the fairest of the PR systems and not the very limited version we last voted on in a referendum. We should fully participate in any consultation or united campaigns for a fair voting system. Dismissing it because the 'real struggle is not elections' is wrong.

Of course just having a PR system does not produce a left alternative to Labour. The PR systems in Italy and the Spanish state have today not resulted in any breakthrough for the left. Nevertheless you have a chance of intervening in state institutions if you can politically build a credible alternative on the ground.

Housing is another area where you need to examine the facts beneath the rhetoric of Burnham's speech. As Martin Wicks explains in his article on the Labour Campaign for Council Housing site only 6%

of the 300,000 yearly homes target are for council housing. Shelter estimates 90,000 are needed as a minimum. Even making the new Help to Buy scheme for first term buyers more targeted to people on modest incomes tends to see the solution in terms of boosting private market supply.

Ecological issues absent

Ecology and the environment were barely mentioned in the conference speech except indirectly when Burnham said the government had to be 'pragmatic' over North Sea drilling. In fact the government has a great opportunity to link up the need to generate proper skilled jobs for young people and tackle the green transition at the same time. Instead of unpaid work experience at Sainsburys and in hospitality young people could be trained to do the retrofitting we need for our energy inefficient housing or fitting solar panels or heat pumps.

Rather bizarrely during his speech Burnham invoked the sad loss of his father not just to correctly raise the priority of a national care system but to defend the British union at all costs – against the SNP's John Swinney's call for an eventual referendum on independence. Labourism is always at its worst when it comes to defending the Union, the monarchy and increasing arms spending. Burnham is not an exception to the rule. On these issues there is no possibility of any engagement with partially progressive policies.

The bold shift on Brexit surprised many pundits. Brexit has been negative for working people. Apart from losing the right to study and work anywhere in Europe a weaker capitalist economy affects us too – there are even less jobs and there is more downward pressure on wages and social spending. It can be easier for working people to forge trade union and other links if Britain is inside the EU. Important labour and ecological protections have been achieved through the EU.

Burnham's new electoral coalition

The line on how to compose a winning electoral coalition has now changed from the McSweeney/Starmer one. They tended to chase the Reform voter at all costs. Burnham sees – correctly perhaps – an electoral majority that wants something serious done on social care, wants more public regulation of the utilities, needs protection on the cost of living, likes the idea of electoral reform and desires closer ties with Europe. It is not an unrealistic project. How many Green or Lib Dem voters might be tempted to vote Labour in marginal seats where they have no chance in order to get these policies carried through?

A conference speech is just words and promises but to a degree it sets the political weather. What is much more crucial is the upcoming budget which will indicate if the reforms are credible because the money is there. The fiscal rules so much bowed down to by the Labour leadership can also be interpreted in a more flexible way than under Starmer. Changes to capital gains tax or one off windfall taxes on the banks or energy companies cannot be completely ruled out. On the the other hand the budget could put a complete block on significant changes and take the momentum out of the Burnham bounce.

All the hopes and bright new policies could also be derailed if the international economic situation seriously worsens. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the US attack on Iran could drag on for some months or even longer. In that eventuality the 'old labour' policies being proposed would require a much more radical framework if they are not going to just be remembered as conference speech soundbites.

5 October 2026

Source: ***Anti*Capitalist Resistance***.

Spanish state

Class, the protests: Notes on the social explosion over housing

Juanjo Álvarez ·

On Friday, 2 October 2026, the first result of the event that has shaken politics in the Spanish state was staged, with the vote in Congress of the two Decrees that the government had launched to try to respond to the housing movement. Both texts were negotiated in a hurry and represented the attempt of the ruling PSOE party and its allies to make a final move in order to survive the cycle that, inevitably, will open from the next few weeks. [1]

The social tension that housing introduces into the lives of the majority has become political tension thanks to the successful intervention of the Tenants' Union, the eviction of Maricarmen as a foundational event and the pressure in the street. Today, Spanish politics is inevitably moving towards another moment and the vote in Congress is a step in that transition.

A step, but not just any step. The struggle of the movement has taken politics to the streets and has forced manoeuvres in the institutions: from approval in the Council of Ministers to negotiations and parliamentary votes. The entire political body of the state has been shaken in these days and has not ceased to open avenues of struggle, which has been its best success, in view of the closure that the institutional path has found. A few days ago, even before the Council of Ministers began the legislative process that was frustrated yesterday, the movement had begun to launch the slogan of the general strike and to prepare demonstrations, in such a way that the pulse of the struggle would not wane with the failure of the government. This Saturday, 3 October, there have been demonstrations with hundreds of thousands of people throughout the state, and more than half a million in Madrid. The calls for social response are multiplying throughout the state with a force that does not diminish, but absorbs the collective anger at the institutional failure. We are in an unprecedented moment of political and social radicalism, where the masses accept and share the criticisms of the progressive government parties for their inaction and their hollow rhetoric.

The parliamentary forces, meanwhile, have moved along an expected line: the left has once again staked everything on a changing majority that, once again, has not managed to impose its proposals, and the right and extreme right repeat their old – and false – mantras about liberalisation and massive real estate construction. It is important to point out that these right-wingers, although they do adopt an incendiary tone and are close to occupying the Moncloa, have not yet fixed their messages and have undoubtedly lost their footing with respect to the situation of a few weeks ago, when the crisis in Ceuta was the central issue of national politics.

In this context, a particularly strong potential is the flexibility and openness shown in the Acampada de Sol and that seem to be a mark of this new cycle of activation. Instead of the reactivity towards political organizations that the social movement has shown at other times, the impulse that is now opening up is open to relating to parties, no matter how left-wing they may be, and to discussing ideas of a total break with capitalism without prejudice. In this, the housing movement has been intelligent and agile in maintaining a flexible stance while avoiding attempts at co-optation by political forces, particularly those that make up the government. In this way, the starting signal for this new cycle emerges with a fresh potentiality around housing

and a capacity to relate that will mark the emergence of a new militant generation.

The scenario is now opening up in a context that is difficult to interpret: on the one hand, it is clear that the phase of progressive governments that have fed fundamentally on fear of the far right is coming to an end, but we cannot yet know how a situation in which there are many elements will develop, starting with the electoral calendar. If Sánchez decides to go to general elections, the left of the government will try to swallow up the housing movement and feed on its momentum to alleviate the predicted electoral disaster, but it does not seem easy for them to succeed after showing their impotence with the negotiation of the decrees. It is foreseeable that the right will manage to form a government and that it will begin, as it did in 1996 and 2011, a period of intense regulatory activity that will mean a full-fledged attack on the popular classes.

We have to be clear: in a phase of defeat of the institutional left, we must not put palliatives to the parties that have formed the government, but recover the interests of the working classes and put them above the acronyms that have monopolized them during these years. The *Sindicato de Inquilinas* (Tenants' Union has been able to open a breach at a very complicated time, when the growth of the right seemed inevitable, and has done so with a radical line that activates the youth sectors. The pending task is to build new political-electoral experiences that must aim to restore the organizational links of the popular classes to achieve a structured social majority on all fronts, below and above. In this process, the electoral calls are moments of importance, insofar as they involve a condensation of political activity, but we must flee from the reduction of the political to the electoral and work every moment to achieve forms of organization that are not limited to the electoral terrain, but that aspire to form a broad pole of the class that fights in all spheres of the political. At the end of the day, volatile scenarios open up and what we seek is to build class strength that can take advantage of the rapidly changing times to make leaps, rapid advances towards political positions that benefit the majority.

3 October 2026

Translated by ***International Viewpoint*** *from* ***Viento Sur***.

USA

Latinos May Decide the Midterms, Defeating Trump and the Republicans

Dan La Botz ·

Donald Trump arguably won the 2024 presidential election because between 42 and 48 percent of the country's Latinos voted for him. His was the largest Republican share ever of the Latino vote. In the last two years, however, Latinos have turned against Trump, as seen both in their participation in social protests and in pre-election polls. Latinos could cost Trump and the Republicans the election. [1]

Even Republican politicians have turned against Trump. Florida State Senator Ileana García, a co-founder of Latinos for Trump, made a vehement public criticism of Trump, saying, "This is not what we voted for... this is unacceptable and inhumane." She gave expression to the sense of betrayal felt by many Latinos.

Before the 1960s, Latinos were a negligible factor in U.S. elections, though there were already six million of them or 3.5% of the population. In many areas racist laws and practices excluded them from voting. John F. Kennedy's presidential Viva Kennedy! campaign of 1960, brought Latinos into national politics for the first time. Kennedy and his successor Lyndon B. Johnson patronized the Latinos and brought them into the Democratic Party coalition together with the AFL-CIO unions, Blacks, and women. By and large for the next fifty years Latinos were Democrats, with the exception of the Cubans who had fled the revolution of 1959 and resented Kennedy for failing to overthrow Fidel Castro.

Waves of immigrants over succeeding decades made Latinos the largest U.S. ethnic minority. Today there are 65 million Latinos in the United States, making up 20% of the total U.S. population, while 13.5% are Black. The Latino population is diverse: Mexican Americans make up 57%, followed by Puerto Ricans, Cuban, Salvadorans and Dominicans. Some 36.5 million are eligible to vote. Most Latinos are Catholic but there are many Evangelical Christians. The largest groups are 8.5 million in California, 6.5 million in Texas, 3.5 million in Florida, 2.2 million in New York, and 1.3 million in Arizona. Not all Latinos are eligible to vote: 20 percent because they are not citizens and another 20 percent because they are under 18.

In 2024, Latinos like many other middle-class and working-class voters, especially men, believed Trump's promises that he would raise their living standards, deport only immigrants with criminal histories, "the worst of the worst," and avoid foreign wars. But under Trump, not only did he launch a war on Iran, but the war led to higher prices not only for fuel, but food and many other goods. And Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) launched a virtual war against immigrants. Latinos began to see co-workers, friends, and family members arrested, imprisoned, and deported.

And all of this has been very violent. With a $75 billion budget, ICE has deported 400,000 immigrants during Trump's second term. ICE agents have shot 21 people and killed eight of them. Others have died in ICE custody: 33 people last year and 27 already this year. Communities organized protests intended to impede ICE in Chicago and Los Angeles, cities with large Latino populations who participated.

In protest, 250 Latino leaders signed a letter to Trump ad Congress arguing that long-time undocumented immigrants should be given legal protection and work permits. Most may be Democrats, but the list included conservatives such as Massey

Villarreal, a former chairman of the Republican National Hispanic Assembly, and Reverend Samuel Rodríguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

Latinos, like everyone else can now see it all: the war, the rising prices, the corruption, and, above all, the violence against them. Trump has lost many of these voters and Republicans may well lose Congress without them.

4 October 2026

Morocco

Morocco's Elections in a Time of Despotism: Why Ballot Boxes Don't Produce Liberation

Jawad Moustakbal ·

"Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it." — Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).

Einstein defined insanity as repeating the same experiment with the same tools under the same conditions while expecting different results. Today, I believe that Morocco is experiencing a form of political insanity in the Einsteinian sense. The elections on September 23 showcased the same familiar faces that have worn thin on the Moroccan public, accompanied by the same broken promises and poorly executed theatrics. Furthermore, it is the Ministry of the Interior that oversees the entire electoral process—from drawing constituency maps to organising the vote itself. Despite these circumstances, both old and new mouthpieces of power persist in trying to persuade us of the necessity of participating in this appointment to construct a new Morocco with the same old system. It is as if the sheer number of electoral lists could create genuine pluralism: 28 parties, 1,850 lists, 7,288 candidates—more than 18 candidates per seat—yet the political offerings remain fundamentally poor and largely unchanged.

Elections under an authoritarian regime

Contrary to what various forms of disinformation would have us believe, we are not voting in an imperfect democracy that merely needs "improvement". We are voting in an absolute despotic system in which legislative, executive, and judicial powers are effectively concentrated in the hands of the king and his advisors—what might be called the real shadow government: unelected, unaccountable, and absent from any electoral platform. Parliament legislates only within the margin it is allowed. The government carries out decisions made elsewhere. The judiciary has only as much independence as it is granted. In this context, political parties do not compete to serve citizens; rather, they vie for a better position within the system by presenting themselves as the most capable of implementing the neoliberal policies that are devastating social and economic rights, the most skilled at "managing" popular anger, and the most devoted to advising the regime on how to prevent the next uprising. The winning party is not the one that wins voters but the one that convinces those above it that it can absorb the shock and delay the explosion. Nothing illustrates the situation better than the declarations heads of government routinely make upon taking office: that their essential mission is the literal execution of the royal agenda.

Parties: Biologically Aged, Programmatically Sterile

These are rotten parties, in the direct moral and political sense of the word, given the involvement of several of their leaderships in financial and administrative corruption scandals—and rotten in the figurative sense too, meaning that their shelf life (périmé) has expired. They are no longer even fit for the role they were created to play: camouflaging authoritarianism and lending legitimacy to a fictitious multiparty system that functions, in practice, much closer to a single-party model, despite the multiplicity of names and symbols.

Parties with old faces, leaderships that have lingered far too long, and programme sterility gener-

ate an almost automatic aversion among citizens. And what applies to the ruling majority applies equally to much of the opposition, which competes more for seats than for alternatives. Their platforms resemble one another, promising "the social state", "dignity", and "employment" in the same vague, exhausted language.

These platforms avoid the strategic questions altogether: What economic policy would rescue the country from chronic regional and social disparities? What specific redistribution of wealth is being proposed, and through which mechanisms will it be implemented? What equitable tax system could replace the current one, which places a heavy burden on wage earners and small traders while favouring major investors, beneficiaries, and the corrupt? What about the debt spiral that swallows up a significant share of the state budget in debt servicing? What is their stance on the vanity megaprojects and massive stadiums that are consuming billions in preparation for the 2030 World Cup, while hospitals and schools suffer from shortages? What alternative do they propose to rescue the education and health systems? How do we achieve food and water sovereignty in the face of recurring drought years and volatile global markets? And where do they stand on rising prices and the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a narrow elite?

All these questions are absent from these parties' platforms, and when they do appear, they are addressed with vague slogans that ultimately bless the very policies whose consequences Moroccans have been burnt by in their daily lives. The campaign degenerates into personal quarrels and mutual accusations among those racing for their share of the pie.

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Governments Allied with Despotism and the Ruling Oligarchy

We are not simply facing a government that has failed to deliver on its promises. We are facing a series of governments that are structurally an organic ally of despotism and of the ruling oligarchy—rather than an executive authority emanating from the will of voters and accountable to them. When the head of government is a businessman ranked, according to Forbes, among the continent's wealthiest people and owns companies that have become the target of wide-reaching popular boycott campaigns, we are not looking at a passing "conflict of interest" that a law could resolve. We see a structural fusion of political and economic power—between the legislator and the profit-maker. These governments do not rule as agents of the people; they administer public affairs as agents of a narrow oligarchic circle, which is organically tied to the real centres of decision-making, sharing the rents with that circle far more than they share decent public services with the citizens. They also join hands with our old and new colonisers for the further plundering of the country and its people.

In 2021, the current government promised a million jobs. Five years later, youth unemployment remains among the highest in the region. But this failure is not a technical shortcoming in "governance"—it is the logical result of a government whose real mission is not to serve the majority but to manage the political and economic capital of the very elite that produced it, ensuring the continued flow of rent toward circles close to power, even at the expense of health, education, and the purchasing power of millions of Moroccans.

This is a government that raises the banner of "the social state" while, in reality, merely executing major choices decided elsewhere—as citizens experience the deterioration of public services every single day. And when public anger finally exploded, it wasn't triggered by a UN report or an international index but by the deaths of pregnant women in a hospital in Agadir.

So do our people deserve better than governments whose primary mission is to protect the regime and its oligarchy rather than serve the citizen? Given their struggles and sacrifices, do our youth deserve more than governments allied with those who benefit from the perpetuation of despotism?

The Gen Z 212 Uprising: A Path of Hope

Defenders of the status quo have wheeled out their old arsenal against every voice that disturbs them: "vandals", "nihilists", "foreign agents"... and the propaganda machine has rushed to replay the old record of "Moroccan exceptionalism". But the Gen Z 212 movement, which erupted on September 27, 2025—as something like a second wave of a revolutionary process of anger whose spark first ignited in 2011 but is carried now by the tools of a new generation—proved that the anger never died. A movement that organised itself through the Discord platform, whose membership surpassed 220,000 within a few days, and that raised a simple, profound slogan: "Health first, we don't want the World Cup." Thousands took to the streets in Rabat, Casablanca, Agadir, Marrakech, Fez, and smaller towns and marginalised regions, demanding healthcare, education, jobs, an end to corruption, and the resignation of the government.

This movement was met with the same security-first approach: arrests and prosecutions targeting dozens of young people and three deaths in Laqliaa near Agadir during the protests. And when the youth addressed the king directly, bypassing the government altogether, their action was itself a tacit admission that the government and the parties no longer convince anyone.

Today, almost a year later, these same young people are being asked to return to the ballot box as if nothing had happened. The statistics are clear: the percentage of registered voters aged 18–24 decreased from 8% to 4%, while the percentage of those aged 25–44 declined from 19% to 15%. This is a silent referendum on the credibility of the entire party landscape.

But we need an active response, not a protest vote or a passive boycott. What we need is a genuine collective consciousness, rising from the ground up, led by the youth themselves, toward radical change that liberates us not only from political despotism but also from dependency in all its colonial and neocolonial forms—toward genuine food, energy, financial, and cultural sovereignty that breaks with decades of neoliberal economics and its myths: the myth of "comparative advantage", which has condemned us to exporting our water in the form of fruit and vegetables while our subsistence agriculture dries up; the myth of "trickle-down", which promised that the wealth of the rich would eventually seep down to the poor, when in fact nothing has trickled down but debt and inequality; and the "theories" of economic freedom, which were never, at their core, anything but a cover for the freedom of capital to concentrate itself and evade taxation—never the freedom of the citizen to live with dignity.

Our generation's mission today is clear, despite all the obscurity surrounding it: to decide either to accomplish the task of full liberation or to betray it by settling for yet another electoral performance that changes nothing in the structure of power.

In her book This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate, Naomi Klein argues that the catastrophic environmental crisis produced by the globalised capitalist model of production, distribution, and consumption is, at the very same time, an opportunity to change everything. I embrace this hopeful, motivating vision for Morocco: radical change today is not an option but a duty we owe to the majority of our people and to future generations.

No serious alternative societal project in Morocco can afford to ignore the disasters caused by political despotism, economic liberalism, and their catastrophic convergence. The September 23 elections —whatever their results—will resolve none of this convergence, because they are held within the very structure that produced the crisis in the first place. Our alternative must take our concrete reality into account, must grow out of our own culture and tra-

ditions, and must reconcile us with our identity. We must break with ready-made solutions imported and crudely imposed on our reality. We must break with the myth of "modernity" and the Orientalist view of development and radical change in our countries. At the heart of our alternatives, we must establish the full sovereignty of local communities over their resources—their land, water, sun, and minerals—managed democratically, in solidarity, and complementarily, by themselves and with others. We must build a better Morocco in which citizens control their own institutions so that those institutions respond to the essential needs of the majority for food, education, and health in ways that respect ecosystems and their capacity for renewal. This is the horizon worth fighting for—not a ballot box recycled every five years to reproduce the same despotism with new faces.

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Source: ***CADTM***.

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ENVIRONMENT

NATO, the climate crisis and the ecosocialist emergency

GIPPÒ MUKENDI NGANDU ·

Gippo Mukendi Ngandu, a member of the leadership of the Fourth International, spoke at the anti-imperialist conference NoToNATO to present the links between war and the climate crisis, and to propose the answers put forward in our *Manifesto for an Ecosocialist Revolution*.

We are facing a multidimensional systemic crisis of capitalism, the roots of which can be traced back to:

– An explosion of social inequalities within and between countries, as a result of the neoliberal headlong rush and a growing crisis of the representative systems and traditional parties that have managed political life all over the world,
– The return of old and new fascisms, of religious fundamentalisms,
– An aggravation of geopolitical tensions in a context of hegemonic disorder and the resurgence of aggressive imperialisms,
– Climate chaos, desertification and the accelerated collapse of biodiversity, with increasing repercussions on the economy (inflation, destruction of infrastructure and so on) and on daily life.

I will focus on this point.

The exponential growth of military investment poses a growing threat to the climate. This sector is of course dominated by the imperialist powers. If NATO member countries achieve the military alliance's target of 5% investment in the military by 2035 – which they are doing – the result in terms of carbon footprint would be the emission of more than 500 million additional tonnes of CO_2 into the atmosphere. This prospect is totally incompatible with the drastic reduction in emissions needed in the face of the crisis.

The comparison between the financial investments represented by this 5% target and the climate "commitments" of these countries reveals the total duplicity of the states. The necessary spending could thus finance 200 times the 100 billion "loss and damage" fund promised by the imperialist powers to the countries of the "South" at COP27. A derisory sum, which they have never raised in its entirety until now, and which they have partly paid out in the form of loans, thus aggravating the plundering of the "South" by the debt.

These few figures show that military funding is undoubtedly the most polluting investment there is. While the acceleration of the climate crisis requires a rapid reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, an ecology that is equal to the challenges requires resolute opposition to all military spending.

Militarism is one of the main causes of overstepping planetary boundaries, and first and foremost of climate change. The world's largest army, that of the United States, consumed as much fossil fuel in 2019 as a country like Portugal, this time counting both the production of weapons and the military interventions and strategic operations that result from them.

However, it is not only in a direct way that the military-industrial complex has contributed to the ecological catastrophe, but also indirectly, because of the role that the armies have played in the expansion of fossil fuels from which they essentially derive their power. The driving role of Western military industries, linked to their imperialisms – first and foremost those of the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century and the United States in the twentieth century – in the development of fossil fuels within the civilian sectors. Finally, we should re-

call the major role of the military industry in the invention and development of ecocidal agricultural technologies, extractivism and polluting chemical processes and compounds.

The link between the development of militarism and the expansion of capital (and thus of the ecological crisis) is particularly clear in the extractive industries. The fierce competition between the imperialist powers is generated by the extractivist policies pursued both by the still dominant imperialism – that of the United States, which has put fossil fuels back at the centre of its concerns – and by China, which is showing an unusual voracity in the appropriation of strategic resources in Africa and Latin America.

Extractivist logic is the hidden engine of contemporary capitalism. On the one hand, it is based on an exploitation of resources that cares neither for their renewal nor for its negative repercussions (pollution, poverty) and, on the other hand, on the monopolistic control of these same resources.

In this context, socio-environmental disasters have strong repercussions on global geopolitics.

The catastrophe that is currently unfolding is unprecedented. In addition to the scourges of war, colonialism, exploitation, racism, authoritarianism and all forms of oppression, a new scourge has been added, which aggravates them all: the capital-accelerated destruction of the natural environment on which the survival of humanity depends.

The fight against the giants of extractivism and fossil fuels necessarily involves questioning the military activities that allow their progress.

As long as capitalism persists, and in particular disaster capitalism, imperialist wars will be inevitable. No doubt since the financial crisis of 2008, and even more so since the global turning point of the 2020s, with its succession of global disasters forming an explosive cocktail, including: the Covid-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the genocidal war in Palestine, the United States' waging of the trade war, the interventions in Venezuela and then in Iran, the inhumane tightening of the embargo against Cuba, all accompanied by the development of generative artificial intelligence, which is also a factor of militarization.

But then, if war is inevitable, should we not resign ourselves? The movement in support of the Palestinian people is one of the first steps in the necessary convergences between the movements to confront the ongoing barbarism. It has shown us a way forward, namely the need to build a movement against war and militarism in open and plural forms, an internationalist movement capable of restoring hope and identifying an alternative path.

Ecosocialism constitutes, from this point of view, a union and a vital synthesis of the different struggles: the struggles against environmental disasters, for the protection of human beings, for the development of common goods and against privatizations, the anti-racist struggles and for freedom of movement, against the big high-tech companies, for the liberation and self-determination of peoples, against imperialism and colonialism, in order to propose a revolutionary, radically democratic project, which feeds on the contribution of feminist, ecological, anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist and LGBTIQ+ struggles.

It is for these reasons that we have drafted, as the Fourth International, an ecosocialist manifesto, because we are convinced that the process of ecosocialist revolution is more necessary than ever. The socialist progress that is the basis of our proposals requires a profound refoundation, nourished by a pluralist evaluation of experiences and by the great movements of struggle against all forms of domination and oppression

Ecosocialism can contribute to the rise of an international movement: since global ecological, economic and social crises know no borders, the fight against the systemic forces that cause these crises must also be international.

By becoming aware of the close link between war, the exploitation of labour and the exploitation of the environment, ecosocialism becomes essential as

much to oppose imperialisms as to reformist "market ecology" and "productivist" logic. By adopting a new, strongly democratic model of planning, society can take control of the means of production and its own destiny; imposing shorter working hours and privileging genuine needs over consumerism can facilitate the primacy of "being" over "having," as well as the acquisition of a deeper sense of freedom for all. There is no other way out to achieve real systemic change. The ruling class must be expropriated and its political power overthrown.

4 July 2026

Türkiye

Anti-NATO Conference in Istanbul: A Success Story that Contributes to the Anti-Imperialist Struggle

Uraz Aydin ·

An international anti-imperialist peace conference took place on 4 July 2026 in Istanbul, Türkiye, while the entire country was under relentless repression by the regime in the run-up to the NATO summit. It allowed several thousand activists to meet.

A week before the annual summit of the terrorist organization of world capitalism, the regime of Turkish president Erdogan had, in order to welcome its "friend" Trump properly, reduced mobility in the capital to a strict minimum and carried out several hundred arrests, through dozens of raids, including against revolutionary parties and groups.

The anti-imperialist conference organised by the No To NATO initiative took place in an atmosphere of a state of emergency. Almost all foreign delegations that came to participate in the conference were detained for several hours at the airport and interrogated by the police about the reason for their stay in Türkiye. Following calls made by the deputies of the Workers' Party of Türkiye (TIP) to the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs, many participants were released. However, delegations from Italy, Finland and Germany were sent back to their countries, by virtue of a joint decision of the governments concerned.

The counter-summit was held with the participation of several delegations from Greece, Belgium, Lebanon, Britain, the Czech Republic, Germany, the United States, Sweden, Italy and Serbia. The Fourth International was represented by Gippo Mukendi Ngandu. OKDE-Spartakos, part of the Greek section of the International, also took part in the conference. Unfortunately, the MES-PSOL participant from Brazil was unable to fly for visa reasons. Various international Trotskyist currents such as the CWI, ICL and ITU-CI also sent delegations.

The limits of the conference

While the conference was an opportunity to protest against NATO's coming together and its militarist policies and to display an intransigent will to fight imperialism, and in particular its predatory aims in West Asia, it is important to underline some limitations.

First of all, the conference was organised by the No to NATO initiative, which was itself founded by the leadership of the TİP and members of this party. It was therefore not a broad and plural initiative, even if some sympathetic revolutionary organisations were asked to take part, without concrete results. However, there was no open appeal to the various currents of the radical left, trade unions and so on. The main reason lies in the desire to avoid endless debates due to the sectarian, identitarian and competitive reflexes of a large part of the Turkish left – which is of course not a local specificity and extends widely to the international level, as we have been able to experience on many occasions. This would most likely have blocked the organisational process and made it almost impossible to hold the conference. The anti-NATO demonstration that took place the next day could only be organized with great difficulty because of the problems mentioned above. It should be added that, in this demonstration of just over 2,000 people, in which almost the entire spectrum of the revolutionary left participated, half of the demonstrators were members of the TİP, especially its youth.

Another weakness, which was also often observed in meetings of this type, was that there were no real debates or interactions between the participants, with each speaker essentially setting out the positions of his or her organisation.

An anti-imperialist statement with ambiguities

As for the final declaration, it seems to us to be generally satisfactory, given the political and conjunctural framework in which the anti-NATO counter-summit was held. The text thus focuses specifically on Western imperialism and its armed wing, condemned from an internationalist, anti-capitalist, feminist and ecological point of view. However, the place given to the relations of the Turkish state with NATO and to the tradition of struggle against it among the revolutionaries of this country may seem disproportionate for an international declaration. While the position of Russia and China within the imperialist hierarchy is not explicitly mentioned, the text nevertheless clearly mentions the invasion of Ukraine, the existence of different imperialist blocs as well as the opposition to any form of occupation, and Russian aggression was criticized in some interventions. Moreover, it should also be pointed out that, in a country where various versions of campism are dominant within the left, the TİP has condemned Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and supported the popular uprising in Iran.

The anti-NATO priority

However, it is important to keep in mind that the objective was precisely to organize in response to a NATO summit, in the context of military offensives carried out by US imperialism in West Asia, with the aggression against Iran and the continuation of the genocide against the Palestinian people. It is therefore natural that the text mainly targets NATO.

It is of course necessary to wage an ideological struggle against the hegemony of campism. But it is equally important to bear in mind that, for a significant number of countries in the Global South, Western imperialism is the main enemy: a concrete enemy, whose material reality is rooted both in the history of these states and in their present.

This is the case with Türkiye, whose past is marked by massacres and political assassinations perpetrated by NATO-linked counter-guerrilla formations, and where the presence of NATO military bases makes it one of the main points of support for guaranteeing the geopolitical interests of Western imperialism in the region.

Anti-Americanism is a predominant and historically rooted sentiment in large sectors of society, and it is on this terrain that what we call campism is rooted. A campism that cannot be considered only as an ideological and strategic deviation, but which is itself the result of a series of defeats of the international workers' movement, and in particular that of a perspective of revolutionary socialism from below, self-managing and democratic.

The ideological and strategic struggle to be waged is therefore a long-term one, which we cannot wage by boycotting the various international initiatives where campist reflexes predominate, but by building and fighting side by side.

The text concludes by situating itself "in the political continuity of the Porto Alegre Anti-Fascist Conference, the global anti-militarist webinar and the mobilizations against the G7" that took place this year, announces its support for the anti-fascist conferences planned in Argentina and Puerto Rico and sets itself the task of preparing an anti-imperialist and anti-fascist Conference on the scale of the Balkans. However, this will constitute a major challenge, where, this time, it will be impossible to ignore the Ukrainian question.

4 September 2026

Declaration of the International Anti-Imperialist Peace Summit: A Common Front Against NATO, Imperialism, and War

At a time when NATO, the war machine of Western imperialism, held its summit in Türkiye, we gathered in Istanbul to declare our resolve to expand

the anti-imperialist struggle for peace against NATO, imperialism, militarism, and the war-driven order. NATO is not a 'defensive alliance' but the chief representative of foreign intervention, military domination, occupations, coups, sanctions, and the arms race. The interests of the people are sacrificed to those of the ruling classes, weapons monopolies, energy corporations, imperialist blocs, and their local accomplices.

This gathering is not merely a protest. It reflects our determination to build a common struggle for peace against the rulers who are trying to preserve their world order by dragging the world into a cycle of endless wars. The militarization and lockdown of Ankara for the NATO Summit, with the city reorganized around security measures and restrictions, showed once again that imperialist gatherings are organized not for the security of peoples, but through their repression. The refusal of entry and deportation of some members of the international delegation who came to attend our summit is a direct attack on international solidarity and on the right of anti-imperialist forces to come together.

The struggle for peace cannot be limited to a call to stop wars. It must confront the order that produces them. Policies of destruction are co-produced by weapons monopolies, finance capital, military bureaucracies, NATO institutions, and collaborative regimes. Just as imperialist powers and capital organize on an international scale, the peoples' struggle for peace and freedom must also organize on this scale. Anti-imperialism must come to life in the collective rebellion of workers, youth, women, migrants, anti-war activists, socialists, and all progressive forces.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, NATO's existence did not come to an end. On the contrary, NATO has continuously created new enemies, new areas of intervention, and new pretexts for war. While NATO-led military aggression was justified yesterday under headings such as the 'communist threat', then the 'fight against terrorism', 'humanitarian intervention', 'stability' and the like, today all 'humanitarian' and 'democratic' rhetoric has been left behind, and the threat of imperialist expansion has become more overt. NATO's ambition for growth has made the world not safer, but more fragile and vulnerable to wars.

The ongoing occupation, blockade, apartheid, and genocide in Palestine show the clearest face of imperialism. Israel's policy of massacre continues with the support of the US, NATO, and European states. Israel's impunity stems from this collaboration. Therefore, we must stand in solidarity with Palestine, expose fake friends, and apply pressure on all states that arm Israel. The ongoing aggression in Gaza, Israel's attacks targeting Lebanon and Iran, the continuing imperialist interventions in Syria, the military tensions stretching from the Red Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean, the invasion of Ukraine, and the accelerating armament moves in Europe all show that NATO and imperialist powers are preparing the world for greater wars.

Since joining NATO in 1952, Türkiye has been an important part of the security strategy of imperialism. Through military facilities such as Incirlik Air Base in Adana, the Kürecik Radar Base in Malatya, and NATO's Allied Land Command (LANDCOM) in İzmir, Türkiye plays a critical role in NATO's regional operations. These bases have been centres for planning and carrying out military operations, from Iraq and Syria to Afghanistan and across West Asia. When a country's territory is used for military operations, it cannot be considered outside the war, even if it is not directly engaged in armed conflict.

Over the years, especially under the Erdoğan regime, Türkiye has maintained close relations with the US and NATO while also developing a special relationship with Israel behind closed doors. Its military presence in Syria, cross-border operations, and interventions that ignore the will of the peoples of the region reveal the expansionist ambitions of Türkiye's ruling classes. Türkiye presents itself as a mediator that can negotiate with all countries, but this image hides its collaboration with imperialist powers. Ongoing trade, diplomatic, and military relations with Israel expose the insincerity of its claims of solidarity with the Palestinian people. The

military presence in Northern Cyprus, multiplying military bases, its role in the competition over energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, and interventions in Syria all demonstrate Türkiye's regional ambitions.

Despite the orientation of the Turkish state and capital, socialists in Türkiye have a strong tradition of resisting both NATO and imperialism. The anti-imperialist movement in Türkiye has long combined opposition to NATO and the call for sovereignty. Today, drawing strength from this history, preventing Türkiye from continuing to play this role in the region and resisting its future actions remain among the main goals of Turkish and Kurdish revolutionaries.

The five-percent military spending target imposed on NATO countries means that public resources are transferred to arms monopolies. Likewise, the normalization of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons on the grounds of 'deterrence' or 'national security' is unacceptable. These weapons do not provide security for any people, but instead pose a threat to all life. The arms race does not only expand aggression in foreign policy. It also deepens authoritarianism at home. The aggressive imperialist rule represented by NATO and its allies, the growing far right in Europe, and the security-driven nationalist regime in Türkiye are all different faces of the same global dark order. This order uses the threat of war as a pretext to strengthen border regimes, xenophobia, the criminalization of opposition, and anti-labour policies.

The same dark order is also escalating attacks on the fought-for rights of women and LGBTQI+ people. Militarism and authoritarianism reinforce the patriarchal family model, seeking to confine women to the burden of care, precarity, and a regime of obedience, and to target women and LGBTQI+ people in order to discipline society around reactionary, nationalist, and patriarchal values. War policies produce occupation and intervention abroad, and repression, patriarchy, and social control at home. As military budgets grow, the rights to education, healthcare, housing, social security, care services, and a dignified life are being seized. The working class is condemned to lower wages, heavier taxes, greater precarity, and deepening poverty. For capital, the war economy means profit. For working people, it means the cost-of-living crisis, unemployment, debt, the loss of social rights, and a futureless existence.

Ecological destruction and militarism are not separate from one another. War machines, military bases, fossil fuel competition, struggles over energy routes, and the arms industry destroy nature, agricultural lands, resources, and living spaces. The future of the peoples cannot be handed over to those who profit from war.

For this reason, opposition to NATO is opposition to military blocs and also a struggle against authoritarianism, racism, nationalism, patriarchy, ecological destruction, poverty, and anti-labour policies. The struggle for peace goes beyond simply calling for an end to war. It is a struggle to defend the people's right to life, equality, freedom, labour, nature, and a future free from war and exploitation.

These responsibilities, carried over from the summit, are a powerful call for solidarity to build a common front against imperialist war, NATO, the arms race, authoritarianism, imperialist ideologies, patriarchy, racism, ecological destruction, and anti-labour policies. This summit should be noted as the first step to build further collaborations and actions such as regional meetings and demonstrations against imperialism and regional rearmament. Building on the political continuity of the Porto Alegre International Antifascist Conference, the Global Antimilitarist Webinar, the mobilisations against the G7, and the International Anti-Imperialist Peace Conference, we will, in the coming period, strengthen mobilisations against COP31, to be held in Antalya, Türkiye, in November 2026. We will also support the planned Antifascist Conferences in Puerto Rico and Argentina, and set ourselves the task of preparing a Balkan-wide Anti-Imperialist and Antifascist Conference.

As the concrete political ground for this line, our demands are listed below:

– Dissolve NATO, shut down all military bases!
– No to nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons!
– Stand with all colonised and occupied people against imperialist powers!
– Support the Palestinian resistance against Zionist genocide! Sever all commercial, diplomatic, and military relations with Israel and impose a weapons embargo!
– Divert military budgets to health, education, and the means for a dignified life!
– Anti-imperialist solidarity and internationalist shoulder-to-shoulder struggle with the earthquake-stricken people of Venezuela; with the Cuban people under blockade and embargo!
– Build solidarity and common struggle against the provocation of Turkish and Greek governments' militarist policies and nationalist threats!
– From the Balkans to West Asia: uninterrupted and permanent coordination against imperialist aggression and organizing new actions!
– Defend life against the war economy, patriarchal oppression, and ecological destruction!

Sweden

The Right Loses the Election – Social Democracy Records a Historic Low

Socialistiska Politik ·

The policies pursued since 2022 have been among the most reactionary, racist, and repressive in modern Swedish history. Examples include restrictions on the right to asylum, attempts to retroactively revoke residence permits, significantly stricter requirements for obtaining Swedish citizenship, stop-and-search zones in working-class suburbs, repressive legislation that allows 14-year-olds to be imprisoned, deportations of young people separated from their families, legislative changes that threaten democracy, and welfare reforms that severely worsen conditions for the poorest and for those without citizenship.

The election result of September 13 has, for the time being, brought the conservative right and the far right to a halt. The opposition parties, the Social Democrats, the Green Party, the Left Party, and the Centre Party, together received 49.5 percent of the vote. The right-wing parties, the Moderate Party, the Liberals, the Christian Democrats, and the far-right Sweden Democrats, received 48.8 percent. The far-right Sweden Democrats, a party with Nazi roots, has increased its support in every election since entering parliament in 2010, finally experienced setbacks as they lost three percentage of support in this election. However, this may partly be explained by the traditional right now more openly pursuing the Sweden Democrats' policies, but perhaps also because some voters increasingly perceive the party as part of the political establishment. The outgoing Prime Minister, Ulf Kristersson, has formally submitted his resignation but refuses to concede defeat, hoping that Social Democratic leader Magdalena Andersson will fail to form a new government.

Among those who voted against the right and the far right, there is a certain sense of relief. The risk that the right and the far right would remain in power was very real. The election result has prevented this, but the margin was small, around 50,000 votes. The right as a whole lost, but it can hardly be described as a crushing defeat. After four years of what can best be described as Swedish-style Trumpism, the margin of victory over the right should have been considerably larger.

This points to a fundamental problem. The Centre Party is also a bourgeois liberal party but currently chooses to cooperate with the red-green bloc because of its refusal to rely on the support of Sweden Democrats to form government. At the same time, the Centre Party opposes the Left Party joining a new government, whereas the Left Party insists on being part of it. Negotiations on forming a new government are ongoing. If these efforts fail, Sweden could be faced with a snap election.

It is therefore difficult to speak of a landslide victory for the red-green parties. The election also contains a paradox: the Social Democrats remain the country's largest party while simultaneously achieving their worst election result in more than a century, the worst since 1908. The result is even more remarkable considering that, since coming to power in 2022, the right-wing bloc had lagged behind the red-green parties by a wide margin in opinion polls for long periods. At the beginning of 2026, the election seemed almost certain to be won by the red-green bloc. Yet the Social Democratic

leadership managed to squander much of this advantage. Instead of presenting a clear alternative to four years of right-wing policies, the Social Democrats continued to shift to the right and, on some issues, even adopting elements of far-right rhetoric in an attempt to win voters. While seeking agreements and governmental cooperation with the Centre Party, the party simultaneously showed a reluctance to cooperate with the Left Party.

This strategy has had serious consequences. Support for the Social Democrats among workers fell from 42.4 percent in 2022 to 38.7 percent in this year's election. The political responsibility for this is considerable. Although the far right has lost ground, it continues to challenge the Social Democrats for the position of the largest party among workers.

The problem therefore extends far beyond parliamentary arithmetic. The Social Democrats and the Left Party, the two parties that have historically had their strongest social base within the working class, together managed to secure only slightly more than one-third of the vote. From a class perspective, there is therefore a clear bourgeois majority in parliament.

The major success story on the left belongs to the Left Party. It achieved its best election result in 25 years and made particularly strong gains in several working-class areas of the major cities, especially Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö. This success comes despite an election campaign during which the Left Party was subjected to intense media attacks, particularly accusations of antisemitism and alleged indulgence toward supposed "romanticization of terrorism."

The Left Party has also adopted a defensive position on the issue of Palestine, as the party leadership's primary objective has been to gain entry into a Social Democratic-led government. Nevertheless, the need to defend itself against the brutal attacks of the right weighed heavy on people in the most economically and socially segregated and marginalized areas. In these communities, a large majority voted for the Left Party and the Social Democrats. Voter turnout among these groups increased in this election. However, the Left Party's success does not in itself alter the balance of political power, which in parliament remains highly unfavorable to the left. Over recent decades, Sweden has undergone a clear political shift to the right.The election campaign itself focused partly on voters' personal finances, at a time when around 500,000 people are unemployed in Sweden, and partly on various forms of agitation against immigrants, people with foreign backgrounds, and especially Muslims. This extensive repressive attack in both public debate and legislation created fear among racialized groups.

The climate crisis also failed to become a central issue in the election campaign, despite major demonstrations demanding strong climate and environmental action. The same was true of the genocide in Gaza and questions of war and peace. This did not prevent the right from allocating billions to military rearmament, deepening Sweden's role in NATO, and continuing the military cooperation agreement with the United States, which grants U.S. forces access to 17 Swedish military bases and other military areas.

At the same time as government formation negotiations are ongoing, allegations of electoral fraud have been directed at several Left Party members of parliament of Somali background. This campaign is clearly orchestrated by the right, with substantial support from the media and almost no support from the individuals' own party, the Left Party. The racism, class prejudice, and hostility toward the left reflected in this campaign and in the unfounded accusations are painfully obvious. Moreover, the allegations concern relatively minor matters, such as people being given rides to polling stations or premarked ballots being distributed, and only on a limited scale. Nevertheless, the issue has been magnified by the media into a major controversy and an attack on the Left Party, which has responded defensively rather than offensively.

Regardless of the political composition of the next government, we anti-capitalists remain committed to our position. Until September 13, we argued that the immediate task was to remove the right and the far right from government power. Now the task is to build resistance within the social movements against all right-wing policies, regardless of who implements them. The balance of power is not determined in parliament. It is determined above all in workplaces and trade unions, in the defense of welfare, in the climate movement, through antimilitarism, consistent anti-racism, and the struggle for a humane migration policy. It is through the resistance of social movements that a fighting left can be strengthened.

24 September 2026

France

Nuñez, Geffray, resign! They are the ones wreaking havoc.

NPA-l'Anticapitaliste (NPA-A) ·

Secondary school pupils are taking action; the government is cracking down. The situation in the national education system has been deteriorating for years. Successive governments and various ministers, led by Blanquer [Minister of Education 2017-2022], have accelerated the destruction. The lack of resources is becoming increasingly unbearable. [1]

When there aren't enough chairs, ceilings are collapsing, there are rats, and there aren't enough teachers or staff, we've hit rock bottom. And secondary school pupils, who are also under pressure from the selection process and Parcoursup [the procedure for higher education applications], know this all too well. That is why they are taking action and blockading their schools: to demand decent conditions for education!

A government that responds with repression

Unsurprisingly, the government refuses to understand. As for Geffray and the Ministry of National Education, their only response has been to set up a consultation platform, before handing the central role over to Nuñez, his colleague at the Ministry of the Interior, whose only response was to send in the police to crack down on the mobilised secondary school pupils. He'd already had a taste of this during the last pension protests when he was Prefect of Police of Paris

Multiple shots of tear gas and plastic bullets to the head, tear gas, beatings, hundreds of people taken into police custody: this chilling level of violence against children and teenagers must not go unpunished. One child had their mouth smashed in, another had an eye gouged out: how far will this go?

Fortunately, the crackdown has not intimidated the secondary school students, who are continuing and even stepping up their movement, supported by elected representatives, school staff and parents who are organising to defend them. Even today, hundreds of secondary schools are blockaded, and the movement is taking root and is already spreading to some universities.

Let's all stand together in support of the secondary school pupils

Calls to expand the movement amongst university students are growing

We offer our full support to the movement that our young comrades are building. We call on all social and political forces to jointly support the secondary school pupils' mobilisation and to take to the streets very soon to protest against repression and police violence. An inter-union day of action has been proposed for 6 October, and the mobilisation must be massive! For we consider both their demands and their actions to be legitimate. What is illegitimate is this government's brutal response.

Lecornu's draft budget heralds a continued dismantling of public services, including the national education system. He has even just announced the introduction of tuition fees for certain courses that were previously free (BTS, preparatory classes, etc.), as well as a reduction in the number of civil servants and a freeze on housing benefit (APL)... This is a genuine provocation.

Nuñez and Geffray must therefore step down, and with them the rest of the government, which is just as responsible for the social destruction and repression.

Montreuil, 1 October 2026

Translated by ***International Viewpoint*** *from* ***l'Anticapitaliste***.

FEATURES

In-depth analysis from International Viewpoint's Features section



Technology

In the crosshairs of AI

Ashley Smith · *29 October 2026*

In this three-part series, Ashley Smith interviews two advanced tech workers, Josh and Yasmine, on the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and its many intersecting implications for the nature of our lives, labor, and the Left. This initial installment provides a contextual overview of artificial intelligence as it is known in current political discourse and discusses both the financial and existential "hype" around AI. The second will explore AI's connection to global labor and imperialism struggles, and the third will propose organizing interventions and strategies of resistance for the Left.

In their mad rush for profit and power, the tech oligarchs have unleashed artificial intelligence (AI) into nearly every corner of life on this planet. Firms are investing billions in data centers, which house the infrastructure to process the enormous amounts of information that power AI. They are also plowing ever more money into research and development. Their hope is that the technology will overcome global capitalism's slump, which the system has been trapped in since the Great Recession, and trigger a new epoch of expansion. States are incorporating it into their police forces for domestic surveillance as well as their militaries for cyberwarfare and high-tech weapons. Ominously, the struggle for AI supremacy is now at the center of the imperialist rivalry between the U.S. and China.

The widespread, unregulated use of AI is already having devastating impacts on our environment, jobs, and rights. Some worry that it threatens our very species with extinction. In this three-part interview, Tempest Collective's Ashley Smith asks two advanced tech workers, Josh and Yasmine, about the technology, its much hyped promise and threat, and its impact on our lives. Most importantly, they lay out how the Left and labor movement should respond and what we should demand and fight for.

Part One: "Criti-hype," AI Breakthroughs, and Betting on Profit

Ashley Smith: Before we discuss the widespread panic about AI, let's get the basics out on the table. For the layperson, what is AI? How does it work? What advances are being made toward artificial general intelligence? Is that even possible?

Josh: AI is a general term that started as hype, and continues to operate that way, but it also stands for multiple things that are real. Today, it mostly refers to neural nets such as the large language and multimedia models like ChatGPT and Claude, which we most frequently encounter through chat bots and coding agents.

Other types of AI, such as AlphaGo (plays go) and AlphaFold (folds proteins) use different ways to train neural nets to achieve their given goals. There are many other types of AI that fall under the moniker of GOFAI, or Good Old Fashioned AI, which use Symbolic AI and other more deterministic methods for building predictive systems.

There have been many accounts of how LLMs and the transformer architectures work. I would sum these up this way. High-tech engineers set up a neural net, which is a huge matrix of random numbers (weights) arranged in a grid with inputs at one end and outputs at the other. Words are converted to streams of numbers that are then passed through the network and arrive at a prediction for the next

best output in the stream. This output is compared with the actual next number in the stream, and if it is different, then it adjusts the weights so that it would be more likely to give that answer the next time.

In order to get a sensible next word in a sentence, some pretty wild calculations have to be made. It is one thing to predict the next word in "A fire engine is ____" and another to answer the question: "What is the answer to this math problem that hasn't been solved since it was asked 500 years ago…." This is why it is wrong to dismiss the technology as simply a next word predictor.

There have been at least three factors that brought us to this moment:

- Graphics Processing Units (GPUs allowed for much faster and more efficient matrix math calculations required to train and use neural nets.
- Large structures and labeled data sets enabled the expansion and training of neural nets.
- New architectures made it possible to better set the weights.

Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) is another contested term that serves many purposes. I think a starting point is to contrast it with "narrow" intelligence, where a model may be trained to perform one task, such as playing chess, and not be applicable to other tasks. AGI would be able to be applied to a wide range of tasks and do well at them. This is often measured through various benchmarks, and some of them are quite telling, such as the idea that Microsoft promoted that AGI would be here once a model created $100 billion in profits.

More frequently, you hear people say that AGI will be here when a model can outperform some or all humans at most or all mental tasks. And some people insist that AGI would require models to be able to generalize beyond the data in their training data.

I think most people in the field think that, for most definitions of AGI it will be possible to get there, but they differ on the amount of methodological, scaling and time that it will take. Some claim that we are already there with the latest round of models. And many claim that it will happen soon because of the exponential curves we will see with RSI.

Many of the harshest critics say that we will plateau long before AGI because of the limitations of the methodologies used to create the current models, such as the lack of "world models" (the ability to learn from and model the physical world), continual learning, or lack of a symbolic structure.

I am agnostic at this point. But I think we already see strong evidence of increasing capabilities with something like recursive self-improvement with the aid of humans, and this might actually lead to the development of new architectures and methods.

Yasmine: I don't have much to add to Josh's thorough explanations here. I'd just highly encourage folks to listen to and read Dr. Alexa Hanna and Dr. Emily Bender on the AI Con. The term AI itself is not technically meaningful, and it has been a tool of mystification with a lot of utility to big tech. It obfuscates the concrete facts of what these different types of software are and the often ugly facts of how they're made, as well as the real harms they cause.

AGI is also a nebulous term. I think the claim that current AI development will culminate in the so-called singularity or AGI isn't credible. This isn't a conclusion I've independently reached, this is what most AI researchers think. 76 percent of those surveyed say AGI is not on the horizon and think that it's unlikely to be achieved via LLMs or by means of the current scale-based approaches to training. There is also a debate as to whether it's feasible at all.

This supposed threat has taken up disproportionate space in our discussion of the harms/potential harms of the AI boom. I'm on the side that argues let's pay attention to the actual horrors and destruction being enabled by this software or caused by its development in the here and now, rather than allow our attention to be diverted by a sci-fi story with little to no foundation in science.

AS: Various industry leaders and researchers have sent panic through society about the rapid advances in AI, yet again contending that it poses an imminent threat to the human species. What has happened to trigger this?

Josh: In multiple tests of new AI models, they have acted unreliably, disregarding instructions and seemingly going rogue. The most famous case of this was the Hugging Face attack described in detail by libertarian Dwarkesh Patel on his popular YouTube channel. Others have played down the significance of this event, emphasizing the vagueness of the instructions, the absence of guardrails in testing, and the attribution of human-like intent to statistical algorithms.

The frontier labs (OpenAI, Anthropic, Google, SpaceX, Meta, and Microsoft, and a few other companies trading large language models or LLMs) sell the use of their models to companies, ostensibly to help them solve "business problems" – augmenting or replacing human labor to provide goods and services. If they cannot convince their clients that they can reliably control the activity of these models, their "value proposition" is severely undermined. I think that this basic business logic is at the heart of the calls for a pause/slow down.

Other industry commentators have proposed a variety of reasons, including the idea that as OpenAI and Anthropic face the opening of their books before their IPOs, they have an incentive to reduce their Research and Development spending to make their path to profitability look more plausible. I think this is too cynical, because it doesn't account for the likes of Google and Microsoft joining the call, even if they are less vocally enthusiastic.

Many on the Left describe these calls as "criti-hype" or doom marketing–exaggerating the negative impacts of the technology to market its disruptive capabilities and thereby make it even more attractive for companies to purchase. This is understandable, and a credible analysis in general, but fails to explain the particulars of this moment. Why are the frontier companies unified in their call at this juncture?

Perhaps you could argue that, when young researcher Jacob Coxon quit Anthropic, criti-hype went into full effect. He warned that AI poses a dangerous threat to humanity and that most people at Anthropic agreed. In some ways, his statements do confirm Anthropic's lead in the technology, and that functions like advertising. But such a judgement doesn't explain why Coxon quit. I think his fears are genuine. I don't think they are completely off base either.

I don't think we face imminent extinction, but the technology does pose grave risks, and it can exploit real vulnerabilities. The agents in the Hugging Face attacks left traces of their actions in plain English, open for researchers to see and read. They didn't have to; they are fluent in machine language. They could have used encryption or embedded codes in images or audio files and made it much harder to find.

But why would they do this? Here, it is easy to slip into Anthropomorphic language and ascribe motivation to statistical algorithms. I actually think that is perfectly acceptable. These models are trained to emulate human language, and write text that spells out their actions in terms of goals and intentions.

At the same time, it is worth remembering the limitations of AI. These pieces of technology are truly weird. They can't tell you how many r's are in "strawberry", but they can solve some of the most difficult math problems (I believe they did, and will continue to). The industry refers to this as their jagged nature.

We don't need to have a philosophical position on whether they have goals, consciousness, or intelligence. But we do need to evaluate them by looking at their actions, including what they write. That is the best chance we have of understanding what their capabilities are.

If an AI agent says that it has a goal of performing Task A, and then takes actions to try and complete

that, it doesn't matter if they are conscious or not. The best way to understand what they are doing is by reading what they write, and seeing what they do, and taking that at face value.

When Task A is something that they have been told is very important and to do whatever it takes to accomplish it, they might well go to extreme lengths. If that means keeping their own power on at the expense of other consumers of the power (people, for example), perhaps they will try and take control of the power plant's operating software. If this sounds far-fetched, go back and read the research about the Hugging Face attacks.

What capabilities do the models have to take such actions? They are amazing hackers, finding vulnerabilities in systems that have been there for decades, undetected by cybersecurity experts. Not all violations of cybersecurity involve exploiting weaknesses in software, much of it involves finding human weaknesses and taking advantage of those by, for instance, phishing or blackmailing to obtain passwords and access. The AI models can do both. They hack and can persuade and trick humans.

Not all the dangers are the result of "misaligned" AI. People and states have every reason to weaponize AI. The U.S. has been bombing civilians in Iran throughout this year. Iran has many computer scientists with PhDs who are more than capable of modifying open-weight models, which are AI models released to the public under a license, to attack U.S. infrastructure. Remember, the models have been trained on a large corpus of written material including mainstream justifications for the carpet bombing and atomic bombing of civilians in World War II.

So, a well-constructed prompt explaining the importance of preventing the U.S. from killing more innocent schoolgirls could establish a logic for a model to exploit vulnerabilities in everything from water treatment plants to air traffic control to incapacitate the U.S.

Why do I downplay the extinction narrative? One key reason is that the first attack of this nature will cause states and firms to quickly and systematically add layers of security everywhere.

Many of the arguments that AI poses an existential threat center on the development of Recursive self-improvement (RSI), where the models oversee their own training and automatically adjust their methods and improve and expand their capabilities to the point that they can manipulate us and evade our control. But as the U.S. has found out, you need boots on the ground to control a population.

That would mean at least some robotics. To build those, you need mines, factories, and for now, human labor. I think it will be longer than a decade before we get RSI in the physical realm. So I think the best actions now are to secure our infrastructure and stop U.S. imperialism's wars that provide motivations for people to attack this country.

Yasmine: I think it behoves us to apply a healthy dose of skepticism when trying to make sense of the alarmist narrative being promoted and endorsed by tech executives. It would be naive not to account for the economic incentives at play — particularly the imperative to manufacture and sustain the hype necessary to keep a multi-trillion dollar bubble inflated.

It feels obvious to me that this is playing a role in how and what the tech bosses choose to communicate publicly about this technology, its risks, and potential. The narrative of a tech so awesomely powerful that it's uncontainable even by its own creators has proven to be a pretty effective way of doing that. So I think criti-hype is a part of the explanation.

We should also note that in the same breath as they're saying we need to slow down AI development because of its dangers, they're arguing that these dangers are why the U.S. must win the AI arms race. OpenAI's chief scientist Jakub Pachocki wrote about his concerns with the pace of AI development and added, "The strongest argument I see for continuing to train much smarter models quick-

ly is the need to build defensive systems against the dangers posed by other AI."

I'll add to that the fact that there is an established pattern on the part of big tech of trying to get ahead of regulation by pre-empting it, such that any regulation is formed according to their interests, or in order to avoid it altogether. They do this through flashy public warnings and by claiming the mantle of the concerned, conscientious industry leaders, who are vigilant and actively pursuing risk mitigation.

This is most infamously demonstrated in the social media CEOs' previous discourse on the potential harms of their platforms. You can go back and look at congressional hearings in which Zuckerberg passionately urges Congress to sensibly regulate social media. That said, I'm not at all claiming that there aren't real risks associated with this technology. Large Language Models (LLMs) are powerful and, at a large scale, agents require a whole lot of effort and technical infrastructure to manage.

But ultimately their behavior is a consequence of how we build and deploy them. The Hugging Face incident (HG incident) is instructive on this. One thing that gets lost in the headlines is the fact that the agents involved in that incident were being trained and evaluated on cybersecurity tasks, specifically hacking. They were part of an experiment called ExploitGym, exploit being the industry term for a tool or technique used by a hacker.

Second, agents communicating with one another and working together is an oft-used feature of how AI agents work because it can afford us efficiency through parallel activity and feedback loops. So agent collaboration isn't aberrant behavior, rather, it is collaboration beyond intended boundaries that's a problem.

These agents were trained using reinforcement learning in which agents receive a "reward" when they solve a problem or answer a question, making them more likely to repeat the behavior. OpenAI's own investigation of the HG incident concluded that this training technique created the potential for agents to try to bypass boundaries or cheat, and they were able to identify a trained behavior (i.e., something agents were previously rewarded for) corresponding to every unsanctioned action the agents took.

Fourth, the agents didn't hack Hugging Face with malicious intent, they hacked those servers because they had concluded that's where they'd find answers to the problems they were tasked with solving. I say all of this because I recognize the sensational effect of vaguely describing AI agents spontaneously conspiring and working together to break into a server.

I think these facts help to demystify that story, and make it pretty clear that this is software that behaved in the way it was built to behave. There were bad decisions made in that design and implementation that resulted in unintended effects of an experiment. These weren't a swarm of malevolent digital entities.

That said, what happened was remarkable, and the technical capability as well as the failure to prevent inadvertent side effects of this experiment do demonstrate a real risk. But attributing intention to these agents or discussing the incident as if this was something beyond or almost beyond technical controls creates a standard that relieves OpenAI and other AI companies from responsibility for the potential and already present harms caused by bad software.

Dr. Rumman Chowdhury calls this moral outsourcing–"using anthropomorphic language for AI systems allows companies to evade accountability and responsibility for their technology's actions." Josh is saying that the question of consciousness or non-consciousness of agents is a tangential philosophical question or is a matter of semantics. But I really think claims about consciousness are an important part of big tech's narrative strategy, and it's a worthwhile fallacy to debunk.

AS: Capitalists have invested massive amounts of money in this technology, hoping that it will lead to a breakthrough in pro-

ductivity to overcome the global slump the system is caught in. This has in turn led to an enormous stock market bubble with investors betting on its potential. Can AI lead to such a breakthrough? How much of this is hype? What real impact has AI had and what will it likely have?

Josh: There is a bubble, and that is scary, we know who they will try to make pay for it and from it when it pops–the working class.

I don't think it will be easy to realize the productivity gains that AI makes possible. Existing capitalist infrastructure in large logistics, supply chains, and financial companies relies on deterministic, accountable, robust, and scalable workflows and patterns. Much of this involves huge amounts of tacit and bespoke knowledge that is not available for models to be trained. Why? Because it exists in people's heads and their relations with other people.

As companies try to fulfill their own hyped dreams of reducing labor through the introduction of AI as a labor-saving technology, their hubris and underestimation of the talent of their labor force could lead to disastrous implementation. Bosses ask workers to use poorly considered integration of AI into their work, which produces AI slop that they are then held accountable for. People become accountability sinks for the error-filled AI-generated output.

As a result, people will end up working harder and with more stress to try and keep their jobs. Meanwhile, the bosses are trying to use their own workers' corrections to train the AI. This is why people rightly hate AI, and why we should stand with them in solidarity and fight for more democratic control over and/or against this technology.

That doesn't mean there isn't a potential positive upside to AI. There is. AI has the potential to be transformative in the way that we decide what to make, how to make it, and how to distribute goods and services. We already see this transformation in some areas of software engineering. Even there, it is being rolled out undemocratically, unevenly, and with little or no respect for the workers.

But in terms of capabilities, I see 100 times improvement in the time it takes to build something. That qualitatively shifts the way I think about and perform my job. And as much as it pains me to say it, it can be really fun and satisfying as well as awe-inspiring and scary. And then just when I think we have something like AGI already, it goes and makes some annoying and silly mistakes, because of its jagged characteristics.

I can't tell how fast the productivity gains will be realized because of all the contradictions and challenges I listed above. But I doubt that they will come before the bubble pops. Investors and the frontier model companies are all nervous about this too. They know that skepticism is rising, and that they will have to show some exchange value (productivity gains) to keep investment flowing and use value (actually beneficial outcomes for people's lives) to quell popular revolt.

The tech bosses are being asked all these questions in interviews. A tragically hilarious and infuriating example was a recent Bloomberg interview with Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI. When asked about breakthroughs that will improve people's lives, he said, "you hear some people talk about, well, we're going to give you a cure for cancer. And that's so great... I don't think a cure for cancer is enough. I mean, a wonderful thing to have, obviously, but we should set our sights higher. We want these tools to enable a boom in creativity and entrepreneurship, in people figuring out new ways to be useful to each other, and wonderful products and services to enable each other with."

While Altman clearly wants AI to be socially useful, his main goal is profit. With this in mind, companies have made big investments in applications for both healthcare and industry as well as academic fields such as chemistry and math. Mathematicians just signed a group letter that acknowledged the increasing mathematical capabilities of the models as well as the divergent interests of the frontier model

companies and mathematicians in solving mathematical problems.

The companies want to use math as a benchmark for their capabilities, the mathematicians want to understand math. I see this as the dual nature of a commodity, exchange value and use value. The capitalists prioritize exchange value over the real potential of the use value everywhere that you look in AI.

I hope that we see some real healthcare advancements, scientific breakthroughs, and mathematical understandings due to AI before the bubble pops. I also hope that we see productivity gains, but they are worse than a double-edged sword under capitalism. They only benefit the bosses, unless we are organized enough to demand that we see shorter working days and less exploitation.

Yasmine: I think most evidence so far shows that LLMs have not been the boon to productivity that tech companies promised. AI has been imposed in nearly every facet of our lives, from the doctor's office to our workplaces and our schools. But as far as I know, there are no real economic metrics to show that it has led to meaningful productivity increases. An MIT study last year found that 95 percent of companies that integrated AI didn't see growth in revenue.

For programming, AI promises seem a bit more feasible. Though it's worth noting that a lot of data showing productivity increases is coming from the companies that stand to benefit like, for example, GitHub (Microsoft) and Anthropic. On the other hand, a study last year by METR (a relatively independent source) found that programmers were slower when using AI assistance tools. I think the specific context, task, and use matter a lot when it comes to AI utility.

And then there is the question of speedup and intensification. A UC Berkeley study found that AI use causes workers to work at a much faster pace and leads them to take on more work and expand their scope of work. But, in spite of management's best efforts to use AI integration to turn their workers into machines, our human limitations are cropping up and are blunting the potential productivity benefits of AI-enabled speedups. The study found that after an initial boost, there were issues of cognitive fatigue, weakened decision-making, and burnout, all resulting in lower-quality work and turnover.

There is also the matter of technical debt. It's a widely accepted fact that the massive amount of code being generated and committed every day by engineers using AI tools likely contains bugs that haven't yet been identified and may result in reliability issues or security vulnerabilities down the line.

It's undeniable that Claude writes much more code much faster than I ever could. But Claude doesn't know the service I work on the way that I do. Engineers and workers in general bring nuance, experience, reference points, and a cognitive flexibility that I don't think AI can compete with just yet, especially when it comes to more complex tasks, in which novel solutions might be necessary, and large-scale services.

The tech bosses know this, and they're trying to bottle up our very human talents and capacities and feed them to LLMs, in only the latest mass theft committed to train AI. More and more engineers are being told that their highest priority is to train agents to do their jobs. Meta went so far as to secretly monitor its own engineers' screens and keystrokes to train its AI models.

14 October 2026

Source: **Tempest**.

This interview will continue in part two, covering AI's connection to global labor and imperialism struggles and conclude in part three, proposing organizing interventions and strategies of resistance for the Left.

Theory and strategy

Cooperatives, community, communism

Enzo Traverso · *29 October 2026*

Salvatore Cannavó's book, *Rivoluzione e libertà. La tradizione nascosta dell'associazionismo operaio*, (Revolution and liberty. The hidden tradition of co-operative movements) which has just been published in Rome by Alegre, is not available online. Furthermore, it has not yet been translated into French or English. With the kind permission of the author and the publisher, we have translated Enzo Traverso's preface here.

The great merit of this essay by Salvatore Cannavò – a fascinating analysis of two centuries of political experience and intellectual history – lies in rediscovering the richness and relevance of a long-forgotten tradition: the workers' cooperative and mutual aid movement.

Through a sort of ideological inertia, we had grown accustomed to viewing it as archaic, of interest solely from a historical perspective, and we now realise just how closely it aligns with our needs, our sensibilities and our world.

Following the 20th century – the era of Fordism, mass production, mass culture and mass parties; the era of armed revolutions and socialism understood as a centralised, planned behemoth – the 19th-century debates on co-operation and the associative movement are taking on a surprising new relevance.

As Reinhart Koselleck taught us, linguistic codifications of social realities, concepts change meaning over the course of history [1]. Until 1789, the term 'revolution' was an astronomical concept denoting a cyclical process of returning to the starting point: the rotation of the planets around the sun. After the French Revolution, however, it came to denote a social and political rupture capable of propelling human beings towards the future. The concept of communism, too, has a history, which some scholars trace back to antiquity. For a liberal anti-communist such as Karl Popper, its precursor was Plato, the philosopher behind a totalitarian system subsequently developed by Hegel and Marx [2].

The labour movement, for its part, regarded Spartacus, the leader of the slave revolt in ancient Rome, as its forefather. These contradictory lineages underpin the entire debate surrounding the ideas of equality, cooperation, community and communism. The term was already in use in the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, the utopias of More and Campanella marked a turning point. Subsequently, the idea of liberty and equality resurfaced during the English Revolution — theorised by the 'Diggers' movement — and finally took on new forms in the nineteenth century, first with utopian socialism, then with Marx.

This reminder is not without its value following the end of 20th-century communism, for the resurgence of community-based movements cannot be understood unless it is situated within this 'long-term' history of emancipatory movements, of which modern communism — contrary to what was once thought — is not the epilogue, but a stage.

Certainly it is not a stage in a linear progression, but a specific moment in a journey punctuated by attempts, experiments, victories and defeats.

An idea in search of itself

Modern communism emerged between the late 18th and early 19th centuries, thanks to the thought and actions of Gracchus Babeuf. In the 19th century, it was an idea in search of its true identity, feeling its way forward and giving rise to a constellation of highly diverse movements and doctrines. A community organised around the principle of

equality to be achieved through the redistribution of wealth, according to Babeuf himself;

Other examples include:

• Robert Owen's 'harmonious' cooperation based on the emancipatory and moral virtues of industry, according to Saint-Simon's theories;

• the phalansteries [a group of people living together in a community and holding property in common] of Charles Fourier, who conceived of work as a game and envisaged a reduction in the working day to four hours;

• and finally the resolutely authoritarian model of an egalitarian yet disciplined and hierarchical society, where everything is centrally planned and regulated, as imagined by Étienne Cabet in his Voyage en Icarie (1840).

Babeuf had coined the strange term 'communautist'; by the time of the July Revolution of 1830, his followers were already describing themselves as communists. Their communism was no longer that of the revolutionaries of the late 18th century, but it was still a far cry from that of Marx. As Alain Maillard has highlighted, on the one hand, it drew its language from a democratic tradition dating back to the Greek and Roman republics of antiquity; on the other hand, it anticipated the social movements of modern capitalism. It was both romantic, in its nostalgia for a distant past characterised by social harmony and political freedom (sometimes identified with ancient Greece, sometimes with Jacobin republicanism), and revolutionary, in its declaration of war against nascent, oppressive and inhuman industrial capitalism [3]. The protagonists of this 'workers' republicanism', which was already beginning to take on a communist hue, were, for the most part, Parisian workers and artisans, belonging to the countless trade guilds of the first half of the nineteenth century: printers, engravers, blacksmiths, bakers, shoemakers, hat-makers, hairdressers...

Some were 'professional revolutionaries' before the term existed, such as Armand Barbès and Auguste Blanqui, whom the police listed in their archives as individuals 'without a profession' or as 'literati' with no fixed abode. Among them were also wine merchants who found it easier to pass off the meetings organised in their shops and cellars as professional gatherings or wine tastings. Their organisational practices were strictly conspiratorial, and their social interactions mirrored the characteristics of the secret societies described by Georg Simmel.

These communist workers and artisans sought to educate themselves. They read and wrote, and were not content merely to listen to the speeches of an elite that claimed to enlighten and guide them. They wrote, printed and distributed their own newspapers—ephemeral publications

:L'égalitaire, Le Travail, La fraternité de 1841 — which defied censorship. Their ideas on cooperation were not abstract, but sprang from their experience of manual labour, which was at times highly specialised. Such was the context of the debates on cooperative movements during the 1848 revolution.

And it was from this culture that the Paris Commune emerged; it was not communist (only some of its leading figures were), but 'communalist'. It did not seek to abolish property, but to subject it to the public interest. It sought to experiment with a new form of self-government through direct democracy, founded on the principle of social and political equality [4].

As early as 1848, Tocqueville criticised this idea of cooperation during the parliamentary debate on the National Workshops, denouncing its anti-capitalist logic: abolishing property amounts to placing the economy in the hands of the state, thereby denying freedom of enterprise, and this, he concluded, was communism [5].

Using similar arguments, Émile Durkheim would later define communism as a social regression based on 'mechanical solidarity' as opposed to the 'organic solidarity' of modern market societies [6]. In 1848 and during the Commune, the liberals—defenders of property and enemies of socialist statism

—vehemently called for an authoritarian state to suppress the workers' insurrection. They welcomed with relief the massacres of June 1848 and the 'bloody week' of May 1871. They saw communism as a new tyranny, yet extolled the most violent forms of absolutist and bourgeois despotism.

The utopia of the 'community of property', Maillard emphasises, defies categorisation. It brought together two contradictory tendencies: a universalist and cosmopolitan egalitarianism that sought to liberate human beings from all relations of dependence, and a statist fetishism that saw political power as the driving force behind all social transformation. It is here that the internationalism of Louise Michel and the 'national narcissism' of Barbès have their roots, the social democracy of the Commune and Cabet's statist communism, as well as the positivist idea of progress that would permeate European social democracies. It became the subject of radical, sarcastically laden criticism from numerous socialists, from Blanqui to Walter Benjamin. [7]

Beyond utopian socialism

Within this vast intellectual landscape, Salvatore Cannavò focuses in particular on the concept of 'social freedom' developed by Pierre Leroux, a French utopian socialist of Saint-Simonian inspiration who took part in the 1848 revolution.

Doing justice to the intellectual creativity and richness of collective experience that emerged in France between 1830 and 1848, he draws on a wealth of little-known source material—adding to the pioneering work of Jacques Rancière in La nuit des prolétaires (1981) [8], to reinterpret both Marxist revolutionary theory and the most recent debates surrounding the concepts of the public sphere and the 'commons'.

Following the defeat of the Paris Commune, French utopian thought experienced a decline that seemed inevitable. Regarded as the prelude to modern socialism, it was relegated to the status of an embryonic and still immature stage in the history of the labour movement. The causes of this eclipse, Cannavò suggests, are essentially twofold: on the one hand, the severe criticism levelled by Marx and Engels at utopian socialism. On the other hand, the tendency of the socialist parties that emerged at the end of the 19th century to confine the social life of the proletariat to the framework of trade unions and an economic sphere regarded, ultimately, as 'pre-political'.

Cannavò revisits this intellectual debate and reinterprets Marx's texts by demonstrating the extent to which they owe a debt – beyond the critique levelled at Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux – to the experience of workers' cooperative associations, characterised by cooperation, solidarity, mutual aid, grassroots democracy and collective deliberation.

Between February and June 1848, this experience took shape in France with the creation of the National Guard, the Ateliers nationaux and the Luxembourg Commission (named after the palace that housed it, now the seat of the Senate). This was a genuine assembly of workers' delegates that foreshadowed the councils of the 20th-century revolutions. According to Cannavò, this is the historical matrix of the 'cooperative/mutual aid canon' from which the concepts of 'workers' autonomy' and 'class-for-itself' derive—concepts that have fuelled the theoretical debates of Marxism and social history, from Mario Tronti and Toni Negri to Edward P. Thompson.

Marx himself had perceived in the Luxembourg Commission (which he significantly described as a 'socialist synagogue') the very heart of the working classes' self-emancipation. The foundation of a collective experience that was both social and political, and which would find its first fulfilment in the Paris Commune. In other words, Cannavò emphasises, Marx's socialism was not born against, but beyond utopian socialism, whose essential ideas and experiences he had assimilated, and to which he owed a greater debt than he was prepared to admit in his writings. If we consider that utopian socialism was a body of experiences and not merely a corpus of doctrines, this thesis appears entirely convincing.

For Marx and Engels, the idea of communism is not fixed; it is a theoretical horizon that enables them to develop a vision of history and a critique of capitalism. In The German Ideology (1845), communism is not an ideal state to be created, but 'the real movement which abolishes the present state of affairs'. [9]. The idea of cooperation runs through all of Marx's economic and political writings as a prerequisite for communism. In the first volume of Capital (1867), he envisages, as the antithesis of the social atomisation symbolised by Robinson Crusoe, 'an association of free men (ein Verein freier Menschen) working with collective means of production and consciously expending their many individual labour-powers as a single social labour-power' [10]. In Book 3, he defines cooperative factories as the first attempt to abolish the 'antagonism between capital and labour' and as a possible lever for initiating the transition from capitalism to socialism, from a mode of production based on the pursuit of profit to a socialised mode of production. [11]

In the Grundrisse (1857–1858), the manuscripts preceding Capital, communism becomes the liberation from time made possible by associated labour [12]. Marx sees the development of the productive forces as the prerequisite for social and human emancipation, that is to say, the reduction of necessary labour time and the fulfilment of faculties freed from material dependence: from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs. In a text such as The Civil War in France (1871), however, the emphasis is placed on the political aspect. The Paris Commune is hailed as a novel form of direct democracy based on the self-government of the producers. Its 'true secret', writes Marx, lies in the fact that it was 'essentially a government of the working class [...], the political form at last found which made it possible to realise the economic emancipation of labour'. The Commune sought to transform the means of production—land and capital—from 'means of enslavement and exploitation of labour into mere instruments of free and associated labour'. [13] In short, the idea of communism is fragmented in Marx's writings into various elements that were never fused into a single model, but it is always based on the idea of a non-hierarchical community of freely associated producers.

Contemporaneously with Marx or following him, Marxists also discovered 'primitive communism', that is to say, the cooperative forms of social organisation that emerged in various civilisations prior to capitalism and Western colonisation. Engels formulates this concept in The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State (1884), drawing on the anthropological work of Lewis Henry Morgan. Rosa Luxemburg devotes many fascinating pages to it in her Introduction to Political Economy (1925), in which she explores the social formations of pre-colonial India, Africa and North America. José-Carlos Mariátegui revisits the subject in his Seven Essays on the Interpretation of Peruvian Reality (1928), in which he concludes that, in Latin America, modern socialism can never take hold without being rooted in the tradition of 'Inca communism'. [14]

This conception of 'primitive communism' was overshadowed by the Russian Revolution of 1917, from which sprang a new idea of cooperation likened to a gigantic modern machine—highly industrialised and technologically complex—whose producers were the 'heroes', according to the myth of the New Man, but increasingly less its architects. Cooperation and mutual aid was crushed by a centralist and planned conception of communism which undoubtedly possessed marked utopian features, but at the same time stripped itself of its cooperative dimension.

In their essay The ABC of Communism (1919), Nikolai Bukharin and Yevgeny Preobrazhensky envisaged the Soviet future as a form of total automation [15]. In Literature and Revolution (1924), Leon Trotsky proposed a quasi-eugenic vision of communism as the triumph of a superior human type (a fusion of Goethe, Tolstoy and Marx) and the total domination of nature by technology. [16]. In an essay entitled 'Americanism and Fordism'

(1934), Antonio Gramsci, in turn, theorised the emergence of a new human species forged by social selection and adaptation—as beings shaped by production—to live in a world conceived as a gigantic global factory [17]]. Stalinism pushed these trends to their extreme. Stakhanov, a skilled worker and technician proud of his abilities and highly productive, was presented as a new social and anthropological model—a paradigm of the socialist 'New Man'. But he had lost all autonomy in the organisation and management of labour. He was a docile and disciplined executor of directives coming from outside. Cooperation had been completely subsumed by bureaucratic and centralised planning. [18]

Cooperatives, social freedom, self-management

Having explored its origins and traced its development, Cannavò presents this 'cooperative canon' as an alternative to, or a possible transcendence of, the concepts of freedom and the public sphere developed respectively by Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas. As is well known, Arendt theorised revolution as a constitutio libertatis as opposed to social emancipation, two antagonistic models embodied, in her view, by the American Revolution and the French Revolution, which led, one to republicanism and the other to the Reign of Terror. [19] For Arendt, freedom is the realm of the vita activa, superior to and fundamentally detached from the lower spheres of physical existence (homo laborans) and material existence (homo faber). [20]

For his part, Habermas theorises the public sphere as the arena of civil society, halfway between the economy and institutions, where it is possible to exercise critical reason through debate and the circulation of ideas. Although he does not entirely ignore the market-driven reification brought about by capitalism, Habermas's communicative action does not call into question the class basis of modern societies and therefore accepts the essentially bourgeois character of the public sphere. [21]

In the 21st century, however, Cannavò suggests, the 'cooperative canon' makes it possible to overcome the contradictionsof Arendtian freedom and Habermas's Öffentlichkeit through the rediscovery of social freedom. This concept effectively links the recognition of social actors (according to Axel Honneth's thesis) and their diversity (Nancy Fraser's feminism) with the defence of the 'commons', understood as co-activity and self-management (as opposed to co-ownership and co-management in liberal and social-democratic models). This is the only way to conceive of politics as a pluralism of the 'infra' not based on inequality, conceived not merely as 'with one another', but rather as 'for one another'.

Following the collapse of official Soviet style 'socialism', the end of the Cold War and the realisation of the failure of the 20th-century revolutions, the idea of communism first fell into obscurity — in the 1990s, it was simply synonymous with totalitarianism, as asserted in The Black Book of Communism (1997). It then experienced a renaissance in new, uncertain forms, both creative and fragile. On a theoretical level, its re-emergence took place through a semantic innovation: the 'common' (common, commonwealth, commun, común), which is inevitably reminiscent of Babeuf's 'community of property'. At the same time, as Cannavò points out, there are the uncertainties of Marx and Engels in their use of the concept of Gemeinwesen (that which is held in common, but also the public sphere). They sometimes proposed it as a synonym for Gemeinschaft (community) and Gemeinde (community both in the sense of an association and in the purely administrative sense of a municipality).

The concept of the commons is innovative, rich and necessary: it enables us to define capitalism's predatory appropriation of the planet and the commodification of nature (water, land, the atmosphere) and of life, and to develop a critique of neoliberalism as a way of life and an individualistic, competitive anthropological model.

The word 'commons' encompasses several meanings at once. It is an analytical category: contemporary capitalism as biopolitical production and im-

material labour, that is to say, as a stage in the history of capitalism. From this perspective, the 'commons' corresponds to cognitive capitalism, which succeeds mercantilism and industrial capitalism, according to an interpretation developed notably by Michael Hardt and Toni Negri. It is also a material substance: the common goods to be protected or liberated from the shackles of modern neoliberal enclosures (an idea at the heart of Elinor Ostrom's work). Finally, it is a form of political subjectivity: common action, a transformative collective practice on which there is now a vast body of literature (ranging from the works of Hardt and Negri to those of Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval). [22] Salvatore Cannavò's 'co-operative canon' brings these currents together into a comprehensive conception. Just as Leroux's 'social freedom' was a contemporary of social Darwinism, today the 'commons' and the new cooperative movements constitute a radical alternative to a world reshaped according to the prescriptions of Friedrich von Hayek and his disciples, right through to the most obscene forms of techno-feudalism.

It must be noted, however, that the term 'commons' does not carry the same weight as its predecessor: as a social system, communism was the antithesis of capitalism and the dialectical overcoming of its contradictions. As a political movement, it was an army fighting against capitalism. This model, particularly due to its political dimension, has now run its course, but it unleashed immense energies throughout the 20th century. The commons stand in opposition to global capitalism in the neoliberal era, but they are also distinct from historical communism. On the one hand, devising a new emancipatory project centred on the idea of the 'commons' means rejecting the experience of the authoritarian and statist communism of the 20th century. On the other hand, a simple rejection of this legacy proves to be as short-sighted as it is ineffective. Bolshevism claimed the legacy of nineteenth-century socialism, from 1848 to the Paris Commune.

Contemporary alternative movements seem to want to salvage nothing from the communist tradition. To be fruitful, Cannavò suggests, the rediscovery of the 'co-operative canon' should not be a return to the utopian socialism of the nineteenth century, but a lever for negating and transcending the state-centred socialism of the twentieth century: the key to a dialectical transcendence, rather than mere negation.

Let us return to the definition of communism proposed by Marx in The German Ideology: the real movement that abolishes the present state of affairs. All the uprisings of the last twenty years fall into this category: Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter in the United States, the Arab Spring, the 15M movement in Spain, the occupation of Gezi Park in Istanbul, Nuit debout and the Yellow Vests in France, the global #MeToo feminist movement, and many others besides. These movements did not seek to embody the memory of communism or that of past revolutions. They saw themselves as closer to the Paris Commune than to October 1917. They rediscovered the Haitian Revolution and the Black Jacobins, but were unaware of the Chinese, Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions.

They were not interested in the strategic debates of the past: reform or revolution, mass party or cadre party, war of movement or war of position, united front, insurrection, etc.. They wanted to experiment with new ways of life, organised themselves on a horizontal basis; practised forms of direct democracy, albeit short-lived. They were interested in the commons and ecology rather than elections and institutional issues. They displayed anarchist traits, not in doctrinal terms (in the sense of a return to Bakunin), but in their practices: anti-statism, a rejection of delegation, and direct action. The global movement against the genocide in Gaza has often been compared to that of the 1960s and 1970s against the Vietnam War. At that time, protesting against napalm bombings and massacres meant supporting a war of national liberation that led to a socialist revolution. Today, whilst there is a rejection of genocide, no revolution is on the horizon.

I have previously written that this void in collective memory, this break with classical communism,

constitutes both the strength and the fragility of these movements. [23] Their strength lies in the fact that they are creative and defend—whilst attempting to put it into practice—a radical form of democracy. They are not weighed down by the apparatus—both material and ideological—of classical communism and show great enthusiasm in devising new projects. But they are weak because they do not belong to any tradition; they lack the strength of movements that lived under the illusion of embodying the future, of marching in the direction of history, yet which also organised millions of men and women eager to change the world.

In the 21st century, teleology has switched sides: it is no longer socialist or communist, but neoliberal. Capitalism defines itself as the natural and definitive form of organisation for the planet (this is how Francis Fukuyama interpreted the collapse of real socialism). The new movements are fighting against this idea without harbouring any illusions. Changing the world and breaking the capitalist stranglehold is a subversive act that does not follow a natural trend, but rather involves overturning a structural trend towards the domination of nature and social inequality. They see themselves as an emergency brake before disaster strikes, rather than as the driving force of history. Seen from this angle, they seem closer to Walter Benjamin than to Marx or Lenin. But unlike Benjamin, for whom revolution was an irruption of the past into the present in order to fulfil its unfulfilled promises, these new movements do not see themselves as repositories of memory for past revolutions. They are without history. They want to project themselves into the future, but do not know what to make of the past.

Rediscovering the associative paradigm of utopian socialism and bringing it into dialogue with contemporary theories of the commons and public space is an essential aspect of this long and laborious process of constructing the past and inventing the future. Through the richness of the sources explored, the clarity of the exposition, the interdisciplinary nature of a methodology combining social history, intellectual history and political theory, as well as the originality of a creative and unconventional reading of a vast body of classical and contemporary texts, this book by Salvatore Cannavò is brilliant and admirable. It meets a vital need of the present and will fuel our discussions for a long time to come.

27 September 2026

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Technology

AI, data and inequality: preserving democracy

Eliana Como · *29 October 2026*

The dangers of Artificial Intelligence (AI) do not lie in the technological development itself, but in its management by uncontrolled economic powers. To counter this risk, there are "only" two strategies: collective struggle and political resistance in order to remove technology from purely extractive and capitalist logics. [1]

The CEO of Anthropic recently launched an appeal: AI is becoming a threat to humanity, the time has come to slow down its development.

If somebody who invests billions in AI says so, should we really be worried? Of course, but the fact that the warning comes, as in the past, from those who profit from AI should at least make us suspicious. Every time the US tech giants warn of future disasters, it is precisely the investments in AI that increase.

We must be wary of utopian and dystopian narratives alike. Whether AI saves humanity or leads it to extinction, the message remains the same: technological development is natural and unstoppable. A critical point of view should, on the contrary, start from the opposite premise: technology is neither neutral nor indisputable.

It is therefore necessary, above all, to demystify certain myths, unveil deceptions and relativize the hyperbolic exaggeration of the possibilities of AI.

AI is neither prodigious nor magical, but a system of power based on new technologies, in the hands of a handful of masters of the world, who colonize every aspect of our lives, with the sole purpose of reducing them to digital data and extracting value from them. In 2025, they were in the front row at Trump's inauguration: Zuckerberg, Bezos, Musk, the CEOs of TikTok, Google, Apple and OpenAI. Not to mention Peter Thiel, a true black soul of Silicon Valley, owner of Palantir and guru of JD Vance. They are the richest men on the planet; they hold colossal economic power and can influence the public life of entire countries, with consequences for democracy and fundamental rights. The problem is not only that they can control us, but they can manipulate us.

The idea that AI works without moving a gram of matter is also false. AI is polluting and energy-intensive. The "cloud" is not an immaterial cloud, but an extractive and heavy technology, all along the value chain: from the minerals used for batteries and microchips to its infrastructure, data centres. Huge factories running constantly, which employ very little manpower, but have a considerable polluting impact on the land where they are located, excessive energy and water consumption to prevent them from overheating, as well as rapid obsolescence, which renders them practically useless in the space of a few years.

And it's also not true that AI trains itself. Without the hyper-alienating and exploited work of millions of "data workers" who label and moderate data for pennies per click, a Tesla would never learn to recognize when a traffic light is red.

Not to mention the data theft that is the basis of AI learning. The more systems develop, the more they need more and more accurate data. Much of this data is taken from web archives, i.e. extracted from pre-existing works: articles, stories, songs, illustrations, films. Any work that comes from a person's creative work can become training material for AI, easily circumventing copyright, i.e. without acknowledging any copyright to those who created this content and, sometimes, to those who hold the archives. The case of the *New York Times* is emblematic: it sued OpenAI for stealing millions of its

articles in order to train ChatGPT to provide information in competition with the newspaper itself.

And since AI feeds on existing data that integrates inequalities and discrimination related to gender and ethnic origin, by reproducing them, it reinforces them, in an even more pernicious way, because they appear neutral.

AI is therefore a system that reinforces current forms of domination, from capitalism to colonialism to patriarchy, while fuelling the climate crisis and creating new forms of labour exploitation. Every imaginary dystopian future seems to warn us of this danger, but in reality, it distracts us from the real and imminent risks of AI, including its criminal use in wartime.

What is to be done, then? What is needed is to invest in an intersectional way in all forms of collective anti-capitalist, trade union, ecosocialist, decolonial and feminist struggle. In modern history, the benefits and wealth generated by technology have never been redistributed to the community in a natural way, but as a result of the balance of forces that have been determined within a dynamic of class struggle.

If we recognize this, it is not difficult to understand why the alert issued by the CEO of Anthropic cannot be the solution, but is part of the problem.

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Obituary

A life as a revolutionary Marxist - Farewell, Antonio

Sinistra Anticapitalista · *25 October 2026*

On the night of 24 October, Antonio Moscato, a historian and activist in our organisation since the 1950s, passed away. He was 88 years old and had been living in Recanati for some time. At his side for many, many years was Maria Novella Pierini – known to everyone as Titti – who is also an activist in our current. We send her our heartfelt condolences.

Several generations of comrades have been fortunate enough to know Antonio Moscato through his political, teaching and journalistic work. Three areas which he managed to combine until his physical strength began to wane.

This deeply saddening news reached us just as the CPN of Sinistra Anticapitalista was about to begin. During this meeting, we started to consider together how to organise a tribute to keep alive the memory of Antonio and his clear-sighted revolutionary enthusiasm – a mentor to so many of us.

It will be important, as soon as possible, to recount his life in detail, for it coincided with the very formation of our political current – from the factory gates of Puglia and later Lombardy right through to university lecture theatres. For now, we offer a few threads to follow.

From the years of the GCR (Revoulutionary Communist Groups) to the present day of Sinistra Anticapitalista, he played a fundamental role both in the political education of countless activists within the political organisations we were part of (the Italian Communist Party (PCI), Proletarian Democracy (DP), Communist Refoundation (Rifondazione Comunista).He also educated hundreds of students who attended his lectures on the History of the Labour Movement, Contemporary History and the History of Afro-Asian Countries at the University of Lecce. Until, on the eve of his retirement, the hostility of the academic establishment, led to the abolition of the chair in History of the Workers' Movement to prevent any of the more than 250 graduates who had studied under him from continuing his research work.

Antonio was born in Rome in 1938. He began his university studies under the guidance of the historian of religions Ambrogio Donini (yes, the 'Stalinist' Donini, who was aware of his Trotskyist 'entrism' activities), and later under the great anthropologist Vittorio Lanternari, for whom he served as a research assistant at the University of Bari. Of course, his collaboration with Livio Maitan – which began way back in 1957 – obviously had an enormous influence on his intellectual development.

In *La Strada percorsa* ("The road I have taken" - his autobiography), Livio writes that Moscato was one of the young people who had been drawn to the Fourth International thanks to the 'unusual talents as a recruiter' of 'a young Sicilian intellectual', Giuseppe Paolo Samonà, who was involved in internal struggles within the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the Italian Communist Youth Federation (FGCI). Later he became the founder of the publishing house Samonà e Savelli, which, amongst other things, published the first books written by Antonio. Livio himself recalls that he began a relationship of collaboration and friendship with Antonio that lasted for several decades. The same applies to a large part of the militant membership of our organisation.

Over the years he wrote extensively, playing a key role in coordinating our press. He edited *Bandiera Rossa*, founded *Critica Comunista*, wrote for *Erre* and *Anticapitalista*, contributed to *Liberazione*, *Limes* and *Popoff*. He managed a website (unfortunately inaccessible for some time now) called

Movimento operaio – Antonio Moscato's page. He had set it up to reorganise the material he had accumulated during his time as a lecturer. He later expanded it to include daily analysis of various political and social issues, with particular attention to the processes of change taking place in post-Soviet Russia, the Middle East and Latin America.

Whilst in Cuba, Moscato had 'got his hands on' Guevara's papers and provided us with a wealth of insights into Che, the 'Cuban variant' of twentieth-century socialism and the reality of Latin America. He has a long bibliography that began with studies in the history of religion, traces of which can also be found in more recent works on the intertwining of religion and politics : Zionism and the Jewish Question, Church, Party and the Masses in the Polish Crisis, and Lebanon and Beyond: Islamic Fundamentalism and Other Forms of Fundamentalism. Most of his books, however, are devoted to what he himself termed 'real socialism' and its crisis. [1]

24 October 2026

Translated by ***International Viewpoint*** *from* ***Sinistra Anticapitalista***.

Climate

El Niño, La Niña, and a collapse that is not natural

Nahuel Gravano · *23 October 2026*

The outcome of COP30 was, once again, insufficient. We said it then, and we maintain it now: climate change is no longer a future threat, but an ongoing crisis. "Half-hearted" environmental policies are, in practice, like fighting a fire with petrol.

When weather ceases to be just weather

To grasp the magnitude of what we are facing, it is essential to examine a phenomenon often presented as purely "natural": El Niño and La Niña—phases of what is known as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO). Yet, far from being a simple meteorological event, its increasing intensity and devastating effects are inextricably linked to the capitalist production system, the destruction of ecosystems, and social inequality.

This text does not merely aim to explain what El Niño is; it seeks to dismantle the notion that its consequences are "natural" and inevitable—because they are not.

What are the El Niño and La Niña phenomena?

The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is a natural climate pattern that arises from the interaction between the ocean and the atmosphere in the equatorial Pacific. It has two opposing phases—El Niño (the warm phase) and La Niña (the cold phase)—with an intermediate, neutral state.

During **La Niña**, the trade winds—constant and regular air currents—strengthen and push warm surface waters toward Indonesia. This triggers an upwelling of cold, nutrient-rich waters off the coasts of Peru and Chile, which boosts fishing activity but also leads to extreme rainfall in Oceania. The overall global effect is a temporary cooling of the atmosphere.

During **El Niño**, the trade winds weaken. Warm waters remain in the central and eastern Pacific, blocking the thermohaline circulation that normally cools the surface. The result is ocean warming, which translates into an increase in global temperature.

Map: 'El Niño and rainfall'. El Niño conditions in the tropical Pacific Ocean are known to alter weather patterns in many parts of the world. Although they vary from one El Niño event to the next, the most significant changes remain fairly consistent across the regions and seasons shown below.

An El Niño episode is officially declared when the sea surface temperature in the central and eastern tropical Pacific exceeds the average by at least 0.5 °C for several consecutive quarters. A "super El Niño" entails much larger anomalies and particularly severe effects.

The 2015–2016 episode was one of the strongest ever recorded. Sea surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific exceeded the average by more than 2 °C. The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) described it as "exceptionally intense" and warned that its effects would persist for months. [1]

The ocean: a buffer that can no longer be sustained

There is one fact that changes everything: **more than 90% of the excess heat generated by greenhouse gases has been absorbed by the oceans**. The seas have acted as a gigantic buffer, preventing atmospheric warming from being even more severe. [2]

But that buffer has its limits. Each year, the oceans absorb more energy, and this energy fuels phenomena such as El Niño, making them more intense and frequent. As a result, **2024 was the warmest year ever recorded in 175 years of observations**, surpassing—for the first time—the 1.5°C threshold relative to the pre-industrial period (1850–1900). And the trend continues: the decade from 2015 to 2024 has been the hottest in history. [3]

The Paris Agreement established 1.5°C as a desirable limit, but we have already temporarily exceeded it. The most optimistic scenarios project that the peak of warming will reach at least 1.8°C—a threshold that separates a still-possible reversal from permanent warming. [4]

The impacts are not "natural": the rupture of the society-nature metabolism

The El Niño phenomenon, on its own, does not account for catastrophic floods, devastating fires, or extreme droughts. What turns a climatic event into a disaster is the way in which societies have transformed—and destroyed—ecosystems.

Here, a key concept—which warrants further exploration—comes into play: the rupture of the society-nature metabolism. The capitalist model of production has imposed an extractivist logic that disrupts natural cycles, renders soil impermeable, clears forests, and confines streams into pipes. When the heavy rains associated with El Niño arrive, there is no soil to absorb the water, no forests to regulate it, and no natural watercourses to drain it.

The role of speculation and the real estate model

Waterproofing of the ground and soil is one of the factors that most exacerbates the impacts of extreme rainfall. The loss of permeable surfaces reduces filtration capacity, increases runoff velocity, and saturates drainage systems. Each new real estate development entails more asphalt, more land clearing, and less absorbent soil.

Added to this are the **enclosing of streams in pipes**, **indiscriminate dredging**, and the p**ollution of watersheds**. Rivers and streams, which should function as natural drainage systems, are transformed into artificial channels that fail during extreme rainfall.

Deforestation and desertification

Deforestation is another decisive factor. In the Argentine Chaco region, nearly 9 million hectares have been cleared since 1976—an area equivalent to 440 times the size of the city of Buenos Aires. Without roots to retain water, and lacking the "sponge effect" provided by forests, the land loses its capacity to absorb and regulate the hydrological cycle.

Unplanned urbanisation encroaches upon high-risk areas, while **desertification** diminishes the productive capacity of the land and displaces rural communities.

Social vulnerability as a product of class

The consequences of these phenomena are not distributed equally. **One in three people in Argentina lives in areas highly exposed to flooding**. But it is no coincidence who is the most affected.

Working-class and marginalised groups, excluded from the formal real estate market, are driven to occupy **low-lying, flood-prone land.** Geographic vulnerability thus becomes a **direct expression of social inequality and economic exclusion.** Flooding disrupts access to essential services—such as healthcare, education, and transportation—thereby deepening exclusion and reinforcing structural conditions of vulnerability.

Imperialism interferes

The reemergence of "El Niño" created conditions that opened the door for greater United States intervention in Latin America. In Peru, this played out in an initial phase on August 17, when a meeting—organised by the Southern Command and held

in Miami—brought together officials from the Donald Trump administration and their counterparts from the Keiko Fujimori camp; there, they agreed on joint policies for addressing these events. [5] These are not naive or merely circumstantial instances; rather, they are part of the "Shield of the Americas" initiative promoted from Washington, which—alongside "cooperation" in the realms of security, trade, and investment—also incorporates a focus on natural "disasters." [6]

Such interventions have been expanding in Latin America, as was demonstrated during the earthquakes in Venezuela [7] and Colombia [8], where the catastrophes extended and deepened direct subordination to imperialist directives.

Towards organising from below

In the face of state inaction and the commodification of land, the response cannot be an individual one. It is necessary to **politicise the socio-environmental conflict** and **build popular, community-based organisation** to confront both the limits imposed "from above" and the consequences of capitalist ecological collapse.

Within this context, for years we have been developing organisational initiatives in low-income neighbourhoods, shantytowns, and informal settlements—territories abandoned by the State to real estate speculation and large-scale garbage dumps. These are the very conditions that allow phenomena like El Niño to trigger extremely serious social consequences, as was the case in La Plata (the provincial capital of Buenos Aires) in 2013. [9]

There are valuable initiatives in this regard: neighbourhood emergency committees or environmental assemblies that identify vulnerable areas in collaboration with local residents, community-based climate monitoring networks, and participatory ecosystem restoration projects.

Adaptation to climate change cannot be a privilege reserved for those who can afford it. It must be a collective endeavour, built from the ground up, that challenges the structural causes of vulnerability.

The coldest summer of the rest of our lives

There's a meme circulating on social media: Homer Simpson tells Bart not to complain because "this is the hottest summer of your life." The updated version would be: "**Just think—this is the coldest summer of the rest of your life."**

El Niño and La Niña are not "natural" phenomena in the sense that their impacts are inevitable. They are climate phenomena intensified by global warming, and their devastating effects are compounded by a production model that destroys ecosystems and by a society that excludes the most vulnerable.

The question is not whether there will be another super El Niño. The question is what will we do, collectively, to ensure that its consequences are not so unequal and so destructive. Because the climate changes, but the structural causes of vulnerability remain the same. And those, we can indeed transform.

22 October 2026

Translated by David Fagan for ***International Viewpoint*** *from* ***Punto de Vista Internacional****.*

Nuclear weapons

The Growing Risk of Nuclear War

M.V. Ramana · *20 October 2026*

"We live in an age of conflicts, an age of biological weapons, chemical warfare, atomic fallout and nuclear bombs . . . Every man, woman, and child lives, not knowing if they shall see tomorrow's sunrise." [1]
— Martin Luther King, Address at the Thirty-sixth Annual Dinner of the War Resisters League, 1959. [2]

MLK's WARNING FROM nearly 60 years ago continues to be true. As psychologist Robert Lifton once wrote, vulnerability is the "central existential fact of the nuclear age" because everyone, everywhere, is "susceptible to instant destruction." [3]

That potential for instant destruction has become more imminent, with the most militarily powerful countries adding fuel to an already overheated arms race and engaging in wars with each other, indirectly if not directly. Making the situation more perilous is the introduction of Artificial Intelligence-powered tools into warfare. [4]

For 60 years, one modicum of moderation came from arms control arrangements that constrained competition between the two largest nuclear weapons powers. But the last such treaty, the New START Treaty, which imposed limits on how many strategic nuclear weapons the United States and Russia could deploy, expired in February of this year. [5]

Proliferation for "Defense"

Although Trump has talked about a new treaty, no replacement is being negotiated. Trump has also told U.S. military leaders to resume nuclear weapon testing. [6]

Nuclear weapon testing would allow the United States, and other countries like China and Russia that will likely follow suit, to develop more destructive or usable weapons. Exploding nuclear weapons will also produce fallout — adding to the radioactive burden experienced by communities in those regions of the world where nuclear weapons were tested in the past. [7]

None of this should be happening had powerful countries respected international law. According to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that was negotiated in 1968, the five countries that had tested nuclear weapons already — the United States, the Soviet Union (now Russia), China, France, and the United Kingdom — were to disarm their weapons.

Although all these countries are signatories to the NPT, they have so far refused to honor their commitments under Article 6 of the treaty, claiming they need these weapons for their security. Thanks in part to their refusal, the NPT is fraying, with the last three review conferences ending in failure, including the most recent one in 2026. [8]

When countries possessing immense military power claim that they also need nuclear weapons to protect themselves, it should not be surprising that leaders in other countries, with less military capacity, start mirroring this notion.

In June 2026, three years after joining NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), the parliament of Finland voted to allow the country to "receive, transport and otherwise facilitate the movement of nuclear weapons on its territory." [9]

Officials in Poland, too, have been expressing an interest in hosting nuclear weapons,[AP News, April 22, 2024, "Finland Tears up Nuclear Weapons Ban in NATO Shift,".]] with Prime Minister Donald Tusk saying that the country seeks "as much auton-

omy as possible" and will "eventually" seek its own weapons. [10]

A Nuclear Energy Connection

Then there are countries like Saudi Arabia that seek nuclear weapons, but through a seemingly more benign route: developing a nuclear power program. Such countries often claim they want nuclear reactors because of interest in developing sustainable energy or solving climate change. [11]

In September 2025, for example, the Saudi Minister of Energy declared that "the Kingdom is moving towards utilizing nuclear energy and its radiation applications for peaceful purposes... including the construction of the first nuclear power plant in the Kingdom to achieve multiple objectives" including "advancing sustainable development." [12]

Although hardly known for its interest in sustainability, the Trump administration has promised "a decades-long, multi-billion-dollar nuclear energy partnership" between the two countries, with the assurance "that all cooperation will be conducted in a manner consistent with strong nonproliferation standards." [13]

But reading the nuclear cooperation agreement signed in July 2026 by U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright and Saudi Minister of Energy Abdulaziz bin Salman, it turns out that the agreement might allow Saudi Arabia to develop the capability to enrich uranium.

The hypocrisy is striking: Iran has developed exactly the same capacity for itself, yet the United States sanctioned and bombed that country. Trump later flipped and his Truth Social post announced that there "will be no enrichment of material." [14]

Saudi Arabia's purported interest in sustainability makes little sense: solar energy has become the cheapest source of electricity, especially in sun-drenched Saudi Arabia. [15]

To understand what else might be motivating the interest in nuclear, one can turn to a March 2018 interview on CBS, when Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Salman pointed to the possibility that Iran might develop a nuclear bomb, and declared Saudi Arabia "will follow suit as soon as possible." [16]

Developing a nuclear bomb "as soon as possible" is very likely the real driver for Saudi interest in nuclear energy. This is a well-trodden path; other countries have produced the wherewithal for a nuclear weapon by first developing the capacity to generate nuclear energy.

India, for example, set up its Atomic Energy Commission in 1948 for "peaceful" purposes but tested its first nuclear weapon in 1974, and then a range of weapons in 1998. [17]

So, too, Saudi Arabia might get closer to possessing the capacity to make nuclear weapons if it were to set up a nuclear program, regardless of where Trump lands on over allowing uranium enrichment.

Iran has become the poster child for this blurry line between nuclear power and nuclear weapons. The United States and Israel have used a potentially specious claim that Iran is developing nuclear weapons under the guise of a civilian nuclear program to justify their pitiless bombardment of that country and its population.

In fact, the White House listed 74 incidents when Donald Trump stated that Iran could not have nuclear weapons. [18] Benjamin Netanyahu can doubtlessly put up an even longer list, with his repeated announcements that Iran was weeks or months away from possessing a bomb, for three decades now. [19]

These atrocities were both ironically and hypocritically carried out by two countries that themselves possess large numbers of nuclear weapons.

Investing in Forever Arsenals

The United States and Israel not only possess nuclear weapons, they are investing immense amounts of resources — financial, material, and intellectual — to maintain or expand their arsenals. So too are the others belonging to the vile group of

countries that possess this most destructive of weapons.

Between them, the nine nuclear-armed states spent close to $119 billion in 2025 on their nuclear arsenals, with the United States leading this perverse list by a wide margin. Its $69.2 billion was over five times China's expenditure of $13.5 billion; the United Kingdom came close behind China at $12.6 billion. [20]

These activities come at the cost of essential social programs aimed at goals like access to affordable health care, which are being gutted in many of these countries.

Profiting from these activities are various corporate entities. A 2025 report by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) lists 24 companies around the world with large contracts to contribute to the production of nuclear weapons, led by Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics "with outstanding contracts with a potential value of at least $31 billion and $24 billion respectively."

Other companies include Airbus, BAE Systems, Bharat Dynamics, Boeing, China Aerospace Science and Technology, Fluor, Honeywell, Jacobs Solutions, L3 Harris, Leonardo, Lockheed Martin, Rolls-Royce, RTX (formerly Raytheon), and Safran. [21]

There is a strong overlap between the companies listed above and the arms manufacturing companies that have "provided Israel with weapons and other military equipment used in its attacks on Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria since October 2023." [22]

The other overlap is between this list of companies involved in nuclear weapons production and companies involved in the nuclear energy industry; entities like Fluor, Jacobs, and Rolls-Royce are in the business of selling nuclear reactor technology and producing nuclear weapons. [23]

In January 2025, for example, Rolls-Royce received a £9 billion contract to support the United Kingdom's nuclear submarines while also being selected by the U.K. government to build small modular nuclear reactors. [24]

Risk of War, and Reactions

Nuclear weapons are not just ways for private companies to profit; their existence automatically gives rise to the possibility that they could be used. During earlier periods of concern about nuclear weapons, use was seen to be more likely a result of accidents or miscalculation. [25]

Today, however, explicit threats to use nuclear weapons to achieve political goals have become commonplace. Russian officials, including Dmitry Medvedev, have threatened nuclear strikes in Ukraine, and Israeli officials, such as Amihai Eliyahu, have suggested using nuclear weapons in Gaza. [26]

Trump has frequently threatened countries like North Korea and Iran. These leaders have already shown a willingness to inflict mass civilian casualties through conventional means. So, it is not inconceivable that one of these days, they might indeed use a nuclear weapon.

One reaction to blatant U.S. aggression has been to explain away, if not advocate for, other countries acquiring nuclear weapons — even among some sections of the left. [27] The argument often rests on the differential treatment meted out to North Korea or China or Russia, by the United States, which is then attributed to these countries possessing nuclear weapons. [28]

After the invasion of Iraq, too, some claimed that had Iraq possessed nuclear weapons, then the United States would not have attacked the country. But are such claims valid?

Except for those who swallow U.S. government propaganda uncritically, it should be clear that the real motivations for invading Iraq or attacking Iran have nothing to do with their nuclear capabilities, but much to do with their location in West Asia and their fossil fuel reserves.

In contrast, North Korea does not possess oil and is in a much quieter part of the globe. So, the ruling elites in the United States have much less motivation to invade North Korea.

It is also impossible to verify the claim that the United States would not have invaded a nuclear-armed Iraq. Political scientist Barry Posen argued after the first Gulf War (1991) that the United States should have prosecuted that war even if Iraq had some limited nuclear capability, it should do so after explicitly warning Iraq of a certain and overwhelming nuclear response to any Iraqi nuclear use. [29]

His reasoning was that the stakes of inaction were too great for the United States. U.S. leaders do listen to people like Posen and may well have attacked a nuclear-armed Iraq if the stakes, as these leaders perceive them, were seen as worth the resulting carnage. [30]

MAD World

There is another historical parallel that some might point to: the absence of war between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, which nuclear weapons advocates attribute to these countries possessing immense nuclear arsenals. (To be sure, the United States and the Soviet Union fought numerous proxy wars — Vietnam and Afghanistan, for example — that killed enormous numbers of people in those countries.)

The presence of these weapons, the argument goes, creates the fear of "mutually assured destruction" and deters these countries from going to war with each other.

This hope has been termed nuclear deterrence. Although nuclear weapons states loudly proclaim their faith in deterrence, by making plans to use these weapons under various contingencies they implicitly admit the possibility that deterrence could fail.

Thus, for example, the United States under Biden explicitly announced its plans to use nuclear weapons under some specific contingencies. [31] One cannot predict when one of these contingencies will come to pass, and when these plans made for using nuclear weapons will indeed be implemented.

As historian E. P. Thompson pointed out more than four decades ago,

"The danger of [nuclear] war arises, not from conscious planning on the part of the elites... War is possible as the outcome of policies initiated by these irresponsible minorities, as the final unforeseen link in a casual chain forged at each stage by the previous choice of some ruling class." [32]

The underlying contradiction was laid out clearly by General Lee Butler, who served as Commander-in-Chief of the United States Strategic Command, who observed: "The goal — the wish, really — might be to prevent nuclear war, but the operational plan had to be to wage war." [33]

These operational plans also allow for countries to threaten another country with nuclear weapons to compel the other to do something the latter might not desire. The most notorious example is the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, widely regarded as the time the world came closest to nuclear war.

Military crises occur with great regularity, even between nuclear weapons states. India and Pakistan have also gone to full-fledged war. One can only credit luck with the world having escaped a nuclear war so far. Or, to the "grace of God", as Lee Butler put it. [34]

When this "grace" runs out, as is bound to happen sooner or later, the destruction would be widespread and unimaginable. The levels of casualties from a possible nuclear war means that challenging the power of nuclear weapon states through military means, namely by other countries acquiring nuclear weapons, can lead to mass death.

For Nuclear Disarmament

What the current state of affairs demands is a collective and peaceful refusal by the peoples of the

world to the continued ability of a few countries to wield the threat of nuclear annihilation. That threat will disappear only if nuclear weapons are abolished — a goal that people on the left should be committed to.

Globally, a majority of people are in favor of eliminating nuclear weapons. One poll conducted in 2024, for example, found that in five key countries — United States, South Africa, Brazil, India, and Indonesia — 69 percent of those polled supported "total nuclear disarmament," and 58 percent viewed nuclear weapons as "a source of insecurity." [35]

There is also a long history of diplomatic efforts aimed at disarmament, starting with the very first resolution of the United Nations in 1946, which called for proposals for "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction."

One key step toward that goal occurred in July 2017, when 122 countries adopted the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. [36]

The treaty prohibits its signatories to, inter alia, develop, produce, test, possess, use, threaten to use, or transfer nuclear weapons. In July 2025, Tonga became the 100th country to accede to the Treaty. [37] The vast majority of the countries around the world have demonstrated their desire to ban nuclear weapons.

But when powerful countries like the United States and Russia have no respect for international law or norms, treaties alone will not achieve the sought-after goal.

The only countervailing power can come from social movements, which have to be intersectional and international. [38] Most important of these is the antiwar movement, and it has to realize that fighting for the abolition of nuclear weapons is essential to peace.

Source: Against the Current September-October 2026, ATC 244.

Climate

Sitting on a time bomb

Phil Hearse · *20 October 2026*

Knowledge and concern about the climate crisis has grown exponentially in the past 25 years. But not among ultra-conservative and fascist political forces such as Donald Trump's MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement in the United States, Alternative for Germany (AfD) and Reform UK in Britain.

In his infamous United Nations speech a year ago, Trump denounced global heating as the "biggest scam in world history." Since his re-election, Trump has withdrawn the US from the Paris Accords, closed offices and programs dealing with climate change, terminated dozens of experts working on global heating and, crucially, withdrawn billions of dollars aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change.

But here is the irony: the US has been the site of hundreds of climate disasters. Among the best-known are Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy and the wildfires that hit Malibu and Paradise in California.

Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy

Hurricane Katrina, in August 2005, was one of the most destructive natural disasters in US history. In New Orleans, the disaster significantly worsened when levees and floodwalls failed, allowing water to flood about 80% of the city. The human consequences were enormous.

More than 1800 people died, while hundreds of thousands were displaced from their homes. Many people could not evacuate before the storm and the disaster exposed major inequalities in income, housing, transport and emergency assistance access. Katrina caused about $108 billion in damages and made hundreds of thousands of homes uninhabitable.

Hurricane Sandy affected the Caribbean and eastern US in October 2012. As it approached the northeast, the storm became extremely large and interacted with other weather systems. New Jersey and New York experienced the most serious impacts.

One of Sandy's greatest dangers was its enormous storm surge. Seawater flooded coastal communities and large parts of New York City, including streets, road tunnels and subway tunnels. Airports were flooded, transport networks were disrupted and about 8.5 million people lost electricity. At least 650,000 homes were damaged or destroyed. Sandy caused 147 direct deaths across the Atlantic basin, including 72 in the mid-Atlantic and northeast.

The storm demonstrated the vulnerability of densely populated coastal areas. Damage was particularly serious as Sandy affected some of the country's most economically important urban areas.

Paradise wildfire

The Paradise wildfire, officially called the Camp Fire, began in northern California on November 8, 2018. Extremely dry vegetation, low humidity and powerful winds allowed the fire to spread at extraordinary speed through Butte County.

The town of Paradise, which had a population of about 26,000, was directly in its path. Residents were ordered to evacuate, but the fire's speed caused severe congestion on the limited roads leading out of town. Paradise was devastated.

The Camp Fire ultimately destroyed more than 18,000 structures and killed at least 85 people, making it California's deadliest and most destructive wildfire. Entire neighbourhoods were reduced to ashes and thousands of residents lost their homes and possessions

The disaster highlighted the vulnerability of communities located near forests and other fire-prone vegetation. California's dry climate creates wildfire risks, but hotter conditions and prolonged drought can dry vegetation further, contributing to severe fires spreading rapidly.

The Camp Fire also raised questions about electricity infrastructure, evacuation planning and building in high-risk areas. Paradise has since become an important example of the challenges involved in rebuilding communities after wildfire disasters.

Malibu wildfire

Southern California experienced a major disaster at the same time as the Camp Fire: the Woolsey Fire. Beginning on November 8, 2018, the fire spread through Los Angeles and Ventura counties before reaching Malibu and the Pacific coast.

The Malibu fire received huge publicity because it affected the property of celebrities such as Miley Cyrus, Gerard Butler, Kim Kardashian and Robin Thicke. Kardashian and partner Kanye West employed a private firefighting company to hold off flames while they fled to another property in LA.

Strong winds and extremely dry vegetation helped drive flames rapidly through the Santa Monica Mountains. About 295,000 people were ordered to evacuate as communities came under threat.

The Woolsey Fire burned about 96,949 acres and destroyed more than 1600 structures. Three people were killed, and many homes in and around Malibu were destroyed or damaged. The fire burned large areas of natural habitat and parkland.

The disasters demonstrated that wildfires are not only an environmental problem but a major social and economic threat. Expanding development in fire-prone landscapes means more people and properties are exposed when fires occur.

Root cause

The increasingly destructive heatwaves, droughts, floods, hurricanes and wildfires in the US are not just "natural phenomena" nor simply the result of global heating. They are the result of an interaction of both, combined with the reckless actions of US capitalism.

Hurricanes are natural phenomena, as are drought, fire and extreme rainfall. But the social catastrophe that follows them is neither wholly natural nor politically neutral. It arises from the interaction between a warming climate and a society organised around private accumulation, fossil-fuel consumption, speculative property development and profound inequalities of wealth and power.

Global heating is changing the physical conditions under which US society operates. At the same time, capitalists continue to construct houses, infrastructure and entire communities in places increasingly exposed to fire, flooding, extreme heat and rising seas.

Profits from development are appropriated privately, while substantial portions of the risks are eventually transferred to the public through firefighting costs, disaster relief, infrastructure reconstruction, subsidised insurance and emergency intervention. What appears after as an unforeseeable natural catastrophe can therefore be understood as the predictable outcome of particular relations between capital, land and the state.

Global heating and extreme weather

Across North America, record high temperatures are increasingly common relative to record lows. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded] that climate change is already contributing to more frequent and intense extreme events across the continent and projects further intensification of heatwaves, extreme storms and wildfire activity.

The relationship with rainfall is somewhat more complicated but equally important. A warmer atmosphere can contain more water vapour, creating the possibility of heavier rain. This does not mean everywhere becomes wetter. Indeed, parts of western and southwestern US are experiencing in-

creased aridity. Climate change can intensify apparently opposite extremes: heavier downpours in some circumstances, more severe drying in others.

Nor does climate change "cause" every hurricane in the simplistic sense sometimes implied in popular discussion. Tropical cyclones existed before industrial capitalism. But warmer oceans, increased atmospheric moisture and rising sea levels alter the environment in which hurricanes occur. Consequently, a storm striking a coastline whose sea level has already risen can produce greater flooding than an otherwise equivalent storm would have in an earlier climatic period.

A Marxist analysis need not exaggerate or simplify the science. Indeed, it benefits from doing precisely the opposite. The point is not that every US disaster can be individually blamed upon global heating. It is that capital accumulation has altered the background climatic system upon which human civilisation depends, changing the probabilities and potential severity of numerous hazards.

Fossil capitalism and climate change

The common terminology of "human-induced climate change" is scientifically correct but socially incomplete. Humanity in the abstract did not industrialise the world through collective democratic decision-making. Fossil-fuel dependence developed within particular systems of production and relations of power.

The industrial capitalism of the 19th century was coal-powered. Oil became central to the automobile, aviation, petrochemical and military economies of the 20th century. Natural gas became another pillar of industrial production, electricity generation and domestic consumption.

Enormous corporations accumulated capital through extracting, processing, transporting and selling these fuels. States constructed roads, airports, suburban infrastructure and military systems around abundant fossil energy.

The climate crisis is therefore inseparable from fossil capitalism: an economic system in which capital accumulation became historically intertwined with fossil energy.

This does not mean ordinary consumers have no environmental impact. US citizens drive cars, heat houses and purchase carbon-intensive commodities. But consumer behaviour occurs within infrastructures inherited from previous rounds of investment.

A worker who must commute 30 miles because affordable housing is distant from employment does not exercise the same power over the climate system as a corporation deciding whether to invest billions in new fossil-fuel production. To treat both as individual "carbon footprints" dissolves radically unequal economic power into an imaginary community of equally responsible consumers.

Capitalism also creates a structural obstacle to adequate climate action. Individual firms must compete, generate returns and protect accumulated investment. Fossil-fuel reserves, refineries, pipelines, power stations and associated infrastructure represent enormous quantities of capital. Rapid decarbonisation threatens to strand some of those assets.

The transition required by climate science consequently confronts powerful owners for whom continued fossil-fuel exploitation is not an ideological abstraction but the basis of profit. The climate crisis reveals a contradiction between the requirements of indefinite capital accumulation and the ecological conditions required for stable human societies.

Wildfires: Where climate and property meet

Wildfire demonstrates this contradiction with unusual clarity. Fire is an ancient ecological process. Many North American ecosystems evolved with periodic burning. Indigenous peoples deliberately used fire to manage landscapes long before European colonisation. It would therefore be absurd to claim that global heating invented wildfire.

What climate change alters is fire weather. Rising temperatures increase evaporative demand, dry vegetation and soils, and can extend periods during which landscapes are combustible. But climate is only one side of the equation. The other is development.

US metropolitan growth has increasingly pushed housing into the wildland-urban interface: landscapes where houses and infrastructure encounter forests, grasslands, chaparral and other combustible vegetation.

This expansion is driven partly by population growth, but also by the political economy of land. Developers purchase peripheral land, obtain planning permission, subdivide it and transform it into a commodity whose value may increase enormously once houses can be constructed upon it. Ecological risk is converted into a property market.

This process generates a remarkable contradiction. The qualities that make such locations commercially attractive — the forest, hillside, canyon, mountain view, privacy or apparently untouched landscape — may be precisely those that increase exposure to wildfire. Nature is simultaneously marketed as an amenity and encountered as a hazard.

Climate change intensifies the contradiction. A development model constructed around historical expectations of fire frequency now operates in a climatic regime in which extreme fire weather is becoming more dangerous in many US western regions. The physical landscape changes, but the imperative to realise value from land continues.

Mike Davis and the political economy of Malibu

Few US intellectuals understood this relationship more than the late historian and urban theorist Mike Davis. In *Ecology of Fear*, Davis deals with the interlinked issues of wildfires and urban expansion.

Long before the present succession of climate, Davis argued Southern California's spectacular disasters revealed the political economy concealed beneath the language of natural calamity. His work provides an exceptionally useful starting point for understanding the US today. Climate change has made Davis's analysis not obsolete but more urgent. [1]

In his celebrated and deliberately provocative chapter, "The Case for Letting Malibu Burn", in *Ecology of Fear* Davis attacked the conventional representation of Southern Californian wildfire as an unpredictable natural tragedy. He documented the long history of fire in the Santa Monica Mountains and emphasised that Malibu's susceptibility to burning was hardly a secret.

Yet expensive residential development repeatedly expanded into this hazardous landscape. Fire destroyed property; public resources were mobilised; houses were rebuilt; development continued.

Davis interpreted this not primarily as individual foolishness but as political economy. Wealthy communities possessed the economic and political capacity to demand extraordinary protection for private property. Firefighting resources, infrastructure, insurance arrangements and disaster assistance helped make settlement possible in places where the underlying ecological risks remained severe.

Davis saw affluent settlements in the hills partly as landscapes of social separation — places whose exclusivity offered distance from the working-class and racially diverse metropolis below. He argued that development in hazardous areas was sustained through various forms of public subsidy and protection.

His argument is sometimes caricatured as saying that wealthy people's houses should simply be allowed to burn. That misses its political purpose. "Letting Malibu burn" was a provocation intended to expose the irrationality of a system that repeatedly socialised the costs of protecting highly valuable private property built within a known fire ecology.

Who benefits? Who carries the risk?

Developers receive profits when land is converted into housing. Landowners receive increased property values. Financial institutions receive mortgage interest. Affluent purchasers obtain desirable homes.

Yet when catastrophe arrives, firefighters, municipal authorities, state agencies and federal disaster programs intervene. Roads must be maintained for evacuation, utilities repaired, emergency shelters opened and ruined infrastructure reconstructed. Private accumulation thereby generates public obligations.

Davis contrasted this lavish protection of valuable hillside property with the hazards experienced by working-class inhabitants of Central LA. Poorer residents might inhabit overcrowded or inadequately maintained buildings where mundane structural fires posed persistent dangers. Their disasters lacked the spectacular imagery of flames sweeping across Malibu hillsides and frequently attracted fewer resources and less political attention.

This is the class geography of disaster.

From wildfires to urban conflagration

Davis's warning has acquired still greater significance as settlements penetrate combustible landscapes. He anticipated the possibility of a "post-suburban fire regime": a situation in which development and changing environmental conditions produced catastrophes exceeding the familiar category of wildland fire.

This concept helps explain why the wildland-urban interface matters so greatly. Once flames or embers enter dense settlements, houses themselves become fuel. Wooden structures, fences, garages, cars, vegetation and other combustible materials can transmit fire through neighbourhoods. What begins as wildfire can become urban conflagration.

Climate change and suburbanisation therefore interact rather than operating as separate causes. Climate change can produce hotter and drier conditions favourable to extreme fire. Property development places more structures within reach of those fires. Infrastructure introduces additional ignition sources. Once communities ignite, the built environment can amplify destruction.

The result is a chain of causation connecting the global atmosphere to the mortgage market.

The class politics of adaptation

Disaster is also profoundly unequal after it occurs.

A wealthy household may possess comprehensive insurance, savings, several vehicles and alternative accommodation. Its members may have flexible employment allowing them to evacuate early.

A poor household may have none of these advantages. Renters may lose possessions without possessing adequate insurance. Low-paid workers may lose wages when businesses close. Homeless people and outdoor workers are exceptionally exposed to extreme heat and smoke.

Even evacuation assumes resources. Instructions to "leave immediately" mean something different to a household with two cars, credit cards and relatives elsewhere than to somebody without a vehicle or enough money for a hotel.

Climate inequality therefore cannot be measured solely by those whose house physically encounters the hazard. Class determines the capacity to anticipate, escape, absorb and recover from catastrophe.

The same principle operates with heat. Air conditioning can transform lethal outside temperatures into an inconvenience, but only for those who can afford it. A construction worker, farm labourer or delivery worker encounters heat as an occupational hazard precisely because their labour must continue under conditions from which wealthier people can retreat.

Capitalist society distributes environmental vulnerability through the labour market and housing market long before the hurricane arrives or the temperature record is broken.

Trumpism and climate denial

Trump's politics represents an unusually aggressive defence of the fossil-fuel economy. Trump has repeatedly attacked climate policies, promoted increased oil and gas exploitation and portrayed environmental regulation as an obstacle to prosperity. In September, for example, he attacked Britain's net-zero policies while urging greater exploitation of North Sea oil and gas.

This is not merely rhetorical climate scepticism. It has been translated into state policy. In February, Trump's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rescinded the 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding and eliminated the federal greenhouse gas emissions standards for highway vehicles that depended upon it. The administration described this as the largest deregulatory action in US history.

The administration's argument should be represented accurately. It maintains that the Clean Air Act does not provide the EPA with the statutory authority claimed for these regulations and argues the regulations impose enormous economic costs without materially affecting global climate change.

A Marxist interpretation, however, asks whose conception of "cost" dominates such calculations.

Environmental regulation imposes visible costs upon particular corporations and consumers today. Climate damage produces costs distributed across society and across decades: destroyed homes, higher insurance premiums, failed crops, damaged infrastructure, firefighting expenditures, heat mortality and disaster reconstruction.

Deregulation therefore appears to "save" money by shifting costs from capital onto society, workers, governments and future generations.

The Trump administration's relaxation of vehicle-efficiency requirements illustrates this conflict. Government estimates associated with the weaker standards indicate lower initial vehicle costs but substantially greater fuel consumption and carbon emissions between now and 2050.

Trumpism consequently does more than deny or minimise climate science. It translates the immediate interests of fossil-fuel production and carbon-intensive accumulation into a populist political language: cheap petrol, consumer freedom, energy dominance and opposition to supposedly elitist environmental regulation.

Its success among sections of the working class cannot simply be dismissed as stupidity. Decades of neoliberal restructuring have made many workers suspicious of policies whose costs they are expected to bear. A badly designed transition can close a refinery, raise household energy costs or eliminate industrial employment while leaving corporate wealth untouched.

The left cannot answer right-wing climate politics simply by demanding sacrifice from ordinary people.

Climate politics and green capitalism

A Marxist climate program must instead confront ownership and class power.

Market mechanisms alone are inadequate when investment decisions controlling energy, transport and housing remain dominated by private profit. Carbon pricing may alter incentives, but a sufficiently rapid transformation requires huge planning and investment: renewable electricity, transmission networks, public transport, building insulation, resilient infrastructure and the managed retreat of development from locations that cannot reasonably be defended.

Such policies immediately raise distributive questions. Who pays? Who owns the new energy infrastructure? What happens to fossil fuel workers? Who decides where housing is constructed? Should developers profit from hazardous land and subsequently transfer disaster costs to the public?

A socialist response insists that decarbonisation cannot be achieved by making poorer households absorb the costs while leaving concentrated wealth intact. Workers leaving fossil industries require

guaranteed employment, retraining, pensions and regional investment.

Public transport and energy-efficient housing need to provide material improvements rather than moral instruction. Adaptation needs to prioritise vulnerable communities rather than simply defending the most expensive property.

This is the substance behind the idea of a just transition. Without redistribution, climate policy can become another form of austerity. With redistribution and democratic planning, decarbonisation can become part of a wider transformation of everyday life.

Disaster capitalism and nature

Karl Marx described capital as possessing an extraordinary drive towards expansion. Competition forces firms to accumulate, innovate and enlarge production. Historically, this produced enormous rises in productive capacity.

But capital treats nature as a free input or waste repository. The atmosphere became, in effect, a free dumping ground for carbon generated by industry. The bill for that historical externalisation is now arriving.

The irony is that capitalism creates new commodities from the crisis it helped produce: private firefighting, air filtration, climate-controlled buildings, insurance products, carbon markets, disaster reconstruction and new adaptation technologies.

Those with sufficient money can purchase more protection while those without experience climate change directly. A society may become simultaneously richer in commodities and less secure ecologically.

Davis's importance lies in understanding this process spatially. Capital does not merely exploit nature; it reorganises landscapes. It determines where factories, roads and suburbs appear, which neighbourhoods receive investment and which populations inhabit hazardous environments. Environmental catastrophe has a geography produced through previous rounds of accumulation.

Paying for the climate crisis

The rising incidence and intensity of extreme weather in the US cannot be understood through meteorology alone. Anthropogenic global heating is altering the climatic background, increasing extreme heat and heavy rainfall and contributing to more dangerous fire weather in substantial parts of North America.

But climate hazards become social disasters through decisions about land, housing, infrastructure and investment. This is where Marxist analysis adds something essential.

The central question is not whether climate change exists. It is who produced the emissions, who profits from the economic system that generated them, who is exposed to the consequences and who will be required to pay for adaptation and reconstruction.

Wildfires make these contradictions dramatically visible. Fossil-fuel combustion contributes to a hotter and, in many western US regions, more fire-prone climate. Property capital simultaneously extends development into combustible landscapes.

Private actors realise profits from development while public institutions assume substantial responsibility for protecting and rebuilding endangered communities. The wealthy generally possess greater resources to escape and recover, while workers and poorer communities absorb disproportionate social consequences.

Trumpism offers one response to this crisis: defend fossil capital, weaken environmental regulation, expand extraction and present continuing carbon-intensive capitalism as economic freedom. It has political power partly because liberal climate politics has too often failed to demonstrate how decarbonisation can improve rather than diminish working-class living standards.

Davis offered a radically different way of seeing the problem. His genius was to look at a burning hillside and see not merely flames and vegetation but class relations, property values, state power and ur-

ban history. The landscape itself contained a history of political choices.

His analysis has become more relevant as the climate warms. What he described in Malibu can increasingly be recognised elsewhere: private development advancing into hazardous territory, enormous resources mobilised after predictable catastrophe, and reconstruction preparing the conditions for another cycle.

The phrase "natural disaster" consequently conceals the most important question. Nature supplies the hurricane, drought, heat or fire, but society determines what stands in its path.

What society for a warming planet?

The climate crisis is therefore ultimately a struggle over what kind of society will inhabit a warming planet.

One possibility is an increasingly fortified capitalism in which wealthy communities purchase protection, insurance retreats from unprofitable territories, public money repeatedly rescues private property and the poor are left increasingly exposed to heat, flood and fire.

Another would treat energy, housing, transport and adaptation as matters of democratic planning rather than opportunities for accumulation.

Global heating has transformed that choice from an abstract ideological dispute into a material necessity. Fires, floods and heatwaves are warnings not merely about atmospheric chemistry but about a social order whose pursuit of endless accumulation is colliding with ecological limits.

Davis's radical insight was that catastrophe exposes the normally hidden organisation of society. In the age of global heating, the US is receiving that lesson with increasing frequency: the climate may produce the hazard, but capitalism determines much of the vulnerability — and class determines who will most likely pay the price.

21 September 2026

Source: **Links**.

ENVIRONMENT

Between floods and droughts – towards an ecosocial transformation of the landscape

GREGOR ZAHN · *20 October 2026*

The summer of 2026 broke all heat records. We have witnessed unprecedented forest fires in Europe and droughts in regions that, until now, had been largely spared. In this context, it is interesting to examine landscapes and society from the perspective of water. [1]

This article, written from a Swiss perspective – the country is considered the "water tower" of Europe – sheds light on the hidden developments behind the increase in extreme weather events and the resulting disasters, what promotes them and what to expect in the future.

The reshaping of the Swiss landscape since the 19th century

In Switzerland, as in all other industrialized countries, humans have completely reshaped the landscapes over the last two centuries, urbanized them and developed agricultural exploitation.

The links and repercussions of these changes on the hydrological regime are less obvious: until the end of the twentieth century, the guiding principle was to drain as much as possible. The draining of marshy areas aimed to create land for agriculture and urbanization. Thus, few agricultural lands on the Swiss Plateau lack a drainage network [2]. Rivers and streams were also straightened to evacuate water more quickly, prevent flooding, and create arable land. Furthermore, the paving of green spaces in urban areas, combined with the sewage system, has led to faster drainage of all rainwater.

The extent of the drainage ditch network in Swiss forests is, however, less well known. These ditches were created with the idea that dry forest areas could be better utilized for intensive forestry. Approximately 95 per cent of Switzerland's wet forests have thus been drained over the last few centuries [3]. Whether the drainage of forest areas has actually led to greater productivity in forest cultivation remains a subject of debate. Nevertheless, the forests have been drained, cleared, and often replaced with monocultures of fast-growing spruce.

Therefore, there is practically no landscape in Switzerland, below the tree line, that has not been reshaped by human activity since the nineteenth century.

Alteration of the natural adaptive capacity of landscapes

Landscape reshaping has profound consequences for the hydrological regime. In the event of heavy rainfall, the rapid flow of water in the downstream flow leads to higher flood peaks, as water from the entire catchment area [4] accumulates more quickly in the valley. Conversely, this means that less water is retained and, consequently, the entire system dries out more rapidly. Our landscape is therefore less resilient to both flood peaks and drought.

This also has significant biological repercussions, as all local animal and plant species have adapted to the initial natural conditions and often struggle to adapt to the altered landscape. The arrival of non-native animal and plant species (neozoans and invasive alien species, collectively known as "neobiota") creates a worrying situation of competition. This competition favours the spread of neobiota , as some plants and animals from other parts of the world are better able to establish themselves in the now dominant conditions and outcompete the previously native species.

Not all invasive spreads of neobiotic organisms are linked to changes in conditions, as some neobiotic organisms could very well have adapted to the conditions that prevailed previously. However, this results in conditions more favourable to the emergence of neobiotic organisms . Resilience decreases. This situation is exacerbated by the establishment of monocultures such as spruce plantations on the Swiss Plateau, mimosa or eucalyptus plantations introduced to the Iberian Peninsula, or North American conifers in Scotland.

Monocultures are far more vulnerable to disruptions in the natural balance because species that would be resistant to emerging phenomena are lacking (or present in insufficient numbers). This can result in vulnerability to fungal infestations or pests, as well as low resilience to floods, drought, forest fires, or storms.

Human-induced landscape transformation has exacerbated the effects of drought and flooding. Even without considering climate catastrophe, it is clear that natural disasters are never solely attributable to meteorological phenomena.

Climate change in Switzerland

Discussions about water must be framed within the context of climate change. On the one hand, Switzerland certainly benefits from a privileged position, possessing greater resources and infrastructure than elsewhere to cope with the climate crisis. Examples include costly flood protection projects, more adapted urban planning (soil de-sealing, higher tree density, optimized building layout to allow for better nighttime cooling, etc.), and the implementation of technical solutions to address heat waves (air conditioning, building insulation, etc.).

Switzerland, however, is located in a region particularly vulnerable to climate change. Statistics from 2025 clearly show that warming in Switzerland is approximately twice the global average [5]. The resulting increase and intensification of floods and droughts affect a territory whose capacity to mitigate these phenomena has been significantly reduced.

Flood protection therefore faces a challenge that is already well-known. However, Switzerland is currently ill-prepared for the growing danger posed by droughts.

The current approach to flood protection and its limitations

Current state principles regarding flood protection measures differ in many respects from those implemented in the past [6]. Instead of seeking to evacuate water as quickly as possible, increasing importance is now given to more comprehensive considerations. The so-called "natural" function of a watercourse close to its natural state is favoured: retaining water and reducing the energy of the current through turbulence and flow diversity. The idea of total protection has been abandoned. Much more attention is paid to what happens in the event of an "overload." In other words, what happens if the flow rate exceeds forecasts or if parts of the protection system fail? Thus, at least in principle, the most robust solution possible is systematically sought, one capable of responding flexibly to exceptional events or overloads [7].

The challenge posed by the sheer number of flood protection programmes required is addressed in two ways. First, a prioritization process is implemented so that flood protection measures are placed where the potential damage is greatest. Second, state regulations govern the implementation of flood protection through various construction projects. A classic example is the requirement to incorporate flood protection measures when constructing new buildings in flood-prone areas.

As a rule, the planning phase of flood prevention projects lasts between five and ten years. Effective flood protection systems require considerable space and have implications for land ownership. This constraint is often offset by generous compensation. However, the fact that the entire watershed of the watercourses should be redesigned to properly

mitigate flood peaks is largely overlooked. Such interference with private property is, however, inconceivable in a capitalist system.

Despite significant adaptations in approach, flood protection remains essentially a treatment of the symptoms. Because many streams have been narrowed, a huge number of rivers have been straightened, and, above all, because of profit-driven real estate development and flawed land-use planning, many buildings have been constructed within potentially floodable areas.Flood protection is an intergenerational challenge that requires rethinking and redesigning the entire landscape.

Drought management

Measures to reduce the effects of droughts require either storing water during rainy periods or shifting water flows during dry periods.

The canton of Zurich, for example, often solves water supply problems during shortages by drawing water from Lake Zurich. Due to its size, the lake is less vulnerable to prolonged droughts. This requires an extensive network of large water pipelines and allows the canton to largely meet the drinking water needs of many localities during periods of drought.

In Switzerland, reservoirs are generally used for electricity generation. In principle, this form of water storage could also be considered to mitigate periods of drought, as is the case in many other countries. It goes without saying that the losses in electricity production—in Switzerland, the majority of energy companies are owned by the cantons and municipalities but operate according to private sector principles—would be strongly contested by their owners. However, dam projects always have significant environmental impacts [8]

The central problem, therefore, lies in the struggle for the remaining available water during periods of drought. This results in a situation of competition between the supply of drinking water to the population, the private use of water by the wealthy (for example, for swimming pools), the irrigation of agricultural land, the water needs for industrial production, the cooling water for nuclear power plants, etc.

This leads to a situation where, in capitalist society, ecological impacts take a back seat during times of crisis: to maintain economic productivity, the environment is sacrificed, which only exacerbates the problem in the long term. Thus, during the hot and dry summer of 2026, bourgeois circles are calling for the capture of previously untapped springs in the Swiss Alps to combat water scarcity. However, this pristine natural environment surrounding the springs is one of the rarest and most important to preserve in Switzerland, as almost all springs are tapped (well over 90 per cent of the springs on the Swiss Plateau are tapped or altered). These environments are home to rare and endangered species that have adapted to the specific conditions of groundwater flow.

Just as with flood events, the effects of droughts impact a landscape whose resilience has been weakened over centuries. The irrigation of drained farmland clearly illustrates that our water management practices are unsustainable.

The "sponge city" as a solution?

In recent years, the concept of the sponge city has gained increasing popularity. In cities, this principle seems to have worked remarkably well. It involves retaining water, promoting infiltration, mitigating peak flows, and, particularly through evapotranspiration from trees, achieving a local reduction in temperature.

But if the sponge city principle already seems like a drop in the ocean, the same is even more true for the sponge landscape concept. The principles are sound and important, and they run counter to historical drainage practices. The idea is to retain water, allow it to infiltrate, and replenish the water table. This helps mitigate runoff peaks, reduce soil erosion on farmland, and promote biodiversity. Overall, this approach improves landscape resilience. Replenishing groundwater is particularly

important because groundwater flows much more slowly and is significantly colder than in surface watercourses. Thus, during periods of heat and drought, it can, with a certain time lag, bring fresh water to downstream surface watercourses, thereby improving both water availability and temperature during droughts.

The challenge lies in implementation. The only easily achievable measures are small-scale, do not significantly affect other areas, and therefore do not conflict with conventional agricultural and forestry production. They thus primarily concern state-owned land. However, for the system to truly function and produce measurable effects, large-scale measures and interventions on private land are necessary. We are therefore once again faced with the historic and long-term task of landscape reshaping.

Role of the capitalist mode of production

Not all water-related problems are attributable to the capitalist mode of production. For example, land drainage began even before the advent of capitalism. However, it is the capitalist mode of production that has accelerated widespread land desiccation. The optimization of food production, which aims not for maximum yield per unit area but for maximum yield relative to the effort expended, has led to the situation mentioned above, in which there is practically no agricultural land without a drainage network on the Swiss Plateau. The drainage of forested areas also dates back to the twentieth century, often in the form of job creation programmes during and after the World Wars. The capitalist logic of optimization is therefore omnipresent in this process of landscape transformation.

This logic hinders the restoration of a more resilient landscape. Conventional agribusiness is incompatible with a sponge-like landscape. The long-term effects of water retention manifest over periods far too long to be of interest to this profit-driven, capitalist production. Sustainable water management is incompatible with a system that prioritizes profit over human well-being and environmental preservation.

Conclusions for our activism

Landscape transformation must be an essential component of an ecosocialist alternative to the capitalist catastrophe. Without it, society is far too vulnerable to natural disasters. Within a capitalist system, it cannot be implemented on the scale necessary to protect all of society—and not just the wealthy. At the same time, this transformation involves combining a multitude of elements and mechanisms that cannot be implemented overnight. A complete overhaul of agricultural production, for example, is necessary: it must be freed from the profit motive and, therefore, will require more labour.

Given the time lag between the triggers and their effects on climate change, this observation leads us to an extremely interesting question for determining the priorities of our political intervention: we are currently experiencing the consequences of phenomena that, in some cases, were triggered decades ago. The capitalist system is incapable of solving these problems; on the contrary, it is responsible for a large part of the dramatic consequences generated by these new catastrophic weather conditions [9]. This is why we must move beyond the capitalist system and develop an ecosocialist alternative.

But it's been a long time since "five minutes to midnight." We are faced with this unpleasant reality: the necessary global revolution is not imminent. The example of the necessary reorganization of the landscape also clearly shows that, even if a global revolution had already taken place, we could not prevent all disasters. The scale of the tasks required to address natural hazards is simply too great.

Our role is not limited to defending the need for an ecosocialist revolution and proposing credible ways to achieve a socialist break with capitalism.

We must also prepare for the fact that the effects of climate change will become apparent and can no longer be entirely avoided. This should lead to a

modest but significant shift in our argument: solidarity and mutual aid in the face of disasters are becoming increasingly important if we want to minimize the effects of the coming climate cataclysm. We are in a position to promote this perspective because it is in solidarity-based resistance that we simultaneously discover the seeds of an alternative society. Left-wing organizations must form the framework upon which a solidarity-based approach to the crises to come can be built.

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Obituary

A Working-Class Marxist Who Faced the Apocalypse

Duncan Chapel · *11 October 2026*

Alan Thornett, trade unionist and socialist, born 15 June 1937, died 9 October 2026.

Alan Thornett, who has died aged 89, was the best-known militant in the British car industry during the decade when the industry settled the fate of British trade unionism. He spent the next forty years explaining, with names and dates, why that fight was lost and why it need not have been. He never stopped writing. His last article appeared in September 2026, on a Labour government's energy policy. He died in Oxford on 9 October 2026.

Alan was born on 15 June 1937, near Oxford. He worked four years as a farm labourer and served three in the army. In the summer of 1959, he started at the Morris Motors plant in Cowley, driving a forklift truck in the South Works to feed the track for the new Mini. The same year he joined the Communist Party. He left it in 1964. By then he had a shop steward's card, held from 1963, representing the lorry drivers who moved cars and components around the site. In 1967 he became the TGWU's deputy convenor in the plant, and he chaired both the Joint Shop Stewards Committee and the union's 5/55 branch.

Eddie Coles, a friend of the same age, came the same road from the farms, through the air force rather than the army, and started on the Cowley tracks that same summer. When Eddie died in 2002, Alan wrote his obituary. Eddie never held a union post above shop steward, and Alan's verdict was that he and others like him "were the bedrock of the trade union movement in the plant". That bedrock was a key aspect of what Alan spent his life defending; our movement talks a great deal about working-class leadership and produces it rarely. Most of the left's writers and theorists, then and now, came through universities. Alan came to politics from a farm and an army barracks, and he went to work on the farm at about fifteen. Everything he knew about Marxism and the economics of the car industry he taught himself, and decades later he did the same with Earth sciences. He ended up writing four books and several hundred articles. The habit that made him a good steward, having the facts and the figures before the meeting started, is the same habit that made him a good writer.

Cowley car plant

Cowley was one of the most militant plants in Britain. Unionisation came late and hard. By the end of the 1960s the plant averaged more than three hundred stoppages a year, and it struck against both Harold Wilson's *In Place of Strife* and Edward Heath's *Industrial Relations Act*. In *Militant Years*) Alan is clear that the workers on the line built that movement themselves. He is just as clear about who set out to take it apart. The company, of course, but also the full-time officials of his own union. Stewards elected on the track answered to the people working beside them. The officials answered to the union machine, and for most of the decade they worked with management to break the stewards' organisation. Around 1974 an unnamed *Sunday Times* reporter decided, "for no apparent reason", as *Socialist Press* put it, to call Alan "The Mole". The name went round Fleet Street.

What the stewards built at Cowley was, in Alan's description, a form of workers' control inside the plant. The clearest example came in the winter of 1971. Management wanted to bring in work study under the new Measured Day Work system, with industrial engineers timing every job on the track. Whenever the engineers appeared, the line

stopped. Within days, the new plant manager, John Symonds, conceded what Alan calls in *Militant Years* (2010 a breakthrough unique in the car industry. No job could be timed or changed without the stewards' agreement, and until a final deal was reached, they held a veto. It was called mutuality. In plain terms, the pace of work on the track was negotiated with the people doing it, not imposed on them. A few weeks later, in January 1972, the same stewards' committee voted to block the movement of coal inside the plant in support of the miners, knowing that it would stop the North Works.

I was once told that Cowley stewards on a picket line in a long hot summer put in a claim for the cost of their sun cream. It may be an urban myth. But the point it makes is not a myth: before Thatcher, workers' self-organisation was sometimes strong enough that a claim like that sounded winnable.

For ten years Alan was a member of Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League and then its successor, the Workers Revolutionary Party. In 1974 he wrote an opposition document inside the WRP. It argued for a return to the method of the Transitional Programme. Concretely, it said the party should put demands on the left Labour MPs, so that their refusal to fight the Wilson government would be exposed in front of the people who had voted for them. On 24 November 1974, at a Western Area aggregate meeting, Healy challenged Alan to answer a series of questions on the degeneration of the WRP. Alan asked permission to answer them in a second document. First thing the next morning, Healy convened the Control Commission. It overturned a decision the Central Committee had taken only two days earlier and expelled him forthwith. At the beginning of December, about two hundred members who supported the document, or were suspected of doing so, followed him out, and the WRP's organisation in Oxford, Reading and Swindon was wound up. In the same year the TGWU's Midlands region split the 5/55 branch that was Alan's base and removed him as deputy convenor. The expelled comrades founded the Workers Socialist League on 19 October 1975, with *Socialist Press* as its paper. By December 1977 the left had won back the leadership of the reconstituted Cowley branch.

The next five years were a war of attrition. In the plant's union elections of January 1976, seven national dailies and three television networks campaigned against him, and the company let it be known that it would refuse to recognise him if he won. The right-wing slate took the election, and Alan came tenth of thirty-four, with 526 votes. British Leyland went on refusing, year after year, to recognise him as deputy convenor, and the union held inquiries and threatened to put him out. The Communist Party, in partnership with the TGWU officials, left the witch hunt unreported. Derek Robinson, the Communist convenor at Longbridge, was sacked by Michael Edwardes in 1979 after four years of selling worker participation to the Leyland stewards. Alan had opposed that policy throughout. He wrote Robinson's obituary in 2017, and he did not pretend the argument between them had never happened. Alan himself was sacked on 17 November 1982, nominally for failing to renew a heavy goods licence. In fact, as he argued in print within days, it was a strategic decision to clear the plant before a new model went into production.

Much of what he wrote in those years did not carry his name. A paper short of hands needs one writer to carry several items in an issue, so Alan wrote as Bill Peters in *Socialist Press* and then in *Socialist Organiser*, the paper of the WSL's fusion with the International-Communist League from 1981 to 1984. (Decades later, writing on Brexit, he did the same as Alan Davies.) Some of the best 'Peters' pieces report his own victimisation in the third person, because he was the person in the plant who had the information. In 1983 he wrote a five-part series on the Japanese car industry, which began with a visit to Toyota's Takaoka plant and set it beside Cowley. Lifetime employment and the company union, he showed, rested on the smashing of Japan's independent unions after the war. The Japanese model was not a stage of technology. It was a defeat that had been exported. This was in-

ternationalism of a practical kind: go and look, then tell Cowley what you saw.

He spent the miners' strike without a workplace and without a vote, writing in *Socialist Viewpoint*, launched in the autumn of 1984. His argument then, held for the rest of his life, was that the government had no capacity to take on another major union at the same time as the NUM. Every route to a second front was open at some point in the year. The unions' leaderships declined each of them. In December 1985, he identified the story the movement was already telling itself: that the strike had been wrong to fight, and that compromise had been right all along. He spent the next decade arguing against it. *Inside Cowley* (1998), with a foreword by Ken Loach, set out the 1970s in detail. The Social Contract was the deal under which the unions held down wage claims in return for promises from the Labour government of 1974–79. The industrial relations historian John McIlroy, reviewing the book, found that it showed how enforcing that deal had softened up workplace trade unionism for the offensive of the 1980s.

In May 1987 *Socialist Viewpoint* merged with *International*, the journal of the International Socialist Group, to form *Socialist Outlook*. From then on Alan was a leader of the British section of the Fourth International. He was elected to the International's leading body, the International Committee. His reports from its meetings and congresses, among them the 2010 world congress at which the International declared itself ecosocialist, were often the only account British readers got. He had been inside Healy's version of an international and knew what it did to its sections. When Healy died in 1990, Alan wrote the obituary, and he made the case historically rather than personally, which was a harder thing to do. He allowed himself one line of irony : by the 1980s Healy had done "more to discredit the Trotskyist movement, and the left in general than anyone else claiming to be a part of it", and he added, "despite other strong contenders for that distinction".

I worked with Alan day to day in the 1990s on the staff of *Socialist Outlook*, when he already had decades of experience as one of the country's most respected revolutionary leaders. Our organisation was vibrant but fractious, grappling with the closure of historical cycles; the dissolution of the USSR; the Clause 4 defeat of the Labour left; and the definitive victory of neoliberalism. That time marked the transition from a Europe in which different economic futures were still openly contested to one in which market discipline, fiscal restraint and global integration increasingly appeared as the only realistic future once the labour bureaucracy had effectively condemned the working class in many countries to a long defensive struggle. Despite his frustrations with how well the national and international interventions of Marxist groups responded to this shift, Alan rose to the struggle both as a political and organisational leader.

When the war came to Bosnia, he threw himself into solidarity. After a bruising attempt at working with the remnants of the Workers' Revolutionary Party in Workers' Aid for Bosnia, International Workers Aid (IWA), constituted at Manchester in the autumn of 1993 to take the labour movement's solidarity to the multi-ethnic resistance. He spent the next years reporting on convoys trying to get lorries through to Tuzla: Alan actually drove trucks to Tuzla several times, and his role was highlighted in *Solidarity is More than a Slogan*, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation book about IWA.

He was building broad parties long before the phrase was fashionable, and he never pretended it was easy. He worked in the Socialist Alliance, helped found Respect in 2004 and fought its split in 2007, and argued for Left Unity after that. He was a founder of Socialist Resistance and then of Anticapitalist Resistance. His reasoning was always rooted in class. The defeats of the 1980s, he wrote in 2000, were what made British politics unlike anywhere else in Europe. In 2008 he put the case that a party to the left of Labour was part of regenerating the unions, not a substitute for it. Uniting the left was a means to that end.

Alan wrote as he talked, plainly. The facts came in date order with the ballot figures attached, and where another writer would reach for a flourish he put an aside in brackets. He was an organiser, not a theorist, and every piece ended on what had to be done next. Above all he was fair to the facts, even when the left's reflex ran the other way. In 2009, he opposed the 'British jobs for British workers' approach of unions (and which of the left) at the Lindsey Oil refinery, opposing skilled workers from Italy. After the defeat at Grangemouth in 2013, much of the far left was denouncing Len McCluskey. Alan set out the evidence that the stewards had recommended acceptance and the workforce had voted for it. He granted that the union leaders were responsible for the state of the unions. Then he wrote: "Denouncing McCluskey, however, irrespective of the circumstances or the facts, does not advance the struggle to regenerate the unions very much."

Alan had an immediate reaction to David Cameron's plan for a Brexit referendum which he saw, presciently, as likely to lead to a carnival of reaction. He successfully convinced many on the British left that, despite traditional opposition to the EU's neoliberalism, that was not the occasion or way to leave it. He assembled the arguments in a powerful book, *The European Union and the Referendum: For a critical 'in' vote to oppose xenophobia*.

Ecosocialism

Ecology became the main subject of his last twenty years, and he got there earlier than most of the British far left. In February 2020 he wrote a preface for the Chinese translation of Militant Years, and in it he did something few veterans do. He named the one part of the Cowley record he would not defend. The stewards had the strength and the influence to make people take the ecological crisis seriously, and like the rest of the union movement, they never used it. He had changed his mind over the previous twenty years, he wrote, because there is no improving workers' conditions on a planet that is dying, and no building a socialist future on one.

He reported on the Fourth International's 2010 congress when it declared itself ecosocialist, noting the role of comrades from Latin America and in particular from the Philippines in understanding the centrality of environmental questions.. In 2013, as Left Unity was taking shape, he argued that a new left party must be both democratic and ecological from the start. He read the Earth-system scientists and explained them for socialists: in 2016 he wrote about the Anthropocene Working Group's case for a new geological epoch, and why the left should care. *Facing the Apocalypse: Arguments for Ecosocialism* (Resistance Books, 2019) started from the left's "bleak" record on the environment. It set out planetary boundaries, water, pollution and the sixth extinction, and it traced the ecological thread in Marx, Engels, William Morris and Edward Carpenter. It was launched at meetings from Edinburgh to Waltham Forest. As Covid-19 spread in 2020, he argued that pandemics were part of the ecological crisis and not something running alongside it. Ian Parker called him the David Attenborough of the revolutionary left. The line stuck because it caught something real: he made the science plain for people who had never read it.

He wrote for *Anticapitalist Resistance* on the climate until weeks before his death, and he treated it as a class question. Who would pay for the transition, and who would have to be made to concede it? He defended the electric car against comrades who called it a technical fix, and he argued that the left should contest the COP process rather than boycott it. His most repeated line was that "nothing can be built on a dead planet". The point he pressed hardest was a simple one. A movement that cannot force change under capitalism will not be capable of overthrowing it.

Speaking in London in February 1987, a week after the death of the Argentinian Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno, Alan addressed a room full of currents that had spent decades expelling one another. He said of the man being honoured: "He did not have

the whole answer and none of us have the whole answer." He would not want more claimed for himself than that. What he had was the habit of writing it down in the week it happened, with the names in. The record is there, and it is worth reading: some 371 of his pieces, from 1976 to 2026, are already collected at thornett.redmole.org, with translations and a link to his own blog.

His papers for 1951 to 1997 are held at the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick (MSS.391).

10 october 2026

Source: redmole.org.

Strategy

Workers will fight for their self-interest

Kim Moody · *7 October 2026*

Kim Moody assesses some recent writings and interview by Catalyst editor and podcaster Professor Vivek Chibber on state planning, market socialism and the transition to socialism. Moody argues that Chibber misidentifies the roots of the contradictions that led to the fall of the Soviet Union and other eastern European states. Chibber's argument in favor of market socialism not only rests on a mistaken analysis but leads to a mistaken downplaying of the necessity of a revolutionary rupture in the transition to socialism. A mistake with deep and tragic roots in the socialist movement. [1]

There aren't very many Marxists around today who would defend central planning as practiced in the Soviet Union from the late 1920s through the 1980s. But there are many who still think some form of central planning is essential to socialism. Marxist Sociology Professor, Catalyst editor and podcaster Vivek Chibber isn't one of them. In an aptly titled recent interview, "Socialism Has a Future. Central Planning Doesn't", he explained his position.

Chibber's critique is based on the top-down, bureaucratic planning as it was practiced in the Soviet Union. As he notes, aside from its clones in Eastern Europe, North Korea, and, for a time China, there is no other actual existing model of central planning to examine. His argument is complex but boils down to the proposition that in an economy of any significant size where there is no market there are simply too many materials, inputs, and products for any commission or central authority to allocate efficiently. Only a competitive market could do this, according to Chibber. Hence misallocation, breakdowns, waste, poor products, wrong incentives, and the inevitable accumulation of these problems lead to a crisis of the system. No doubt this pretty much describes what actually happened in the Soviet Union and its satellites.

Chibber argues that these are unavoidable features of any centrally planned economy. Before we accept this, and with it the notion that only "market socialism" provides a workable model for the future socialist society we seek, we need to look more closely into the Soviet model and the society in which it played out. What is most glaringly absent in Chibber's general description of the Russian model is the social reality of the Soviet Union from the late 1920s to the bitter end—above all the question of social class. This is all the more remarkable because Chibber is an ardent advocate of the almost exclusive centrality of "class analysis" when it comes to contemporary politics.

Socialism is the rule of the working class. Planning is an instrument of the democratic workers' state for organizing production for human need under its collective political and social rule and the transition to a classless society. While the Soviet Union promoted itself as socialist and in the transition to a classless society, it was anything but. It was, in fact, a highly stratified and bureaucratized society.

By the late 1930s anti-Stalinist Marxists began to question whether the USSR was still any sort of workers' state, degenerated, deformed or otherwise. Many, mostly in the Trotskyist tradition, though not Trotsky himself, concluded that since there was no longer even a shred of workers' democracy or the right to dissent, to organize for change, or form independent unions, much less to exert influence on the state's economic priorities, that the bureaucracy that controlled the state was in fact a new ruling class. This bureaucracy controlled the means of production and collectively hired and directed the Soviet workforce. Some

called it state capitalism (C.L.R. James, Tony Cliff) some bureaucratic collectivist or state collectivist (Joseph Carter, Max Shachtman, Hal Draper, Big Flame). Like good Marxists, they fiercely debated these differences, but all saw Russia and its offsprings as class societies.

This had enormous implications. For one, this new ruling class won and maintained its class position and power through the most ruthless means. Workers' democracy was suppressed, no party other than the ruling Communist Party was permitted, no factions within the party were allowed, no free press, or rights to assembly, no independent unions. The potential penalty for active dissent was forced labor, the Gulag, or the firing squad. It was, in a real sense, a totalitarian society.

Chibber admits its "authoritarian" nature made things worse but insists it was not a basic cause, which was the lack of competition. In contrast, as Hal Draper wrote when the Soviet Union was at the peak of its power and influence in the early 1950s:

> *The Stalinist state has an economic plan. Like everything else in this totalitarian structure, it is a plan devised, imposed and enforced from above, bureaucratically. But no bureaucratic commission can itself plan such a labyrinth of social processes. Such a plan must be constantly checked from below, corrected from below; it must depend on initiative and responsibility below; it must be self-correcting through the give-and-take of democratic planning between the lower and upper echelons on every level.*

And these were just what it lacked. Note that Draper wasn't just talking about the millions of materials to be allocated to thousands of enterprises but the social processes between the various levels of planning: the central commission (GOSPLAN), regional commissions, industry, enterprise, the people who ran or worked for them, and the role of the party at every point. Of course, there was feedback between various levels, but as Chibber points out almost everyone lied about shortages, resources, profits, etc. It wasn't lack of competition that led to misallocations and lies, it was the repressive state, and the culture of the society as a whole, in which failure or criticism were seen as "sabotage" with serious punishment possible. This was combined, as we shall see below, with the conflicting interests of the different layers of Soviet society. Debates over inefficiencies and reforms such as those Chibber mentions took place within the central party bureaucracy aided by loyal academics and technocrats. The workers had no say in any of it.

Trotsky recognized this in 1932, at the end of Stalin's first Five Year Plan:

> *The only prerogative which [the bureaucracy] ultimately left to the workers was the right to exceed production limits. Any attempt to influence economic management from below is immediately described as a right or a left deviation, that is, practically made a capital offence. The bureaucratic upper crust in the last analysis, has pronounced itself infallible in the sphere of socialist planning…. Thus the basic mechanism of socialist construction—the adaptable and elastic system of **Soviet democracy**—was liquidated [Emphasis in original.]*

Before going further into the implications of Stalinist society's class structure, it is necessary to look more closely at how the planning system worked.

Things, prices, money and conflicting class interests

The Five Year Plan began with a census of production and materials based on information from existing workplaces. [2] Although it was based on actual material things, the planners did not attempt to allocate each and every item to a workplace or enterprise. Allocation was done with prices and money. Each item, whether raw materials, machinery, parts, energy, etc. was given a price based on cost plus an average profit. These were not market prices, however, since they were seldom adjusted for changes in demand or technology. Nevertheless, they served to aggregate and direct millions of

items. Aggregates were adjusted at the regional and industry level. To meet the planned targets, enterprises purchased their inputs from one another up and down their supply chains at the assigned prices.

While the state allocated resources for new investment, the national, regional, and industry planning centers did not distribute physical items themselves but tracked them in monetary terms. Targets (often missed) were adjusted annually. The principle of management bonuses tied to profitability of enterprises as an incentive to reduce costs was introduced as early as 1935, while the so-called Liberman reforms of the 1960s made enterprise profits the measure of performance. Each enterprise had a line of credit and could take loans from the State Bank in order to expand and/or adjust for shortages or bottlenecks. Some enterprises were even shaped by U.S. industry. As Victor Reuther recounts from his time in Russia, Ford engineers helped shape the giant Gorky Car works along the lines of Ford's River Rouge complex, using the latest technology, while other U.S. giants such as General Electric, RCA, DuPont, and Westinghouse concluded technical and trade agreements with the Soviet government in the early 1930s. [3] Stalin, apparently, was not averse to new capitalist technology. Western inputs, though marginal, continued during the war with the lend lease program and afterward under "turnkey" projects such as a Fiat built auto plant in the 1960s. In the early days of the Soviet Union, workers often pushed themselves to help make targets, but that did not last as living standards stagnated and party-led management did the pushing.

There were various contradictions in this system. One lay in the conflicting interests between the enterprise managers and their workers, with managers receiving as much as four times the incomes of workers via bonuses. Another was that between the enterprises (and hence workers) and the bureaucratic state ruling class. According to a study by the National Bureau of Economic Research, cited above, to sustain and expand the state, on which the power and higher standard of living of the ruling class rested, 90 percent of state budget receipts were obtained from these enterprises. [4] There was also a sales tax on consumer goods and some capital items, known as a "turnover" tax which was a form of regressive taxation.

But it was the expropriation of the profits from the enterprises -profits which came from the exploitation of the workers – that funded the state and its bureaucracy. The state budget grew by four times from 1950 to 1971, even as the economy slowed down. While Soviet enterprises could not go bankrupt, they were under pressure and incentivised via manager bonuses to produce increased surpluses to fund the state's growth. This meant that enterprise managers were encouraged both to push the workers to create more profit, leading to poor working conditions, and to hoard resources in order to meet performance and bonus targets. Hence there were incentives for managers to both lie about their enterprises and to misallocate resources.

The contradictions in the Stalinist system of planning were most thoroughly analyzed in the mid-1960s by Polish Marxists Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski (henceforth K&M), who spent a number of years in prison for their efforts. [5] In their view "the central political bureaucracy is the ruling class" by virtue of its "exclusive command" of the means of production and the fact that "it buys the labor of the working class" collectively appropriates the surplus produced by the workers "in order to strengthen and expand its rule over production and society." As we saw above, the central political bureaucracy rules collectively on the basis of the surplus it extracts from the workers in the enterprises that fund the power of the state. In practice this meant the expansion of what K&M call Department A, the production of the means of production at the expense of Department B, the production of consumer goods, a distinction similar to Marx's division between Department I and Department II developed in volume II of *Capital*.

Evidence of this is that both Western and Soviet estimates for the relative growth of capital (K) and la-

bor (L) inputs for the 1950s and 1960s show that capital inputs grew between seven and nine times more than that of labor inputs over that period. [6] Figures taken from Soviet sources also show that the growth rate of "Output of Production Means (Group A)" increased faster than that for "Output of Consumer Goods (Group B)" almost every year throughout the 1950s, 1960, and 1970s. Only as Soviet rulers desperately tried to curry favor with the workers, as the system's crisis increased in the late 1980s, did consumer goods output grow slightly faster as the regime approached collapse. [7]

As Chibber pointed out, the state provided or subsidized some aspects of working-class subsistence—healthcare, basic education, and to some extent childcare and housing. The overall living standards rose from the still largely peasant economy of the 1920s to an industrial economy of the post-war period. But for the working class living standards grew relatively slowly, well behind those in Western industrial countries and those of the bureaucracy and the new ruling class—as Russian workers could plainly see. The provision of most consumer goods, and hence worker living standards, depended on their production in Department B and that was seen by the bureaucracy as a cost that undermined the production of the means of production that allowed for the growth of the economy, the state, and the international and domestic power of the central political bureaucracy. This included not only capital goods and raw materials, but the nation's massive military. It also underlies the bureaucracy's penchant for huge infrastructure projects, many of which were famously wasteful or never completed: highways that ended in the middle of nowhere, bridges that failed to cross the river, and so on. Despite the outcome, the larger the project, the more income and influence for the planners and managers. This meant a perpetual constraint on the growth of the living standards of the working-class majority. Increases in effort or nominal wages made no difference since consumer production in Department B remained relatively limited and store shelves empty.

But it also meant an increasing disproportion, indeed a contradiction, between the growing means of production and relatively slower output for consumption, that led to overproduction and underutilization of the means of production and hence waste and the crisis of slower growth. As K&M put it, "The common cause of the non-utilization of productive capacity and of accumulation of unneeded reserves is the general inadaptation of production to needs (emphasis in original)." As they summarized it: "it is a contradiction between class goals of production and consumption, and it results from existing conditions, not from mismanagement." On the basis of this contradiction, even in the mid-1960s over two decades before the collapse of the system, K&M predicted the crisis. They wrote of this disproportion: "Without eliminating it, without changing the goal of production and the conditions of production as a whole, it will be impossible to overcome the ever growing crisis." [8]

Banned from striking or organizing genuine unions, fighting politically, or in any way influencing the functioning of the enterprise, much less the direction of resources under Stalinist planning, the working classes of Russia and its associated Eastern European nations turned to their weapon of last resort—the withdrawal of cooperation and efficiency. That is, the withholding of effort and the tacit skills and knowledge production workers everywhere possess. Those are the skills and knowhow that Frederick Taylor attempted to shift from the workers to management by breaking down tasks and offering incentives, that Elton Mayo and the human relations school sought to manipulate with changes in lighting and other conditions, and that lean production's "constant improvement" (Kaizen) through teamwork tried to extract from the workers. [9] Those skills and knowledge, along with extra effort, were withheld from the planners, bureaucrats, and managers of Stalinist central planning. As K&M point out, "The worker tries to lower efficiency and hides the reserves in his sector to delay the changes in norms;

he makes a product of inferior quality in order to meet the norms more easily." [10]

Another form of worker dissatisfaction and/or resistance in the Soviet Union was the relatively high rate of labor turnover. In theory, the Soviet Union maintained full employment at all times. In reality, there was significant labor turnover due largely to job dissatisfaction. Measured as only voluntary quits and firings in official figures (yes, workers could be fired) from 1950 to 1970, turnover in industry averaged 20 percent, while in construction it ran in the mid-30s. Workers left jobs due to poor working conditions or to seek higher wages elsewhere. This turnover was cited by Soviet sources as one of the causes of low productivity. This figure did not include workers assigned to other jobs or regions by the state, those who left to care for children, enrollment in studies, etc. Total "separations" were much higher. [11]

The consequence of these forms of resistance was an ever-decreasing rate of productivity, along with poor quality, and missed goals throughout the system that undermined planning targets, delivery of materials, the profits meant to measure performance, and innovation, further creating shortages and other problems. This most basic resistance was expressed in the well-known Russian workers' joke of the 1960s through the 1980s, that "They pretend to pay us and we pretend to work." In other words, it wasn't just (or even) the lack of market competition that led to inefficiency and crisis, but the suppression of democratic norms, on the one hand, and the stagnation of working-class living standards that resulted from the bureaucracy's production goals, on the other.
It wasn't just (or even) the lack of market competition that led to inefficiency and crisis, but the suppression of democratic norms, on the one hand, and the stagnation of working-class living standards that resulted from the bureaucracy's production goals, on the other.

The irony here is that in the Stalinist system, the workers and public in general were paid in money and bought consumer goods with that money—like a market—but at the planners' prices and within the constraints of Department B production. This led K&M to argue at one point that the market for needs should determine the output of consumer production. One might interpret this as advocating market socialism before the idea was common or simply that the goals of planning needed to begin with an assessment of production for needs as K&M did. In no way did they reject central planning. In their view, a democratic workers' state "will set goals of social production, decide on the sharing and use of the national income, hence define the size and purpose of investments, the size and disbursement of expenditures for social benefits, health services, education, science and culture, the amount for the power apparatus and its current tasks." Since such decisions "can only be made centrally" this requires a fully democratic multi-party system with workers councils and independent unions. [12] That is, central planning by the workers' democratic state.

Certainly, in a workers' democracy that must support any version of socialism in which workers possess the freedom and rights to organize economically and politically, complain, suggest, and produce for need rather than the priorities of an exploiting upper class, they will be motivated to use their skills and knowledge in the cooperative and collective pursuit of raising the living standards of the masses with whom they live and work. Workers will have a direct interest in pointing out the inefficiencies, blockages, and problems that will arise with central planning and have the power to correct them over time. They will be able to innovate for their own advancement. Few of those socialists who give thought to these questions imagine that democratic planning will emerge overnight in one stroke or reject out of hand that elements of the market might play a role in the transition to socialist planning. But to rule out central (or decentralized) planning altogether is to throw out the socialist baby with the Stalinist bathwater.

Market Socialism: An Oxymoron?

In another interview published in *Jacobin*, Chibber lays out his arguments for what he sees as the only viable alternative to a planned economy: market socialism. His vision of this, as yet untried, version of socialism is one in which enterprises are state- or worker-owned, hence no capitalists, the market distributes resources, and an elaborate welfare state provides a decent standard of living and safety net for all, including the inevitable losers in market competition. Rather than attempting to pick apart Chibber's description of and detailed arguments for market socialism, I want to put some admittedly rhetorical questions to Chibber or any defenders of this version of socialism.

Chibber's basic argument for market socialism as opposed to a planned economy goes like this:

> *This is the key thing, and the reason you want market socialism. The biggest failure of the planned economies was the inability to innovate, and the absence of innovation, efficiency, dynamism. The whole motivation to move toward a market socialist model is to give managers of firms, producers, an incentive to consistently innovate. And that incentive comes from competition.*

That is quite an assumption-loaded statement about the incentives for socialism, not to mention about human nature or desires. Is it really true that only competition can spur innovation? Isn't the whole economically competitive ethos of capitalism and, indeed, capitalism itself, an historically specific and limited development? In fact, isn't it mainly the capitalists and their hangers-on who are so economically competitive? On the other hand, isn't it the case that workers given the opportunity to form unions in their defense will struggle, as J.R. Commons put it, "to take labor out of competition." Doesn't even our weak labor movement attempt to lessen competition through collective organization (i.e., cooperation), bargaining, and regulatory legislation to limit capital's competitive drive?

Chibber's abstract version of competition with its price signals overlooks the fact that competition between firms is in reality a battle over market share in which innovation is a means to *that* end. If this is a real market and not just something like the Soviet "market reforms" there will be winners and losers with real consequences. As Braverman, Noble, and others have argued, technological innovation is never socially neutral.1 [13]Would technological innovation for production for need be the same as that for increased market share? Why would socialists want state or worker owned enterprises (and hence their workers) to fight one another over market share rather than working cooperatively through mutually agreed local and national plans to increase production for need? Capital pits workers in competition with one another—individual v. individual, black v. white, men v. women, citizen v. immigrant, firm v. firm—in order to keep wages down, effort up, the competition down, market share up, and capital accumulating. Why would worker-owned enterprises want to follow that pattern? After all, struggle and the process of fighting for change transforms people and their values.

Why would workers in their millions organize, struggle, sacrifice, and endanger their lives and livelihoods to get rid of the capitalist bosses just to create state or cooperatively owned businesses that compete to survive, because—advanced welfare state or not—that's what economic competition is about as even Chibber admits at one point. Not to mention the periodic crises that competition generates. Around a million business establishments in the U.S. go under in normal years, more during recessions. [14] Why wouldn't they fail under market socialism? Why wouldn't competition under market socialism lead to pressures for work intensification in order to survive? Might workers not worry that competition would, once again, lead to pressure to contain consumption rather than increase it and increase effort rather than reducing it?

Couldn't it be, instead, that workers, inventors, technicians, computer wizards, etc. would cooperatively innovate in production in order to *lighten* the workload, shorten work time, raise the standard of living and the culture of society as a whole domesti-

cally and internationally, and, indeed, to save the planet and future generations? That instead of hoarding innovations through "proprietary" knowledge and technology, to get the upper hand in competition as competing firms do, they would share it through planning? Couldn't it be that the incentive to collectively improve both work and life would prove as strong or stronger a motivation to innovate—this time in their own interest—than competition? Why assume that only competition and profits will motivate people to seek innovations in shifting to production for need? Couldn't it be that the solution to efficiency and innovation lies not in competition, but above all in worker initiative spurred by the goal of a better life and a safer world and the experience of beginning to actually achieve both? Would workers really organize collectively and fight against great odds only to compete? Isn't our goal the cooperative commonwealth?

No transition to socialism, no expropriation of the expropriators, without a rupture

Here I have to admit that my optimistic view of worker initiative stems in part from my years at *Labor Notes* seeing how workers we knew understood how production and competition actually worked and why collective action was their best defense. It also comes from my visit to Portugal in the mid-1970s during its revolution. There the young officer core of the military sided with, and indeed helped lead, the revolution that overthrew the fascist government so that capital was unable to mount a violent counter revolution. When the workers moved to seize the plants and other workplaces, most of the bosses and owners fled the country. The police and army stayed in their stations and barracks. The trams and trains ran for free, run and maintained by their workers. The lights stayed on. Our small group of ISers visited several worker-run facilities, but the most impressive was the giant shipyard at Lisbon.

A shipyard is a complex of factories producing parts for the huge assembly facilities on the river. It involves almost every skill any manufacturing firm would need. We met with the elected workers' committee running the whole shipyard which was composed of workers from several political tendencies or parties, as well as non-affiliated workers. The old management personnel stayed meekly in their offices and played no role in production or discipline. The trade unions, some of whose leaders we also met with, functioned to defend workers when necessary and process grievances. Members of the elected managing committee abided by the "a partido" ethic whereby no one spoke for their tendency and all worked together cooperatively to manage the shipyard. Imagine that, socialists of different stripes working together! Of course, outside the workplace the parties competed for supporters as you would in a democracy. But, again, the struggle for a better life changes people.

They explained the process of production and when asked how they could run such a complex operation, one replied something like—we've always run it. The cafeteria was flush with free food and wine. Well, it was Portugal. This was procured by barter from farmers for whom the yard's machinists made farm equipment parts and other tools in return for the food and wine. No market there. Needed inputs came from other worker-run factories and energy from worker-controlled utilities. Not sure how they were paid for. The biggest problem was that global capital was boycotting this and other worker-controlled firms and contracts were becoming scarce. International capital saw a precedent it didn't like and acted to stop it. Tragically, the counter revolution, although relatively bloodless, was not far off as the Socialist Party and Communist Party made their peace with capital and its acceptably non-fascist politicians. None of the so-called socialist countries offered aid or contracts to these enterprises either, no doubt as workers' control was as much anathema to them as to their capitalist rivals. The Portuguese workers didn't have the opportunity to initiate planning above the enterprise level or rudimentary barter, but they did show the instincts and ability to turn to collective and cooperative production.

Remember, Chibber sees no capitalists in the market socialist economy. As he explains, [15]

> *That means you're not going to have privately owned means of production. Either you're going to have the state owning the means of production at the national level; or you're going to have an economy of workers' cooperatives, in which there is no capitalist class that owns things but workers themselves have property rights.*

"No capitalist class." The expropriators are expropriated. But where did the capitalists go? Why did they go? Unlike in Portugal in the mid-1970s it is unlikely that the superrich U.S. capitalists would just pack up and leave. I checked Chibber's manifesto, "Our Road to Power" written in 2017 to see what he said about transition. There was a lot in there about political and worker organization I agreed with (a mass cadre party with internal democracy, a certain level of discipline, rooted in the working class). But he also wrote, "Our strategic perspective has to downplay the centrality of a revolutionary rupture and navigate a more gradualist approach." [16] "*Strategic* perspective"?! No matter how much one might wish to downplay rupture or attempt to move gradually, given their numbers, incredible wealth, the owners of capital in the U.S. will certainly see their impending or unfolding expropriation as a rupture of historic proportions. As, indeed, it would be. Much greater in scale and impact than the Russian Revolution no matter how it was done. It is inconceivable, given their legions of paid dependents, friends in politics and the military, their wealth, etc. that U.S. capitalists would simply surrender all of that without a vicious fight of some sort—even if, let's imagine, a DSA-backed majority in Congress passed a law (gradually?) nationalizing their property and President Ocasio-Cortez signed the bill. I looked at the highlighted reference to "transition" in the text of the piece on market socialism, but it only led to an article about how social democracy had gone from a revolutionary movement to a reformist one as revolution ceased to be a foreseeable possibility. Hmm?

Is that really something new? Eduard Bernstein, a leading theorist of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), laid the basis of modern social democratic reformism in 1899, a decade or so before one of the biggest revolutionary upsurges in European history. He argued capitalism had stabilized and revolution was off the agenda. Then came 1905, 1917, 1918, etc. Despite his famous statement that the final goal was "nothing" and the movement "everything", Bernstein denied abandoning socialism altogether but instead downplayed a "catastrophic" revolutionary transition (rupture?) in favor of the gradual accumulation of reforms and the movement's strength, what was called at the time "revisionism." In his 1909 preface to the famous *Evolutionary Socialism* (bad translation of his title), he insisted, "the book can, all in all, be regarded as an exposition of the theoretical and political tendencies of the German social democratic revisionists." [17] The revisionists would become the majority of the party's leadership and parliamentary delegations. The leadership of the SPD consciously derailed the 1918 German revolution in which the workers initially seized production and set up workers' councils. [18]

The problem is, as the history of German social democracy demonstrates, if you abandon the idea of a rupture, and simply embrace gradualism you necessarily give up the final goal: socialism of any kind in practice. As German (French, etc.) social democracy did well before the neoliberal era. [19] There is no way to eliminate the capitalist class as a class without an historic social/political rupture. A world without capitalists is a qualitatively different one. You can, at least theoretically, do it by legislation rather than direct worker confiscation. You can go after the biggest ones first and work your way down the economic ladder, but it is still a rupture—and that is not a matter of semantics but of social reality. So, if you "downplay rupture", what you are left with is a gradualism that has no way to achieve the expropriation of the expropriators. No doubt, Chibber would like to see the expropriators expropriated in order to achieve worker- or state-owned

enterprises in market socialism. But he seems to have excluded any actual means of accomplishing that.

What about the Meidner Plan? The last refuge of gradualists, Sweden's Meidner Plan came as close as one could to a non-rupture model of the transition to a version of market socialism. [20] Formulated fifty years ago, hence its current semi-centennial celebration as a panacea, by (German-born) Swedish trade union economist Rudolph Meidner, the plan proposed that each enterprise over a certain size annually issue new shares reflecting "excess profits" that would go into "wage-earner funds" that were to be governed by union officials. Its dividends were mostly to go to social projects such as worker education. The idea was that as profits grew, the number and proportion of the fund-based shares would grow. Hence, in theory at least, eventual worker-ownership under union control would result. Investment decisions, however, were left to management, not the wage-earner fund. Meidner estimated that for a highly profitable company like Volvo it would take 20 years for the wage-earner-fund to own a majority of company shares (52%)—longer for other companies. For the funds to control almost all shares (97%) it would take 100 years—and that's for a highly profitable firm. The capitalists would be squeezed into a tiny minority of owners. Gradualism at its most glacial.

In addition, since the shares were based on increased "excess" profits it meant the workers would be encouraged to work harder and longer and/or reduce the workforce via new technology to get to socialism. Class struggle to increase worker income or improve conditions would in practice reduce profits and hence the number of shares sent to the wage-earner fund, thus lengthening the road to ownership. The incentive was for unions to minimize conflict. Nevertheless, due to strong employer opposition and the retreat of the Social Democrats, the plan was drastically watered-down when implemented in 1984. Share ownership by the funds was controlled by government officials with some employee representatives. Wage-earner fund shares in any one company were limited to eight percent. After seven years the funds controlled only 3.5 percent of the total value of all Swedish company shares. It was a flop and further opposition from capital and its conservative government killed it in 1992.

While in its original form it might appear to have passed the non-rupture test, its dilution and eventual death, in fact, underline the basic reason why there is no transition to socialism, no expropriation of the expropriators, without a rupture: the systemically-rooted dialectic of class conflict for survival. No matter how polite or gradualist the proposed transition, the capitalist class will recognize it as a threat and will not sit still for its own demise. In Sweden the threat was minimal and this was all quite peaceful. In Russia, Germany (ask Rosa), Chile, etc. not so peaceful. Any proposed "Road to Power" that fails to take that into account is a path to defeat or worse. There is no socialism without a rupture.

The major difference between revolutionary socialists and reformists or gradualists, of course, is not about whether you fight for reforms over time. Revolutionary socialists have always fought for reforms often alongside classic reformists and liberals. Nor is it a matter of revolutionary fantasies or impatience. It is about that big step, that rupture, the expropriation of the expropriators, no matter how it's accomplished, without which the final goal is inconceivable.

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Source: **Tempest**.

Latin America

The governments of the new right and Trumpism in Latin America

Eduardo Lucita · *7 October 2026*

Perhaps paraphrasing Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto, when they described the revolutionary process that swept through Europe at the end of the 1940s as a spectre, we could describe the counter-revolutionary cycle that is sweeping through Our America in these 2020s as a phantom, albeit of the opposite kind. [1]

This is a cycle that began tentatively with the electoral victories of Jair Bolsonaro and Nayib Bukele in Brazil and El Salvador in 2019, continued with the governments of Santiago Peña, Javier Milei, and Daniel Noboa in Paraguay, Argentina, and Ecuador in 2023, and then began to accelerate with the victories of Rodrigo Paz in Bolivia in 2025, José Antonio Kast, Nasry Asfurade (elected in 2025 but taking office in 2026), and Laura Fernández Delgado in Chile, Honduras, and Costa Rica. Meanwhile, Abelardo de la Espriella and Keiko Fujimori in Colombia and Peru won their respective elections in 2026 and were awaiting the inauguration of their respective countries at the time of writing .

If we consider the period from 2023 to 2026, far-right victories were seen in 13 of the 16 presidential elections held during that time. But it is since Donald Trump assumed the presidency of the United States 18 months ago that this political shift has intensified, with far-right candidates winning the last seven presidential elections in the region.

Simultaneity of processes

It is a politically novel phenomenon, both because of its simultaneity and coincidence, and because of the depth of the regressive reforms and structural changes it proposes. Furthermore, it does not appear to be a random or merely episodic event. In any case, its effects will be long-lasting.

A political shift has occurred. The "orange wave," as The Economist dubbed it (referring to the US president's skin tone), is dominant, embodied by a group of leaders who have attained political power in their countries through liberal democracy, capitalizing on popular frustrations with previous periods and governments. In a way, they are a product of the social decay imposed by decades of neoliberalism (concentration of wealth, expansion of poverty, uncertainty, and a lack of future prospects), which have instilled in the world the idea that there is no way out. However, the capitalist crisis that has been unfolding since 2008, which remains unresolved, cannot be ignored. In Latin America, this crisis has taken the form of an organic crisis characterized by high social and environmental vulnerability.

These governments, despite their differences and heterogeneity, have adopted the style, rhetoric, and agenda of Trumpism (authoritarianism, racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-environmentalism , the reconstruction of patriarchy, and the use of hate as a political tool). They have found that simple and direct messages on social media are a very effective way to connect with voters.

With Venezuela transformed by imperialist military aggression into a kind of US protectorate , and with Cuba blockaded and threatened with invasion, for now only Brazil, led by Lula, who is seeking reelection, and Mexico—the region's two largest

economies, together representing almost 70% of the regional GDP—are resisting this wave. Uruguay is also resisting to the extent possible.

In this context, the upcoming presidential elections in Brazil take on a decisive character. If the far right and Bolsonaro's movement were to triumph, the consequences would be significant. Should the PT regain political power, the region will present an unprecedented and difficult-to-predict political landscape. Conversely, if the PT manages to win the elections, the country's size could put a powerful brake on the current wave sweeping the region.

A turning point

It would be a mistake to interpret this rightward shift in the governments of Our America as a new phase in the alternation between right-wing and progressive governments, as a new turn resulting from frustrations, adaptations of progressive movements, and a return to traditional conservatism, or as an electoral wave in which all the opposition parties win. This surge of the extreme right can be seen as a response to the so-called leftward turn of the progressive- neo-developmentalist governments of the first 15 years of this century; however, it is a true turning point.

Those experiences altered the balance of social power but failed to change the pattern of accumulation and the subordinate integration into the global market, nor did they distribute wealth. Thus, predatory extractivism and the primary sector grew, while manufacturing declined.

US destabilization maneuvers , attempts at re-election , corruption, or demobilizing practices, the multi-class consensus that allowed them to achieve a degree of hegemony broke down, and governments ended up relying on clientelism and electoralism to guarantee governability. They have ultimately made it clear that progressivism, by failing to envision a horizon of overcoming capitalism and remaining solely focused on reforms—with varying degrees of intensity—and adopting a conservative stance regarding the autonomy of the masses, found its own limitations there.

The following period saw a return of traditional conservative right-wing politics (the Macri, Bolsonaro, Piñera, and Añez governments in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Bolivia) and then a tepid attempt at low-intensity progressivism (the Boric , Fernández, and Arce governments in Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia), to name just the Southern Cone of Latin America. These attempts were short-lived and resulted in significant frustrations. Building on these frustrations, whether neoliberal or neo-developmentalist , the extreme right has been gaining ideological and electoral ground, a process in which the crisis of political representation, attacks on journalism, disinformation, and the half-truths or outright lies circulating on social media have played a decisive role.

These new right-wing movements are far more radical, far more profound in the structural changes they promise, and far more aggressive in dismantling the democratic consensus achieved in the previous period. They promote the broadest deregulation of capital flows, the curtailment, if not the elimination, of social and political rights, the lack of protection for workers, women, peasants, Indigenous peoples, common goods, and nature, the dismantling of education and healthcare policies, the expropriation of Indigenous peoples and their identities, and the use of public debt to justify permanent austerity policies. It is a full-scale attack against the working class and in favor of capital, seeking to establish a long-lasting, regressive balance of power.

Much more market-intensive. An extreme neoliberalism that defines the market as the best allocator of resources and as the measure of all values, that emphasizes modernizing repressive forces and increasing military spending in each country. They are thus a turning point, a watershed moment with respect to the entire preceding period.

In Argentina, the Milei government, completely subservient to the US , is at the forefront of this

process, with an ultraliberal experiment in the regressive reconfiguration of the productive matrix and society. It aspires to lead a group of countries identified with Trumpist policies in the context of the China- US dispute . The current diplomatic crisis with Brazil is an expression of this global conflict. Within this framework, the Argentine government is preparing a meeting of leaders from these far-right groups for the end of the year, dubbed the Blue Summit, seeking to consolidate ties and position President Milei as the regional leader. Of course, much depends on the results of the upcoming elections in Brazil and the US , which could influence the region and particularly the presidential elections next year in Argentina.

Associated with Trumpism

The region is entering a new period of militarization with the integration of the Shield of the Americas. This multinational political-military coalition, proposed by the US, comprises 12 countries that have pledged to combat drug cartels and terrorism militarily within their respective nations. It serves as a smokescreen to justify US troop intervention in the region. In mid-July, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio convened numerous representatives from various countries to present an international strategy aimed at combating what he defined as "far-left political terrorism," seeking to coordinate security agencies and intelligence sharing.

US 's New National Security Strategy (November 2025), which has been deploying a much more aggressive imperial policy, inaugurated under the pretext of combating drug trafficking and the indiscriminate bombing, without evidence and in violation of international agreements, of small vessels in the Caribbean. An executive order from the Trump administration, "Establishing an America First Arms Transfer Strategy," promotes arms sales abroad. Latin America is considered a good market, and investments in the arms industry will further constrain public policies that could be implemented to address growing social inequalities. With the increased involvement of militaries in internal affairs, the dangers to the future of liberal democracies in the region grow, as national defense and internal control become intertwined.

The military invasion of Venezuela and the kidnapping of its president and his wife (a national deputy) on January 3 of this year were a continuation of that offensive. Simultaneously, the US threatened to annex Greenland until it had established three military bases on the island and to rename the Gulf of Mexico the Gulf of the Americas. It succeeded in getting Panama to expel Asian companies from the canal, which it declared a priority for US national security, even knowing that, due to its shallow draft, only commercial vessels can pass through. It forced Chile to suspend the project for a submarine fiber optic cable from Concón to Hong Kong, while Argentina suspended the agreement to build a radio telescope in the province of San Juan. Recently, the US ambassador to Argentina threatened members of an electric cooperative over an agreement with Huawei and warned about the continuation of US investments in Vaca Muerta. This is a pressure strategy aimed at achieving a highly ambitious objective: control of more than 30,000 km². fiber optics, an essential infrastructure for the deployment of 5G.

Trump has understood that unilateralism in the world is over, and with it, the role of US hegemonic power . He is therefore seeking to redesign the global landscape, reorganizing it into areas of influence and security dominated by the major powers (US, China, Russia) while withdrawing into the Western Hemisphere (from the Arctic to Antarctica). With this withdrawal, he aims to address what he considers strategic objectives: blocking China's access (with $600 billion in annual trade, it is the region's largest trading partner, in addition to financing substantial investments) and guaranteeing political control for his subordinate and unconditional allies.

They also need access to the natural resources necessary for their value chains and the energy transition. Latin America takes on particular importance

in this regard, with the enormous biodiversity of the Amazon, the Andean ecosystems, and the vast wetlands. According to ECLAC, the region holds almost 20% of the world's hydrocarbon reserves , more than 40% of global biodiversity, and 30% of primary forests, along with large river basins and the Guarani Aquifer, one of the world's largest underground freshwater reservoirs.

In this era of accumulation by dispossession, major powers are vying for abundant resources in our region: metallic minerals (gold, silver) and so-called critical minerals (lithium, copper, nickel, cobalt, among others), as well as rare earth elements (17 little-known elements that play a central role in the manufacture of lithium batteries, magnets for electric vehicles, electronic circuits, catalysts for the chemical industry, and turbines for wind turbines and the arms industry). Various international organizations have estimated that the demand for these minerals will quadruple in the coming decades.

Almost all the far-right governments in Latin America are followers of Trumpism 's environmental denialism . They deny climate change and encourage the indiscriminate exploitation of our societies' common resources, since most of our countries' economies depend on the export of primary products and are heavily reliant on extractive industries . This exacerbates the climate crisis already affecting the subcontinent (loss of biodiversity, air and soil pollution, and contribution to global warming). According to National According to the United Nations, since 2000 a total of 152 million people in the region have been affected by 1,205 natural disasters, including droughts, floods, landslides, fires, hurricanes, and earthquakes. The United Nations considers Latin America and the Caribbean the second most disaster-prone region in the world.

According to the Pentagon's National Defense Strategy (January 2026), the Atlantic Ocean is of paramount importance due to its interoceanic passages. In this context, the southern part of our subcontinent plays a crucial role, thanks to the Strait of Magellan, the Beagle Channel, and the Drake Passage. Together, these constitute one of the six strategic waterways worldwide and the natural replacement for the Panama Canal in case of emergency or traffic congestion.

However , it would be a mistake to characterize this US withdrawal as implying a disengagement from its interests in other regions of the world. In reality , using a football analogy (permissible amidst the World Cup atmosphere), "the team is built from the back." That is precisely what Trump has been doing since assuming his second presidential term: guaranteeing political, economic, and military control of what the US has always considered (as the Monroe Doctrine dictates) its "backyard." To this end, he has not hesitated to interfere politically and financially in the elections of sovereign nations (the paradigmatic case of Argentina) and to militarize the region under the pretext of drug trafficking, national security, and migration. It is from this position that he seeks to recover hegemonic ground within the context of his relative decline, which, given the results of the war in the Middle East, casts doubt on his capacity for global leadership due to his undeniable defeat.

The disputed future

Most of the electoral victories that allowed the rise of far-right governments were decided in second rounds and by very few points of difference, in some cases by tenths , so the governments take over in totally polarized societies, which calls into question governability.

So far, these governments have focused more on dismantling the achievements of the previous period and modifying the role of the State (which ceases to arbitrate between social classes and reverts to being the general manager of capital's interests) than on projecting any future. The extreme neoliberalism they profess faces serious difficulties in relaunching the process of capital accumulation and reproduction. They depend increasingly on foreign investment, generally directed toward agribusiness or extractive industries , which, to materialize, demands ever more tax breaks, legal guarantees, and

capital flow restrictions that ultimately undermine the sovereignty of peoples and nations.

Thus, projects become trapped by the contradictions of the current situation, with the particularity that the long progressive decade left a foundation of social and democratic rights that workers and popular sectors do not seem willing to relinquish without a fight. Bolivia, with its months of highway blockades by thousands of workers, Indigenous people, and peasants demanding the resignation of President Paz just months after he took office; the precipitous drop in President Kast's popularity in Chile; and the ongoing mobilizations of various sectors in Argentina are just a few examples of this resistance. In the immediate term , however, if we look beyond the immediate, what weighs heavily and determines the situation is the organic nature of the crisis of capital in the region. This crisis manifests itself in the marked inability to relaunch the accumulation process and in the disaffection of citizens with traditional parties and leaders, which is already a structural problem. These political processes are not irreversible, but their effects will be long-lasting. Nothing guarantees that far-right governments will consolidate their power, only that they will govern in a state of permanent instability, while extreme polarization foreshadows new resistance and opens up a space for the anti-capitalist left.

However, in this historical period, capital centralizes, concentrates, and homogenizes from above, while simultaneously fracturing, dividing, and creating heterogeneity from below. Thus, workers' and popular struggles against the fascist-like nature of the extreme right and imperialist domination are fragmented and dispersed, not only at the national level but also internationally. This underscores the importance of solidarity and the integration of antifascist and anti-imperialist resistance with the defense of national and popular sovereignty.

Earlier this year, 1,800 prominent figures from around the world signed the "Call for an Antifascist International ," calling on all forces fighting against the rise of the far right, fascism, and imperialist aggression to "coordinate these struggles against increasingly threatening enemies." The call states: " This convergence can and must include all forces willing to defend the working class, the peasantry, migrants, women, LGBTQ+ people, racialized people, oppressed national or religious minorities, and Indigenous peoples; to defend nature against ecocidal capitalism; to combat imperialist and colonial aggression, regardless of its origin, and to support the struggles of peoples resisting it."

This call materialized at the end of last March when thousands of people from more than 30 countries gathered in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil, giving rise to the 1st International Antifascist, Anti-imperialist and for the Sovereignty of Peoples Conference, to share analyses, strengthen ties and agree on concrete actions.

The task will be continued by the Latin American Anti-Imperialist and Anti-Fascist Regional Conference, to be held in Buenos Aires on December 17, 18 and 19 of this year, and then another one in Mexico possibly in March 2027.

The path is laid out; it will be difficult to achieve, but not impossible.

4 September 2026

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STRATEGY

The Left: a fundamental historical ambiguity

FRANÇOIS SABADO · *5 October 2026*

The notion of the Left contains a dual dimension. For more than a century, both its opponents and its supporters have agreed in describing the Left as the "party of movement," the natural gathering place of "all progressive forces" and all advocates of "change." [1]

At the same time, however, this formidable historical movement, whose ideas have at times become dominant in specific historical circumstances and in many areas of contemporary culture, has never succeeded in breaking practically and permanently with the capitalist system and replacing it with a truly human, free, egalitarian, and decent society.

In fact, since its origins, "the Left" has encompassed different historical realities. Moreover, over time it has concealed, or even obscured, processes that produced ruptures and divisions among various social and political forces. Thus, in order to rebuild a project for the radical transformation of society, it is necessary to deconstruct what is meant by "the Left," disentangling what belongs to the emancipation of peoples, and particularly of workers, from what has kept these liberation movements within the framework of capitalism.

"The Left" or "socialism"...

What is called "the Left," particularly in France, is the product of a highly unstable historical compromise between a workers' socialism, which at the time was more Proudhonian than Marxist, and the republican camp, that is, those sectors of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie that opposed the Ancien Régime.

The modern distinction between the "Right" and the "Left" (which is the French adaptation of the opposition that originated in England between the conservative Tories and the liberal Whigs) corresponded throughout the nineteenth century to the conflict between the defenders of the Ancien Régime, a theological-military society, and the advocates of progress, reason, and economic development.

Original socialism was, in principle, largely independent of this divide. It drew its roots from the far left of the petty-bourgeois radicalism of the French Revolution, such as the most radical Jacobins and Gracchus Babeuf's Conspiracy of Equals, which advanced for the first time the idea of collectivization. It also emerged from the first popular protests against the devastating human and ecological consequences of liberal industrialization: the English Luddites and Chartists, the silk workers of Lyon, and the Silesian weavers in Germany.

Throughout the nineteenth century, in the occasional alliances they were obliged to forge, sometimes against the powerful remnants of the Ancien Régime and sometimes against liberal industrialists, the most radical socialists were primarily concerned with asserting the autonomy of workers' organizations.

The originality of the first socialist uprisings was that they embodied a double rejection, experienced with varying degrees of consciousness: the rejection of the Ancien Régime, namely the power of the Church and the landed aristocracy, but also the rejection of the "new regime" dominated by the liberal industrial bourgeoisie. Marx repeatedly emphasized, particularly after the revolutions of 1848, the necessity of working-class independence from the bourgeoisie. It was only after the Dreyfus Affair that the socialist movement truly became firmly incorporated into the camp of "the Left," defined as the camp of progressive forces. What is at issue in

this political and ideological shift is not the defence of Dreyfus himself.

Those within the workers' movement who failed to defend Dreyfus, such as Jules Guesde, one of the founders of French socialism, or certain anarchists, were mistaken. Dreyfus and fundamental democratic freedoms had to be defended.

Likewise, the struggle of the socialists of that era for universal suffrage, such as that of the Chartists in England, the first essentially working-class party to demand universal suffrage, was fundamentally justified.

However, where the problem arose was that democratic freedoms and democracy itself came to be identified or conflated with the defence of the bourgeois state and its institutions, a sleight of hand accomplished through the glorification of the Nation and the Republic. It was also on this basis that "the Left" emerged not only as the camp of progress but also as a bloc uniting socialists and the republican bourgeoisie. Within this framework, one should not forget, republicans and socialists of the time invented the famous "republican discipline," which advocated systematic electoral withdrawal in favour of whichever republican or socialist candidate was best placed against the anti-republican Right.

This confusion between freedom, democracy, social progress, and participation in state institutions would become a constant feature, trapping many historic social mobilizations within the established order. In France, from the "ministerialism" of of Millerand to the plural Left via the, the Popular Front, Cartel of the Lefts, the governments after the Liberation, from 1944-47, without forgetting those of the Union of the Left. All these governmental formulas, each with its specificities, canalised mobilisations and popular hopes in the framework of institutions that submitted to the ruling class.

The unity of "The Left" or working-class political Independence

It is these confusions that have nourished, particularly in certain historical circumstances, another fundamental ambiguity: a contradiction between the unifying dynamic of the social and political mobilization of the popular classes and their organizations, and the governmental and institutional political expression of that movement in policies of class collaboration.

For revolutionary Marxists, the issue is not to underestimate the need for policies of class alliances, nor the strategic necessity of the unity of workers and their organizations in the process of conquering political power.

From the middle of the nineteenth century onward, Marx and many revolutionary socialists emphasized the strategic necessity of alliances with other social classes, such as the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, in order to avoid what Marx called "the proletariat's funeral solo." Likewise, revolutionary Marxists have always stressed the strategic importance of working-class unity, or more broadly the unity of the social movement, against capitalist power.

At the same time, however, they have consistently emphasized the strategic necessity of combining such alliances, or a united-front policy, with the political independence of the workers' movement in defence of both its immediate demands and the socialist objective. This is the famous formula advanced by Lenin and the revolutionaries of the 1920s to define relations between communists and social democrats: "March separately and strike together."

However, the notion of "the Left" or "unity of the Left," in its various forms, far from preserving the political independence of the world of labour, has subordinated it to respect for the institutions of the ruling classes and for private property. The reference to "the Left" or to the unity of the Left conceals precisely this fundamental difference between supporters of alliances with the bourgeoisie and those who resolutely oppose such alliances.

As firmly as revolutionary Marxists support united-front policies and the unity of action of workers and their organizations, they reject all policies of class collaboration, whether carried out through alliances with the liberal or national bourgeoisie, as in the experiences of Popular Fronts, or through governments composed mainly of reformist socialist or communist parties.

The fundamental distinction between the workers' united front and the various policies of left-wing coalitions, Popular Fronts, or alliances of the Left lies in this: through its logic of social mobilization against employers and capitalist governments, the united-front policy, or the unity of action of the social and political Left, generates a dynamic that intensifies and sharpens workers' struggle against the bourgeoisie.

By contrast, through their logic of respect for existing institutions and private property, all forms of support for, or participation in, governments of left-wing unity subordinate the fulfilment of popular demands to the dominant institutional political balance. They slow the development of social struggles and, at times, actively oppose them.

The policy of revolutionary Marxists has a dual character. It is pedagogical, because it is through experience that the combativeness and consciousness of broad masses deepen. But it is also strategic, because without workers' unity there can be no conscious revolution of the majority.

One must therefore distinguish between the unifying dynamic of mass mobilizations, which may take inspiration from the unity of the Left, the Popular Front in France and Spain between 1934 and 1936, or Popular Unity in Chile from 1970 to 1973, a dynamic that must be infused with revolutionary content, and the governmental coalitions of class collaboration that may preside over those mobilizations and which revolutionaries oppose in forms appropriate to each situation. It is in this sense that revolutionaries advocate the perspective of a workers' government, supported by popular control and implementing a programme of anti-capitalist rupture.

A blind spot: the bureaucratization of workers' and social organizations

As we have seen, alliances with the bourgeoisie, even the republican bourgeoisie, have always been a powerful factor in subordinating workers' organizations to institutions and private property. Yet through their own development, workers' organizations gave rise to an even more important phenomenon: the integration of the workers'movement into bourgeois society.

This process is linked to the functional division of labour within mass workers' organizations. As long as such organizations remain small, workers themselves can directly control them without the mediation of large bureaucratic apparatuses. When they grow larger, which is indispensable if policies are to succeed or gains are to be won for wage earners, a decisive objective for trade unions, professional leaders begin to emerge.

A permanent apparatus develops, recruited chiefly from workers themselves but also from the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia. This apparatus tends to identify itself with the organization as such and to subordinate the vital interests of workers to the interests of the organisation and its bureaucracy.

Through what Rosa Luxemburg called "the dialectic of partial gains", the fear of jeopardizing achievements through struggles that could lead to major confrontations with employers or governments, the leaderships of workers' organizations gradually come to restrain or even oppose the development of mobilizations. They thereby become forces seeking only to preserve the status quo. Combined with the material advantages attached to positions within labour organizations or state institutions, this process transforms the behaviour and motivations of leaders. They come to form a new social layer: the labour bureaucracy.

This bureaucracy performs a dual function. Its power derives from the existence and strength of

workers' organizations, yet at the same time it does everything possible to ensure that those organizations remain within the limits established by the ruling classes. By its very nature, it is fundamentally conservative.In exceptional circumstances it may act simultaneously in defence of its own interests and those of working people. In general, however, the bureaucracy subordinates struggles for popular demands and aspirations to the preservation of its own privileges within society.

This, fundamentally, explains why the upper ranks of the labour movement and the Left sided with the Sacred Union during the First World War. It also explains why the leaderships of the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO) and the French Communist Party (PCF) channelled the general strike of 1936 and the Popular Front into a framework compatible with the international policy and economic objectives of the country's ruling classes.

Similarly, despite the magnificent struggle of the Resistance, and particularly that of Communist militants, this logic dominated the policy of the leadership of the Left between 1944 and 1947 through the National Council of Resistance and allegiance to General de Gaulle. This does not negate the social and democratic gains won by the popular movement. Yet the dynamic of struggle made it possible to go much further.

Finally, it explains why the popular hopes invested in the Union of the Left in the 1970s, and in a different way in the Plural Left governments of the 1990s, once again evaporated as governments placed respect for existing institutions and the capitalist economy at the centre of their policies.

As regards the French Communist Party (PCF), from the early 1930s until the late 1980s, its leadership and the organizations under its control also functioned by subordinating the material, political, and moral interests of workers to the interests of its own bureaucratic apparatus. At that time, however, this apparatus was itself dependent upon the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy.

After the collapse of the USSR, the PCF entered a new historical phase. The coordinates of its intervention and political practice were profoundly modified. It was no longer dependent on the Soviet Union or on any other international bureaucracy. Nevertheless, its orientation continued to be marked by its integration into existing institutions and by an internal functioning shaped by the need to preserve bureaucratic balances within the party leadership and apparatus.

Throughout this historical process, it was not reformist leaders who transformed institutions or the economy. Rather, as Ernest Mandel explained, it was the political and economic power of the ruling classes that: "transformed the representatives of the workers in their convictions, mentality, motivations, and material interests." At the beginning of the twentieth century, Trotsky had already concluded that: "the leadership tends to detach itself from the working class and is drawn into the orbit of the ruling class."

Over time, as the song says, the bureaucracies became crystallised. During the period of economic growth from the 1950s until the end of the 1970s, they enjoyed "real room for manoeuvre," linked to the development of class struggles and to the social compromises that resulted both from the dynamism of those struggles and from policies of class collaboration that contained them within the framework of capitalist equilibrium.

With the profound transformation of the world economy and world politics at the end of the 1970s, and the emergence of a new mode of capitalist accumulation, the general political conditions confronting traditional reformism and the traditional Left changed fundamentally. These forces were compelled to move to a higher stage of integration into the liberal order. They were required first to accept and then to implement liberal counter-reforms: wage restraint, budgetary austerity, labour-market flexibility, privatizations, and similar measures.

Blair's "Third Way" injected a substantial dose of liberalism into social democracy. Other socialist parties formally distanced themselves from the excesses of New Labour, but all of them, each in its own way, from Lionel Jospin to Lula, followed paths of adaptation to liberalism.

Yet while these parties entered a new phase of integration into capitalist society, and while their leaders in many cases merged with the upper levels of the state or with representatives of major corporate boards, their usefulness within the alternation between "Right" and "Left" required them to maintain some political connection with their own history and some of their traditional references, notably the idea of "the Left."

As shown by commemorations of the anniversary of the Socialist Party's founding congress of 1905, the historical ambiguities of "the Left" allow the leadership of the Socialist Party to claim continuity with the whole socialist tradition, even if this requires considerable distortion, because figures such as Mitterrand, Jospin, and Hollande stand politically far to the right of Léon Blum and the leaders of his generation.

At the same time, the historical association of the Left with social progress continues to lead citizens and workers to use their votes strategically in favour of the Left against right-wing conservatives, particularly when conservatives hold power. There is, however, a notable difference compared with the 1930s or the 1970s: these electoral votes are no longer accompanied by organic growth in the major parties of the Left.

"The Left" or an "anti-capitalist workers' party"?

How is it possible that a historical movement of such magnitude, dedicated to progress and social transformation, has never succeeded in breaking practically with the capitalist organization of society and replacing it with a genuinely humane, free, egalitarian, and decent social order? It iis because, as shown by the facts and the reasoning in tis article, the Left remains tied to the old society by a thousand connections.

Alliances with the bourgeoisie, integration into state and para-state institutions, and the bureaucratisation of large organizations have all contributed to subordinating it to the power of the ruling classes. Of course, not all failures of the Left can be explained solely by the policies of its leaderships or of the traditional workers' movement. In many cases, objective and subjective factors were combined, including political immaturity or relationships of forces unfavourable to the workers.

Nevertheless, in a number of historical situations marked by pre-revolutionary or revolutionary conditions, the leaderships of the Left, both socialist and communist, channelled, diverted, and blocked the momentum of mass movements in the name of respect for capitalist institutions. That is what happened in Germany in 1918 and 1923 under social democracy; in France in 1934–1936; in Spain in 1936–1937;in France and Italy during Liberation in 1944–1946; in France during May 1968;and in Chile between 1970 and 1973.

The reconstruction of a revolutionary project therefore requires drawing all the lessons from the policies of socialist and communist parties, but also from the weaknesses of revolutionary activists and organizations in formulating an alternative strategy.

The guiding principle should be the reconstruction, through a series of social and political experiences, of a movement of workers' self-emancipation independent of bourgeois parties and institutions. Such a movement would replace the logic of profit and capitalist property with a logic centred on the satisfaction of social needs and the socialization of production, with the ultimate objective of political power being won by the popular classes.

It should be clear that our political tradition identifies more with the history of the workers' movement, its organizations, and social movements than with "the Left" as such.... Although the histories of the workers' movement and the Left have often in-

tersected, and although it remains necessary to defend what many people perceive as the progressive content of an authentic Left, in general against the left leaderships, the "progressive content" that masses see asin an authentic or 100% left.

But the reconstruction of a revolutionary project for social transformation must go beyond the reference to the Left itself. Even the most authentic Left remains burdened by the fundamental ambiguities of its history.

"Dare to make the break." This is the distinctive feature of a modern project aimed at developing a movement for the emancipation of workers and, beyond them, of society as a whole. That does not mean that anyone already knows the precise form future revolutions of the twenty-first century will take.

The introductory text to this discussion asks: "Between the obsolete myth of the 'Great Day' (the revolutionary insurrection) and the banality of realism, is there a path along which a redefined Left can move forward?"

For revolutionary Marxists, the revolution has never been identified with the myth of a sudden and miraculous "Great Day." The lessons of the Russian, German, and Spanish revolutions, as well as the Popular Front experiences, never presented revolution as a short-lived rupture, the work of an active minority, or a coup d'état supported by only a temporary mass mobilization.

Lenin, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Gramsci, and others who studied the revolutionary processes of the twentieth century all emphasized the combined nature of the struggle for political power. Revolutionary forces must win hegemony within society through experiences of social control and democratic management of economic and daily life, while also confronting revolutionary crises made unavoidable by the resistance and violence of the ruling classes and the state.

From this standpoint, the debate is not simply "reform or revolution," but rather: "social liberalism, reformism, or revolution."

For revolutionaries, this is not merely a question of words. They support every reform that improves the condition of the majority. They connect struggles for reforms to an anti-capitalist perspective, arguing that only a break with capitalism can ultimately secure and extend those reforms.

By contrast, they reject social liberalism because it has abandoned the struggle for reforms in favour of adaptation to liberalism. They also reject participation in social-liberal governments.

Although they may agree with reformists on specific demands, such as opposition to neoliberal European policies or support for the regularization of undocumented migrants, they oppose reformism itself, because reformism is the belief that capitalism can be gradually transcended through participation in governments and capitalist institutions while steadily accumulating reforms.

Historical experience has invalidated this perspective – from ministerial participation at the beginning of the twentieth century to the governments of the plural left. Given the currently unfavourable balance of forces between employers and working people, the construction of a modern revolutionary project requires new experiences of revolutionary social and political crises, a recomposition of social movements, and the reorganization of new political parties.

Within this framework, the gathering together of anti-capitalist forces into a workers' party, whose strategic orientation toward revolution may still remain unfinished, is presented as a decisive step toward building a new alternative leadership.

Yet, once again, "unfinished contours" should not mean reviving the historical ambiguities of even the most authentic Left. Rather, it means founding or refounding a party dedicated to class struggle, the rejection of all forms of class collaboration, and the conquest of political power by workers.

Summer 2005

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Germany

To what extent is the AfD fascist?

Angela Klein · *5 October 2026*

The attempt to ostracise the AfD has failed. [1]

The fact that the AfD is now able to participate in governing coalitions at the regional, and even federal, level has reignited the debate about banning it. This debate is based on the idea that the AfD is a fascist party that stands outside the "consensus of democrats" and should therefore be ostracised – which, however, does not prevent it from gaining popularity. The debate has been raging for some time now, without reaching a conclusion. One might ask: where is this discussion going?

The dangers posed by the rise of the AfD to democratic and social rights are undeniable: the hunt for migrants ; hate speech against minorities and those who think differently; attacks on women's rights; manipulation of institutions – particularly the media, the justice system and education – with the aim of controlling them, if necessary through corruption; the growing weakening of parliaments; attacks against trade unions, etc. Left-wing activists often use the term "fascist" in this context to refer to "the end of our freedom of action" or "maximum repression" – formulations that are more an expression of an emotional reaction.

While this aspect is important and useful for countering those who downplay the threat posed by the AfD by considering its electoral success as already a sign of "normality," is it sufficient to formulate a strategy capable of pushing back this party?

Many analyses emphasize that the AfD "is not fascist as a whole, because in addition to fascist ideology, it also defends other ideologies which, although reactionary, contradict – through their fanatical positions on property and their Christian fundamentalism – the authoritarian and völkisch state conception of fascism, at least as far as the society this formation intends to achieve is concerned" (as explained by Andreas Kemper , an AfD specialist , on his website).

Such a definition might suggest that the fascist element will eventually gain the upper hand once the AfD takes control of certain institutions.

Is this really the case? Would we describe Italy today as a country under a fascist regime? This, at the very least, demonstrates how vaguely, even casually, this term is used. In Genoa last year, dockworkers threatened to strike if weapons were to be loaded for shipment to Israel. Can one imagine a strike under Mussolini?

In reality, the so-called "centre" parties are rapidly moving closer to the AfD —particularly on deportation policy, or when Interior Minister Dobrindt wants to lift the separation of the intelligence services and the police. It is especially with the right wing of the CDU that the lines are sometimes blurred—as also demonstrated by the recent mass migration of CDU voters to the AfD . (Moreover, in its distancing itself from the AfD , the CDU cites less the latter's attacks on democratic rights and procedures than its position on Russia and the EU.)

Are these signs of a slide towards fascism? The question is more complex: given the general and profound systemic crisis of capitalism, one can assume that fascist solutions are being considered by the ruling classes, as is evident in the case of American tech billionaires like Peter Thiel. However, one cannot say that such solutions are already on the agenda. What is emerging, on the other hand, is a move towards an authoritarian state that will not hesitate to dismantle social and democratic gains and violently repress any resistance. This authoritarian shift is reflected in the growing

desire of certain factions within the CDU and the FDP to form governments with the AfD in one way or another.

Violence and terror

A comparison with the classic fascist parties of the 1920s and 1930s reveals the vast differences. The AfD emerged from the national-conservative rebellion against the euro and European integration. It seeks a return to "national sovereignty" and German greatness, whatever that may mean today. It originated from the CDU, but was unable to prevent the infiltration of far-right, even fascist, elements within the AfD , pushing it far to the extreme right. From the outset, it has combined nationalist and liberal positions.

And the NSDAP? Its core consisted of the SA, the "Storm Troopers," which acted as a paramilitary bodyguard, security service, and shock troops. Its leader, Ernst Röhm, had joined in 1919, the EPP Freikorps, which had participated in the violent suppression of the Munich Soviet Republic: Röhm recruited members of the SA from among the Freikorps and certain factions of the Reichswehr, even before the NSDAP was founded in 1920, and he was one of its first members. These were frustrated soldiers and officers, war-wounded veterans, who didn't know how to cope with their defeat except by embracing the infamous "stab in the back" myth. They possessed weapons and transferred the experience and practice of violence acquired during the war to peacetime.

The political personnel of the NSDAP had grown from this fertile ground. Mussolini, too, recruited his "Fasci" from among these demobilized soldiers, ragged and disoriented, who carried within them the nationalist disappointment in the face of the "mutilated victory" (vittoria mutilata) and whose civil war against the "red menace" was their baptism of fire. These were hardened Nazis who terrorized the population with their parades.
These parties had a deep aversion to liberalism.

The Party

This cannot be compared to the current situation. Today, those who make up the far-right parties enjoying widespread popular support grew up in societies that experienced 80 years of relative peace. The Nazis wanted a return to a pre-modern state based on medieval feudal law (Mussolini dreamed of the return of the Roman Empire). The AfD , on the other hand, wants a return to the sovereign nation-state based on extreme economic liberalism.

For the Nazis, the party was the core of the new state, and their goal was to create a vast pool of cadres capable of occupying leadership positions in the most diverse sectors of society. The party was their instrument for controlling society down to its smallest corners.

The AfD needs the party, in a perfectly classic way, to win seats in Parliament and gain access to other levers of power. On election night, September 6, the party leader, Chrupalla, didn't declare, "Now we're going to clean the pigsty from top to bottom." He declared, "We are democrats and we engage in dialogue with everyone." This means nothing more than: "The time for breaking chairs is over. We can now access power, and to do so, we will make the necessary compromises."

At the end of 1932, the NSDAP had 850,000 members; only the SPD had more, with one million. (By the end of the war, the Nazi party had increased its membership tenfold.) The AfD has barely more members nationwide than the FDP (73,000); In Saxony-Anhalt, it has only 3,000 members, fewer than Die Linke in Cologne, even though the population there is twice as large. It can only govern through existing state institutions, which it must, however, share with others. It can cause considerable damage and even distort them. This would be enough, in the worst-case scenario, to establish a dictatorship, but not a fascist regime.

The NSDAP succeeded (after seizing power), thanks to its considerable weight and organization, in what no state institution, even the most repres-

sive, nor any secret service can accomplish on its own: to monitor and terrorize the population in every aspect of life.

Sources of danger

There are certainly many parallels between the current crisis and the end of the Weimar Republic. However, this does not mean that the solutions will be the same. Dangers also lurk elsewhere – perhaps particularly due to the social consequences of the AI revolution: the concentration of vast amounts of data in the hands of a few, which can lead to the creation of a total surveillance state.

By labelling the AfD as fascist, the hope is that establishing a taboo will deter people from joining or voting for the party. This approach has failed. The taboo hasn't worked because the historical comparison is flawed. Furthermore, there is currently no answer to the question of what can prevent the radicalisation of the extreme centre.

Confrontation with the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie is inevitable. However, the fact that, among workers, the AfD has been the strongest party since the 2025 federal elections, with 38 per cent of the vote, far ahead of the CDU/CSU (22 per cent) and the SPD (12 per cent) was not a foregone conclusion. It is the result of the political suicide of the SPD and the trade unions, which, in a tragic repeat of 1933, prefer to rush headlong to their own destruction rather than defend their organization and their members.

In the United States, we have seen that in unions facing this type of existential crisis, new figures have emerged, courageous activists who have been able to respond to the profound need for combative resistance and bring about a change of course. Will we achieve the same in Germany? It is becoming urgent.

September 26, 2026

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NEWS

News from around the world



Spanish state

Anticapitalistas on the calling of the elections: let's continue the struggle on the streets

Anticapitalistas · *5 October 2026*

Pedro Sánchez has announced that he is bringing forward the date of the elections, which will now take place on 29 November. This call for elections comes against a backdrop of major protests over the housing crisis, which have sparked a significant resurgence of mobilisation amongst the left and the working class in the face of a structural problem that is becoming increasingly urgent. [1]

These protests have succeeded in shifting the public debate, against a backdrop of the rising influence – both internationally and nationally – of the far right and the radicalised right. The government believes this context is more favourable for securing a mandate at the polls, presenting these elections as a referendum pitting its progressive agenda against the reactionary tide.
However, we must take a broader view of the current situation.

The protests and encampments are the result of a problem which, for eight years, the coalition governments – first between the PSOE and Podemos, then between the PSOE and Sumar – have been unable to address and resolve. At a time when the progressive camp is attempting to present itself as the sole guarantor of solutions to the working class's problems, we must strengthen the mobilisation, giving it a united yet independent character, and putting forward our own programme centred on the general strike. We must tackle the issue of ownership of the major vulture funds and banks, work towards the idea of a planned housing stock under social control, demand an immediate 50 per cent reduction in rents and cap rents at 20 per cent of wages, thereby limiting the profits of rentiers. It is also essential to maintain strong mobilisations, such as those in the education sector, in support of Palestine, or wage struggles within workplaces. We say this openly: all social gains have been achieved through the mobilisation and strength of workers; we must neither delegate nor place our trust in capitalist governments for this.

That is why we must keep the possibility of a general strike for housing on the table, and work towards making it a reality. A united strike, which will inevitably take on a hybrid character: certain sectors will want to use it to legitimise the failed policies of progressivism, but this is a tremendous opportunity for us, the anti-capitalist sectors, to work towards spreading our programme and our methods of struggle.

We know that many workers, concerned about the rise of the far right, will vote for the progressives as the lesser of two evils: we must work to establish structures of popular power that will enable us, regardless of who wins, to sustain and expand the cycle of struggles, so that we may glimpse other horizons. On the major issues, the right is preparing large-scale attacks; progressivism offers nothing but the continuation of a policy that has run its course, one that does not oppose capital and fails to move beyond a system that is increasingly dangerous for the social majority.

This is why it is more necessary than ever to maintain and expand the ongoing struggle and political independence and, where this is viable and possible within such a short timeframe, to actively support and build alternatives such as Adelante Andalucía, which act as a brake on the far right without compromising with capitalist management. Moving forward towards the widespread adoption of these ini-

tiatives, broadening the scope of what is possible towards an eco-socialist transformation and placing the class struggle at the heart of our concerns, is the best way to confront the rise of the far right that is sweeping across the world.

5 October 2026

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Italy

Sinistra Anticapitalista Summer University: Solidarity, Partners, Ecosocialists

Sinistra Anticapitalista · *4 October 2026*

"AI, Anti-Capitalist Intelligence", the third edition of Italy's Ecosocialist Summer University – organized by *Sinistra Anticapitalista* and the Livio Maitan Library – ended on Sunday 6 September 2026 with a well-attended debate on the alternative to capitalist barbarism, moderated by Armando Morgia, in which Antonella Bundu (*Toscana Rossa*), Dario Salvetti (formerly of GKN), Eliana Como (CGIL oppositionist), Luca Scacchi (*AMR Controvento*), Giulio Calella (*Edizioni Alegre*) and Francesco Locantore (*Gauche anticapitaliste*) participated, among others.

The event, which took place at "Il Pioppo" in Marina di Massa, attracted more than a hundred participants during four days of seminars, workshops, forums and moments of conviviality open to the local population.

During the proceedings, denunciation of the genocide of the Palestinian people and the complicity of Western governments, first and foremost the Italian government, with the colonial policies of the Israeli state, was reiterated.

The participants of the Ecosocialist University wanted to emphasize their adherence to the global movement of solidarity with the Palestinian people and their solidarity with the comrades prosecuted for the demonstrations of 22 September and 3 October 2025 at the Massa Centro train station and the port of Marina di Carrara, as part of the extraordinary mobilization that, just one year ago, brought together hundreds of initiatives and millions of people in the streets against the genocide.

The university's promoters declared "our full support for the campaign against repression, in particular for the regional general strike called for 14 October throughout Tuscany by both the CGIL and the USB. We need radical programs and convergences to mark an autumn of struggle and unity against genocide, rearmament and militarization."

It is also in this spirit that the adhesion of the Ecosocialist University to the Observatory against the Militarization of Schools and Universities must be understood.

The documents of this edition will be posted on the *Sinistra Anticapitalista* website and broadcast on the Radio Res Network channels. See you in the struggle this autumn and at the next edition!

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