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The myth of Direct Foreign Investment

30 September 2018, by **Lal Khan**

The aggressive penetration of imperialist transnational corporations, particularly in the ex-colonial world, began after the Bretton Woods treaty of 1944. World capitalist powers setup new financial and trade institutions like the IMF, World Bank and WTO for the facilitation of their investments and profits. The modus operandi was the colossal debt burden on neo-colonial countries through an unjust and cruel division of labour in the world markets. Prices of goods and products from poor countries were diminished and those of technology etc. from the advanced capitalist countries inflated. This imbalance of trade and resultant fiscal deficits forced the neo-colonial capitalist regimes into a debt trap, making them subservient to imperialist institutions and the interests of transnational corporations.

The crushing domination of the world market was hard to resist under the capitalist socioeconomic system. Nehru's state capitalist regime tried to

withstand these pressures, restricting Indian markets through high tariffs. However, in the 1990's India capitulated and opened up its huge market to imperialist monopolies. Initially, the growth rates increased sharply, but it has worsened mass misery. India has the largest concentration of poverty in the world at present.

There were certain tariff controls in Pakistan until the late 1970's. However, with the advent of Reaganomics, Thatcherism and neoliberal economics under General Zia's brutal dictatorship, this model of state controls began to unravel. Under the 'democratic' governments of Benazir and Nawaz Sharif this process accelerated. Ever since, the popular mantra of economic growth and employment generation of the political elite has been Direct Foreign Investment (DFI). Pakistan's Western educated economic experts slavishly follow this disastrous IMF recipe. It's now the corner stone of Imran Khan's

economic doctrine. Other parties dominating the present political setup offer the same economic formula.

Corporate bosses have amassed trillions of dollars through the treacherous connivance of the native rulers, whom they hire cheaply, squeezing the blood and tears of the workers. With the onset of every new crisis, their experts try to forge new methods to extract more surpluses. Furthermore, from 2005 onwards, multinationals shifted their production from being labour intensive to capital intensive with advanced technology and robots replacing workers.

One OECD (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development) research paper unmasks the DFI myth: "Foreign direct investment is often thought to bring, production, construction of new factories, and transfer of technology. That is not the case anymore... The growing complexity of the corporate structures of large multinationals has shifted the

investment emphasis to other more “secure” avenues.”

Corporate production is now capital intensive, not labour intensive. Technology and robots are replacing workers

The crash of 2008 and the contraction of the markets have had a severe impact on transnational corporate profitability. These corporations are venturing into massive tax evasion and concealment of the trillions of dollars with the corporate bosses reluctant to invest due their scepticism of the system’s future. This has sent alarm bells ringing in the imperialist financial institutions. The IMF internal research document, “Finance & Development, June 2018, Vol. 55, No. 2: How tax havens work, says, “New research reveals that multinational firms have invested \$12 trillion globally in empty corporate shells, and citizens of some financially unstable and oil-producing countries hold a disproportionately large share of the \$7 trillion personal wealth stashed in tax havens...The offshore industry and financial world remains highly opaque. Because of the secrecy that lies at the heart of the services offered by offshore banks, lawyers, and domiciliation companies, it is hard to know exactly how much money is funnelled through tax havens, where the money is coming from, and where it is going”. This capital amounts to 40 percent of all foreign direct

investment.

The sleaze of the capitalist system lays bare as a healthy recovery from the 2008 crash of world capitalism is still nowhere in sight. Even small DFIs that trickle into Pakistan come at exorbitantly high costs for the oppressed masses of the country. In the last decade, every dollar of this foreign investment extorted 14 dollars from Pakistan. Now this ratio has doubled. Imran Khan’s economic policy gurus have no clue on how to get out of this vicious economic cycle. The truth is that within the confines of capitalism, there is no way out. Our mainstream parties are just representatives of different factions of Pakistan’s criminal capitalist elite. Poverty, unemployment, lack of education, public health and infrastructure are in a terrible state. Deprivation and misery are appalling. Hence they rule through the gimmickry and personal antics exaggerated by the corporate media.

After the socialist revolution in Russia, the Bolsheviks expropriated all national and imperialist wealth and assets. However, they still needed advanced technology for the extraction of minerals from Siberia and development of industry. But Lenin knew that the corporate monopolies needed those contracts even more for their existence. Hence, the Bolsheviks signed deals on stiff conditions ensuring that not an extra

penny of the workers republic was plundered by imperialist monopolies. In the 21st century, one can cite the examples of the socialist governments of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador. Although their socialist revolutions were incomplete, the deals they signed with the transnational corporations were somewhat similar to those signed by the Bolshevik government after 1917.

Worsening crises and turbulence under this reactionary capitalism will haunt Pakistan’s economy and society in the stormy period that impends. [1] Without a socialist transformation of the economy, state and society, the country cannot escape this abyss of joblessness, destitution and suffering. To accomplish such a great historical task, a revolutionary party may not yet be discernable on the political horizon. But history is witness to the fact that Marxist parties leading socialist revolutions only emerge on the verge of revolutionary movements. Such historical moments may not be that far off!

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[Daily Times](#)

“Everything under heaven is in utter chaos; the situation is excellent”? Some hasty reflections on the current crisis

29 September 2018, by Martín Mosquera

As we said in a previous document (after the December crisis): “The dominant classes have the initiative, but have failed to establish, for the moment, a new hegemony or stabilize a new relationship of forces between classes. Even in this defensive

framework for the popular classes, neoliberal transformations are slowed down by social resistance. Government policies are advancing, but they are gradually losing their mass base and face recurrent situations of major social mobilization,

albeit without an alternative political and social bloc emerging.” We define this situation as “hegemonic instability”. [2]

August’s mega devaluation concretized a qualitative leap within

the newly delineated framework. The "lack of dollars", the level of indebtedness, the "mistrust of the markets", and thus the enormous external fragility and the risk of new currency runs, place the country at a critical juncture and on the verge of a crisis of greater proportions. The preceding "gradualism" has broken down, not to return, and we face a real shock therapy hitting the popular classes confirmed in the recent announcements that restructure ministries, cut subsidies and, above all, set the goal of "zero deficit" in tax matters. The successive runs on the currency would seem to place the government in a situation of uncertainty and disorientation, at the limit of losing control definitively. In this context, internal disputes in the government coalition are also flourishing: between the "political wing" and the "technical wing", between the PRO and its radical allies and Carrió, between the government and many of the powerbrokers that gave it sustenance (the *Clarín* group, for example).

In this economic and political crisis, *Macrismo* again comes up against the boundary that has structurally conditioned its whole governmental mandate. As it is in an unfavourable social relationship of forces for the implementation of a violent adjustment plan, the set of measures that it is implementing are experienced as strongly prejudicial by the popular classes, while being insufficient for "the markets" and for the necessary social restructuring that capitalist accumulation in the country needs. The dominant classes need a regressive transformation of the kind that that followed 1976, 1989 or 2001. But current power relations are a real challenge to this. They open, perhaps, two hypotheses to the future. Either *Macrismo* suddenly concretises a brutal fall in purchasing power (via a violent inflationary crisis), and liquidates its political capital in the attempt, (and, perhaps, a future government can pick up the "successes" of the "kamikaze" social transformation perpetrated); or the necessary restructuring is of such magnitude that it is slowed down by social resistance and there is a prolonged cycle of social, political and economic instability (which will

transcend the current government).

Today, the main difference between the current crisis and those of 1989 and 2001 is in the political arena: the strong collaboration of Peronism and the CGT. While in those crises Peronism at a certain point decided to confront the government, today most of the PJ is ready to cover politically for *Macrismo*. This is for three fundamental reasons: first, Peronism today does not have a valid leadership like that of Menem in 1989 or Duhalde in 2001. Second, no fraction of bourgeois politics wants to deal with a "new 2001" which puts governance at risk and presses for large social concessions. Finally, Peronism wants the current government to go as far as possible in the adjustment to offer itself subsequently as manager of the instability that could emerge from the current shock against the popular classes.

An "optimistic" scenario for the government would be that it manages to stabilize the adjustment program while avoiding a large economic upheaval (default, hyperinflation) and/or a popular outburst. In any case, it is not going to be able to avoid a major deterioration of the social situation (better said, its objective is to stabilize the economic situation through devaluation of wages and an adjustment in the public sector to reduce the deficit). Therefore, in the best hypothesis, it will have to face the next presidential elections in much worse political conditions (and perhaps with new candidate or in agreement with a sector of Peronism). A crisis is not a guarantee, by itself, of political defeat for the government, or much less, of a society's "turn to the left." But even a scenario of "controlled social regression" would create many obstacles for government's re-election attempts. It cannot be ruled out that a provisional "victory" of the government - if it is able to stabilize the adjustment by avoiding an economic catastrophe or a great mass mobilization - would then be compensated for with an "electoral sanction" from the people. However, the strategic objective for the popular classes does not lie primarily in the forthcoming electoral contests, from which it is unreasonable to expect a "people's government" to emerge

(unless there is a hallucinatory view of the relationship of political forces or naïve expectations of Peronism). Rather, it is necessary to mobilize to break the attempt to manage the crisis.

The crisis opens up a moment of radical uncertainty. A major crisis is a turning point and the origin of a global redefinition of the test of strength between classes. The social and political landscape that would result cannot be predicted. Just as there is a "capitalist" use of the crisis by the employers (attacking wages in the face of fear of layoffs and so on), there is also political leverage on the part of governments. The crisis can push people into struggle but also flatten social expectations and generalize a disciplinary panic. The hyper-inflationary catastrophe of 1989 generated a social disorganization that legitimized Menem's subsequent neo-liberal turn. It is even possible to have a combination of both reactions: 2001 was the response to the crisis from the recession started in 1998, but the biggest blow to wages came after the days of December, with the devaluation of 2002, and generated a relatively minor reaction. As a condensed class struggle, the outcome of the crisis cannot be anticipated.

II

We must not lose sight of the growing role of the judiciary which we have seen in the past few months in the midst of the crisis. It may respond to a long-term trend: the authoritarian tightening of a political regime which is increasingly weak in its consensual dimension. The open operation around the Centeno notebooks puts us before a new phenomenon, of regional scope, that perhaps we could call "judicial Bonapartism". Under the pretext of the fight against corruption, the judiciary is elevated as an arbitrator with regard to the political regime, violating or leading to the limit of formal democratic proceduralism (reaching the point, in Brazil, of perpetrating an "institutional coup"). In alliance with the big media monopolies, this Bonapartism seeks to protect the political regime, harming elemental democratic rights and acting for the benefit of interests

hostile to the popular classes.

The unveiling of the intimate links between political power and entrepreneurship has a positive aspect. It can serve to denounce the structural corruption of capitalism, especially in a dependent country like ours. However, we must be clear about the definitely reactionary nature of the whole operation. One sector of the left considers that these allegations of corruption are the battering ram to denounce the political caste together and hope for a “*lava Jato* to the end”, in which the arrest of the Kirchnerista leaders would be only the first step. An important polemic is opened here, which could become central in the event of CFK’s arrest. We should point out not only that these operations play a distracting role in relation to the social deterioration and the economic crisis, but that the development of this judicial/media “war machine” responds to interests hostile to the popular classes and aims at reducing democratic rights in a reactionary sense. It is also necessary to be aware that in many cases the “*mani pulite* (s)” (clean hands) set up favourable conditions for the emergence of authoritarian populist demagogues (such as Berlusconi and Salvini in Italy, or Bolsonaro in Brazil). A sector of the left, which is enthusiastic about allegations of corruption, the arrests of the Kirchnerista leadership and this kind of breakdown of the political class, can end up being placed as the “extreme left” of the neoliberal bloc. The case of Brazil and the differences on the left concerning the “institutional coup” and the arrest of Lula are evidence of the shock that may be in store.

The instability of the political situation obliges some hypotheses. Until now, there were two obstacles to arresting CFK: 1) The fear of social rejection that it could generate (surely higher than that of Lula’s arrest in Brazil); 2) Secondly, the government seems to need her as a competitor, to guarantee the division of Peronism and try to take advantage of the hostility she generates. While the former remains in force, and any detention would be a high-risk operation (the combination of economic crisis and CFK’s

imprisonment could be explosive), there may be sectors tempted to remove CFK as the only way to allow any candidacy coming from the PJ or some “national unity” agreement. For now, Pichetto stands firm in the rejection of any dismissal without firm judgement, but a bill is already underway that would prevent people convicted in the higher court from standing (“*ficha limpia*”, presented by the now famous congresswoman Lospennato). On the other hand, as journalist Carlos Pagni asks: “Pichetto can resist the pressure from public opinion for Cristina to be stripped of her privileges. But can he resist the pressure of his own party, which also needs her as a prisoner?” [3]

An arrest of CFK would be a leap in the anti-democratic interference of “judicial Bonapartism” and would impact decisively on the political situation. Like in Brazil, strict political differentiation from CFK’s leadership must be accompanied by opposition to this possible qualitative leap from state-authoritarian hardening aimed at prosecuting social and political opponents.

It is worth noting that the government maintains an ambiguous role to the phenomenon unleashed by the “notebooks”. It takes advantage of it, to some extent, but does not feel comfortable with the allegations that touch it closely (Calcaterra, IECSA, Franco MACRI). This seems to show that Macri’s leadership power over his socio-political bloc is limited, and that judicial Bonapartism has also risen above its competence and authority (which seems to give support to the “Chinese trail” suggested by several analysts, that this issue has its origin in the US State Department and is a chapter in the trade war between the US and China). The government is trying to contain the case of the notebooks so that it is not affected closely, even more considering that allegations of corruption impact more severely on its social base than on that of *Kirchnerismo*. The bribery allegations in the Senate in 2000 were a wound from which the Alliance government never recovered, which had been installed with promises of “moral and institutional regeneration”. The government is trying to surf successfully over the explosive

emergence of the issue, but does not seem to control it point by point. [16] Furthermore, it should be added, as Roger Martelli has pointed out, that in an economic system as global as it is today, it is the low wage costs in the countries of the “South” that serve as the principal means of pressure for capitalists, not the presence of immigrant workers in the main global economic powers [18].

“We are thinking about the profits made from the development of security technology in the area of border surveillance, but also of everything in the countries of immigration that comes from legislation on the reception, lodging, detention and expulsion of foreigners. In both cases, the beneficiaries of this windfall are principally private enterprises: armaments and aeronautics industries, insurance companies, security companies, private providers for the management of visas, as well as a plethora of operators involved in the implementation of migration and asylum policies”.

With colossal sums at stake: the market for border security in Europe amounted to 15 billion euros in 2015 and, according to some estimates, is expected to increase to more than 29 billion euros per year in 2022, for the benefit of multinationals like G4S, Thales, Finmeccanica and Siemens... All of this hardly confirms the thesis of “pro-migrant” employers, although this issue is in reality secondary in the discussion that we are dealing with, compared to the need to constantly repeat that France and Europe have indeed the means of welcoming migrants, and that the discussion is political, not technical or economic.

For a consistent internationalism

It should be noted in passing that the second axis of the discourse of Jean-Luc Mélenchon and FI about migrants – which consists of explaining that although it is necessary to accommodate “people [who] have touched the sacred soil of the homeland” (sic) it is also necessary to “ensure that they can live with dignity

at home” so that they will have no reason to leave their country, [19] - resembles more an “internationalist” counter-shot than a consistent political agenda. It is in fact difficult to find consistency between the proclaimed willingness to “let the countries of the South develop” (through the denunciation of free trade treaties) and the absence of demands, inter alia, for the abolition of debt (but only for its “restructuring”), for the expropriation of French multinationals who plunder the wealth of African countries, the dismantling of the bases and military installations that assure France a role of “gendarme of Africa”, without even mentioning the enthusiastic discourse about “France, present on all continents” or “France, the second maritime territory of the world”, a situation which is above all an ever-present legacy of French colonialism.

And let us add that the posture according to which it is necessary to “create the conditions for people to live in a correct way at home” is not unambiguous, entertaining the idea that the objective is to reduce migratory flows, or even to “dry them up”, according to the formula of Djordje Kuzmanovic, adviser to Jean-Luc Mélenchon and future candidate of FI in the European élections. [20]. For our part, we would prefer to say clearly that we tend towards the

objective of creating the conditions for migration to be free, and not forced. And we also do not forget that, according to all the forecasts, a large majority of refugees will, in future, be climate refugees, and that it is futile to argue that it would be possible, including by repealing the free trade treaties, to lay the basis for a global slowdown in migratory flows, given how advanced global warming is, and even though we fight against climate change.

Everyone will understand that these internationalist criticisms, which are based on a defence of freedom of movement and residence, are intended to further the discussion on the left, and do not have anything to do with the postures of the LREM leaders who, since the end of the summer, have been attacking the “nationalism” of Jean-Luc Mélenchon. This is an opportunistic offensive - both pathetic and cynical - coming from a government and a majority whose anti-migrant obsession, particularly embodied in the asylum-immigration law, demonstrates an increasingly strong alignment with ultra-nationalistic currents, whether French or European.

At a time when some people in Germany claim to be fighting the far right by creating a movement in which one of the markers is to denounce the

“naivety” of the left on issues related to immigration, that is by taking up the vocabulary of the right and the far right, there is no question of equivocating. Welcome migrants, all migrants, without establishing a hierarchy between “political refugees” and “economic migrants”. Regularize undocumented workers, all undocumented workers, without separating out “those who work” and “those who do not work”. Refuse to give an inch of ground to reactionary theorists of “a breathing space” or “unfair competition”. Defend unconditional freedom of movement and residence, insisting that this is nothing but a matter of political choice and of a struggle for a real distribution of wealth.

These are perspectives that we have not given up and that we will continue, with many others, to defend, within a Europe in which ill winds are growing stronger. While proposing, here and now, the constitution of fronts comprising all those, and we know that there are many of them in FI, who refuse to remain passive in the face of the enterprise of methodical destruction of all our gains, in the face of the continuation of the law-and-order and repressive offensive, in the face of racist policies and the criminalisation of solidarity... And who do not intend to wait until 2019 to put Macron in his place.

Tropical Forests Are Flipping From Storing Carbon to Releasing It

26 September 2018, by **Sam Eaton**

It wasn't until heavily armed men arrived from across the river that Cláudio José da Silva realized who was bankrolling the latest episode of illegal logging. His bare chest traced with blue-black lines of body paint, da Silva is a member of the Guajajara people in eastern Brazil, one of the country's largest indigenous groups. Their side of the Carã River is pristine Amazon rain forest. Across

the river, the rain forest has been razed and replaced by cattle ranches and farms. On paper, the Guajararas' nearly 700 square miles of rain forest are protected as federally recognized indigenous territory. In reality, the group lives under constant threat of theft and violence. Just the day before, da Silva's self-defense force, the Guardians of the Forest, caught the local sheriff's son using cattle to drag

lumber from their forest. Armed with machetes, they chased him away and confiscated the cows. Now the sheriff had come bearing an ultimatum: Return the cattle or his posse would retrieve them by force.

“This struggle, for us, is war,” da Silva says. He claims to have received dozens of death threats since founding the Guardians of the Forest in 2012.

"The loggers carry arms. The farmers are armed. They want confrontation." Indeed, on August 12, a month after I visited da Silva, the dead body of his comrade, Jorginho Guajajara, was found in a nearby river.

Violent conflicts over land and logging have spilled blood throughout the Amazon since the 1980s, when the murder of the organizer Chico Mendes made international headlines. Brazil is the deadliest country in the world for land defenders, with more than 140 killings since 2015, according to the NGO Global Witness. The state of Maranhão, where the Guajajara live, is perhaps the most dangerous: In 2016, more attacks on indigenous groups occurred there than anywhere else in Brazil, according to the Pastoral Land Commission.

Apart from the human toll, the violence in the Amazon is also driving an ominous trend in the earth's climate system. Last October, Science published one of the most important²¹ and least noticed²² climate studies in years. [21] Tropical forests in the Amazon and around the world have been so degraded by logging, burning, and agriculture that they have started to release more carbon than they store, according to scientists from the Woods Hole Research Center and Boston University. In the parlance of climate change, these forests are flipping from carbon sinks to carbon sources.

This is very bad news, for two reasons. First, until now, the capacity of forests to absorb carbon dioxide via photosynthesis has been a crucial buffer against greenhouse-gas emissions: The forests' absorption of CO₂ has limited the global temperature rise to considerably less than it would otherwise be. Second, forests must absorb even more carbon going forward if humankind is to contain that temperature rise to a survivable amount. Current trends put the earth on a trajectory to an increase of 3.5 degrees Celsius, an amount that scientists have warned is "incompatible with organized society." Minimizing future emissions is imperative, but it's not enough. To meet the Paris Agreement's commitment to hold the temperature

rise "well below" 2°C, humankind must also "go negative." That is, we must extract the CO₂ that's already in the atmosphere and store it where it can no longer trap heat, notably in the earth's trees and soil. And that means growing more trees, not cutting them down.

"This is really very serious," says Carlos Nobre, Brazil's leading climatologist, in an interview at his home in a tree-lined suburb outside São Paulo. Nobre has the tired expression of someone who's been ringing the alarm bell for too long while society looks away. He says the world's forests have been absorbing roughly 30 percent of the CO₂ emissions generated by human activities. But Nobre's research, conducted with Thomas Lovejoy of George Mason University, has found that deforestation, combined with rising temperatures and the droughts and fires they encourage, is taking a heavy toll.

"We're dangerously approaching a point where the convergence of all these drivers might reach irreversibility," Nobre says. Cross that threshold, and much of the Amazon rain forest will begin to die. The Amazon could reach that tipping point if 20 to 25 percent of its original forest cover is destroyed, Nobre estimates. In that case, more than half the Amazon would transition from rain forest to savannah, releasing massive amounts of CO₂ into the atmosphere as the trees die and burn. Such a "dieback" is one of the scenarios that could trigger runaway global warming, according to the "hothouse Earth" study published by the Potsdam Climate Impacts Institute in August.

Humans have deforested roughly 16 percent of the entire Amazon basin so far, Nobre cautions²³ "just 4 to 9 percent from his projected tipping point. This means that the deforestation must be halted²⁴ and soon²⁵ if humankind is to have much chance of avoiding a climate catastrophe.

Just as the consequences of the Amazon's deforestation are global, so are its causes. "There's really no mystery as to the main reasons we're

seeing tropical forests disappear," says Frances Seymour, a senior fellow on forest and governance issues at the World Resources Institute. "Vast areas continue to be cleared for soy, beef, palm oil, and other globally traded commodities."

The world's growing demand for meat has transformed Brazil into an agricultural superpower. Today it boasts the largest commercial cattle herd in the world. It's also the world's largest exporter of soy, mostly for animal feed, with food giants like Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland eagerly processing that harvest into their transnational supply chains. Globally, hundreds of billions of dollars are invested each year in cattle, grains, and palm oil, which translates into additional deforestation. Dirty money only feeds the destruction: More than two-thirds of the foreign capital driving the expansion of Brazil's soy and beef sectors were channeled through offshore tax havens, according to a Stockholm University study published in Nature in August, making accountability for environmental destruction that much harder to enforce.

As with the assaults against the Guajararas, much of the clearing of tropical forests, in the Amazon and elsewhere, is illegal²⁶ but it continues with the blessing of corrupt officials. Throughout Brazil's so-called "arc of deforestation," a crescent-shaped strip tracing the southern and eastern edges of the Amazon, such violent clashes are only the first stage in a chain of events that threatens indigenous people and global climate stability alike.

Criminal organizations and land grabbers start with illegal logging, Nobre explains, extracting valuable timber from indigenous lands and other supposedly off-limits areas. With the money gained from selling that timber, the criminals clear the land and plant grass for cattle. Once they have enough cows on the land, they draw up phony titles and sell the lots.

It's at this point that the corruption becomes institutionalized. Astonishingly, criminals who seize land then have their actions made

legal, because the Brazilian government grants them amnesty. In 2017, President Michel Temer signed legislation “regularizing” illegal land claims by anyone who appropriated Amazonian land before 2011. And that amnesty was an extension of the previous 2004 limit. The maximum area of claimable land was also increased, from 1,500 hectares (3,706 acres) to 2,500 hectares (6,178 acres) per person. “It’s a very perverse dynamic,” Nobre says.

In Brazil, that dynamic has also transformed the political landscape, enabling a coalition of landed rural elites called the ruralistas to dominate, despite the fact that 86 percent of Brazil’s population lives in cities and towns. Some have called the ruralistas’ breathtaking rise to power a “parliamentary dictatorship.” Their success is due to the growing economic clout of the agribusiness sector, as well as a savvy political union—dubbed the BBB caucus, for “beef, Bibles, and bullets”—in which the farm lobby joined with evangelical and anti-gun-control parties to take control of Brazil’s Congress.

The rise of the ruralistas has largely reversed the Brazilian government’s previous success in slashing deforestation rates. Between 2002 and 2009, federal protections were applied in the Amazon to an area twice the size of Germany; enforcement was beefed up; and financial credit was denied to properties associated with illegal deforestation. Those hard-won achievements are now being gutted. An embattled Temer, in exchange for the ruralistas’ support, has provisionally lowered environmental standards, suspended the ratification of indigenous lands, and reduced the size of protected areas. Nara Baré, who heads the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations from the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB), one of the largest such organizations in South America, explains that the ruralistas’ motives are simple: “to expand agribusiness and to expand large enterprises that are focused on the Amazon.”

In the agricultural boomtown of Sinop in northern Mato Grosso, that logic is on full display. Sinop’s brief history includes all the stages of the Amazon’s

deforestation: from logging in the 1970s, to cattle ranches in the 1980s, to today’s mechanized soy plantations, which have brought wealth and prosperity to early settlers like Jaime Farinon, who owns an 8,000-acre farm there.

“We came to this region in 1985 to occupy—to turn this abandoned land into a productive area,” Farinon says, tapping a cigarette from a pack of Dunhills. Those were the final days of Brazil’s military dictatorship, an era that Farinon remains nostalgic for. “Maybe we’ll manage to get a Trump here to align this country.” This is a none-too-veiled allusion to Jair Bolsonaro, a current presidential candidate and apologist for Brazil’s dictatorship, who is known for his attacks on women, black people, homosexuals, and indigenous communities. “In these parts,” Farinon adds, “you have to have a little blood in your veins.”

When he first arrived in the Amazon, Farinon was allowed to clear the trees from half of his land. The laws have since changed to allow only 20 percent of private lands to be deforested, which is hindering expansion, Farinon complains. He owns another 1,700 acres that aren’t worth clearing because of these limits: “It’s the laws that are blocking us.”

Officials at the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), the federal agency for environmental protection, paint a very different picture. Evandro Selva, an IBAMA enforcement officer, works in the northwest corner of Mato Grosso. Selva looks the part of an environmental cop: square jaw, black polo shirt, and blue jeans, the keys for his truck clipped to a belt loop. With resigned weariness, he points to the stacks of green paper folders in his office, which reach from the floor to the ceiling. “All of these are fines—deforestation embargoes, illegal mills, illegal timber transport from indigenous lands, from private lands.” But only 10 percent of the fines will ever be paid, Selva adds, because “there is no fear of being punished.”

President Temer reinforced that

message last year, when—again with the ruralistas’ support—he slashed the budget of the Ministry of Environment, which includes IBAMA, by a staggering 43 percent. Those draconian cuts, and the political message they’ve sent, will make Selva’s work even more untenable. His field office is responsible for patrolling an area with one of the highest deforestation rates in the world. But “we only have four agents,” he tells me, “of which three will retire in the next 12 months.”

The ruralistas are also targeting one of the most effective strategies for protecting the Amazon: indigenous land rights. The ruralista bloc has introduced more than 100 bills in Congress aimed at reducing the land rights and autonomy of indigenous and other traditional communities. “Brazil’s debt with the Indian is not over land,” says Nilson Leitão, the ruralistas’ polished political leader, who wants to open indigenous lands to mining and other extractive industries.

But indigenous people are fighting back. In April, more than 3,000 representatives from over 100 groups descended on Brasília, the nation’s capital, for a week of rallies that proved to be the largest mobilization of indigenous people in Brazilian history. The agribusiness lobby “is our main enemy,” says Sônia Guajajara, a vice-presidential candidate from the Socialism and Freedom Party and the executive coordinator of the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil, the umbrella group that organized the mobilization. “They can’t see the environment as a space that needs to be preserved because it guarantees life, guarantees water. They only see it as something to exploit, to create wealth.” Guajajara argues that preserving the rain forest requires more financial support and legal protection for indigenous people so they can do the kind of patrolling that Cláudio José da Silva’s Guardians of the Forest are doing in Maranhão. “The Brazilian state doesn’t do it,” she says, “so the indigenous people are doing it themselves. But they lack resources.”

Fighting the Climate Wreckers

Guajajara's recommendation mirrors the findings of specialists: that the best way to defend forests is to empower the people who inhabit the forests, assuring them of property rights, legal standing, and government protection against invasions by outsiders. Annual deforestation rates in the areas legally managed by indigenous peoples have been two to three times lower than in other forests, while generating billions of dollars' worth of benefits from carbon sequestration, reduced pollution, clean water, and more, according to the Woods Hole Research Center and World Resources Institute. But in the Amazon, 71 million hectares—an area roughly the size of Chile—remain undesignated public lands, leaving them especially vulnerable to deforestation. "The land grabbers consider these areas to be a no-man's land that can be invaded,"

says Renã Luiz de Oliveira, head of environmental enforcement at IBAMA.

Zero deforestation is possible in Brazil. One model of future land use projects that if the country continues to expand the agricultural and livestock frontier into new areas at the current rate, over 50 percent of the Amazon rain forest will be razed by 2050. However, if Brazil shifts to a sustainability scenario, reinvesting and strengthening its environmental policies and enforcement, deforestation can be virtually halted. Getting to that zero-deforestation future will require a reshuffling of economic incentives that makes it worthwhile to leave forests standing. But the payoff is potentially enormous, saving Brazil as much as \$100 billion a year by 2030 while also fulfilling the country's emissions-reduction commitment of 43 percent under the Paris Agreement.

Meanwhile, in Maranhão, I watch as da Silva and his fellow Guardians wake before sunrise and pour sweet black coffee from orange thermos

containers into shared glass jars. They paint their faces and chests with a red paste made from urucã seeds before climbing into speedboats for the day's patrol.

"This painting represents blood," da Silva tells me. "We paint when we monitor our territory. It gives us more strength, more energy. This is for fighting."

The day before, da Silva and I had stopped at the spot where the sheriff's son had downed the trees he tried to steal. Someone had placed a cross made of palm fronds on the riverbank—a clear threat. But da Silva was undeterred. His biggest concern, he says, is that in 30 years' time, his people's territory will no longer be a vibrant rain forest, but rather the deforested landscape that relentless logging and industrial farming has engendered across the river. "We keep fighting," he tells me, "so that this doesn't happen."

[The Nation](#)

The Challenges for the Left in Europe and the Eurozone

25 September 2018, by **Éric Toussaint**

The policies dictated by the European leaders have six fundamental objectives:

1. Bail-out the private banks with public funds so that they may avoid the damaging consequences of their own private credit bubble.
2. Give to the new public creditors, who replaced the private creditors, enormous coercive powers over the governments and institutions of the peripheral countries in order to impose policies of radical austerity, deregulation, privatisations and stricter authoritarian controls.
3. Preserve the Eurozone perimeter

(in other words, keep Greece and the other peripheral countries within the Eurozone), which is a powerful instrument in the hands of the multinational corporations and the major economies of the Zone.

4. Bring neoliberal policies to bear more heavily on Greece, in particular, but also on the other Eurozone peripheral countries as an example for all the European populations.
5. Reinforce a Europe-wide authoritarian form of governance, without resorting to new experiments resembling Fascist or Nazi regimes or that of Franco, Salazar or the Greek colonels (1967-1974).

6. Impose easier labour legislation and lower wages to render European goods and services competitive on the world market and to increase the rate of profit.

A large part of the radical left who have sitting members of Parliament had and still have a mistaken idea of what EU integration and the Eurozone are. To say it simply, they seem to see more advantages than disadvantages in the EU. They consider that the EU, as much as the Eurozone, is compatible with a return of social-democratic policies, somewhat less injustice and a Keynesian style relaunching of the economy.

This is profoundly wrong.

We should be clear: EU is not only a neoliberal project of integration. It is also a project of big capital. It is a tool to integrate the peoples of Europe into a single market in which they are made to compete one against the other and in which they are also competing with all the other peoples of the planet.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, there have been three failed attempts to unify Europe: the first with the Napoleonic wars at the beginning of the 19th century, the second and the third one led by big German capital that caused WW1 and WW2. The fourth attempt is succeeding peacefully piloted by the big Capital of the main economies of the continent. It is not only a victory and an achievement of the German bourgeoisie, it is a big victory for the European bourgeoisies of the core countries and also for the bourgeoisies of the peripheral countries which have no national projects of their own.

The European bourgeoisies are using the centre/periphery relations inside the EU as a tool in the class struggle.

There are lessons to be learned from the failure by the government of Alexis Tsipras in 2015 to break the bonds of austerity. Also, it is necessary to realise the limits of the socialist minority government of Antonio Costa in Portugal.

Alternative policies in the people's interest must at the same time deal with austerity, public debt, private banks, the Eurozone and oppose authoritarian tendencies without forgetting the climatic and ecological crises, the humanitarian crisis caused by Europe's fortified-borders policy, the Middle East crisis, the far-right and the rise of racism.

Since the election of Donald Trump, and also since the appearance of the radical movements that gathered around Bernie Sanders, the European radical left, trade unions, feminists and ecologists must create links with the forces of resistance in the U.S.

Considering the experiences of 2015, it is fundamental to strengthen an authentic ecological and socialist

alternative in rupture with the EU, as it exists.

Neither the EU nor the Eurozone can be reformed.

The first lesson comes from the capitulation of the Syriza government: The People and the authorities entrusted to break with austerity programmes cannot put an end to the Human Rights violations perpetrated by the creditors and the big corporations unless they take strong unilateral measures of self-defence.

Having said that, the way-out of the crisis is not of a Nationalist nature. As much as in the past it is necessary to adopt an Internationalist strategy and aim for a European integration that binds all the peoples opposed to the present form of integration that is totally dominated by the interests of big capital.

If Syriza had adopted a correct strategy in 2015 it could well have been a turning point. It didn't happen. Without doubt, the force of popular mobilisation will be an important decisive factor. If the pressure for real uncompromising change does not invade the streets, the neighbourhoods and the work places, the future will be very dim.

Ten proposals for social mobilisation and actions to be taken immediately and simultaneously by any government that is truly functioning in the interests of the people (see this article).

First : a left-wing government must, in line with its prior commitments, clearly and openly disobey the European Commission.

The party or coalition of parties (the example of Spain comes to mind) which claims to govern should refuse to obey the austerity measures from the outset, and pledge to refuse measures for the sole reason of balancing the budget. They should announce:

"We will not yield to the European treaties' diktat of a balanced budget because we want to increase public expenditures in contradiction to anti-social and austerity measures and embark on the ecological transition."

"We will create public monopolies in the financial and energy sectors and transform them into public services".

Second: a determination to call for popular mobilisation both at the national and the European level.

In 2015, it was obvious that the European social movements in solidarity with the Greek people did not achieve great success in calling for demonstrations, which did take place but were not up to the strength required.

However, it is also true that Syriza's strategy did not include calls for popular mobilization in Europe, or even in Greece. And when the Tsipras government did call for mobilization by means of the referendum of July 5, 2015, the will of the 61.5 percent of Greeks who refused to accept the creditors' demands was not respected.

Let's remember that starting in late February 2015 and up until the end of June 2015, Yanis Varoufakis and Alexis Tsipras made statements aimed at convincing public opinion that an agreement was in sight and that the situation was improving.

Imagine that instead, after each important negotiation, they had explained what was at stake through press releases, statements to the media, and declarations in public places "in front of the headquarters of the European institutions in Brussels and elsewhere. Imagine that they had revealed what was really going on. It would have led to gatherings of thousands or tens of thousands of people, and the social networks would have relayed this alternative discourse to hundreds of thousands or millions of citizens.

Third: launch a debt audit with citizens' participation

The situations in the EU countries, and of course within the Eurozone, are diverse. In some European countries - as in Greece - it is a matter of utmost necessity and priority to suspend debt repayments, in order to make an absolute priority of meeting social needs and guaranteeing basic human rights. It is also a key element of a self-defence strategy. In Spain, in

Portugal, in Cyprus, and in Ireland, it depends on the balance of power and the current economic picture. In other countries, it is possible to carry out the audit first and then decide on the suspension of repayments.

The audit should take into account the experience of the Greek Debt Truth Committee that had been created by the president of the Hellenic parliament in April 2015. The concepts of illegitimate, illegal, unsustainable and odious debts should be used to analyse the public debts.

A tool in the hand of a leftist government against the ECB : the suspension of payment on the sovereign bonds accumulated by the ECB during the QE.

In the case of Spain: for instance, the ECB owned a total of €253 billion of Spanish sovereign bonds (see: <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/mopo/impliment/omt/html/index.en.html>).

Fourth: Establish control of capital flows

Fifth: Socialise the financial sector and the energy sector

Socialising the financial sector does not merely mean developing a public banking hub. It implies decreeing a public monopoly on the financial sector, including the banks, insurance companies and other financial corporations.

That is, a socialisation of the financial sector under citizen control.

In other words, turning the financial sector into a public service.

Of course, socialising the energy sector will also remain a priority during the ecological transition. Ecological transition cannot take place without a public monopoly over the energy sector, both in terms of production and distribution.

The socialisation of the financial and energy sectors should be done through simple expropriation without compensation.

Sixth: Creation of a complementary, non-convertible currency and the unavoidable debate on the Euroexit

Whether it is a case of exiting the Eurozone or remaining, it is necessary to create a non-convertible complementary currency, a fiscal currency. In other words, a currency that would be used only locally, for exchanges within the country - for example, for paying increased pensions, salary increases for civil servants, taxes, public services etc.

Of course, we cannot avoid the debate on the Eurozone. In several countries, exiting the Eurozone is an option that must be defended by political parties, trade unions and other social movements. Several Eurozone countries will not be able to truly break away from austerity and launch an eco-socialist transition without leaving the Eurozone.

Seventh: radical tax reform

Remove VAT on basic consumer goods and services, such as food, electricity and water (up to a certain level of consumption per individual)¹, and other basic necessities. On the other hand, increase VAT on luxury goods and services, etc. We also need to increase the taxes on corporate profits and incomes above a certain level - in other words, a progressive tax on income, wealth, and luxury residences. Owner-occupied homes will not be targeted. The reform of taxation must produce immediate effects: a very significant decrease in indirect and direct taxes for the majority of the population and a very significant increase for the wealthiest 10% and for major corporations. Also,

strict new measures will be taken against fraud and tax evasion.

Eighth: deprivatization - Take back the control of privatized companies

Compensating with no more than a symbolic sum (if at all), those who have benefited from privatizations would be an appropriate gesture and would strengthen and extend the public services under citizens' control.

Ninth: implement a broad emergency plan for creating socially useful jobs and for justice

Reduce working hours with no reduction in wages. Repeal antisocial laws and adopt laws to remedy the situation of abusive mortgage debt; countries such as Spain, Ireland, Greece, etc. are the most concerned. This could well be fixed legislatively, to avoid court actions (to protect households from having to face repossession). For example, a Parliament could pass a law to cancel mortgage debts below 150,000 Euros and so put an end to such cases. A vast program of public expenditures would be implemented in order to stimulate employment and socially useful activity by encouraging local schemes.

Tenth: initiate a genuine constituent process

This does not imply constitutional changes within the existing parliamentary institutions. It involves dissolving the Parliament and electing a Constituent Assembly by direct vote.

Breaking away from austerity policies cannot be achieved if radical measures against big capital are not taken, from the very start.

Eco-socialism must be put at the heart of the debate, not left aside.

Oslo Accords accelerated the process of

colonization of the Palestinian territories

24 September 2018, by **Gilbert Achcar**

Are the Oslo Accords dead and buried?

The Oslo Accords were stillborn. I belong to the minority of those who, in 1993, criticised these agreements and warned against the impasse that was looming. The most famous critic of the time was the late Edward Said. These agreements are based on some kind of naive hope on the part of Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian leadership that a dynamic could be set in motion and achieve their goal of an independent Palestinian state. It was on this basis that they agreed to sign the accords by waiving the main conditions that Palestinian negotiators, especially those from the interior, had put forward up to then; including in particular the freezing of settlements, not to mention the question of Jerusalem or the question of refugees.

On the Israeli side, there was no illusion or naive hope whatsoever, the perspective was very different. The Oslo agreements were part of the perspective developed since 1967: to control the West Bank without the Palestinian populated areas, which would change the demographic balance. The colonization of the West Bank aims to create this *de facto* annexation of a major part of this territory, leaving the populated areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority, which finds itself playing the role of a kind of "police by proxy".

The closest thing to what the Palestinian Authority has become is the situation of the Bantustans in South Africa. That is, so-called states for the black populations, which were in fact under the domination of the South African state during the apartheid era. As critics had predicted, far from leading to a freeze followed by the dismantling of settlements, the Oslo Accords accelerated colonization. Settlement

expansion doubled in the period 1993-2000, as much as in the entire period 1967-1993.

How did Oslo accelerate the process of colonization of the Palestinian territories?

The Oslo Accords created a calm that was conducive to the acceleration of colonization. Palestinian Authority control on the Palestinian side reduced considerably the risk of attacks and demonstrations. The Zionist movement seized the opportunity to intensify colonization.

How to explain the current impasse?

The process was in acute crisis until the death of Yasser Arafat in 2004. Mahmoud Abbas, the Bush administration's favourite candidate, succeeded him and, despite the fact that he went further than any Palestinian leader in submitting to the Israeli-American desiderata, he obtained nothing. It is clear that we are in a total deadlock, which was quite predictable at the time of the signing of the Oslo agreements.

Today, the situation is worsened by the fact that since 2017, the United States has had an administration that goes far beyond the traditional pro-Israeli bias of American governments. We have now an administration that is in affinity with the Israeli far right and which is, in my opinion, preparing the political conditions for an official annexation by Israel of the West Bank territories under its current control.

How would this annexation be justified to the international community?

This would be in line with the logic of the Israeli far right, which wants unilateral separation. Their problem is: what to do with the remaining Palestinian territories? The Trump

administration, through Jared Kushner, tried to convince Jordan to regain control. But of course, the Jordanians do not want this hot potato. We are moving towards an official annexation, a *de jure* annexation. The pretext will be the Palestinian refusal of the famous American peace plan. The Israelis will then say: "You see, the Palestinians have always refused peace plans, so we will act unilaterally and annex the territories. Â»

Is colonization irreversible?

No, it would be possible to reverse the process if there were an American will to impose on Israel the withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967. Obviously, it would not be possible without a major crisis in Israel, but it is not impossible. There are no more settlers in the West Bank than there were Europeans in Algeria who left the country in 1962. It is a matter of political will. That being said, the more time passes, the more the Israelis take root, and the more difficult it becomes. And with the current balance of forces, one can't see how this could happen.

Do you think there is an alternative solution to the creation of a Palestinian state?

An argument is the claim of a single state, which some call binational and others secular, without mentioning the national factor. But in my view, this is even more utopian than the withdrawal of settlers from the Territories. The logic that says that since settlers' withdrawal is impossible, there must be a single state where Palestinians have the right to vote and where there is equality of rights between Palestinians and Israelis is even more difficult to imagine today. So we are at a dead end. It is tragic, but there is no way out of this conflict looming on the horizon today.

Price hikes and jobs: How NGOs affect the economy in Cox's Bazar

23 September 2018, by **Linah Alsaafin**

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh - A wide variety of conspicuous acronyms greets the eye, stamped anywhere from road signs and large tent warehouses to weathered buildings and newer structures with corrugated tin roofs.

These block letters belong to the 144 local and international NGOs that have sprung up in Ukhiya sub-district - some 40km from Cox's Bazar - since last August, when hundreds of thousands of Rohingya fled to Bangladesh to escape an army crackdown in neighbouring Myanmar's Rakhine state.

According to the Inter Sector Coordination Group, 918,936 refugees have arrived here as of June 2018, outnumbering the locals in the surrounding host communities by more than two to one.

In the densely populated settlements of Ukhiya, which hosts 20 camps accounting for 75 percent of the Rohingya population, the NGOs' work in providing much-needed humanitarian assistance to the refugees is evident.

The Rohingya: Silent Abuse

In close coordination with Bangladeshi authorities, they have set up health and learning centres, mobile clinics and friendly spaces for children, women and the elderly, as well as food distribution points, sanitation facilities and other infrastructure.

But the NGOs' role has also had a significant impact on Bangladeshis living in Ukhiya.

"Before the INGOS arrived, the locals' source of income came mainly from

the forest, such as woodcutting and land cultivation," said Md Nikaruzzaman Chowdhury, the executive officer of Ukhiya.

"But the forests - up to 4,000 acres (1,619 hectares) - were cut down in order to settle the refugees, so the locals were deprived of their original jobs. Now many of them have been employed by the NGOs to work in the camps, mainly labour jobs and infrastructure camp development."

As a result, added Chowdhury, the quality of the shelters' structures in the camps is getting better by the day.

Leaving jobs in favour of NGO work

In March, United Nations agencies and NGOs launched a \$950.8m appeal to provide further essential humanitarian assistance for the rest of the year to the 1.3 million people in the Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts, including nearly 400,000 Bangladeshis in the surrounding host communities.

As part of the drive, Chowdhury said that Bangladesh's government requested the NGOs and INGOs "to provide at least 25 percent to 30 percent services to the host community, in the forms of infrastructure work, increasing the capacity of our educational system and providing livelihoods to the locals".

As a result, the growing activity of NGOs in the area has boosted some local businesses, including the owners of engine-powered rickshaws or tom-toms whose customer figures have risen.

Yet, others complained that the local economy was suffering due to the presence of the humanitarian organisations.

"Entrepreneurs and traders [are] abandoning their businesses in favour for working with NGOs," said Saiful Islam, a 29-year-old computer shop owner in Ukhiya.

"Many shops are now closed because there is no one to run them any more," he added. "Labourers have also suffered because a Rohingya is more willing to be hired at a cheaper rate."

Still, Islam's friend Salim, a marketing officer, said the greater demand for blue-collar jobs is beneficial for some locals, too - even though wages have fallen or stagnated.

"There are some benefits of NGO presence, mainly in that it offers unemployed people [the chance] to get jobs like drivers, translators and labourers," he said.

"But for people like me, salaries remained the same while the cost of living has gone up."

Over the past year, locals say, the cost of tricycle journeys has risen from 20 Bangladeshi taka (\$0.24) a person to 50 taka (\$0.59). House rents have also gone up, with a two-bedroom residence now costing 15,000-20,000 taka (\$176-235) a month compared with 3,000-5,000 taka (\$35-59) before.

Commodities double the price

Outside the camps, registered Rohingya refugees - those who had arrived in Cox's Bazar during previous waves of displacement - have set up bustling marketplaces which attract

locals because of the cheaper products on offer.

As part of their work, aid agencies deliver food essentials, such as rice, lentils and vegetable oil, to the camps' residents, some of whom, in turn, hawk the surplus items at black markets for a fraction of the price found in local markets, affecting market stability.

For example, soya bean oil is sold for 40 taka (\$0.47) a litre at the Rohingya markets, while local markets sell it for 100 taka (\$1.18).

Locals say the price of household staples has also increased, with the price of vegetables, potatoes and hilsa fish - Bangladesh's national dish - doubling compared with the pre-August 2017 levels.

Traffic jams bad for business

On the narrow and twisting main road to Ukhiya, where dozens of 4X4 vehicles and pick-up trucks belonging to international organisations barrel down on a daily basis, Dishan sits behind the till at his roadside shop which sells snacks, juice, rice and flour.

The 17-year-old says that his business has gone down as the congestion and dangerous driving is keeping his customers, who usually hail from his

Court Bazar Pashchim Para village and other locales, away.

"People don't stop by here like they used to before," he said.

"Students from school and other kids used to gather in front of the store for tea and hanging out but due to the jam-packed roads, they don't any more."

Still, Dishan's mother, Rahema Khatun, said she considered the presence of the NGOs as having a positive social impact.

"There are equal job opportunities for men and women," she said, standing inside the family-owned store.

"Women especially are venturing out of the social boundaries imposed on them," added Khatun, noting that local women had found jobs in the education, medical and aid sectors.

She said she had heard rumours of young women offering sex to foreign NGO workers, but remained doubtful.

"I can't confirm what I haven't seen with my own eyes," she said.

'Positive impact'

Abul Kashem Shikdar, the general secretary of Cox's Bazar Hotel-Motel Owners Association, said that prostitution and drug smuggling have increased in the tourist town, pointing

the finger at the Rohingya refugees "who are not accustomed to our culture".

But he said the business of tourism outlets has increased due to the influx of NGO workers staying there, adding that he regarded the influence of these groups in Cox's Bazar as generally beneficial.

"Infrastructure in hotels and restaurants has developed due to the presence of foreign staff members of these organisations," he said.

"Despite the price hikes in transport and daily commodities, the NGOs give locals a chance to find jobs easily," he said.

Md Kamal Hossein, the deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar, agreed.

"The NGOs are doing something good for the host community," he said.

For Chowdhury, Ukhiya's executive officer, more infrastructure work must be carried out in the host community in order for the locals' living standards to get better.

"Both the local NGOs and INGOs have had a positive impact in Ukhiya, but it is very important to engage more local people to improve the quality of their lives," he said.

10 Aug 2018

[Al Jazeera](#)

Nowhere to run

22 September 2018, by **Sushovan Dhar**

It seems that the situation is worse now. A recent report by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), revealed worsened evidences and data about the current refugee crisis the world over. Indeed, the images of Syrian refugees desperately trying to get to Europe even under extreme perilous conditions; Trump's recent decision

forcibly cramming Latin American children into the cages of American imperialism; the Rohingyas piled up like garbage in cankerous makeshift camps in Kutupalong-Balukhali area of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh amidst rains and cyclones; boats with countless sub-Saharan Africans begging to reach the European shore and other images have been deeply

etched in our memories. However, the above report is scarier than one can imagine. Displacement has reached epidemic proportions with one out of every 110 people in the world being displaced.

More than 71 billions and still counting

Released on 19 June 2018, a day before the World Refugee Day, the report [22] is so damning that much of it is beyond imagination. It points out to a refugee crisis - exacerbated by the global capitalist crisis - that has reached historic proportions. Large numbers of people were, and are, forced to run away to foreign lands or move to another part of the country that appears "safe" and "survivable", temporarily. The report notes "As of the end of 2017, there were 71.4 million people of concern to UNHCR worldwide, more than half of whom were women and children. All had fled armed conflict, violence, insecurity, criminality, persecution, and human rights abuses. The vast majority of them (85 per cent) were in low and middle-income countries." These forced displacements are a product of war & conflicts, ethnic cleansing and economic explosions across the globe. A refugee crisis that outnumbers the after-effects of WWII and the postwar years, when 40 - 60 million persons around the globe were displaced. Every two seconds, a person is displaced in some corner of the planet or the other.

The Syrians continue to be the protagonists of this tragic snapshot, with 6.3 million refugees and 6.2 million internally displaced persons. In 2017, 2.6 million Syrians added their name to endless list of refugees coming from this devastated land. However, the rapid deterioration of the Rakhine situation in Myanmar or the latest spate of violence in the eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo forcing large numbers of Congolese to run away to adjoining Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda and the exploding violence resulting in human disaster in South Sudan have made these countries jump places in the refugee index. Today, more than 66% of all refugees come from Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, and Somalia. 2.9 million persons were displaced in 2017 alone.

A humanitarian disaster aggravated by imperialist wars

In his Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution, Lenin comments that capitalist society is and has always been horror without end. The current refugee crisis aptly illustrates the levels and the depths of this horrific system. The refugee crisis has reached an additional dimension since 2001 with the invasion of Afghanistan by imperialist powers under the pretext of "war on terror". It created 5 million refugees, half of whom have not been able to go back to their land, many of them women. As a matter of fact, Afghans were the largest number of refugees before Syrians overtook them. We should not forget that the NATO member states including Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Croatia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and others participated in this grand destruction under the Anglo-American leadership.

Again, in 2003 the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq forced 2 million Iraqis to flee the country and 1.7 million internally displaced refugees apart from hundreds of thousands of civilians dying. In 2011, the imperialist military intervention in Libya devastated the country creating up to 300,000 refugees. The offensive launched under the pretext of saving Libyans from the dictator Gaddafi was actually done in order to protect imperialist interests there. Another major humanitarian disaster enacted.

Since 2011, Syria is another theater of an unforeseen tragedy. On one side, the Anglo-American duo and their cohorts like Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey and the Russo-Iranian alliance on the other side have encouraged, backed and armed various warring factions weaving an eternal web of armed conflicts that have forced more than 12 million Syrians flee their homes. In this inter-imperialist conflict in the region, the lives of ordinary Syrian proved too cheap.

A situation is created where there are more refugees since World War II, and people are staying refugees for longer than ever before. Years, decades, sometimes entire generations. However, the instigator of this huge refugee crisis, imperialism, refuses to accept the consequences.

President Trump doesn't admit a global refugee crisis

Donald Trump comes up with a smart and innovative solution in the midst of this grave crisis. He decided to close American doors for refugees. Earlier, a travel ban on Muslim travelers from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen to US reflected his attitude towards human plight caused by repeated US misadventures in that region. Instead of ameliorating the inadequate United States Refugee Admissions Program, the US administration suspended it and thereby placed a four-month blanket ban on refugees. The president himself continues with an unashamed offensive and intolerant rhetoric about refugees and immigrants. He declared that all unauthorised crossing of the US border will be prosecuted, thus leading to criminalisation of asylum seekers and imposition of criminal sentences before any consideration of asylum claims. Moreover, asylum seekers are separated from their children creating major psychological and other detrimental consequences for the children and their families. This is done with the conscious policy of holding children as hostages to deter other would-be asylum seekers. The separation of families has appropriately been the subject of much public attention and concern, and it comes on top of a range Trump administration measures that create unfair and unreasonable risks to asylum seekers and, in many cases, conflict with US legal obligations.

Trump has regularly pronounced unrestrained hostility towards the US refugee policy even since his campaign days vilifying refugees especially, from Muslim countries.

Ironically, the realities on the ground point out that the purported dangers posed by refugees are vastly overstated. While thousands of violent incidents have taken place there resulting in death of US citizens, in not a single case has any refugee been found responsible for any violence. Around a million refugees have resettled in US since 9/11.

The EU deters refugees

The recent meeting in Brussels over the EU deal on migration ended in Europe shifting its obligation for offering help to people in trouble to keeping its borders closed.

The arrival figures have now dropped in the old continent owing to governments cracking down on the refugees. Matteo Salvini, the Home Minister of the brand new right-wing government of Italy and leader of the xenophobic Northern League, was the subject of numerous headlines these days, both for his proposal to make a census of gypsies in order to expel all those who are not Italians and for his refusal to receive the ship Aquarius. This vessel with more than 600 Africans on board was forced to float across the Mediterranean for days until landing in Spain. This undoubtedly highlighted once again the issue of desperate boats that point to Europe. For its part, in Hungary the right-wing has put into debate bills that seek to penalize those who help refugees.

Overall, the refugee crisis in the old continent - created by European imperialism that promoted wars, massacres and dictatorships in Africa and West Africa - reinforces the disintegrating tendencies of the European Union. In spite of a drop of the number of arrivals in the last two years, the crisis has worsened. In the middle of the dispute over the

distribution of the refugees, where the primary recipients (like Italy and Greece) are the most affected, France and Italy exchanged strong words. The minister, Matteo Salvini accused the French leader Emmanuel Macron of hypocrisy for his criticism of Italian immigration policy, reminding him that his country hinders the entry of migrants at the Ventimiglia crossing. On their part, the Visegrad group (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia) reject any quota of migrants in their countries. The attempt to "socialise" the crisis through country quotas has horribly failed.

The political crisis is also reproduced within each country, as exposed in Germany by the clashes between Merkel and his Minister of the Interior, Horst Seehofer, of the Christian Social Union (CSU). The latter demands that the chancellor tighten the screws against migrants and the CSU threatening that it will stop supporting the government if the borders are not closed.

An idea explored by European states is that of an opening up of new buffer states. Already Turkey after its agreement with the EU to stop migrants to Europe, hosts the largest number of refugees in the world, with 3.5 million people. The countries in which the EU states now want to confine the new migrants, cynically referred to as regional landing platforms - Libya, Albania and Tunisia - are already ruined by social and political catastrophe.

India and China not left behind

Interestingly, China was a positive beneficiary of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Rakhine state of Myanmar. While thousands of Rohingyas perished and hundreds of thousands fled for their lives, Beijing skillfully exploited the turmoil to advance its own interests. It's an

indisputable fact that the Myanmar regime has been able to operate with such brutality and impunity due to the strong Chinese support it received in spite of global condemnation of their actions including the ruthless ethnic cleansing by the army.

China's nemesis in the South Asian region, India, is not left behind. The Indo-Chinese troops might be involved in recurrent stand-offs on the controversial Himalayan border and power over Myanmar, but the aspirant super-powers on the either side of the Himalayas seems to be in complete agreement about the Rohingya crisis. Heavily invested in Rakhine state, both these powers are backing the illegal Yangon regime, an unprincipled and immoral act that needs unanimous condemnation.

The Indian government has also gone to the extent of threatening to expel nearly 40,000 Rohingya migrants that it claims has settled illegally in the country. It has also submitted a dangerous affidavit to the Supreme Court accusing Rohingyas of being involved in all sorts of criminal acts. Both India and China have economic interests in the Rakhine state. Myanmar is pivotal to India's Look-East policy and China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. Both the countries are looking to extract natural resources in Myanmar that is up for grabs. It is also an emerging arena for capital investment.

The major imperialist powers from across the Atlantic along with their cohorts and the sub-imperialists across the globe have done everything in their capacity to create this humanitarian disasters at a global scale. From devising criminal plans against migrants, protecting capitalist the interests of their respective countries, the catastrophe produced by war and economic advances has complicated the problem beyond any easy solution. And now they add spice to the curry by refusing to let in refugees.

The long march of the feminists

19 September 2018, by **Ahlem Belhadji**

Can you tell us about the latest feminist mobilizations and their dynamics?

Since 1956, the date of the promulgation of the Personal Status Code, 13 August has been Tunisia's national women's day. This year, several thousand women and men, young and old, invaded Habib Bourguiba Avenue to defend equality and individual freedoms. The call came from feminist associations, including the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, human rights organizations and several newer LGBTIQ associations.

The demonstration is part of the Tunisian feminist movement's long journey to achieve gender equality. It follows the battle for the constitutional recognition of women's rights from 2011 to 2014. The feminist movements demanded the recognition of equality between citizens in a civil status based on non-Sharian laws. But there is still a lot of resistance to harmonizing laws with the constitution.

The personal status code, which has become obsolete over time, is the subject of a heated national debate following the report of the Committee on Individual Liberties and Equality (Colibe) set up by the Presidency and led by feminist MEP Bochra Belhadj Hmida. This code includes frankly discriminatory measures inspired by Sharia law: the husband as head of the family; paternal guardianship of children except in special situations; the obligation of dowry for marriages (even if it is symbolic), and especially discrimination in inheritance.

In addition to equality between men and women, the demands also concerned respect for individual freedoms and in particular the decriminalisation of homosexuality and the free disposal of your body. The alliance between the feminist movement and the LGBTIQ movement is recent. It has resulted in several joint actions and the establishment of a Tunisian collective for individual freedoms.

What obstacles do these mobilizations face?

On 11 August, the hard-line Islamists organized a march against these reforms. They claim that they are in contradiction with religion and consider that equality and individual freedoms threaten Tunisian Muslim society and that the Colibe report is a call to *Fitna* (civil war on religious grounds). They called for all measures in favour of equality in inheritance, dowry to be abandoned and were particularly opposed to everything related to free sexual orientation.

The ruling Islamist Ennahdha party did not officially call for this demonstration, but one of its leaders was Ennahdha's former minister of religious affairs.

The two ruling parties, Nidaa Tounes and Ennahdha, are trying to create a climate of political polarisation in preparation for the 2019 elections. And the instrumentalization of women's rights is the subject that works best for that. President Caïd Essebsi, who is very disappointed by the coalition with the Islamists, needs the entire female electorate who voted massively for him to be able to counter

Ennahdha and to follow in Bourguiba's footsteps and make history by establishing equal inheritance. For its part, Ennahdha plays on religion and identity in the hope that its base will forget its failures.

The demonstration on 13 August broke the state of lethargy and demobilization of recent months following many disappointments and the economic and political crises. The government is disowned by its own people, and Essebsi's Nidaa Tounes party has splintered into several pieces with a succession war over his son. The ruling national coalition has several internal conflicts. The UGTT trade union centre is calling for the government to resign in the face of neoliberal measures dictated by the IMF and the World Bank, in a climate of unprecedented economic crisis: inflation at 7.2%, debt ratio at 72% of GDP, devaluation of the dinar.

Few political parties supported the feminist call. The Popular Front [23] joined the march the day before and eventually took a clear position on the side of the demonstrators, the Massar (former Tunisian Communist Party) also called for joining the march, while political activists from other parties demonstrated independently of their parties' positions.

The demonstrators chanted slogans for equality, for individual freedoms but also against the cost of living, corruption and all forms of conservatism. Will the Tunisian feminist movement once again be a driving force for mobilization?

23 August 2018

“If We Don’t Understand Class Struggle, We Don’t Understand Anything”

18 September 2018, by **Ken Loach**

The British film director Ken Loach is one of the most celebrated cinematic voices of our time. A deeply engaged artist and one of a handful of directors to have been awarded the prestigious Palme d’Or twice, Loach’s work often takes up social and political themes. His Œuvre has spanned the Spanish civil war (Land and Freedom), the Los Angeles janitors’ strike (Bread and Roses), the occupation of Iraq (Route Irish), the Irish war of independence (The Wind That Shakes the Barley), and the coercive side of the welfare state (I, Daniel Blake). While the so-called “populist revolt” has triggered much debate on the role of economic inequalities and social exclusion, Ken Loach has been one of the greatest narrators of working-class consciousness and its transformations under neoliberalism.

In this conversation with Italian writer and political activist Lorenzo Marsili, Loach looks at the role of art in moments of political transformation, the evolution of the working class, the meaning of class struggle today, and the left’s failure to inspire radical change.

The interview was recorded during the shooting of DEMOS, a forthcoming documentary in which Lorenzo Marsili travels across Europe investigating transnational solidarity 10 years after the financial crisis.

Lorenzo Marsili: The debate on the role of art in political change has a long history. Today we are clearly going through a moment of great geopolitical transformation and global disorientation. What would be your vision of the role that creativity can play in such a moment?

Ken Loach: In general I think that in art you only have the responsibility to

tell the truth. Any sentence that begins “Art should...” is wrong because it relies upon the imagination or perception of the people writing or painting or describing what are different roles that art can play. We need to assert the fundamental principles of ways in which people can live together. The role of writers, intellectuals, and artists is to look at these as the core principles. This is the long view of history, of struggle, so while you may have to make a tactical retreat, it is important to be aware that this is still a retreat, and the core principles are what we have to bear in mind. This is something that people who are not involved in day-to-day tactics can do.

LM: In your work the human element is not merely an illustration of the theory, but really incarnates and becomes the political. Would you agree that art has the power of showing that, ultimately, there are humans behind the great economic and political processes?

KL: Absolutely. Politics lives in people, ideas live in people, they live in the concrete struggles that people have. It also determines the choices we have and the choices we have in turn determine the kinds of people we become. How families interact is not some abstract concept of mother, son, father, daughter; it has to do with economic circumstances, the work they do, the time they can spend with each other. Economics and politics are related with the context in which people live their lives, but the details of those lives are very human, often very funny or very sad and in general full of contradiction and complexity. For the writers I have worked with and for me, the relationship between the personal comedy of daily life and the economic context in which that life

happens has always been very significant.

LM: So there’s a dialectical relationship between how economic change transforms human behavior, and human behavior, especially through collective action, transforms economic relations.

KL: Take a worker. His or her family is functioning or trying to function, but individually they have no strength because they have no power. They are simply a creature of that situation. But I do think that the sense of collective strength is something very important.

This is where it gets difficult. It is not easy to tell a story where collective strength is immediately apparent. On the other hand, it is often crude and silly to finish every film with a fist in the air and a militant call to action. This is a constant dilemma; how do you tell the story of a working class family, tragically destroyed by economic and political circumstances, and don’t leave people in despair?

LM: Something that I find hopeful even in a bleak movie such as I, Daniel Blake is that we see the coercive state apparatus, but we also see the resilience of a certain human solidarity: The poor help each other out, and people stop and clap when Daniel Blake writes a scathing graffiti outside of the job center. It suggests that we haven’t been completely transformed into homo economicus; that there is still resistance towards the commodification of all life.

KL: Yes, this is something that middle-class commentators don’t get: Workers...take the piss even if they’re laughing. In the trenches there is a

bitter comedy, and this is where we see resistance, even in the darkest places. But in particular, we've had this rise of food banks, where charity food is provided [and] you see the two public faces of our society. In I, Daniel Blake, when the woman is handing out the parcel of food to a woman who has nothing, she doesn't say, "Here's your charitable food"; instead she says, "Can I help you with your shopping?"

On the one hand you have that generosity, and on the other is the state, which behaves in the most consciously cruel way possible, knowing that it is driving people to hunger. Capitalist society is caught in this schizophrenic situation and it is depending on us to organize the solidarity.

LM: It does often seem that traditional economic alienation has morphed into an alienation towards the state. Do you think this is at the heart of phenomena such as the rise of nationalism, of xenophobia, even Brexit? Beyond the scapegoating of migrants, there is perhaps also this sense that "there is nobody that stands up for me."

KL: Yes, I do think that the mood that the right-wing populism really indicates is a failure of the left...in a similar manner as in the 1920s and 1930s. The right-wing parties enter the way with a very simple answer: The problem is your neighbor, your neighbor is a different color, your neighbor is cooking food that smells different, your neighbor is taking your job, your neighbor is in your house. The danger is that it's backed by the mass press, tolerated and promoted by broadcasters like the BBC, that, for instance, gave Nigel Farage and his company all the airtime they wanted.

LM: The focus of your work has always been on working class solidarity. You've lived through the transition from post-war social capitalism to the arrival of neoliberalism. How have you seen class solidarity transforming over this period?

KL: The biggest thing has been the reduction in the power of trade unions. In the 1950s and 1960s they

became strong because people were working in social organizations like factories, mines, or docks and at that point it was easier to organize trade unions. But those old industries died. Nowadays, people work in a much more fragmented way. We are strongest when we can stop production, but if we're not organized at the point of production, we are definitely weaker. The problem is that the production is now so fragmented and with globalization our working class now is in the Far East or in Latin America.

LM: Deliveroo or Foodora gig workers on a bicycle might not even consider themselves to be workers.

KL: Yes, or they have franchises, or they are so-called "self-employed." It's a huge issue. It's an issue of organization for the working class.

LM: Do you think the concept of class still makes sense? Many people would not consider themselves to be working class even though they're poor and sometimes definitely feel miserable.

KL: I believe class is fundamental. It just changes shape as the demands of capital for a different kind of labor force change. But it's still the labor force. And it's still being exploited and it's still providing surplus value even more intensely than before. More important, if we don't understand class struggle, we don't understand anything.

LM: It's one of the great challenges today: restarting the struggle among a fragmented population that doesn't conceive of itself as part of a group.

KL: It's a challenge for our understanding. It was very funny, I was recently talking to some very nice people in Japan who were writing an article and I was insisting on the necessity of understanding class and of conflict. A very nice woman told me, "We're going to show your film to the Japanese government officials," and I said, "Well, why?" and she said, "Well, to get them to change their mind," and I replied, "But that's the point I just

made! They will not change their mind, they are committed to defend the interests of the ruling class and they're not to be persuaded, they're to be removed!"

It's a very hard point to get across when the idea of making the system work is so deeply embedded. That's one of the terrible legacies of social democracy that we've got to fight.

LM: It's an effective form of social control, when your subjects believe they can talk to you and that you will take their concerns into account.

KL: This is why we need to revive the whole idea of transitional demands. We have to make demands that are absolutely reasonable based on the interests of the working class.

LM: I want to bring this to a close, but I notice you once ran a campaign for the European Parliament.

KL: I'd forgotten that.

LM: It's interesting to me how Europe was never really debated very much here in the UK. Suddenly, after Brexit, everybody is talking about the European Union and it's become the most talked-about issue after football. Do you feel there is still hope of constructing a transnational democracy or is it simply too late?

KL: I really don't know the answer. But I do think that international solidarity is clearly important. Can it be organized within Europe? I don't know. The structure of the European Union is indeed so difficult, it is hard to see how we introduce the change without starting all over again. Obviously, every change has to be endorsed by every government and we all know how difficult the practicality of that process is. Clearly, we need a different Europe based on different principles: on common ownership, planning, equalizing economies, sustainability, and generally working toward equality.

But we simply can't do that while big corporations are prioritized, while profit is prioritized, and while the

legal system prioritizes profit. Effecting that change is beyond my

pay grade. Yanis Varoufakis assures me it can be done. I'm sure he's right. I trust him, but I don't know how.

Thursday 16 August 2018,

FMLN Confronts Challenge from the Right

17 September 2018, by David Grosser

With a second FMLN administration nearing its end and a presidential vote scheduled for February 2019, the prospects for a third term for the Frente are very much in doubt. They have attempted to use the existing state to make reforms that could transform the life of their base – the poor, workers and peasants. The right wing has used their still-considerable power to obstruct their efforts to deal with the formidable array of issues – poverty, crime and unemployment – that afflict the country. The result, for now, is a population angry at how little has changed and willing to take it out on the incumbents, who in this case are the left.

Upon taking office the FMLN instituted an ambitious social reform program. To name only one among many, the “Paquete Escolar” (school packet) program provides every public school student with a uniform, a pair of shoes, school supplies, plus daily a hot meal and for those in primary grades, a glass of milk. The Ministry of Education also rescinded “voluntary” fees for attendance that many schools used to make up for under-budgeting by the government, thus making public education truly free. As a result, more kids enrolled in school; students, who were better nourished, did better academically overall and since local small and medium producers received preference in furnishing the food, milk, shoes and uniforms, employment received a boost. [24]

Summing up their achievements, Hilary Goodfriend, a journalist based in San Salvador, wrote in Jacobin:

The FMLN's policy progress often goes overlooked in international media coverage of El Salvador, which prefers

to sensationalize gang violence and migration with little analysis of the profound structural causes of these crises. The achievements are modest in contrast with the revolutionary socialist doctrine that the party espouses, yet they offer a first response to the staggering inequality that has kept the vast majority of the Salvadoran population in conditions of misery, precarity, and marginalization for decades, if not centuries. In particular, they have countered the devastating consequences of the neoliberal model that the US-backed Right imposed upon the country over the previous twenty years. [25]

And yet it appears that these advances have not been enough to insure their re-election. In the most recent legislative and municipal elections, held in March, the party lost six seats (giving them 18 out of 84) and now, if the right wing parties can unify, they can override a presidential veto. Similarly the Frente lost the race for Mayor in the capital, San Salvador, many major cities and in some of their traditional strongholds as well. It was a disastrous showing all in all.

Importantly though, the results do not show a shift to the right on the part of the population. ARENA picked up seats but not votes: their total was virtually unchanged from the last legislative contest three years ago. The Frente, on the other hand polled almost 30% fewer votes than they had in 2015. In this contest at least, their base stayed home. So they now have seven months to salvage the situation and repair the breach with their base or see the social progress they have been able to accomplish reversed if the right wing resumes control.

Challenges to governing

Part of the Frente's problem lies in the right's still formidable bases of power. While the left has the presidency, even before the recent election they never had a majority in the legislature. The right has blocked the FMLN's initiatives and often they must compromise with the right to get anything passed. El Salvador is unique in that the center barely exists – the vast majority of political power lies at the extremes of the political spectrum. So, the Frente needed, for example, to horse trade with GANA, a right wing rival to ARENA, in order to get the budget passed.

In addition as Goodfriend has noted:

The Right maintains a firm hold on the country's judicial system, and the Supreme Court has become a principal destabilizing force in the country, undermining FMLN governance by blocking access to crucial state income, striking down several progressive tax reforms, and wreaking havoc with the electoral system to the benefit of the FMLN's opposition.

In this the right is following a strategy which Latin American observers often refer to as a policy of “soft coups,” resorting to legislative and judicial maneuvers to obstruct and even remove center/left governments as seen recently in Brazil, Ecuador and Paraguay.

Finally, Goodfriend notes the importance of the right's near monopoly over the major communications media:

The country's major television channels, radio stations, and newspapers remain consolidated in the hands of a few families with deep ties to ARENA, who have launched a full-frontal assault against the government. The Right has taken full and cynical advantage of the deeply entrenched gang-related violence that plagues the country to lambaste the government, all the while blocking funding for urgent public safety measures and comprehensive social spending to address the roots of the insecurity — roots that extend, incidentally, into the neoliberal reforms that devastated the social safety net under ARENA in the wake of the civil war.

As noted, these measures have not built the right but they have sapped the energy, confidence and resolve of the FMLN's base — breeding cynicism that all parties are equally bad and pessimism about the Frente's capacity to fulfill its mission. This depoliticized populace then is vulnerable to the changes in the political system forced by the Supreme Court that are restructuring it along "US" lines — campaigns driven by the personality of charismatic candidates rather than the content of party platforms and campaigning by advertising in the mass media instead of face to face contact on the local level.

Internal problems

Some regular FMLN voters (although we can only conjecture how many) stayed away from the polls because they were following a call to boycott by Nayib Bukele, former Mayor of San Salvador, who had governed as part of the Frente but was expelled by the party shortly before the vote. The party had made a Faustian bargain with Bukele, rich, young, handsome and media savvy, but not a frente militante of long standing, in a successful effort to win the mayoralty of San Salvador away from ARENA in 2014. They had done a similar maneuver with Mauricio Funes, their first successful presidential candidate in 2009, and survived the experience well enough to win the presidency again in 2014.

Bukele coveted the party's nomination for president in 2019 and, when it was clear that he would not get it, he distanced himself politically from the program and often voiced criticism of party positions that echoed those of the right. After his expulsion, which enraged part of the FMLN's base, he called on his supporters to boycott the vote. Many regular FMLN voters may have heeded his call and, significantly, the number of "votos nulos" (spoiled ballots) rose 300% over 2015. (It should be noted, however, that the Supreme Court has made ballot and voting procedures significantly more complicated so some of that rise may also be due to problems that voters had figuring out how to fill out the ballot correctly.)

On to 2019

Now Bukele has announced for the presidency as the candidate for a new party ("New Ideas") trying to stake out a center position between the left and right, a sort of Salvadoran version of Clinton's New Democrats. At this point Bukele is not yet an official candidate, and the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) is still reviewing his request to run as the candidate of GANA, the third strongest party after the FMLN and ARENA and solidly on the right. However, a poll by the University Public Opinion Institute (IUDOP) of University of Central America in May gives him an early lead. Respondents preferred New Ideas (38.5%) to ARENA (30%) with the FMLN far behind at only 8.9%. More recent but less reliable polls, show the Frente's candidate, Hugo Martinez, bolting ahead of Bukele. And it remains to be seen how many of his supporters will be turned off by the blatant opportunism of Bukele's attempt to run on the GANA line. But bearing in mind that a lot can change in the coming seven months, if the actual results in February 2019 mirrored these figures, then Bukele and ARENA's Carlos Calleja would face off in a second round, and the FMLN would be left to negotiate shifting their support to Bukele from a very weak position. But everyone on the left is acutely aware that the return of ARENA would prove disastrous for the majority of the

population and would threaten what the Frente has accomplished since 2009. And the popular movement, almost universally allied with the FMLN, has been jolted into action to promote the FMLN and defend their program.

A way out

The FMLN has faced difficult situations before and they may find a way to salvage this situation yet. Many of us who have stood with them throughout the long slog from guerrilla war to political power have done so for just that reason: their willingness to face up to reality no matter how unfavorable the balance of forces; to develop a realistic strategy to move forward and to carry it out with unity, organization and courage.

In fact, the right may have rendered them invaluable aid in rallying and unifying their disgruntled base. Not wanting to waste time with their legislative majority, the combined rightwing parties quickly introduced a thinly disguised water privatization law. Response by the Frente and the popular organizations was swift and militant — over the past few weeks marches protesting the deal have been a daily occurrence across the country. Twice so far, the administration of the national university has shut the campus and the combined forces of the students, faculty, staff and at least some administrators have marched on the Legislative Assembly building. During the first march, the Rector of the university was pepper-sprayed by private security guards while trying to deliver the university's demands.

And with their typical arrogance the right parties refused to even hear the objections of the Jesuit University of Central America or the Archdiocese of San Salvador — a remarkably tone deaf move given the strong identification of much of the population with the church.

Yesenia Portillo, a CISPES activist reported from El Salvador,

The Archbishop has stated his opposition forcefully "We do not believe that private business should have majority control over [water]

resources; it should be the state.” Meanwhile the Episcopal Conference issued a statement expressing, “As pastors, we are witnesses to the clamor of our people, who are calling for clean water in every home and who cannot pay the cost if this vital resource were to be turned into a commercial good subject to the rules of the market.” The alignment between the religious sector, the environmental movement and the

broader social movement could play a determining factor, much as it did in the [2017] successful fight to ban gold mining in El Salvador. [26]

Already the rightwing parties are distancing themselves from their water proposal “will the issue re-energize the left’s base so that they hold their criticisms in check sufficiently enough to unify around the

FMLN? As Salvadorans say “vamos a ver” (we’ll see). But if the right regains the presidency the FMLN will resume its role as the voice of the opposition, the varied popular organizations defending the interests of the poor majority. They don’t have the luxury of sitting the class struggle out “they will continue to fight regardless. [27]

[Against the Current](#)

The looming massacre in Idlib

16 September 2018, by **Joseph Daher**

Joseph Daher reports on what’s behind Assad’s threat and the impact such an attack would have on civilians in the region.

More than seven years since the beginning of the Syrian popular uprising, which has been gradually transformed into a deadly war with an international character, the situation in the country is catastrophic at all levels. The popular classes are the most affected with continuous suffering.

At the end of 2017, some 13.1 million people in Syria required humanitarian assistance. Of these, 5.6 million are in acute need due to their displacement, exposure to hostilities, and limited access to basic goods and services. More than half the population was displaced internally or outside the country, forced to leave their homes as a result of the war.

More than 920,000 people have been displaced in Syria during the first four months of this year, a record number since the conflict began. And life for Syrian refugees in neighboring countries means poverty, exploitation and discriminatory policies.

The World Bank estimated in June 2017 that about one-third of all buildings and half of all Syrian schools and hospitals have been damaged or destroyed. The gross domestic product, which in 2010 stood at \$60.2

billion, dropped to only \$12.4 billion in 2016. Over 80 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

Assad’s Regime Consolidating its Power

Bashar al-Assad’s regime, with the help of its Iranian and Russian allies as well as Lebanon’s Hezbollah, has continued to recover territory. Outside of Assad’s territory, military offensives and bombardments against civilians have continued. In April 2018, regime forces, with the assistance of Russia and Iran, conquered Eastern Ghouta, near Damascus. The offensive included the use of chemical weapons against civilians.

In mid- to late July, following a military campaign and a series of so-called “local reconciliation agreements” “leading to a few hundred Syrian opposition fighters and their families who refused surrender terms to be taken on buses to opposition-held areas in the north” the Syrian regime, assisted by its Russian ally, had regained the control of Dara’a and Qunaytra provinces.

Idlib province, now home to between 2.5 and 3 million persons “of whom 1.5 million are internally displaced

persons” is controlled mostly by the jihadist coalition Hayat Tahrir Sham (HTS, led by formally al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra), which has imposed its own institutions and violently repressed activist networks and civil society organizations.

Idlib province lies at a crucial geopolitical crossroads between encroaching pro-regime front lines around northwest Syria, Turkey to the north and the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD)-controlled enclaves to the east, as well as Turkish-occupied regions of neighboring Aleppo province. Each and every actor has a stake in Idlib’s future.

The Idlib region has suffered deadly bombing campaigns by air forces of the regime and Russia, which have killed and wounded many, despite being part of a “de-escalation” zone agreed upon by Russia, Iran and Turkey last September in Astana, Kazakhstan.

It has also witnessed great instability with violent clashes between HTS and rival armed groups, including the coalition of Jabhat Tahrir Suria (JTS, with leading elements Ahrar al-Sham, Nureddin al-Zinki, groups close to the Muslim Brotherhoods and some small FSA units) sponsored by Turkey, provoking the rejection and hostility of local populations against these reactionary forces. These reactionary armed groups have also committed

significant violations of human rights against local populations.

Despite these conditions, civilian resistance actions, in which women have played an important role, have continued against HTS's reactionary rule. Resistance has taken the form of strikes, public demonstrations, the establishment of women's centers and statements, but without consolidating into an organized democratic political opposition able to challenge reactionary jihadist and salafist forces.

Mass demonstrations occurred throughout villages and towns of Idlib province on September 8 to oppose the threats of a military invasion and for the overthrow of the regime. Members of HTS repressed the protesters in Idlib city by firing live ammunition to break up the demonstration.

Turkey's Influence in Idlib

Turkish armed forces have established a significant presence in Idlib province, with 12 military observation posts. Deployment of Turkish forces is based on the Astana agreement with Russia.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been pressing Russian President Vladimir Putin to make sure that no military intervention occurs against Idlib, while trying to push HTS to disband itself and dissolve into the wider milieu of the opposition armed groups Syria, in order for local fighters to join the Jabhat Tahrir Suria and foreign fighters to be given safe passage out of Syria.

Turkey also increased the pressure on HTS by declaring the organization a terrorist group. Abu Mohammed al-Joulani, the leader of HTS, however, has refused these conditions and released a statement denouncing any form of reconciliation.

Turkish negotiations with HTS were made to try to deter or convince Moscow and Tehran not to launch an offensive operation into Idlib province.

Turkey would like to preserve a zone of control along his border where it

can manage flows of internally displaced persons, repatriate refugees from Turkey, and attack the PYD and its Syrian Democratic Forces.

Erdoğan, however, failed to secure a pledge for a ceasefire from Russia and Iran at a trilateral summit in Tehran in September. At the time of this writing, Turkish officials were still in discussions with Russia and Iran for a diplomatic solution to prevent a military offensive on Idlib.

Turkey deployed tanks on its border following these events, and reinforced and transferred extra forces to observation posts. Ankara has reinforced its border controls over the past few years to prevent the arrival of new Syrian refugees.

Turkey has also strengthened its military leverage and bolstered the defenses of loyal factions within the Jabhat Tahrir Suria coalition, with a massive shipment of munitions and GRAD rocket launchers reportedly arriving across the border in Idlib on September 12.

Erdoğan also wrote in an article in the Wall Street Journal that a Syrian regime's offensive on Idlib "would cause humanitarian and security risks for Turkey, Europe and beyond," as a way to pressure Western countries.

Turkey's government has warned the EU it would not stop the new refugees from heading toward Europe, and in an apparent effort to underscore Erdoğan's warnings and threats, a pro-government newspaper published a map in Arabic showing how Syrian refugees might pass through Turkey and into Europe. The map, published by the Daily Sabah, seemed meant to encourage Syrians to head to Europe and to focus the attention of the EU on a potential new wave of arrivals.

As this article was being written, the Turkish border remains officially closed to Syrian refugees hoping to flee to safety, with only those in need of emergency medical treatment allowed in. A wall of concrete slabs seals shut most of Turkey's 620-mile border with Syria.

At least six people were shot and killed while crossing into Turkey

during August. Human rights groups have long documented abuses by Turkish border soldiers tasked with preventing refugees from entering the country.

In February 2018, a report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) documented the deaths of 10 people as they attempted to cross into Turkey from Idlib during the second half of 2017. In some cases, people who succeeded in crossing into Turkish territory were then rounded up by security personnel and deported back over the border into Syria, in violation of international "non-refoulement" laws that forbids the forced return of asylum seekers.

Turkey currently hosts more than 3.5 million UN-registered Syrian refugees. Ankara also administers a series of internal displacement camps along the Syrian-Turkish border, in an area of Syria's northern Aleppo province that is controlled by Turkish-backed Syrian armed opposition groups.

The Beginning of a Massive Military Campaign?

Assad's regime has amassed its forces on the borders of the province, while Russian and Syrian warplanes have resumed a bombing campaign in Idlib and in Northern Hama province, killing more than 25 civilians after weeks of quiet, in an apparent prelude to a full-scale offensive.

Damascus had already captured some villages on the southeastern outskirts of Idlib, thanks to an operation carried out at the end of 2017. Idlib also suffered 38 attacks against its medical infrastructure during the first six months of 2018, before the launch of the new bombing campaign, which already has targeted new medical infrastructure, including at least two hospitals and two clinics.

At the same time, Russia has consolidated its military presence off the coast of Syria with its largest naval deployment since the beginning of the conflict.

The Russian Defense Ministry said more than 25 warships and support

vessels and around 30 planes, including fighter jets and strategic bombers, would take part in the Mediterranean naval drills, which it declared would last from September 1-8.

They involved anti-aircraft, anti-submarine and anti-mining exercises and ships from Russia's Northern, Baltic and Black Sea Fleets took part, in addition to vessels from its Caspian Flotilla.

Following these naval drills, Russia began its biggest war games since the fall of the USSR on September 10 close to its border with China, mobilizing 300,000 troops in a show of force that will include joint exercises with the Chinese army.

Moscow also stated that the Syrian regime had every right to chase the "terrorists" out of Idlib.

Humanitarian organizations and NGOs are worried about a military offensive by the Assad regime against Idlib, which would threaten the lives of 900,000 displaced civilians, who are already in precarious conditions. Two million people depend on vital aid delivered from Turkey, and fighting could lead to a mass exodus.

More than 30,000 people have fled their homes in northwest Syria since the army and its allies resumed bombardment in the beginning of September, the U.N. Humanitarian Affairs Office (OCHA) said on September 10. About half of those displaced so far have moved to camps, while others went to informal settlements, stayed with family or rented housing,

This is despite official statements by Russian and Iranian officials claiming they were averting a potential catastrophe. Western states have been passive about the current developments, while only threatening a "much stronger response" to previous Western air strikes if Damascus uses chemical weapons.

In other words, a military campaign and mass civilian casualties by Assad's regime and its allies will be tolerated as long as they use "conventional weaponry."

Oppose Assad and His Crimes

While affirming opposition to the jihadist coalition of the HTS and other reactionary armed groups in Idlib, progressives must oppose the shelling

and threats of military offensive by the regime and its foreign allies against Idlib, where millions of civilians reside or have taken refuge.

As the popular demonstrations on September 8 proved, large sectors of the local population oppose both the regime and its Islamic fundamentalist opponents.

These protests expose just how wrong it is to equate the millions of people in Idlib with their jihadist oppressors. Doing so is one of the tricks enacted by Assad and his so-called "anti-imperialist" backers to justify his war against the Syrian popular classes.

Moreover, such an equation mimics U.S. imperialism's "war on terror" and its attendant Islamophobia.

A blank check given to the Assad regime for its crimes would entail further betrayal of the Syrian popular classes and their heroic resistance, which would in turn increase the sense of impunity of the region's authoritarian and despotic states, giving them the confidence and justification to crush their own people if they were to rebel.

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socialistworker.org

The Wagenknecht project, a new movement?

15 September 2018, by **Manuel Kellner**

Certain positions developed by Wagenknecht and Lafontaine lie to the right not only of the party's anti-capitalist wing, but also of its official program. The designated enemy is no longer capitalism, but unbridled neoliberal capitalism. "Open borders" are referred to as a neo-liberal bourgeois project to exacerbate competition among those at the bottom and to weaken wage-earners and reduce real wages. The defence of democratic conquests involves defending the sovereignty of nation states against the European Union and

projects - for example that of Macron - to strengthen European integration within it. Basically, the project of Wagenknecht and Lafontaine aims to weaken the extreme right, to counter the electoral breakthrough of the Afd and to win over layers of German wage earners and the "left behind" who, while unhappy with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and attracted by the demagoguery of the Alternative for Germany (Afd, far right), do not identify with the positions of Die Linke. According to Wagenknecht and Lafontaine, Die Linke is wrong to

ignore their fear of unfavourable competition with immigrants.

In a recent interview on *Mediapart*, Wagenknecht explains (rightly) that the project traditionally linked to the "governmentalist" right of Die Linke is no longer realistic: [28] This project of union of the lefts is currently not a majority project. The SPD is currently at 17% of the voting intentions and, although still in government, it could experience a rapid decline. On the other hand, today's SPD has moved far from the traditional positions of social

democracy. It is in its third "Grand Coalition" with Merkel's conservative union."

The SPD's terrible electoral crisis is linked to the fact that this party has never broken with Agenda 2010 and its ferocious counter-reforms. This, according to Wagenknecht, is what motivates the project to launch a new broad movement centred on social themes: "Before this the Social Democrats carried out the neoliberal reforms of Gerhard Schröder's Agenda 2010, which is the opposite of a policy of equality and social protection. This has led to the creation of a huge low-wage sector in Germany, which in turn causes enormous social insecurity. All of these things have nothing to do with our political programme. That is why we are in the process of preparing the launch of a broad popular movement, open to all those of good will on the left. It must bring together all those who still believe in certain elements of a classic social democratic policy."

Wagenknecht says she does not want a return to the early 1970s. But what she opposes to neoliberalism and unbridled capitalism is above all a welfare state, national, with more social security and more protection against the bad effects of capitalist globalization. The international solidarity of wage earners and the oppressed plays almost no role in her political discourse. For her, it is the state that must protect the people, and especially the most disadvantaged: "I mean by that we want to promote the values of a more social state, higher and fairer wages, an autonomous European foreign policy, a disarmament policy and so on. It is of course not about returning to the social democratic programme of the 1970s. The world has evolved, and we need to modernize. On pensions, for example, it is not a question of patching up the old system, but of creating a new system of insurance where everyone would contribute, from the civil servant to the self-employed, and not just the employee as today.

"It is a question of proposing a programme in which the state protects people from unbridled capitalism, from globalisation driven by

multinationals and from competition sharpened by social dumping. We want to rebuild a state that has an active policy for the least-favoured half of the population and for those who are the losers from the present situation."

Members and currents of Die Linke who support the approach of Sahra Wagenknecht and Oskar Lafontaine are not very numerous. There is also no clear indication of the number of positive responses to the call that will be sufficient to create the new movement in September.

Criticisms of the project in the debate within Die Linke, formulated in a sharp way, especially by Antikapitalistische Linke, are located at three different levels of argumentation:

- First, Wagenknecht and Lafontaine have not submitted their positions to the discussion and decisions of the bodies of Die Linke. Indeed, Wagenknecht relies on her personal popularity, presence in the media and personal political following to short-circuit any controversy about her approach in her own party. The polarizing dynamics of this approach in the party seem to be linked to the rivalry with the two party spokespersons, Katja Kipping and Bernd Riexinger.

- Secondly Wagenknecht and Lafontaine adapt too much to the discourse of the Afd and "right-wing populism" by rejecting demands such as "open borders" for fear of losing the possibility of politically influencing disadvantaged Germans.

- Thirdly, there is the fear, and not just on the left wing of the party, that the launch of the new movement will harm Die Linke. As Wagenknecht and Lafontaine keep repeating that Mélenchon's France Insoumise serves them as an example, this fear is quite understandable, because FI was built on the ashes not only of the Front de Gauche, but also of the French Parti de Gauche.

Wagenknecht argues that Die Linke has not been able - so far - to take advantage of the SPD's electoral crisis: "The main alternative that is opposed to me is that everyone who is

unhappy with the situation just has to join Die Linke. Beautiful! But that doesn't work. For years we have been hoping that SPD voters who are disappointed come to join us. But the reality is that since 1998, the SPD has lost more than 10 million voters. And we won 2 million. So, there are at least 8 million voters who have not come to us."

To the question "Is the fear of creating a competitor party to Die Linke not justified?" Wagenknecht responds "No. Creating a party does not seem to me to be a mandatory step. The aim of the movement is to put pressure on the parties to oblige them, the SPD in the first place, to follow a more social policy." But then, is the good example of Mélenchon's FI not to be followed? This is not easy to understand.

In any case, there seems to be a link between the orientation - if you like, "left populist" - and the forms of organizations of France Insoumise and the movement that Oskar and Sahra want to build: "normal" people can join, they can come and applaud, but they cannot participate in developing positions and preparing initiatives. In this beautiful new world, it is the tribunes that do everything and decide everything.

For the content, it is necessary to take seriously the argument of competition and popular concerns advanced by Wagenknecht: "So refugees, who are also poor, are looking for social apartments, often in small, even disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However, Germany is sorely lacking in social housing because the government has followed a policy of austerity. Competition in housing is getting stronger as refugees are brought in. The situation has also deteriorated in many schools not really located in beautiful neighbourhoods and which already had big problems before 2015. Finally, in the low-wage sector, where low-skilled people are employed, competition has become fierce... I believe that at present, and for some time now, democracy will only work well within the framework of nation-states."

To the argument of competition, there is no point in opposing a purely

humanitarian and moralistic attitude, which does not care about the realities and feelings of the disadvantaged popular strata. It is clear that the demand for "open borders" doesn't solve all the problems. It must be part of a set of transitional demands including minimum wages and

sufficient social provision, a tax system that makes the rich pay, a drastic reduction in working time without loss of wages and with proportional hiring, and so on.

But above all, to the argument of

competition, we cannot oppose a purely national "proletarian class interest" ... which is totally fictitious. Real class interests are articulated only by common international solidarity action for the same objectives, whether at European or global level.

Britain Exposed in U.N. Court hearing for illegal detachment of Chagos from rest of Mauritius

13 September 2018, by Lalit

It was riveting because of the only-just-suppressed rage of many of those speaking in favour of the UN General Assembly Resolution calling on the ICJ to give an Advisory Opinion on whether Britain in the 1960's completed the decolonization of Mauritius, when it excised Chagos which includes Diego Garcia from Mauritius, and what the consequences of this incomplete decolonization are today, including for the resettling by the Mauritian Government of the Chagossian people on their home islands.

The only-just-suppressed rage was coupled with lucid argumentation that was, itself, a fine blend of legal, political, logical and factual points woven tightly together. All this showed that the wounds of colonization are still raw. And that the burning desire to finish with colonization is a live emotion until today - in Africa and world-wide.

We in LALIT and all our friends, comrades, colleagues in the struggle over the past 40 years, had the additional feeling of being vindicated. All our arguments - logical and humane - were on international display, being taken seriously by 15 judges of the UN Court, when we have spent decades answering the childish British arguments, often mimicked by subservient local elites that say, "Old Man Ramgoolam sold Chagos to the

English", therefore there is nothing you can do about it.

At the ICJ, all the finer points of law we have, as mere amateurs in LALIT, grappled with for years, were teased out and discussed by top legal minds of the world, and we could all follow this live. And almost all arguments were in favour of the ICJ giving an Opinion, and giving it against Britain for not completing decolonization, and also calling on the Court to lay out the consequences for today of this failure to complete decolonization. It was a source of pride to see a big delegation of Chagossians in the Mauritian delegation, and Mrs. Liseby Elysée giving testimony.

The BBC was the first international media outlet to bow down before the impeccable logic of those challenging Britain for its perfidy - to the credit of those who did the program for the BBC. In LALIT, we have spent hours and hours confronting international journalists on their avoiding of the Chagos issue.

There was also on show, on the British side, a rather despicable display of colonial contempt, in particular on the part of the big four colonizer-defenders: Britain, the USA, Israel and - though an ex-colony herself - Australia.

Their arguments - these four -

maintained that the Resolution sent to the ICJ by the entire General Assembly was a mere "bilateral dispute" between Mauritius and Britain, and therefore not admissible before the Court at all because, they argued, one of the parties to this supposedly bilateral dispute, i.e. Britain, has not given its consent.

All the 94 countries that voted in favour of sending this Resolution to the ICJ do not stop it being "bilateral"! How is that for a colonial mind-set? All those 94 countries do not exist, when they call for an Advisory Opinion for the General Assembly. Not only that. As many of those giving evidence against Britain pointed out beautifully, the Resolution was not even proposed in the General Assembly of the United Nations by Mauritius, one of the parties in the supposed bilateral dispute; it was proposed by the 55 States of the African union. Talk about the mentality of the colonizer of terra nullius, or land without people in it! The African union is still, to Britain, the USA, Israel and Australia, a terra nullius.

So, this point became one of the main debates: Is the question of the excision of all the islands of Chagos from Mauritius just prior to Independence of Mauritius a "bilateral dispute" or a question of decolonization and self-determination, things that are part of the UN Charter,

supported by many Resolutions, one such Resolution even warning Britain specifically not to dismember Mauritius in this way?

And on this point there were absolutely wonderful arguments put forward by the African union itself, represented by three speakers, and by the individual countries of Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Zambia and Botswana. Immense resources had been allocated by these States – the 55 in the African union plus additional resources from these five countries of Africa – to build up and support their argumentation in favour of the principle of complete decolonization, and that this decolonization must maintain “territorial integrity”.

Other States were equally impressive: small states like the Marshall Islands, Belize, and Vanuatu (come before the Court for the first time ever), States under gross and immediate pressure from the USA like Guatemala, Argentina and Nicaragua, other States that are under pressure from the UK, like Cyprus, and others without an axe to grind, only a principle to stand up for, like Thailand, India and Brazil, all in turn gave oral statements.

Listening to the live stream (also on demand – VOD) in English and French on the ICJ site [29] as well as on UN Web TV, the official UN site, made four days of education for spectators or listeners on the history of decolonization. And it was four days that passed in the batting of an eyelid.

Britain was taken to task for its arguments that verged on the ridiculous when it came to the substantive issues.

Britain argued that Chagos was 2,000 kilometres away from the other islands of the Republic of Mauritius, therefore it, Britain, 10,000 kilometres away should have sovereignty. Do we laugh or cry, on hearing such rubbish?

Or why Britain should have hidden so stealthily from the United Nations General Assembly that they were dismembering Mauritius, or secretly spirited the 2,000 Chagossian Mauritians living there to Mauritius main Island, claiming in a wildly sexist

and racist statement at the time that there were no people living there at all, just a few birds there (not – yet – protected by international conventions) and just a few “man Fridays”? Why should Britain have pretended the US military base they were conspiring to get set up there was a mere “communications station”? Why all the deception, if as they now try to say, it was still normal by the 1960s to divide up territories prior to Independence?

Why did the UK pay the Mauritian Government (though a pittance) for the Islands if they were not already Mauritian? Their own actions, so unjustifiable, serve again and again to contradict anything the British State tries to say today. Why did they give fishing rights to Mauritius if the islands had not been part of Mauritius? And why did the British choose to leave most of the Chagossians on the Port Louis docks if they did not know that the Chagossians were Mauritians? And why on earth did they promise to “return” the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, when they decided they were “no longer needed for defence purposes”?

And as for pretending Mauritian voters had a free choice on dismemberment at the time of Independence, this is doubly rubbish: the choice at the 1967 general Elections was between not getting Independence (by voting PMSD) and getting Independence with Chagos excised (by voting the Labour-IFB, CAM alliance); and Chagossians did not get to vote at all. So, what kind of a “self-determination” or consent was that?

Britain was exposed again and again as having suddenly found a reason for seeing Chagos as worth keeping (when the USA wanted a military base there) and then finding devious ways of keeping and depopulating the islands. So this whim to have a base, meant Britain thought it was justified in passing Orders-in-Council to excise Chagos from Mauritius all of a sudden, and then to drive the Chagossians off over the next 8 years.

Only a colonizing power could not see the absurdity of throwing to the wind

international law on decolonization and Chagossians’ human rights to live where they live, just because it wanted a place for a base. And Britain has continued in this vein, still pretending it would “return” or later merely “cede” Chagos when it no longer required it. And who would decide when it no longer required it? Well, obviously, the colonizers. They are the only people who are people.

All this came out in the argumentation by all those who spoke in favour of the UN General Assembly resolution for the 15-member ICJ to give an Advisory Opinion. One of the refrains was, understandably and predictably, that Britain is merely trying to “justify the unjustifiable”.

And as for Britain (and the USA, Israel and Australia) opposing an “Advisory Opinion” from the ICJ, it is mad. Not just an “opinion”, which is very weak, but an “advisory” opinion, which is less than an opinion. The question is why not? It is only “advisory”, and only an “opinion”, for goodness sake. What’s the problem?

And not only that. Britain lost its case at the Tribunal under the Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS) in 2015 when Mauritius argued that Britain did not have sovereignty sufficient to set up a Marine Protected Area there – a ruse to keep Mauritius and Mauritian Chagossians away – and yet Britain has not respected the judgment in that case.

So, finally, all those who have contributed to this struggle: Chagossians like the late Charlesia Alexis and Aurelie Talate, and the 150 or so Chagossian women, and all the Chagossian people and their organizations who we, in LALIT, struggled alongside for all those years, first and foremost. In particular the Chagos Refugees Group and the Organizasyon Sosyal Chagosyin, led by Olivier Bancoult and the late Fernand Mandarin respectively. And then there were the eight women – five Chagossians, three in LALIT – who were arrested and charged with illegal demonstration in 1981, for putting the issue on the agenda in Mauritius, by means of street demonstrations in Port Louis for three days running in support of a hunger strike by

Chagossian women.

And then there are all the Mauritian organizations – like the Comité Ilois of the Organisation Fraternel, the MMM branches in the 1970s in Port Louis, the unions in the General Workers' Federation, the Muvman Liberasyon Fam, The Komite Moris Losean Indyin and the late Kishore Mundil, the Komite Rann nu Diego in the 1990s and the two LALIT International Action Conferences, the Komite Diego set up in 2006 and still in existence, and musicians and poets like Bam Cuttayan, José Bhooroo, Rajni Lallah and Joelle Hussein, and Mennwar, and a number of novelists, too. And individuals who have made immense contributions as journalists (Henri Marimootoo and Patrick Michel), Judges like the late Rajsoomer Lallah, former Presidents of the Republic (like Cassam Uteem), and the Mauritian permanent representative at the UN Jagdish Koonjal, who has master-minded this dossier regardless of which party is in power in Mauritius. It is the hard political work of these combined efforts that forced the Mauritian State finally to go to the ICJ. And even abroad, there have been, in addition to States, organizations and individuals like the No Bases Movement, film-makers like Paedar

King, Michel Daeron, John Pilger and others, and many, many workers and peoples' organizations over the 40 years who have supported the Diego Garcia struggle through LALIT.

Britain and the USA are in deep political trouble over the Chagos and Diego Garcia.

Even if the Mauritian Government is obsequious and bows down to the US military, inviting them to stay on, implying a bit of rent money will do, this case brings the actions of the US government and the British Government before the eyes of their people, who in general are completely ignorant of all these crimes: the military base (in a dark spot on the surface of the globe – over which neither they nor we in Mauritius have democratic control), the immoral and illegal land-grab by Britain through the dismemberment of a whole country under its rule as a condition for the Independence of the rest of that country, and the cruel removal from their homes by the UK-USA tandem of all the Chagossians after subjecting them to watching their pet animals gassed to death, and then watching food supplies dry up.

So, now, after so much international support – from peoples and even from

anti-colonial States, it is time to act. We, in Mauritius must force the Government to prepare an official visit by ship, perhaps a fishing ship. The elected Government and Opposition of Mauritius, Chagossian leaders, Mauritian and international journalists all on board to visit this part of Mauritius.

It is also high time that the Minister Mentor, who was witness at the case and who is the only surviving person from the “negotiations” in which Britain plotted the dismemberment of Mauritius, should hand back his “Sir” and become Mr Aneerood Jugnauth again, just as many Parliamentarians in India did at Independence, and as the poet Tagore did after a British massacre.

And each Ministry in Mauritius must prepare for the return of Chagos to Mauritius.

The coming Electoral Reform that Government says will be a reality by the end of the year must include a Constituency in waiting for Chagossians, too.

And, as the USA goes into deeper and deeper debt, our struggles to close down the US military base must continue.

Outcome of Swedish elections “confirms European trend”

12 September 2018, by Kjell Östberg

Since at least the deep crisis of the Swedish economy in the early 1990s the Social Democratic party has accepted the general outlines of a neo-liberal economic policy including deregulations and privatizations of the public sector. At the same time the once so impressive party organization has been strongly weakened – the party has lost two-thirds of its members during the last two decades and the closely affiliated blue collar trade union confederation LO has lost

25 per cent during the last ten years. The party, which during there previous 85 years had been out of government for only nine, lost power to a rightwing government in 2006.

During the following eight years this government stepped up the pace in undermining the public sector through increasing privatizations and tax cuts. When the Social Democrats came back to power in 2014 they did so in an extremely weakened position. The

party, that for a long time used to get around 45 % of the votes, just reached 31 %. Together with its co-party in government, the Green party, and with the parliamentary support of the Left party, the government still was a minority government. And it had neither the ambition nor the power to fundamentally change the policy of the outgoing government. The most spectacular outcome of the 2014 election was the rise of the right populist Sweden Democrats. They

succeeded in doubling their vote to 13 %, which meant that none of the traditional political blocs were able to form a majority.

Unlike its twin parties in Denmark and Norway the Sweden Democrats has its roots in openly racist and pro-Nazi organisations. Since the late 1990s a new generation of young leaders has successfully managed to build an effective party organization, starting from some local strongholds in southern Sweden. Xenophobia and anti-immigration have been the main ideological platform of the party and the main reason for being able to win voters. As it has increased its parliamentary influence the party has made efforts to downplay the more openly racist rhetoric, expelling some of the most eager representatives. The party has also lately tried to stress the national-conservative features of the party, approaching similar currents in Poland and Hungary. Their economic and welfare policy is close to that of the Conservative party.

For a long time there was a de facto agreement between the traditional parties in the parliament to try to isolate the Sweden Democrats and to abstain from negotiation with them. This was why the right wing parties accepted the red-green coalition in 2014. The huge wave of refugees in 2014 and 2015 - 80 000 and 160 000 respectively came to Sweden - changed the political situation almost overnight.

Until October 2015 there was a broad consensus that the Swedes were prepared to "open their hearts" - to quote former Conservative party leader Fredrik Reinfeldt. Initially only Sweden Democrats criticized the

massive immigration. When the party started to grow and the shortcomings in the organization of the reception of refugees became obvious most leading parties, including the Social Democracy agreed to make an immediate stop and adjust Swedish immigration policy to the minimum criteria of the EU. The change was not only a formal adaptation, it was accompanied by a rise in anti-immigrant sentiments, anti-muslim agitation and demands for tougher legislation directed towards what was claimed to be crimes related to immigrants coming also from the traditional parties, including the Social Democrats in government.

It is obvious that one reason for this change was the threat both Social Democrats and Conservatives felt from the Sweden Democrats. As could be foreseen from experiences from other countries the change of tactics did not work. The Sweden Democrats continued to grow at the expense of especially these two parties. The outcome of the election confirms this conclusion. The Social Democrats fell to 28%, their lowest result since suffrage was won in 1921. The Conservatives lost even more, 3.5 %. And the Sweden Democrats gained almost 5%, to 17.5 %. In a European perspective this result is perhaps not staggering. Sweden is adjusting to an international trend.

In a Swedish perspective however this is a new situation and the outcome is a serious setback in several regards. Two should be mentioned here. The first is the threat of a real influence from the Sweden Democrats over day-to-day governmental policy. There is at this moment a stalemate between the two traditional political blocs: who

will be the next Prime Minister could be decided by the Sweden Democrats. The demarcation line that has existed until now between the traditional political parties and the xenophobic right-wing populists does not exist anymore. It is obvious that the Conservatives are prepared to enter formal or informal negotiations with the Sweden Democrats to be able to form a rightwing government. The Danish experiences shows how disastrous consequence could be letting such parties set the agenda.

The other setback is related to the left and the working class. It is true that the Left party - former communists - made substantial gains - from 5.7 to 7.9 % and above all were able to make an impressive election campaign among young people. However, the left has never been as weak as today, only around 35 %. And a majority of the working class is not voting left any more. Thirty years ago 80 % of the working class voted Social Democrats (and another 10 % communists). In 2014 still 50 % of the members in LO voted Social Democrats. In 2018 only 37 % voted for them (and another 10% for the Left party).

It is obvious that the main reason why the Social Democrats have lost their stronghold inside the working class is that they have abdicated from what used to be their main strength: the defence of a welfare state build on equality and solidarity. Nothing indicates that they have learned that lesson. The main aim of the party leadership is to solve the present situation by trying to form a coalition with bourgeois parties, which would mean a further weakening of the welfare state and more attacks on the rights of the working class.

Feminism in the South: a systemic critique

11 September 2018, by Carolina Olmedo Carrasco

It is part of the wave of mass mobilizations that has led to the experience of the feminist May in

different regions of Latin America and Europe.

This process has had an accelerated

political trajectory. From a university mobilization against gender and sexual violence and harassment in

educational institutions, in Valdivia on 17 April, it has succeeded in bringing together and leading a large part of the social forces for change in the most important cities of Chile, by interpreting in a feminist way the precariousness of life caused by a mercantile economic system and the privatization of social services.

The intensity of this mobilization, the multiplication of occupations and strikes by women in the main universities of the country, have had the result that even President Sebastián Piñera, who is a reference point for right-wing Chilean employers, said that he had "made mistakes" as a man and that he was a feminist to the extent that this denomination implies "believing in full equality of rights, duties and dignity between men and women". And until the end, the extensions of this unprecedented uprising by women of the South have spread like so many small breaches, producing cracks in the entire education market in Chile – a vast enterprise, in which a whole series of lucrative activities (services, real estate, technology) converge, and which has suddenly become one of the new spaces for the development of new subjectivities among young people.

Since its construction in the course of experiences that began at the beginning of this century, anchored in the new and already long tradition of student revolts, in the uprisings of women and LGBTI people (2000-2017), Chilean feminism has consolidated and offers new reflections on the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy, involving a consistent revision of the old monolithic dogmas of Marxism-Leninism in the field of reproductive and care work. In this way the creative examination of the role of women is proposed in a process of advancing socialism; the accelerated neoliberal integration of women into work is understood as an unprecedented factor in the history of Chilean capitalism, as well as an excellent field for the expansion of feminism as a tool for combat at a general level. Chilean feminists organized in the course of mobilizations since May 2017 – a unitary action despite its

heterogeneity – have largely identified themselves as part of a longer local and global struggle, while reverting to their history to look for moments when political practice and the feminist ideological horizon focused their action towards a unitary and integrative posture in the struggle for socialism.

The present moment of this trajectory corresponds to an interpretation of this history, starting from the constitution of a protagonist political subject: women as part of the most deprived social base in a system based on the commodification of life and the privatization of what is public, in a country where the education market is one of the most important providers of services and one which – taking advantage of the social aspiration to education as a road to upward social mobility – has left many young Chileans in debt. The majority of these young people are women of working age, because of the long-term dependency to which they are subject and the growth of the labour market associated with tasks of care – a collateral effect of the increase in the female workforce.

In this sense, it is not wrong to say that the heart of this mobilization is the demand for a total reform of public education, in the interests of all and with a feminist orientation, in order to establish gender-neutral education at all levels, at the same time as the denunciation of the precariousness of women's lives as a pillar of economic growth in Chile. We are far from the classical social structure and the image of university women as privileged in relation to their proletarian peers, as being part of the middle class or intellectuals – a conservative image of feminism conceived in the Chilean case as the product of an exemplary process of "neoliberal modernization". In Chile, students are the main targets of a debt-based market for obtaining certificates for access to a highly professionalized world of work which, after decades of mercantile growth of higher education, imposes low wages on those who do not have a university degree. In this way, Chilean universities – marked by privatization and indebtedness – have been converted into a scene where different

generations of feminists, united by their experiences, sometimes struggling from their secondary education up to their lives as teachers, have been able to intervene. This has consolidated the struggle for equality in public education as a seed-bed for the transformation of society and also for the defence of the university as a space that should integrate feminist demands as a model: an element that has marked political action since the first demands for total eradication of practices of abuse and harassment in universities.

By approaching its heterogeneity as a strength, and as something different from the rigid political identities that characterized the Chilean left of the previous century, it is possible to see in the building of this new force the result of a long resistance to the policies practised in the post-dictatorship period. One of the main features of this movement is its rejection of essentialism, its ability to integrate sexual diversities and its strong left-wing ideological identity. Emerging from the impoverished sectors of neoliberal society – but also from what remains of the struggles of the past – the feminist movement is seen as a laboratory of the new politics for subjects marginalized by the political exercise imposed by the subsidiary state, which – in the market economy as well as forced activity in a political movement that summons them – is saving women from being reduced to poverty.

In the street, in lecture halls, at home and in bed

By challenging the right to education and valorising its accelerated privatization, from the 2000s decade education in Chile has become a well-established "market for social opportunities". This has paved the way for the development of new universities whose massively lucrative character has maintained the capitalist tradition of building on old structures of oppression to ensure the expansion of new markets. The feminist movement that emerged in these universities, where the number

of students has increased, as has their more popular origins, considers that the anti-democratic and commercialist conditions that govern them are the foundation for the reproduction of violence and gender inequality, both in higher education and subsequently in the labour market.

In pursuing struggles of resistance – under the dictatorship and at the beginning of the democratic period – the feminist thinking that developed in universities over the last decade has had an echo in the media from the time of the social movement for education in 2011, which demanded free and quality public education. As the movement in the faculties has developed, the feminist movement has argued for the need to create a new, gender-neutral education, a condition of genuine democratization of the universal right to education. As a result, feminism in the various organizations, co-ordinating committees and university collectives has defined its aim as overcoming patriarchy, by going beyond the framework of the university as an institution and projecting itself throughout society, and has taken up the demands of the student movement in defence of public education.

The reflection popularized in this domain by the feminist movement aimed to make women visible and legitimate, and to challenge, from a gender perspective, social relations, practices and the production of knowledge, within the various communities where it developed. This allowed for a radical questioning of historical structures of domination within the universities. An example of this is the denunciation of the sexual division of labour, which prevails in the programmes of study that are offered in the public and private higher education institutions of the country, and which reproduce and project in the world of work the gender roles imposed in the private sector (care, parenthood and teaching). The fact that women have become a majority in mass universities does not in any way imply a greater democratization of these education spaces, but on the contrary the creation of new niches for the expansion of the university staff that reproduce existing forms of

segregation. For feminism this is therefore a field of action and of concrete conflict within the student movement. The emergence of a radical critique of the reproduction of sexist content and attitudes in universities thus puts the qualitative aspects of teaching as the driving force of change at the centre of the debate. The idea of the right to education as a mechanism for social integration and an indisputable pillar for the construction of a non-patriarchal society has thus been taken over by feminism. This process of becoming conscious and of the spread of feminist politics in universities made possible a multiplication of structures dealing with sexuality and gender from 2011 on, as well as the organization of various national meetings for non-sexist education, which, since 2014, have facilitated the dialogue between various feminist trends within and outside the educational space.

The public appearance of this university feminism, whose extension and discourse have been reinforced by the student movement which emerged in 2011, allowed the feminist movement to take over the streets and thus to associate itself with the various sectors of women who had been up to then excluded from politics, while giving expression to the growing precariousness of women. Thus, organisations fighting against gender violence, against harassment in the streets and at work, for the decriminalisation of abortion and the legalisation of the "morning after pill", for equal pay and for a law of gender identity, confront the same enemy: the neoliberal economic system whose expansion feeds on the conditions accorded by patriarchy to a precarious integration of women into the world of work and to the control of women's bodies, both in formal work and in tasks associated with gender in private space and in reproduction.

And the creation of the Chilean Network Against Violence Towards Women (2004) and the organization of the first march against violence against women under the slogan "Machismo Kills" (2008), as well as initiatives which, starting from 2013, were aimed at setting up a horizon for the liberation of bodies, against the

absolute prohibition of abortion, which lasted in Chile until 2017 [30]. The debate leading to the vote of a first law allowing abortion in three cases (risk to the life of the mother, pregnancy as a result of rape and unviable foetus), which had established a conflicting space of dialogue between the organizations of feminism – radical, student, social and governmental – was an important turning point towards the current massification of this movement. Around the demand for freedom of abortion, radical organizations [31]), although especially present in the academic sphere, have initiated a powerful critique of the stereotypes inherited from the dictatorship and embodied in the Constitution of 1980, which the state reproduces: the sovereignty of women over their lives and their bodies is still denied, they have the right to abort only as "victims", that is to say that public policies remain conservative and paternalistic in the field of female sexuality, thus avoiding by a medical discourse the valorisation of reproductive work. Despite the tensions between the various interests, origins and ideological orientations, the establishment of the Chilean coordination #NiUnaMenos in 2016 – a unitary space for the diversity of feminisms – has made possible an unprecedented process of dialogue and elaboration between policies and activists, between the organizations defending a unitary posture and those of intersectionality, beginning a cycle whose ambition is the refoundation – starting from feminism – of a new left for Chile.

It is significant that in this so diversified movement the discourses – social, political and intellectual – are asserted in a more or less strong way as the thinking of a third wave of feminism, initiated at the end of the twentieth century, refounding its knowledge from its global character, recognising the multiplicity of forms of being a woman under capitalism, integrating the perspectives of class and race as fundamental axes for any construction of a political subject for emancipation. The rereading of the works of Latin American feminists, such as Julieta Kirkwood Bañados [32], developed within the third wave and in social mobilizations

facing the brutal economic conversion to neoliberalism in the authoritarian context of the Southern Cone, opens up before the Chilean anti-capitalist left an unprecedented space to build new identities, which integrate contemporary feminism into the modernization of its ideological principles and social relations. Similarly, in a text signed several months before her election by the Chilean Member of Parliament and former President of the University of Chile Student Federation, Camila Rojas Valderrama [33], the vision of this Latin American trajectory of feminist learning imposes on the present left "rebellion and the criticism of an order that sees us and treats us as inferior" and analyses the reproduction of the patriarchal order as the "dark side" of the Chilean economic boom and of the country being admitted to the OECD. Heritage of the cycle of student mobilizations (2001, 2006 and 2011), contemporary Chilean feminism draws its power from its critique of the system in its entirety by showing that the neo-liberal economy and the policies of the subsidiary state are aimed at the precarisation of life and at social segregation.

Pauperisation and/or modernization? The present debate on feminism

It is this heterogeneous and affirmed trajectory that collides with the "Women's Agenda" of President Sebastián Piñera. His response to the feminist mobilizations of the last few weeks aims to prepare a conservative posture for the second post-dictatorial government of the

Chilean right: strengthening the role of the state and an essentialist conception of woman "naturally different from man", with mercantile measures aimed at framing social rights, including those of health, education, housing and pensions. The organizations of the left have also denounced the continuing tendency of these "pro-women" measures to consolidate a female subject in such a way as to maintain an economic system that perpetuates the precariousness of women's Lives [34]. Sebastián Piñera is making the choice of ignoring the social demands of non-sexist education, forgetting concrete measures both to deal with precarious jobs and to prevent the increase of gender violence and the pauperisation of broad sectors of women in the country and in the region. He does not take into account the reproductive and domestic care tasks that represent work that is fundamental for any production.

In this sense, the biggest feminist uprising in the history of Chile is faced with a challenge that goes beyond the debate on its origins and the present aim of mobilization: the construction of an anti-neoliberal political leadership that, starting from the feminist movement as a spearhead, will deepen the struggle for all social rights. This is where the potential of this southern feminism lies: In its critical questioning of the unfulfilled promises of democratization and freedom after the dictatorship; and this is clearly expressed in all the reforms that turn their backs on the mobilized society, and in the lack of questioning of the institutions inherited from the dictatorship, the hegemony of the market and the continued privatization of what is public.

That said, it is no less important to take into account - as a context for the emergence of the present Chilean feminist movement - the profound

crisis of legitimacy of the so-called transitional democracy, which affects the entirety of the formal system of parties, from the right up to the recently-formed Frente Amplio (Broad Front).

Looking for points of reference to imagine a new democracy that would take on the task of social integration in one of the most unequal countries in the world, citizens are now experiencing the first space for this purpose that is creative and open to society: feminism - which has launched an appeal to the historically excluded sectors. From there comes the fact that the Chilean feminist movement is perceived less as the result of two decades of market modernization of the country, and more as a forum to demand and re-establish lost social rights. Not forgetting a refounding of relations between men and women in the Chilean left in order that they can converge together towards a transformation of society. This reminds this left of its successes and mistakes as regards the political participation of women and becomes a tradition of struggle that is inescapable for all the transformative forces in Latin America.

Coming back to socialism as a collective horizon of defence against the dehumanizing advances of the market and reforms, today's feminism represents in our region a real possibility of ending a social order based on the generation of a second-class humanity. In this way, the advent of feminist demands would make it possible once again, this time in an authentic and integrative way, to rethink democracy in Chile so that it offers everyone, whatever their gender, equality and freedom.

Santiago de Chile, 31 May 2018

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What the Student Protests Mean for

Bangladesh

10 September 2018, by **Neha Simlai**

As I still waited to understand why there was little international concern about what was happening in Dhaka, I realised that it was an issue that concerned everyone in Bangladesh – almost every household has children, and safer roads cannot possibly be an exceptional demand. I continue being a bit lost because I am having to relay what the street-side view of Dhaka is to friends and family back home in India, some even less than an hour away.

At a first glance, the issue seemed quite straightforward: on July 29, 2018, after two school children from the Shaheed Romijuddin Cantonment College were killed and 12 others injured when a speeding bus mounted a footpath, hundreds of schoolchildren took to the streets. These children (mostly between ages 13 and 19), often in school uniforms, were seen demanding justice, improved road safety and immediate removal of unauthorised vehicles and unlicensed drivers from the roads of Dhaka.

The National Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and Railways (NCPSRR), a non-government organisation, estimates that about 4,284 people were killed in road accidents in Bangladesh in 2017. However, the Bangladesh Passengers Welfare Association (BPWA) in its annual report has put out a figure of 7,397 people killed during 2017. Notwithstanding the wide variation in the numbers cited, both reports underline the massive number of casualties and public anger has been on the rise for a number of months.

A seemingly non-partisan, simple and clear demand was emerging out of that incident – one that would be difficult to deny, by any stretch. It is difficult then, to fathom the reasons why almost all of Dhaka halted last week or how vigilante forces managed to get away with violence against these young students. As an outsider,

believing that this too is ‘home’, I cannot help but wonder when violence and arson ended up within that precept of civil engagement. Set against the backdrop of an election year in Bangladesh, various political factions seem to be using this protest as an opportunity to sway public opinion and groundswell.

My work takes me to territorial waters of the Bay of Bengal, the resources of which are shared by people in India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, from way before these countries, and the various identities therein, were born. I work in a field that is too science-based to be political or religious. So, for me, neutrality in observation comes with a sense of shared history and space.

Schendel’s book has served me well during the first few times in Dhaka with its broad introduction to the social, economic and political landscape of Bangladesh. It has managed to explain to some extent what I had so far not been able to understand about Bangladesh: this young country is powered by the idealism of the youth. And in its short history, the country has seen political narratives that have time and again been shaped by young minds. The students’ protests, therefore, were not isolated events. Although the trigger this time was the deaths and injuries of the students they were in continuum with the larger political narrative of the country.

In 1948, when the then Pakistani government ordained Urdu as the sole national language, sparking extensive protests among the Bengali-speaking majority of East Bengal, it was the students of the University of Dhaka who led the movement against it. When the police resorted to violence against those students, it stoked an entire region into civil unrest. The famous ‘michhil’ (protest march) of February 21, 1952 (now international

mother language day) was also taken out by young students from across Dhaka’s colleges and schools. The conflict finally ended in 1956 when the central government relented and granted official status to the Bengali language. It is, in fact, the language movement that catalysed the Bengali nationalist movement and later the Liberation War of 1971. The first version of the Bangladeshi flag Bangladesh was created by a section of student leaders of the Shadheen Bangla Nucleus on June 6, 1970, in room 108 of Iqbal Hall (now Sergeant Zahurul Haq Hall) at the historic Dhaka University.

This is a country where the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, prides herself to have started out as a young student leader at Eden Girl’s College in Dhaka long before she came to the forefront of the Awami League and national politics with a belief system firmly rooted in the overall development of Bangladesh. This is a country that has enjoyed stable economic growth of over six percent since 2008 and has recently fulfilled the eligibility criteria to be recognized as a developing country, crossing over from the list of least developed countries (LDCs). It would perhaps be safe to say that the historical continuity of change is guided by a grassroots ideology driven by the youth of Bangladesh.

The protests themselves, the length of time that they have lasted and the subsequent violence all seems like an overreaction to a very simple demand. The city of Dhaka was literally shut down, and a subtext of fear and extended civil unrest has continued since. A friend who works for an aid agency here remarked that there are way too many police personnel on the streets for anyone to feel completely safe, taking him back to the July 2016 terrorist attack at the Holey Artisan bakery in Dhaka. Dhaka changed overnight that fateful day and has

never been the same again, the friend said.

And then, in a sudden shift, on Thursday morning, I found myself driving in a Dhaka that felt eerily normal. Is that just how the anatomy of a protest works? I am not sure whether to be convinced this sudden calm is a good thing. Not just yet. In a situation like this, there are perhaps no clear answers and no unidimensional ways of thinking through solutions; not when a U.S. embassy vehicle comes under attack, not when an internationally renowned photographer is arrested, not when the United Nations is requested to withdraw its statement about the issue

at hand, not when social media is full of reports one does not quite know how to process, and definitely not when electricity and internet services continue to be peculiarly shaky.

I keep thinking that, like the rest of the recorded history in Schendel's A History of Bangladesh, this too seems like the emergence of what may perhaps, years from now, be described as a new narrative in this context.

I was carrying the book in the lift that evening. A rather friendly neighbour, who has lived through the last 50 years of subcontinental history, looked at me and then at the book. He asked politely whether I had finished reading

it, to which I replied I was trying to but that it was difficult to read stuck in a regular Dhaka traffic jam for two hours.

He smiled and said, "Bangabandhu [35] would have been saddened by the road accident statistics and would have definitely hated the traffic jam you've been in had he been alive today. But he would have beamed with pride at the passion and idealism of Bangladesh's student community."

For now, hope floats.

12 August 2018

[The Wire](#)

India's Antique Anti Sodomy Law repealed

9 September 2018, by **Radical Socialist**

In this moment of achievement, we hail all those who fought to make it possible. It is not a few elite figures, nor some mainstream liberals, and certainly not any of the major political parties, but large numbers of people in their communities, resisting police violence and blackmail, building militant LGBT organisations, and coming out with their identities, or taking part in the Pride Walks and other programmes, who have made the struggle visible and ultimately won this significant step.

Homophobia and compulsory heterosexuality go hand in hand with male domination, glorification of the family and gendered roles for women. These in turn are buttressed by Brahmanism as well as other religious orthodoxies. And all of them are also connected to capitalist exploitation. This is why many LGBT activists, hailing the toppling of Section 377, also chanted slogans against the UAPA and demanded the release of civil rights activists. [36]

Repealing Section 377 is not the end of the struggle. Notwithstanding the promise of equality in Article 14 of the

Indian Constitution, the social reality is that Dalits continue to be sidelined, ill-treated, subjected to violence and excluded from jobs, education and access to many services. The fact that the Supreme Court has completely removed consenting adults from the scope of Section 377 does not mean that LGBTs will immediately achieve equality especially the civil rights to marry; adopt; inherit properties and so on.

That struggle will only now be widened, as greater numbers are emboldened and as they come out declaring their orientation openly. But there have been on one hand attempts at co-opting through prioritising small groups of elite LGBTs, and on the other hand aggressive and violent propaganda and threats persist against many LGBTs. Legal redressal cannot solve the issue of social ostracism and deprivations of the sexual minorities. The reworked Transgender Bill is still skewed. The demand for reservation in government jobs and educational institutions are yet to be accepted.

The struggle for recognition as equal

humans, the struggle for a right to live life on their own terms, to get equal access to jobs, shelter, health, education – these are struggles where LGBTs have a long way to go. At the same time, these struggles call for unity of the exploited across sectional divisions.

This is not to be confused with pseudo-class, or class reductionist arguments, where the struggles of marginal sexualities are ignored, or rejected as petty bourgeois/ bourgeois reactionary fashionable behaviour. Real class unity will be achieved only when special oppression is acknowledged and its issues seriously addressed within larger class forces.

At the same time, therefore, we need to remind people, both in the LGBTIQH communities and in the leadership of working class organisations and left parties, that the bulk of LGBT people are labouring people; and to reject as reactionary the propaganda of those on the left who either treat the struggle as insignificant, or as reactionary, from petty bourgeois moralism disguised as class politics.

Radical Socialist has participated, to the best of its abilities, in struggles of the Queer communities in India. Radical Socialist has argued that the

way forward is through mass movements and widest unity of all the exploited, while recognising and

fighting for all special oppression. Radical Socialist will continue to be involved in these struggles, as we unitedly fight for our demands.

Andalusia: “We need to continue reproducing an alternative common sense”

8 September 2018, by **Teresa Rodriguez**

You were re-elected with three-quarters of the votes in the Andalusia primary and in the absence of support from the federal apparatus. What were the key elements in this? What do you think your candidacy offered to activists?

I believe this is the second round of the II Assembly of Ciudadana Andaluza. During this meeting we had thought about the need for the next step in the construction of Podemos. It went through this slow transition that we have talked about so many times before.

We were in the fast lane. The intention was to obtain rapid victories in intense electoral periods, taking advantage of the wear and tear of the political forces of the regime, of an open crisis of the regime, of a sensation of disenchantment on the part of the social majority, of indignation, of the will for change. Once we crossed and concluded this electoral cycle, this slow transition had to be rooted in the territory with the forces of change. This not in a few months or three years, because it is during decades that alternatives have been built in each of the “comarcas” (counties) of Andalusia.

It is in this sense that the demand for autonomy was made during the II assembly of Ciudadana Andaluza and now we have a strategic project in play, which is convergence, and which was put on the table in this process of primary elections. It is for this reason that we believe that that it is not only agreement on opposing them in

Parliament which counts but also, a very clear alternative to the PSOE and what it is, and that we must avoid the institutional illusion of thinking that it is only by being part of the government, even in association with the PSOE, that we would be able to change things. We have had a very clear attitude in relation to the PP and the PSOE in Andalusia, denouncing them as the forces of the regime.

On the other hand, there is the will to build a process with its own identity, which is an extension of decades, not to say centuries, of the struggle of Andalusia wanting to close the gap with respect to the rest of the country and the continent. This will only be resolved with a process of awareness and self-confidence, with a specific programme to end this situation of inequality.

The convergence with Izquierda Unida goes back a long way. In Andalusia, it provides a notable electoral base, especially in the rural areas. However, the alliances with Primavera Andaluza or Izquierda Andalucista are more recent and we are talking about parties with some social implantation, but which does not necessarily translate into votes. So what do these Andalucista formations bring to the ensemble of Adelante Andalucía?

They bring about something very important which is to have preserved the healthiest tradition of *Andalucismo*. These were the most critical sectors at the time when the Partido Andalucista decided to govern with the PP and the

PSOE, and others if necessary, taking the Andalusian flag but abandoning the flag of the left and social transformation. Within this political force, these same sectors led a clear opposition to the rightward moving tendency of the PA and while crossing this desert kept this green and white flag which continues to have meaning to this day. They bring us something fundamental for such a young force: to connect with the historical expectations of the Andalusian people and, in addition, they have been able to do so in a very generous way. Basically, they are comrades who have put at our disposal this heritage which they have been able to preserve during all those years when they were in the minority. They have brought it to our common project, without absolutely asking anything in exchange beyond collaborating in a process of change in our land. For me it has a lot of value.

In the parliamentary group, we were beginning to get closer to this reality, thanks to José Luis Serrano. He was a deputy for Granada and died after a year in the Andalusian parliament. He also came from this *Andalucista* tradition, which preserved the flag of the historic demonstration of December 4th and which also brought us this inheritance.

Thanks also to our connection with people from the Sindicato Andaluz de Trabajadores like Mari, from Coronil, who brought us this rural and Andalusian feminist background that is very valuable because, in our region, *Andalucismo* is very much linked to the struggle for the land and

the struggle of the Sindicato de Obreros del Campo and the Sindicato Andaluz de Trabajadores.

And I also had a personal interest, and I experienced it in a very close way, because my father was from the Socialist Party of Andalusia. Far beyond that, very quickly, the need appeared to have a specifically Andalusian discourse. Because we believe that if we are able to govern in Andalusia, if we do not question the infrastructures that go far beyond what an autonomous government can decide, linked to the unfavourable and peripheral position of Andalusia in the market at the state and European levels, concerning also the ownership of the land, as a basis for other types of weakness and vulnerability in our economy.

If we are not able to touch those structures that are at the heart of the distribution of power in our land, we will not be able to change the reality of Andalusia. We can manage resources in a healthier way, we are more transparent, we manage better, clean up the administration and save resources to reinvest in public services. No. There is an underlying structure that needs to be touched that goes beyond what an autonomous government can do. And only a people aware of that reality and with a clear determination can change it.

How do these aspirations materialize in a political project?

There is an agrarian reform that has been needed for centuries on our land. This is a strategic bet for renewable energies where we could be innovators and exporters. To obtain sufficient resources to carry out this energy transition that could make Andalusia a leader in an economy with an endogenous development that has been pending in our land for centuries. With a tax reform that is able to collect enough resources to carry this through and which really works.

This is also evident from the commitment to experiences that are already taking place in Andalusia of localised production and consumption, of ecological agriculture. Experiences where people are demanding local

organic production. Not only on the agricultural side but also in other types of goods and services that the administration has. A commitment to the local economy, to credit unions, by systems that can somehow begin to go in the direction of weaving the authoritative network that Andalusia needs and has not had, that other territories have had, to start thinking about the possibility of closing the gap.

Would forming the government in Andalusia be enough to do that?

No.

What else would you need?

There would have to be a lever to activate other mechanisms that have to be produced within civil society, which encourages certain economic and social behavior, which facilitates, empowers, exports and shares knowledge throughout our land of experiences that are already taking place, energy cooperatives, consumer cooperatives, production cooperatives, social currencies. A whole administration making itself available to experiences of change and good practices that are already taking place in our land would be taking steps forward.

But it's not enough. We would also need an administration and a state that would put life at the centre and bet on an economy that generates employment in a dignified way and not only on autonomy.

I think that as with women, the policies that benefit Andalusians benefit the social majority because historically we have been in this position of vulnerability and therefore, change not only has to be produced in Andalusia, it has to happen also in Spain and in Europe.

The commitment to social policies is a commitment to the development of Andalusia because every time there are policies that precarise and cut public services it hurts us especially. This is particularly detrimental to women and to people with disabilities, to the collective, to the people who are in a situation of greatest vulnerability.

We have talked about what the axes of political action would be

for Adelante Andalucía if it comes to power. But what would be the priority measure?

There are many priority measures. I believe that the first thing we would have to do when we come to power, not the priority but the first, is to audit the administration. The Andalusian public administration is a machine with enormous power that is wasted by the construction of a mechanism that does not distinguish between party, government and administration. Therefore, the first thing would be to audit the apparatus with which we try to change reality in Andalusia.

Secondly, it is likely to be reduced certainly or reinforced in places where it has been too light. To make an immense effort to undo the networks and structures of clientelist and para-administrative power that offer no guarantees whatsoever.

The government has to practice politics. Often a government is seen as a bureaucratic or technocratic apparatus. And it's not true. The government has to practice politics, it has to conceive of necessary transformations of an unjust reality. That's what a government has to do. The Andalusian government is not an administrative apparatus as many times we have tried to show. But the administration has to be professionalized and in this case we find a very bureaucratic and technocratic government, with a very politicized administration. We have to turn that tortilla over.

The essence of Podemos is citizen participation. How would the transfer of powers of decision-making and management to citizens be articulated by the administration?

There are many ways. Basically, for me the perfect mix would be between what Pablo Soto has done in the city of Madrid and what (Nacho) Murgui has done in the neighborhoods, well before when he was president of the Federation of Neighbours' Associations of Madrid. I think it is a mixture of digital participation, applying new technologies to political participation, but also face-to-face meetings, deliberative functions, to

build commissions of participation around public services.

I come from the field of education and before, at first, when democracy entered in the educational field, the school boards had much more weight in the organization of life in the centers than they have now. The school boards have been weakened to empower the director, who is like the bureaucrat or political commissar trimming the public administration. This happens in health, social services and the entire Andalusian public administration.

It is necessary to restore the councils of participation in health centers, where also there is advice to consumers and professionals to articulate and to direct life in those centers, there has to be something more than the site where services are dispensed, spaces of socialization and citizen empowerment. And then for relevant punctual decisions, a very powerful digital participation can also be articulated.

We have looked at how the autonomous government would act politically if Adelante Andalucía wins an electoral victory. However, the polls do not point to this outcome, but rather one in which the PSOE-A wins the elections without gaining an absolute majority. At this point, do we contemplate the possibility of allowing for an alliance between the Partido Popular and Ciudadanos to oust a party that has governed Andalusia for almost four decades? Or on the contrary, would support for a Socialist government be possible to prevent the PP and Cs from forming a government?

We have defined this very precisely and accurately so that there is no possible uncertainty. We will never by action or by omission, if it is in our hands, make possible a government of the right. Neither of the PP, nor of Ciudadanos, because it would be the definitive exercise of political frustration: as we are not able to change Andalusia by the way of the confidence in the supposed left of the Socialist Party, we opt for the right as a vote of punishment. That is one of

the most repeated positions in this country and we do not want it to be reproduced in Andalusia.

We see that there is a historical resistance to the right that has to do with the memory of the peoples of Andalusia of which we are proud, even if the effect has been to generate a kind of politically disfigured bureaucratic monster like the current Andalusian government. But, on the positive side, we are the only autonomous community that has resisted the right throughout its democratic history and we will not put an end to that tradition of remaining an impassable barrier to the right.

That said, we are not going to enter into a government with the Socialist Party because we are not able to obtain a majority. In some places like Cadiz they have been the ones who have had to vote our investiture. In this case, they would have to negotiate with us every budget, every law. We could work every amendment of each decree. It would be an intense parliamentary work which I think would also be interesting. Always connecting with civil society, with those who have been making concrete demands or a long time.

What should the relationship be between Andalusia and the Spanish state and its peripheries? And how should this apply to the case of a political party like Podemos?

Well, we have a transformation project that goes beyond Andalusia, among other things because our framework of struggle even goes beyond the Spanish state itself. We understand that it is necessary to combat the policies of the European Union which is also going to form the last barricade of change. Even if we take steps towards a democratically determined change we will always find ourselves with the stumbling block of the European Union. I recall a statement from (Jean-Claude) Juncker in which he told the Greeks that they had no right to democratically decide to leave the Treaties of the European Union, which is an absolute contradiction, but in fact it is like that. Our space of struggle is in the Spanish state and is also at the level of the European

Union.

I believe that from Andalusia there is a fundamental historical contribution both for the democratic configuration of this country and for the recognition of the historical nationalities, where Andalusia played an important role in conquering rights through mobilization and referendum.

The demands that are good for the Andalusian people are good for the social majority of the rest of the country, with certain similarities with the feminist movement. The demands of the feminist movement are not only for women because their starting point puts life at the center and benefits the social majority. In the case of Andalusia with respect to the whole of the state the situation would be similar.

There is also another question and it is the need to rethink the Spanish state from a more cooperative and less centralistic point of view where there is no development of one by the way of underdevelopment of another. Right now in Spain, the community of Madrid is a territory of similar dimensions to the province of Cadiz, and has a gross domestic product superior to that of Andalusia, even with tropical agriculture, the port of Algeciras, eight and a half million consumers, Malaga and its tourism... it makes no sense! Something is happening for profits to concentrate artificially in certain centers of power. It is necessary to undo this injustice because it does not benefit the social majority of Madrid but only those who concentrate fortunes.

Could this message of decentralization also be sent to the Federal Directorate of Podemos?

I think so, that we have to aspire, even in Andalusia, to share more power. Right now I have won the primaries with a candidacy called "Teresa Rodríguez" and we have made use of this personal factor from the beginning of the creation of Podemos, while assuming a self-criticism for it from the first moment.

I remember perfectly the first press conference at the Teatro del Barrio in Madrid. Pablo Iglesias said in

response to a question from a journalist, I think they were from *Diagonal*, about whether it seemed too personalised a project and he replied yes. And it is because we come from a crisis of collective identity in our country, of a sense of defeat of the collective projects, of trade unionism as a space of socialization, of the party as a place where collective aspirations were expressed, of neighbourhood associationism as a place to unite wills and demands. We decided in a transitional manner which became institutionalized and we somehow lost out. It was therefore necessary to build new collective identities. At first it was necessary to rely on a certain individual legitimacy, but we must move towards plural leaderships.

In Andalusia, we would also have to divide power between the 62 regions that form Andalusia and not only in a centralized apparatus in Seville. And here, I start with self-criticism, also for the whole organization at the state level.

So you're not going to dissolve Podemos Andalucía?

No (laughter). I don't think we need to dissolve anything. What you have to generate are new spaces where you keep waiting for the overflow. It seems to me that Podemos was not born as a device that would reproduce itself for 150 years. We do not want to form a PSOE that lasts 200 years and keeps in positions, if possible, the same family for decades. What we wanted was to articulate politically social demands and indignation: a translation into a transformative policy and an effective power strategy which is capable of making us win for once.

That was Podemos and that must remain. Therefore, now in Andalusia the strategic project of Podemos is Adelante Andalucía as a space where people can be added who do not identify with Podemos because it is a consolidated identity, but maybe want to be part of a wider space where Podemos, Izquierda Unida, Primavera Andaluza and other groups that we want to attract are found.

The feminist movement has come to the fore. Keeping a due sense of

proportion, 8-M played a similar role to that of 15-M in the sense that it was able to bring people together and become transversal. In the big subsequent mobilizations, such as around pensions, it has been perceived that not only pensioners have participated. Do you think this dynamic of bringing together social demands and mutual support can be maintained?

When I was in social movements I always had political commitment, but in a limited sense. I formed part of a certain tendency to always travel from the social to the political to try to establish a winning strategy.

So I thought that when we formed a political party that was able to change reality and had sufficient courage, a sufficient relationship of forces and a sufficiently audacious program "the three things necessary to change reality" this was because social movements have come into contact with each other and have seen that they have a common problem "which is basically the system and the need to transform it" so they are able to design an alternative to put on the table and then win and get the support of a social majority. That's what I had in my head. In any case, that a television commentator on the sixth channel was going to found a party around himself and that this was going to shake a whole regime, was going to make a monarch fall, make the Partido Popular organise internal primaries, that a smooth talker like Pedro Sanchez would appear to say that he came anew to transform things or that Albert Rivera and Ciudadanos would appear as the regeneration of an already almost rotten right, was not dreamt of.

This cycle of change has occurred following the emergence of Podemos or, more positively, municipal governments of change, 20% of the population in this country is already governed by candidacies of change in the most important cities, in terms of population. It was not what I had in my head that all this was going to be generated following a television commentator who suddenly founded a party. But it has happened like this, the ways of change are complex.

I would like there to be a process of social mobilization, because Podemos has not only been the work of very intelligent people in the way that word is used. This Podemos and these people managed to connect with a common sense that was already being forged from below. That common sense and legitimacy helped it to seize the platform of the mortgage victims. In this country there was already a social majority that justified the halting of evictions with the bodies of neighbors faced with the police and the banks. In this country there was a very broad agreement with a movement like the 15-M that said "we do not want to be commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers", which is a demand of much radicalism and depth. There was already an alternative common sense around the *mareas* with which we could connect and we need to continue reproducing that alternative common sense.

If common sense becomes the war of flags and interclass irrational patriotic pride that does not see social inequalities but interterritorial hatred, the hatred of that which is different, which is from outside, which wants to self-determine or which seeks life, then we will be moving towards a society which has completely shifted to the right. No one has told us that in this country we are exempt from being able to take that risk, when alternatives and exits are being articulated in our environment to indignation and collective frustration.

We need to continue to reproduce this alternative common sense and, therefore, mobilization is what makes that happen. At this time, one of the biggest obstacles to the far right in this country is the feminist movement; and it emerged without anyone in command, as a highly inter-transversal movement where there are small groups and consolidated associations, where there are territorial coordinators and tweeters. And all of that is articulated with a structure of networks for social mobilization. The pensioner *marea*, exactly the same; the movement in defense of health in Andalusia, the same. I think you have to bet on continuing to build those network spaces where you are flexible in the way of obtaining results so as to get a majority participation.

What do you have to give up in your life as an activist when you come to lead a party with governmental aspirations?

Fundamentally, there is a problem of time. The day has 24 hours and before I dedicated 24 hours to social activism and now I dedicate 24 hours to the political struggle.

I miss a lot of social activism on a personal level. It seems to me that there are many absurdities in the institutions, which is not the case in the social movements. Everything had a little more meaning.

I think it is important that even when we have positions of public or institutional representation we do not lose sight of what we do here, why we have come hear. And let us never remove the ears, the hands and the feet from the outside, of the people who are still mobilizing at the door of Parliament, where we were also ourselves before.

One of the things I've learned in here is that what happens outside that door has much more weight than I thought when I was outside. The first thing a public representative does when they have to vote on the laws that are passed in here is to look at the newspaper to see where the social pressures are, what the social lobby

says. That is why it is so important that this lobby exists: to influence legislators and governments and continue to build an alternative common sense and spaces of emancipation and participation.

Now it's my turn to be in here. Soon I will be back outside and I will continue to build that and, in addition, I want us to build an organization that is increasingly wasting less time on absurd things that happen in institutions. Apparently, it's a very rigorous job that we do in here but then, seen with perspective, it makes little sense. I also want to invest much more effort in looking out and connecting with reality, social and of mobilization. Sometimes, even in the aftermath of institutional rigor, we are able to pose the idea that we need to demobilize and that is very dangerous. Because instead of changing institutions, the institution will have changed us and us and we are not exempt from that happening.

But being inside an institution like the Parliament of Andalusia, do you self-censor, are you forced you to bite your tongue more or given more freedom to say what you want?

I think there is a certain sense of greater power mainly because of the people who listen to you, the audience

you get. But I think I say the same thing now here as what I was saying outside. Sometimes, even with more anger against the adversary because of having them close, seeing how they operate, seeing how cynicism works in the institutions and the privileges, the perks, the relations with the structure of power that generate inequality and social suffering.

We haven't lost that. That rage is still alive and now it seems to me that we are able to hear more people than before. But it is not enough that we are able to send radical messages and speeches from the institutions. It is not enough because changes are not made with speeches, they are made with a correlation of forces.

Anything else to say to anyone who reads this interview?

Well, I hope a new cycle of mobilizations is approaching that overflows Podemos and dissolves us. I have no intention of dissolving Podemos, but hopefully there is a situation of overflow that passes over us, dissolves and includes us.

Translated from [El Salto Dairio]-><https://www.elsaltodiario.com/adelante-andalucia/entrevista-teresa-rodriguez-necesitamos-reproducir-sentido-comun-alternativo-podemos-adelante-andalucia.>]

“Adults in the Room”

8 September 2018, by David Finkel

Sure we are. Thanks to these diligent country-over-party patriots who “have vowed to do what we can to preserve our democratic institutions,” so many things are safeguarded from the rampages of the Orange Apparition — women’s lives, basic voting rights, prohibitions of torture, freedom from murderous police violence against communities of color, and much more.

The core message of the anonymous writer is that the hard-right Republican agenda is being protected

from the wild subjective instability in the Oval Office. “There are bright spots that the near-ceaseless negative coverage of the administration fails to capture: effective deregulation, historic tax reform, a more robust military and more.”

The writer makes valid points about the Trump regime’s accomplishments. “Historic tax reform” has deliberately put the country on the road toward bankruptcy, opening the door to wiping out Social Security and

Medicare for future generations. With “effective deregulation,” corporate power is free to ride roughshod over the vestiges of consumer protection, financial institutions can gleefully head toward the next meltdown, and the fossil fuel industry can plunder the planet for at least the short time before global climate catastrophe becomes irreversible.

The rightwing seizure of the Supreme Court means that the entrenchment of corporate power can be insulated from

popular political “interference,” public education gutted, health care potentially stripped from tens of millions of people receiving it under Obamacare, and ultimately Roe v. Wade overturned as the gift to the religious-fanatic sector of the Republican base. Meanwhile ICE rips apart immigrant families and terrorizes communities, satisfying the demands of the (closeted as well as open) extreme racist elements.

Against the record of such impressive achievements, the mere fact that the President is psycho is an inconvenient but eminently manageable problem. Trump’s lunatic orders to assassinate foreign leaders are simply ignored, drafts of executive orders to cancel NAFTA swiped from his desk, his affections for Vladimir Putin neutralized by the national security team, which “knew better” that “actions had to be taken, to hold

Moscow accountable.”

We need to recognize that Trump, with all his obscene qualities, has emerged in some respects as a “transformational” president “as Barack Obama ultimately failed to become, disappointing the hopes of many on the liberal and progressive spectrum. That of course is why the Republican leadership, who know perfectly well who and what he is, continue to enable him.

It’s a strategy that can continue, even if the administration’s internal atmosphere resembles a cross between a Night of the Long Knives and the Night of the Living Dead, until something happens to rupture it. Trump’s behavior might drag the Republicans down toward electoral oblivion. More likely, some kind of crisis “e.g. the next global financial emergency “might emerge that demands competent American

“leadership,” which no one believes Trump and his inner circle can provide. Or the Mueller investigation might produce indictments threatening to send Trump’s family to prison.

At that stage, the Republican leadership “not the Democrats, despite the empty chatter about impeachment “might have to move to curb Trump in a serious way. But that’s for some presently unknown future scenario.

Right now, the left’s focus needs to be away from the daily festival of scandal and celebrity sleaze, and firmly fixed on the deadly serious issues facing working class and oppressed people. We need to be building a resistance that’s anything but “quiet.”

September 7, 2018

[Solidarity](#)

How conservative is the Russian regime?

7 September 2018, by Ilya Budraitskis

“A strong president means a strong Russia!”. Photo: Andrey Pronin / Zuma Press / PA Images. All rights reserved. The atmosphere of Russia’s recent presidential election and Vladimir Putin’s predictable victory seemingly leaves no doubt that the current Russian regime is conservative.

The boring election was, in fact, a plebiscite in which affirming one’s fealty to the nation’s leader resembled pledging loyalty to the country itself – to its history, sovereignty and political traditions. The election campaign was a performance, and the roles were carefully blocked out by Kremlin strategists. An embodiment of the “perpetual present”, a present that rules out all unpredictable change, a depoliticised Putin towered over the pitiful opposition candidates, who stood in for the arbitrariness and irresponsibility of political gamesmanship. This image of the

present does not envisage circumstances whereby people can choose their future themselves: they can merely affirm their complicity in an unspoken pact amongst the generations. Russian citizens thus made their true choice by observing rituals and performing long-standing practices. Politics, per se was, beside the point.

The Putin regime’s conservative, anti-political, and anti-democratic method of self-legitimation, however, is a natural fit with the market rationale that permeates Russian society. The rejection of political choice is justified not only by fealty to traditions, but also complete mistrust in public life – whatever its shape and colour.

The flip side of this prevailing conservatism is individual self-concern, the priority of private interest over the common good. The sustainability of the government’s

conservative rhetoric, combined with market-driven social atomisation, was especially evident during Putin’s previous term as president (2012–2018). This was a period that witnessed the growth of state-promoted nationalism, especially after 2014, when the annexation of Crimea and confrontation with the west dovetailed with the commercialisation of medicine and education, as well as an overall reduction in the Russian state’s obligations to society. The so-called “Crimean majority” (the silent majority of patriotic Russians who rallied around the Kremlin’s foreign policies) was marked by its pride in the revival of “historic” Russia and its ever-growing distrust of specific government institutions. [37]

It has long been a commonplace to view these institutions (specifically, the police, the courts and high schools) as ineffective and corrupt. This distrust, however, has been

reflected not in the rise of protest movements, but in the “depoliticisation” of social ills. The assumption was that individuals could not count on the state and must thus be responsible for the safety, health, and economic well-being of their families. [38] Moreover, the hegemony of private interest encourages us to sympathise with each and every corrupt official, who, like everyone else, merely wants to secure a better future for their loved ones. This depoliticisation of social ills has been quite in keeping with neoliberal-minded reforms in Russia’s social sector, where the state merely offers services to the public on mutually beneficial terms.

Conservatism and neoliberalism: dangerous liaisons

Despite the authorities’ rhetorical embrace of Russia’s “special path”, the current ideological conjuncture can be fruitfully compared with the neoconservative turn in the west, as exemplified by the policies of Thatcher and Reagan 30 years ago. It was then, during an economic crisis, that the right’s attack on the welfare state took the shape of an authoritarian populism featuring previously incompatible ideological components, such as the appeal to conservative values and the defence of the market’s unlimited sway. [39] Thatcher’s famous adage (“There’s no such thing as society”) directly contradicted the foundations of the conservative worldview, in which society had been a defining category. Thatcherism was a break not only with the previous social democratic consensus, but also with conservative political tradition.

Ronald Reagan on the campaign trail in 1984. Source: Reagan Library / Wikimedia Commons. Since Disraeli’s time, English conservatism had opposed liberalism to the long-standing unity of the nation – a unity vouchsafed by a shared way of life and mutual obligations. Conservatives did not regard government as a night watchman whose only job was to protect private property and ring-fence private life, but as society’s

natural extension, its shape. The relationship between state and subject was not a rational contract. It was based on authority, and it drew on the metaphor of the father vis-à-vis the members of his family. At the same time, conservatives were always averse to the social democratic notion of “public interest”, since it involved vigorous state intervention in the economy. [40]

For conservatives, “society” was never as a normative concept. It was the particular outcome of every country’s history. The emphasis on long-standing relations within specific societies shaped conservative scepticism towards reforms aimed at implementing universal principles of liberty and justice. Conservatism’s sceptical attitude naturally led to its positive view of the law, which did not embody rational principles, but was the product of an unspoken agreement among generations. In this sense, there is no contradiction between a conservative apology for English constitutionalism and Russian autocracy, since the former and the latter are in full harmony with the histories of their respective countries. As the Russian conservative Fyodor Tyutchev aptly put it: “Russia’s history is its constitution.”

Conservatism’s aversion to norms and its sceptical attitude to universalist theories like liberalism and socialism have always lent it exceptional flexibility and adaptability with respect to different countries. Conservatism has always acquired a different content, since it has been defined by the unique ways of living in each particular country, although the political style itself has shared a deeper rationale. [41]

Conservatives see freedom as meaning something else – as the very right to difference, as the nation’s capacity to stay true to itself and its history. Freedom thus overlaps with the notion of sovereignty. All attempts to limit it for the sake of abstract principles, such as human rights, are thus a threat to freedom. True freedom belongs to the social body, whereas individuals, on the contrary, are limited in their freedom of self-determination. They are not free to choose the nation, gender, and class

to which they belong, since all these things are defined by the society into which they were born.

It is not hard to see that the basic building blocks of the current Russian state’s discourse map onto these attitudes exactly. We find the same fight for sovereignty (true freedom) against the normative restrictions imposed by the west, and the hegemony of historic ritual over the letter of the law. Putin thus means more as the nation’s purported leader than the institution of presidential power as described in the 1993 Russian Constitution.

Putin means more as the nation’s purported leader than the institution of presidential power as described in the 1993 Russian Constitution

The Russian state attacks all attempts at revolutionary change from a consistently conservative stance, drawing historical parallels between the events of 1917 and recent so-called “Orange Revolutions” in the former Soviet republics. The Russian conservative critique also constantly stresses that the doctrinal fanaticism of revolutionaries, who experiment with societies grounded in history, has usually been cynically exploited by foreign adversaries to undermine their national sovereignty. [42]

Preserving true freedom from the seductions of false freedom is guaranteed not only by combatting the revolutionary threat, but also constantly taking measures to reinforce moral discipline: abortion rights are restricted, homosexuality is criminalised and so on. The rhetoric of defending family values, which goes hand in glove with these disciplinary measures, is a direct reference to the conservative metaphor of the state as a large family whose members are bound together by mutual obligations. In this sense, moralistic discourse is a universal feature of neoconservative politics, whether in the US during the administration of President George W. Bush or Russia under Putin. [43] In the face of deepening social divides, it generates the illusion of unity, moral majority closing ranks against foreign threats and the selfishness of minorities demanding defence of their civil rights.

"The consequences of government cuts to culture, education and health" reads this display at a protest organised by Deystvie, Russia's doctors' union, November 2015. Photo courtesy of medrabotnik.org

The neoliberal policies consistently pursued in Russia since the early 2000s have been peddled as purely rational, as unencumbered by ideology and politics. The reduction of the state's obligations to society, tax breaks for big business, liberal reforms of labour laws and commercialisation of the public sector have been implemented by technocratic governments whose arguments invoke common sense and the know-how of other countries alone. The president, who symbolises society's unity and historical continuity, has usually avoided publicly defending neoliberal policies, leaving the job to his depoliticised bureaucracy. The division of portfolios between the president and the government dovetails with the hegemonic conservative-liberal symbiosis overall. What matters is that the symbiosis is devoid of apparent inconsistencies, embedding neoliberal rationality and the conservative political style within an ideological unity.

Wendy Brown has compared the American take on this unity with the dream work, as described by Freud, where thoughts and emotions incompatible with reality are happily displaced by the imagination's unconscious protocols. [44] In this reading, neo-conservatism is not a mere rhetorical screen for neoliberal policies, but generates the overall ideological structure. It is crucial the structure's own inconsistencies are not resolved. Rather, they are preserved in a state of reconciliation, whose features are dictated by specific historical circumstances.

Is Russian conservatism opportunistic or axiomatic?

A popular leitmotif of Russia's current period of stability is what might be

called the birth of order from chaos. Per this narrative, the retreat from long-standing Russian historical patterns and the embrace of universalist liberal doctrines during the Gorbachev and Yeltsin administrations generated social catastrophe, moral degradation and a real danger of Russia's losing its sovereignty. The oligarchs took advantage of this erosion of state authority, turning the country into an arena of unfettered competition for power and resources. Putin's advent reversed these threatening trends by firmly separating business and government, thus returning the country to its dignity. The Putinist renaissance, however, not only involved revisiting the reforms of the 1990s, but, on the contrary, melding their outcomes with the continuity of Russian traditions of governance. It borrowed all the best aspects of the imperial, Soviet and Yeltsin periods, as it were: a heavyweight foreign policy, Christian morality and strong property rights.

This genealogy facilitated the political expropriation of both opposing camps during the Yeltsin period: pro-western liberals and the so-called patriotic opposition, including the Stalinists from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) and imperial nationalists. On the one hand, the new official conservatism satisfied demands for a foreign policy independent of the west and rehabilitated the Soviet past as a legitimate part of national history; on the other, it strengthened the market institutions established in the 1990s. In the terms of the latter, it acted like a Bonapartist, preserving the revolution's social gains while reassessing their political value.

Since the 2000s, a considerable number of elite Russian liberals have abandoned their previous political selves, serving as consultants on implementing neoliberal reforms or integrating directly into the state bureaucracy. This strategy was the basis of a liberal conservatism that regarded the rejection of liberal democratic principles as a necessary sacrifice that would make Russia's transformation into a market economy irreversible. [45] Conservatism's anti-revolutionary aspect played a central

role in this case, whereas the rhetoric of historical greatness and morality was regarded as instrumental and derivative. Meanwhile, former members of the patriotic opposition cherished the hope that sooner or later Putin would release himself from his obligations to the Yeltsin-era liberal elites and would set about implementing a thoroughly nationalistic conservative programme. [46]

If, following Samuel Huntington's well-known classification, we can term Russian liberal conservatism "situational", then the second case would have to be termed a conservatism of values. [47] The relative proportions of official conservatism's two ingredients have always been in flux throughout the Putin regime. Whereas situational conservatism dominated during the economic boom and the unsuccessful attempts at integrating Russia into the western hegemonic system in the noughties, the outset of Putin's third term as president in 2012 and the nascent confrontation with the west after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 should obviously be defined as a turn toward the rhetoric of axiological conservatism. However, what members of both ideological camps regarded as tactical fluctuations were, in fact, parts of a uniform ideology.

Some rights reserved. By 2012, the Putin regime had arrived at a political crisis, spurred by popular protests against vote rigging during the December 2011 parliamentary elections. The regime responded to the crisis by engaging in an abrupt rhetorical transition to a conservatism of values. The democratic protests were spun as a revolt, directed by outside forces and driven by hedonistic members of the Russian upper middle class, against the Russian "cultural code", as embodied by the patriotic majority and the nation's political leader.

The annexation of Crimea was the climax of the rhetorical conservatism of values. Unconditional support of the regime's foreign policy was categorically equated with affirming one's loyalty to the country and its historical choice. The fronts in the cultural wars between the so-called

silent majority and the selfish minority virtually turned into a point of confrontation between Russia and the west. This stance was quite clearly articulated in Putin's famous speech of 18 March 2014, in which critics of the annexation were branded "national traitors". [48]

The 2011-2012 democratic protests were spun as a revolt, directed by outside forces and driven by hedonistic members of the Russian upper middle class

The turn to political conservatism coincided with the onset of economic stagnation, attributable to the limits of growth under post-Soviet capitalism's model of society. The government responded to the structural economic crisis, exacerbated by a decline in oil prices and western sanctions, by slashing social spending. The government's anti-crisis economic policy largely aped the austerity measures enacted in the European Union and were even tougher. The conservative discourse, which had virtually criminalised all grassroots protests as unpatriotic and playing into the hands of foreign foes,

legitimised the Russian variation of austerity. [49]

The phase of the Putin regime's evolution that kicked off in 2012-2014 has thus been marked by simultaneous radicalisation of both halves, neoliberal and conservative, of the ideological symbiosis. At the same time, their discordant unity has acquired an ever more coherent shape in which the idiom of axiological conservatism has served as the natural expression of neoliberal content. Thus, Russia's unconditional sovereignty and the moral and political unity it imposes on society has been proffered as a necessary condition in the global fight for resources, a fight depicted as a natural extension of the law of competition amongst individuals, while conservatism's scepticism towards doctrines that limit sovereignty in favour of universal rights has led to the suspicion that all appeals to defend society's interests are hypocritical.

Paradoxically, the rationale of competition has infused the

conservative notion that the communal has priority over the personal. A typical specimen of conservative discursive performativity was Putin's recent statement that the aspect of collectivism was still a strong presence in the heart and soul of the Russian people, and the ability to work as a team was nowadays a competitive advantage. [50]

The radicalisation I have described, involving both neoliberal policies and the conservative rhetoric that has attended them, definitely testifies to the regime's protracted crisis. Its further progress will inevitably lead to ruptures in the current ideological hegemony. These breaches by reality of the dream's illusory unity, to once again evoke Wendy Brown's metaphor, will be occasioned by the need for ever more radical neoliberal reforms, reforms increasingly inimical to society. [51]

This text was originally commissioned for the Slovak magazine "Kapital", 8/2018. Translated by Thomas H. Campbell.

[Open Democracy](#)

RiMaflow will live!!

5 September 2018

They have tried to block, with all available instruments, the work of our mutualistic and cooperative project, RiMaflow, the worker-recovered factory in Trezzano sul Naviglio [Milan]. RiMaflow emerged almost six years ago from a formerly abandoned multinational business which had dismissed 330 people. Since then, the RiMaflow cooperative has received strength to resist and has become one of the most significant experiences of workers' self-managed factories. Since opening our cooperative we have managed to survive and thrive through the strength of community solidarity, enabling us to create a positive ecological footprint, approximately 120 new jobs without

any external help, take a strong stance against organized crime - in which many companies and institutions in the southwestern region of Milan are involved - and to facilitate a people's network of social economy we call "Fuorimercato" (Out Of the Market).

A very small part of RiMaflow's business (the recovery of raw materials from wall paper, representing only 3.6% of RiMaflow's budget, which actually results in an economic loss for us, serving rather as a training investment) has very recently been used to present RiMaflow as part of a criminal association working with the illegal processing of waste. This is indeed the most paradoxical and outrageous charge

that could be leveled against our cooperative!!! Involvement in criminal activities by the companies RiMaflow has relied on for machinery and material for production does not mean in any way the participation of our cooperative and its chairman, Massimo Lettieri, in such shameful activities. And we can and will prove this!!!

Unfortunately, in the meantime, the seizure of our cooperative's fixed and intangible assets, of our bank accounts, and of our IT and administrative systems, has begun to violently erase all of RiMaflow's regular and operational activities, preventing us from paying salaries, contributions, invoices, and tax

obligations (VAT and other taxes). This will, no doubt, dramatically burden our cooperative's budget over time. This is intolerable and unfair!!!

This moment for us is extremely serious. We ask the international community to join us in an extraordinary campaign of resistance and solidarity. We ask organizations and individuals in solidarity with us to mobilize in any way possible: It is time to show, once again, which side we are on!!!

Brazil's Movimento Sem Terra (Landless Workers' and Peasants' Movement, MST) (see below) and the International Workers' Economy Network have already shown solidarity with us. Please join them in sending an email of support with your name, position, affiliation/organization, city, and country to centrodoc@gmail.com and CCinfo@rimaflow.it

Trezzano sul Naviglio, 1 August 2018

Cooperativa RiMaflow

Associazione Occupy Maflow

Fuorimercato, autogestione in movimento [52]

APPEAL

RIMAFLOW WILL LIVE!!!

RiMaflow, through its different work activities (the Cooperative and craftshops), its cultural activities and the promotion of a network of social and people's economy called "Fuorimercato", has contributed to give a more supportive and human face to the suburbs and to the territory of the Southwestern area of Milan, becoming an important point of reference also on an international level for the redemption of the weakest social sectors.

The investigation in which RiMaflow has been involved with the charge of criminal association is paradoxical because of the deep ethical and social values showed by its workers.

The criminal investigation cannot erase the whole community of RiMaflow: the Cooperative must return to live and its legal

representative must immediately return to freedom!!

We express our greatest solidarity with RiMaflow, which must also be concretely translated into immediate financial support for legal expenses and to deal with the seizure of assets, starting with its current accounts; these expenses will amount to tens of thousands of euros over time!!

Sustainable Fundraising initiatives are needed to ensure:

DONATIONS

SOLIDARITY LOANS (with a minimum maturity of 6 months - one year)

to be paid to:

Ass. Fuorimercato

Banca Credito Cooperativo

IBAN: IT79 D083 8633 9100
00000470387

Bic/Swift: ICRAITRRAQ0

specifying "donation" or "loan for ... months / years".

Argentina's Anticapitalist Feminism

5 September 2018, by Camila Baron, Cinzia Arruzza, Gabriela Mitidieri, Luci Cavallero, Paula Varela, Tithi Bhattacharya, Verónica Gago

On August 8 the Argentine Senate, by a narrow margin, voted down the Law of Voluntary Pregnancy Interruption (IVE), which would have legalized abortion in the country. [53] The Catholic Church rejoiced, having led a ruthless campaign against safe and legal abortion for women. Several political operatives, from bourgeois politicians to trade union leaders, had caved in to this intense anti-abortion rhetoric. This for two reasons: one, their general capitulation to the ideology of "family values" upheld by both neoliberal forces and the Church;

two, because they were terrified of a new social force that had arisen in response to neoliberal predation and was now decisively shaping the political terrain: the feminist movement.

The Argentinian feminist wave galvanized around the Ni Una Menos ("not one less") movement, which arose in 2015 to protest the murder of fourteen-year-old Chiara Páez. [54] The movement began as a struggle against femicide but rapidly radicalized, expanding the ambit of

"violence" as an analytical category to include the multifarious assaults of capitalism on the lives of poor and working women and gender non-conforming people. It was the political breadth and activity of Ni Una Menos and of the Polish feminist movement that provided the inspiration for the International Women's Strike. [55]

Here, we bring together Argentinian feminists who played a leading role in shaping Ni Una Menos and the International Women's Strike. We do this at a moment of danger for

feminist organizing in the United States. While anti-abortion lawmakers are also on the march here, they are being buttressed by anti-labor laws, laws attacking social provisioning, and unprecedented levels of violence against immigrants and Muslims.

This is a particular political conjuncture where feminism, if it is to become a threat once more to misogyny and misogynists, cannot confine itself to what liberal politics classifies as “women’s issues.” If feminism is to provide an alternative to capitalist violence it must be an anticapitalist feminism. In recent times, Argentinian feminists have in their concrete struggles given form to an insurgent, anticapitalist feminism, which we can learn from, and hopefully, replicate.

CA:What is your response to the Senate vote, which narrowly failed to legalize abortion in Argentina? What are the next steps for feminists?

LC, VG: Our response is fury and euphoria. Fury because the Senate’s rejection means a decision to ignore women’s power. It is a familiar scene: this moribund political elite pretends that our efforts are invisible, as if they don’t count. This attitude echoes their lack of recognition of our work, of the ways we produce value, of our ways of building community. The Senate’s rejection dramatizes their contempt but it is also an attempt to discipline us.

Here, the principal actor is not the Senate, but the Catholic Church, led by the (Argentinian) Pope. In Argentina, the battle for women’s bodily autonomy is crucial because the abortion debate is part of a radical, mass feminist movement and it is now a debate *about class* in terms of differentiated possibilities for accessing safe abortion. As we argued before the lower house vote, for the Church, the right to decide must be kept away from popular neighborhoods. [56]

What was dramatized in the Senate’s rejection is how conservative political forces, under the leadership of the Catholic Church and with the complicity of other religious

fundamentalisms, perceive the feminist movement as their enemy. This is something that we see strongly at the regional level.

By this we also mean to say that the way in which this debate was expanded, was complicated, and continues to be present is also an exhibition of the strength, the radicality, and the intersectionality of what we have built as #NiUnaMenos — which has ceased to be merely a slogan and become a mass movement.

The first step is: “*ni olvido, ni perdón*” (“neither forget, nor forgive”). We will practice *escraches* (public shaming) against these senators. We will fight to strengthen the network of abortion providers, occupy public hospitals, demand the public production and free use (not only in hospitals) of misoprostol, and for each death due to a botched abortion we will accuse the state and call it a state femicide. We will continue to expose how the issue of abortion intersects with other social problems such as work, poverty, and racism. One of the singular features of our movement is that we are weaving abortion into a web of other political issues.

This was neither easy nor spontaneous. It was an effect of intense political work that was built through debates, encounters, and assemblies, collectively elaborating the web of violence in which abortion is inscribed. The sovereignty over bodies is not an individual question, but lies at the intersection of interdependence and the precarization of our existence. This issue has now been taken up in spaces where it previously was taboo, as we have been told by *campesina* (rural) comrades from the Campesino Movement of Santiago del Estero (MOCASE-VÃa Campesina).

PV: What do we learn from the vote? First, a renewed lesson about the nature of the political regime in Argentina. The Senate is one of the most conservative institutions, where governors of the Justicialist Party, of Cambiemos, and local political parties operate as feudal lords. The Senate is also where the influence of “real powers” is revealed in a more transparent way: in this case the

Catholic Church (in other cases you can see the pressure of economic corporations, for example). For anyone who had illusions about this political regime, the Senate’s vote showed how “real powers” operate when their interests are threatened and how traditional parties, like Peronism, are the vehicle of those interests.

The first conclusion, then, that we draw from the vote is that we must attack the “real powers.” The demand of “separating the church from the state,” which began to circulate almost naturally, is undoubtedly a prime objective of the women’s movement. That obscurantist institution, which put pressure on many boys and girls to put on light blue headscarves [symbol of the anti-abortion militants], which calls a sixteen-year-old girl a murderer for having an abortion, is economically supported by the state that pays the salary of the bishops and subsidizes the religious schools, which are the same schools where sexual education is denied.

The second conclusion is that we must also fight against those who are vehicles of that “real power”: the bourgeois politicians. The senators who voted against the Law of Voluntary Pregnancy Interruption come from various political tendencies — Peronism, Cambiemos, and even Kirchnerism.

The only political current with legislative representation in Argentina that advocates for legalizing abortion is the anticapitalist left expressed in the Workers’ Left Front (FIT), whose deputies voted on behalf of the IVE and are part of the mobilizations. The other political currents were divided around the abortion debate.

But there is another conclusion that is directly related to your second question. August 8 was proof that we need more strength to legalize abortion. I do not agree with the idea that even though we lost the vote in the Senate, we have already won the battle. The battle is not finished. It was and it continues to be a revolution in the schools, in the workplaces, in the streets, and in the home. Anywhere where there are women,

and we are everywhere, this has been the discussion. Is that in itself a triumph? Yes, it is. But we did not win. Because we need more firepower.

What would have happened if we had achieved a general strike in Argentina for the legalization of abortion? What would have happened if the “green tide” had invaded the unions and on August 8 in Argentina, transport, schools, hospitals, factories, state agencies had paralyzed the country? What would have happened if the territorial workers’ organizations had paralyzed the neighborhoods and cut off the country’s routes? The result can never be predicted, but the cost of having ignored the millions that would have then come out to fight would have been higher for the government.

I think we have to become more threatening. And for that we have to inject our green in the conservative gray, in the routine gray, in the bureaucratic gray of most of the unions. Because access to abortion is an issue for the working class as a whole. So, while it is women who have to decide, it is the working class as a whole that has to fight to honor that decision.

This is the goal of the women’s movement: to build bridges with working women (who are already part of the workers’ organizations) and to collectively discuss how to make these organizations see the feminist agenda as their own. Not as an external agenda but as an agenda of its own, because the problems of women are the problems of the working class as a whole.

Women are half of the working class, we are the majority of the teachers and nurses, we have the majority of the precarious jobs, and we perform the overwhelming majority of reproductive work at home. This is why, a basic right such as the freedom to decide about one’s own body, to decide on motherhood, is a right for which the entire working class has to fight for. Similarly, that’s why the precariousness of work, the lack of funds for health and education (which took the life of two teachers last week), the extension of the working day (which makes the double burden of housework and paid work

unbearable), all these attacks on the working class have to be demands of the feminist movement.

CB, GM: The vote revealed the existence of a right-wing nucleus that continues to talk in abstract terms about the defense of life while making misogynistic and repulsive claims that women are mere incubators. Even when referring to cases where abortion is legal in Argentina, for example if the pregnancy is the result of rape, Senator Urtubey from the province of Salta said that not every rape is an act of violence against women.

But outside the Senate it was a totally different atmosphere. We were thousands and thousands of comrades on the streets. Social and political organizations, feminist collectives, civil society organizations from the whole country, who had traveled to the capital and endured twelve hours of rain and cold during the day of the vote.

Our response will be to redouble our organizational efforts. We will strengthen the National Campaign for the Right to Safe and Free Abortion. We will consolidate other feminist spaces such as the Network of Health Professionals for the Right to Decide, which is campaigning inside the public health system. We want to expand feminist collectives, such as Pink Relief, which has been working throughout the country to provide information on how to perform safe abortions.

We will continue to demand the effective application of the law for Comprehensive Sexual Education, which enables discussions and reflections in educational spaces about sexuality, gender roles, feminism, and de-patriarchalization tools. We will of course fight for the next abortion bill. This will be the eighth time we do this. We know that though this is a moment of frustration, they have not defeated us. Abortion will be legal. We took amazing steps these last months: making the debate public, politicizing abortion, removing it from the intimate sphere, and highlighting the economic, social, and cultural dimensions of this practice.

For us it is important to stress that even though we haven’t won this battle, we do not feel defeated at all. The same feminist networks that brought us here are the ones that will make it possible for us to keep on fighting. And we’re happy to say that we belong to a new popular left that cannot think of anticapitalism without talking about feminism. And vice versa, of course. There is a lesson here: political parties and political structures in general should rise to the occasion and understand that feminism is not just a fashionable motto. It is a way to conceive and discuss everything.

CA: What role have unions played in the battle for abortion rights in Argentina? Do you see the issues of labor rights and reproductive justice as connected? If so, how?

LC, VG: The debate in the unions is a live debate. The fact is, the feminist movement has put abortion rights on the unions’ agenda. A lot of unionized workers participated in the *pañuelazos* and this method of struggle was adopted by various labor conflicts during the past few months.

One of those *pañuelazos* took place at the door of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) on the day of the June 25 general strike. Abortion struggle, its methods and politics, influenced the strike. This doesn’t mean that union leaders accept all the demands from the abortion movement. But the issues of labor rights and reproductive justice are now connected because we have already connected them in the feminist strike, when we re-conceptualized the idea of work from a feminist perspective.

This “intersection” is an effect produced by the feminist strike as a political process. It has to do with the class dimension of abortion that I mentioned before. It is important also to say that a lot of women leaders from different unions made public statements in support of legalization of abortion. But, again, the pressure of the Church in the unions was enormous.

It’s important to highlight how women workers have defied their union

leaders in many cases. For examples, the flight attendants (unionized in the CGT) carried out actions in all the airplanes both on August 8 in support of abortion and on March 8, when they struck in the airports. The feminist movement also draws support from workers in the “popular economy” (from trash pickers, to workers in neighborhood soup kitchens, including sewing workers and community “carers”), who are part of new union forms and whose jobs challenge traditional notions of “work.”

From the feminist strike we launched, the very notion of “worker” was expanded, remapping what we understand as “class struggle,” beyond the dogmas of the party left. We are developing a capacity to pressure the union leaderships from below when it came to calling a strike, and transforming the strike itself. This remapping and reconceptualization is not an abstract theoretical proposal. It has been elaborated in countless popular assemblies, transforming the assembly itself into an organizational tool.

For example, #NiUnaMenos assemblies have been organized by workers laid off from the transnational company Pepsico and with workers from Line 144 who respond to calls about gender violence across the country, but also with media workers (the Télam Agency, which laid off 357 workers in the last month) and with women from Mapuche communities who have been criminalized by land owners such as Benetton. The #NiUnaMenos movement has also driven the launch of new political spaces such as #NiUnaMigranteMenos (Not One Migrant Woman Less) and adopted slogans like #NiUnaTrabajadoraMenos (Not One Woman Worker Less) or #NiUnaMenosPorAbortoClandestine (Not One Woman Less because of Clandestine Abortion).

PV: The role of the CGT bosses was pathetic; on July 7, they issued a public statement expressing their “concern” about the economic costs of legalizing abortion for mutual or social plans which are administered by unions.

But the labor movement is not just its Peronist leadership. In response to the bosses’ statement, there was a union women leaders’ mobilization, and there have been a lot of *pañuelazos* in different workplaces: schools, hospitals, public offices, universities, etc. Furthermore, in recent years there have been several interesting rank and file campaigns, some of them led by militants from the left.

For example, there is a case of a sexual harassment strike in a food factory in Buenos Aires. In 2011 the entire factory went on strike because a woman worker had been sexually harassed by a manager. We do not have any other record of a strike with those characteristics in Argentina.

Is that a women’s strike or is it a workers’ strike? That question is very important. The victim was a woman, those who led the strike were women’s delegates of the Internal Commission (some were militants of socialist women’s organization Pan y Rosas) and the demand could be thought as a “women’s demand,” but the collective action chosen by the workers (the strike) is a classic action of the labor movement. Male workers also joined in the strike — indeed, without them the strike would have been impossible.

This example shows the need to stop thinking of the working class as an agent whose demands are about wages alone and begin to think of it as an agent that has the social strength to fight for the totality of social conditions; for the dignity of life as a whole. From this point of view, there are many demands that become central demands for the working class: shouldn’t all the workers’ organizations fight against sexual harassment at the workplace because such abuse humiliates women workers and seeks to discipline their bodies? Are they not going to fight for good day care, canteens, senior care, if all those care tasks are the ones that exhaust and break the bodies of working-class women?

Returning to the previous question, in addition to separating the church from the state, the most important strategic task the green tide has is to bring that subversive spirit that runs today

through streets, schools, houses, and factories, and use it to shake the conservatism still prevalent in the labor movement. Working-class women could be the ones who change the union’s corporatism and enforce the idea that class struggle is not about a wage but about quality of life. That refers to things that happens both within the workplace and without.

Understood in this manner, we see why women are the main protagonists in the current wave of class struggle. They are the first to be affected when the quality of life is attacked, whether in the arena of production (precarization, salary, underemployment) or in the arena of reproduction (education, health, and all care tasks). We have the opportunity today to articulate two forces: the enormous social force of the workers’ movement (which in Argentina has a great tradition of organization and struggle) and the enormous force of change of the new feminist movement.

CB, GM: Unions in our country, as in many others, are very masculine, even those that represent mostly feminine occupations like teaching. One interesting moment in these last months of struggle was when the CGT, through its leaders, said that the unions’ health services, which offer coverage for its members, did not have the resources to provide coverage for abortions if it became law. The response of the feminist movement and of the feminists inside the union was immediate. The next day we organized a *pañuelazo*, a demonstration with our green handkerchiefs [symbols of the fight for legal abortion] in the headquarters of the CGT.

On the other hand, our comrades are mobilizing for a list of demands within the public employees’ unions; for example, the defense of our sexual and (non)reproductive rights goes hand in hand with our demands for equality in maternal-paternal leave and reflection on the distribution of reproductive labor, also understood as unpaid and feminized work.

TB: What is the historical context for the Ni Una Menos movement?

Do you see it as a response to neoliberal attacks on working-class people's lives?

LC, VG: We build the movement precisely as a response to neoliberal attacks. We were able to make this leap through the strike: the first in October 2016 and then in March 2017 and 2018. The key was to connect the feminist strike with femicide and other kinds of violence. The strike weapon has now been reinvented by the feminist movement to politicize the problem of violence against women and to link it to broader social, economic, and political issues. We have shown how a wide variety of unexpected alliances and coalitions have been enabled by the strike, and how they have multiplied its impact and meanings. This political process has involved efforts to forge a new internationalism, with precarity as a common concern. [57]

In the "process" that was opened by this series of strikes, very important discussions and actions took place. For example, on June 2 of last year, we carried out an action in front of the Central Bank denouncing the financial capital's control over domestic economies and particularly against households where women provide the principal income.

The action was #DesendeudadasNosQueremos (We Want Ourselves Debt Free). One year later, for the protest of last June 4, our slogan "We Want Ourselves Alive, Free, and Debt Free" was taken up by many unions as their own, linking the process of taking out external debt in the country with experiences of private indebtedness. Including financial violence in the web of violence against women and dissident bodies has been a way to discuss the very core of the dynamics of neoliberal exploitation of our time.

In remapping work, we remap the forms of exploitation and value extraction that are not only concentrated in the world of waged labor. By this we mean that there is no feminist movement external to the class issue. Rather the feminist movement drives a social conflict that is a class conflict without this being limited to the narrow factory frame.

What is fundamental here is that today popular feminism can connect conflicts and function as a sounding board that is translated into mass-scale, radical anti-neoliberalism.

PV: NiUnaMenos as a movement can't be understood without placing it in the context of neoliberal policies against working-class people's lives and the crisis in social relations that such policies engender. Femicides are an expression of such attacks. Take the example of factory closures and attacks on grassroots unionism such as that suffered by women workers of Pepsico in 2017. NiUnaMenos was in solidarity with Pepsico workers, carried out many activities in their support.

NiUnaMenos, as yet, does not position itself as having a clear anti-neoliberal agenda; it does not have an anticapitalist discourse. But it is an evolving movement. The very fact that NiUnaMenos in 2015 was campaigning against femicides, almost as a single-issue campaign, and that three years later we are fighting to legalize abortion, is a sign that the women's movement as a whole is evolving and growing. The green handkerchief is now a mass symbol.

CB, GM: We are going through a period of profound attacks on our rights, of suppression of all programs of the state except the repressive ones. The effervescence of the feminist movement, of women and LGBTQ people, combines the accumulation of four decades of experiences forged in our massive National Meetings of Women (which have been happening since 1986) with the rise of a young feminism, of students in their classrooms and neighborhoods. This spreads through social networks and denounces sexist violence in all its forms.

Neoliberal entrenchment makes clear that the work that sustains life is done by women workers. The dismantling of the welfare state meant that there were women comrades organizing themselves in their neighborhoods to seek survival in common. Similarly, the deeply conservative logic of neoliberalism makes the lives of LGBTQ workers more precarious, enabling dignified conditions of

existence for only those who can afford it.

We are witnessing a feminization of poverty, a criminalization of trans existence, and an increase in racism towards migrants. All these elements have repercussions for the Argentinian working class which is why it is necessary to think of our class not only as masculine, white, heterosexual, and/or native to the country.

TB: How important is internationalism to the Ni Una Menos movement?

LC, VG: It is central. We think it is one of the most important features of our movement. We're practicing a new kind of internationalism: #LaInternacionalFeminista, as we call it, is producing a new kind of proximity between struggles and we feel it in very concrete ways.

Moreover, it produces a new kind of global battleground, different from the separation between the global and local that existed as recently as fifteen years ago. This implies weaving a network on the basis of resonances, sharing political lexicons and organizational experiences, which requires a complex process of translation and composition.

We are not interested in abstract anticapitalist declarations. We are concerned with connections among concrete struggles. The conflicts over land, over neo-extractive megaprojects, are as important as conflicts in workplaces and in popular economies (which are 40 percent of the economy in our country alone and the majority in our continent), as well as the offensives against dissident sexualities and the criminalization of abortion. The key is the type of web that we are making. One capable of theorizing and acting from below, and an internationalism that is part of everyday struggles.

PV: It's very important because this new wave of feminist struggle is not a local phenomenon but an international one. When you ask yourself what the different national feminist currents have in common, it is clear that the common denominator is that women,

particularly working-class women, are the ones that are the worst targets of neoliberal policies. I've written an article about this that is going to be published in the next issue of *La Izquierda Diario*. [58]

The contradiction between neoliberal capitalism that breaks the bodies of working-class women and the egalitarian discourse of liberal feminism is explosive. It would be a great political experience for the women workers who carried out the strike against sexual harassment in Argentina to meet with the striking teachers of West Virginia. Similarly, those teachers can share their experience with Las Pibas who are at the forefront in the struggle to legalize abortion. Because all these women have much more in common than they probably think.

CB, GM: The women's and feminist movement, which rallies under the banner of NiUnaMenos, builds bridges and feeds on the common struggles being carried out by similar groups globally. Those of us who are anticapitalist feminists, we feel internationalism as part of our core political identity. And as far as the fight for legal abortion is concerned, international connections were a necessary tool to learn how the debate was being conducted in other countries where abortion is legal. We studied various legislation, we even replicated forms of political action that have been successful elsewhere such as by the Italian Pink Relief or the Jane collective in Chicago.

CA: What organizing methods has the movement used? We know about school occupations by Las Pibas in support of abortion rights. What are some of the other forms of protest and how effective have they been?

LC, VG: The occupations have been decisive. They became a place of collective debate and counter-pedagogy forged by *las pibas*, this amazing young and radical component of the feminist movement here. But it's also important to mention the various workers' assemblies that proliferated, producing a feminist diagnosis in each conflict. We're in a hard economic situation, with a lot of

people losing jobs in both the private and public sectors. Here, once again, we could see the genealogy and traces of the strike: the alliances and practices within those workers' assemblies are part of the *modus operandi* that the strike has produced.

PV: What *las pibas* have done in the schools is very impressive. Many believe that these occupations are limited to the capitol or to the more politicized schools, but that's not true. It's an intense politicization that encompasses the suburbs of Buenos Aires and many other regions of the country and it is shaping a new generation of women activists and militants. The other day a sixteen-year-old Piba, who is a leader of her student center, told me that she gives talks to thirteen-year-old girls and boys, and she said: "I'm very happy because they are much better than us, they are the future . . ." A sixteen-year-old girl saying that the future was in thirteen-year-old people! This kind of politicization only happens in moments of high struggle.

There are also some important examples from the workers' movement, which are less visible. For example, at the Madygraf factory (which is a factory run by workers) the Women's Commission and Pan y Rosas called an "open women's assembly" on July 22, to discuss how to participate on August 8 and to discuss women workers' rights. The assembly was attended by more than seven hundred workers from different workplaces such as Pepsico, Kraft, Hospital Posadas, the aeronautical sector, INDEC, etc.

Something that caught my attention was what happened in the Rio Santiago Shipyard (which is also in struggle because the government wants to close it). On August 8 a huge green handkerchief appeared on the prow of the ship Juana Azurduy. It is one of the things that moved me the most, because the shipyard is historically a "male territory."

These, and surely, dozens of other experiences in workplaces have to be unified so that these female and male workers can enhance their social strength. Can you imagine what will happen if next year, when the IVE law

reappears on the Senate's agenda, all these expressions are coordinated? If all these workers use their power in support of the law?

CB, GM: The fight for abortion in these last months multiplied to the point where it would not be possible to trace a map with all the activities that happened throughout the country. The *paÃ±uelazos* and the street demonstrations in front of Congress each week were gathering points for a wide range of political and social organizations, feminist collectives, and artists.

There were the "green Tuesdays" during the debate in the Chamber of Deputies, and later the "green Thursdays" when the discussion moved to the Senate. In these actions we read out letters from actresses, scientists, writers, poets, and musicians. There were panels of debate, and also music to dance to so we could turn the demonstration into a party. From these street meetings called by the National Campaign for Legal, Free, and Safe Abortion, new groups were launched, for example the *puentazos*.

"Operation Spider" was another example of something that was put into practice by this proliferation of networks. The NiUnaMenos Collective along with the combative union workers from the subway (AGTSyP), with the help of the National Campaign for Abortion and more than seventy organizations, managed to organize a simultaneous intervention in every subway line. Each one with a particular slogan and original artistic protests.

In the secondary schools it was the teenagers who played a leading role in the debates and occupied the schools "demanding legal abortion, sexual education, as well as protocols against violence in their places of study. It is not strange that the main leaders of the students' movement today are women. There was also an "*estudiantazo*": activities in front of the Congress and in middle schools, high schools, and universities all over the country. The level of mobilization was high and undoubtedly these actions converged in to the two major mobilizations, the largest of this

process: that of July 13 and August 8.

TB: In the United States we have employed the concept of a “feminism for the 99 percent” to talk about a class struggle feminism, or a feminism that must of necessity be anticapitalist in order to speak to the needs of the vast majority of women. How have Argentinian feminists conceived of class struggle feminism? What are its contours and goals?

LC, VG: Well, we think that this is a very important point because it is part of our everyday discussions. We want to stress that here it is not just an academic debate, but a popular one. Although here feminism does not always get cast in a class language, we think this class-approach is important in terms of updating the notion of class in terms of real, existing movements.

Today, some of the most important moments in class politics are defined by anti-oppression struggles and political forms that are challenging and transforming the unions and the labor movement – often blurring the

boundary between life and labor, body and territory, law and violence. This is entirely because of the feminist movement. We are building a movement that feeds the rebellious imagination around the world today and we are nourished by all these struggles.

PV: As I said before, the relationship between the feminist movement in Argentina and the struggle for working-class people’s lives is something we are still building. But there are three solid pillars on which to build it: the massive size of the movement itself, which ensures that no one can say it is just a “middle class movement”; a new generation of women who in their political practice blur the boundaries between “class issues” and “gender issues”; and the unavoidable fact that women are “the bodies of exploitation” both in the arena of production and reproduction. So, as a socialist I ask: how can we think of a feminism that does not intend to destroy the exploitation that is destroying us?

CB, GM: From the massive turnout of the first marches under the slogan “Ni Una Menos” against femicides, the

feminist movement in Argentina is now a firmly intersectional one weaving together all our struggles. The slogans that appear every June 3 have expanded. The violence against our bodies is not just physical violence. The violence is in the wage gap, in the unpaid labor that falls on our shoulders, in the debt, in the disciplining of our sexualities, in mandatory maternity, in unemployment, and our precarious access to basic services.

Recognizing this whole network of violence and the mechanisms that reproduce it enables us to question, through feminism, all aspects of our lives. The slogan “We want to be Alive, Free, and without Debt,” in reference to the recent IMF agreement, is an example of how feminism in Argentina is not limiting itself to gender demands. The feminist movement is today perhaps the only one that is a mass movement with radical dimensions.

Translation by Karen DomÁnguez Burke

[Jacobin](#)

Against the economic war proclaimed by US imperialism on the Turkish government, stand by the side of the people of Turkey

4 September 2018, by Kostas Kousiantas

The reasons cited by Donald Trub to justify this attack are the continued detention of the evangelist pastor Andrew Branson, whom the Turkish government accuses of relations with Fethullah Gullen - the main promoter, according to the Turkish government’s allegations, of the failed coup of 2016, who has been asylum-seeker since 1999 in the United States.

In fact, according to the American press, it is the beginning of an economic and diplomatic war that will

be escalate with “a bullet a day” against Turkey until Branson is released (Washington Post).

But the real reasons for this economic and diplomatic attack of the imperialist superpower against Turkey are not, of course, the freedom of the evangelist priest. The real reasons and roots of this unprecedented escalation in the relations between the two countries should be sought in the diversification of the foreign policy of Turkish imperialism in the Middle East

region against the hegemonic imperialist plans of the United States and the EU and their most credible allies in the region: Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

It is about a long-term build-up of tensions that began almost immediately after Erdogan’s AKP took power in Turkey in 2001, with main events, the Turkish government’s refusal to the use of Incirlik’s base in 2003 in the war against Iraq, the EU’s decision to block Turkey’s accession

negotiations indefinitely, the Turkish government's conflict with Israel on the Palestinian issue, the Turkish government's support for the Muslim Brotherhood parties during the Arab Spring, the refugee problem management and especially the role of the Turkish imperialism in the Syrian civil war, which was also the culmination of tensions between Turkey and the Euro-Atlantic imperialism.

The Turkish Government, by finding that the US, EU and their allied regional imperialist powers in the Middle East and Syria are increasingly in opposition to its own imperialist plans and interests, seeks to strengthen its relations with the Russian imperialism and Iran (key players in the Syrian civil war) in order to cope with what is the most important problem for Turkish imperialism: the creation of an autonomous Syrian Kurdistan that could destabilize the interior of Turkish capitalism.

This conflict of imperialist superpowers with Turkish imperialism is equally reactive on both sides. All sides (including the Russian and Iranian imperialism that protect the bloody regime of Assad) are deadly enemies of the interests of the peoples of the region.

Therefore, the economic and diplomatic war launched by the US against Turkey is not to defend popular and democratic rights. And above all, it is a war, the victim of which will be the mass popular classes of Turkey, which will bear the full weight of these sanctions, and those who will follow. The collapse of the Turkish economy - something with what these sanctions are intended to blackmail the Turkish ruling class - will mean destructive austerity measures for the people of Turkey. It will also mean even greater autocracy and repression by the Turkish regime, against any form of resistance and disagreement with AKP and Erdogan's policy.

The workers' movement and the left in Greece should take a clear position against the financial sanctions of US imperialism. And first of all, against the efforts of the Greek government to

take advantage of this attack to promote the interests of Greek imperialism.

The Greek Government considers that the escalation of tension between US / EU and Turkey creates a favorable environment for Greek imperialism and the alliance axis of Greece, Israel, Egypt, Cyprus to move more aggressively to fulfill its aspirations in the Eastern Mediterranean (engraving an EEZ that will exclude Turkey from the Mediterranean) and the Aegean Sea (extending the naval miles to exclude Turkey from the Aegean). In fact, the Greek side hastened to give its own help to this economic and diplomatic attack launched by the US, with the decision of the General Staff of Defense (GETHHA) to suspend indefinitely the Confidence Building Measures (MEO) between Greece and Turkey (which among other things provided for the suspension of military exercises during the summer and the great religious feasts).

The peoples of Greece and Turkey will be the victims of this competition, which the Greek government is currently seeking to step up by supporting US sanctions.

At the moment, it is more necessary than ever, the labor movement and the left in Greece, to stand wholeheartedly and with all our might on the side of the left in Turkey, alongside the Turkish trade union movement, the Kurdish liberation movement and other minority movements, the Women's Movement and the LGBTQIA+ Movement, supporting their struggles against authoritarianism and neo-liberal austerity, their struggles for freedom and democracy. Our solidarity with the movements of Turkey will strengthen their dynamism and determination to confront the efforts of the Turkish ruling class to load the consequences of the US economic war on the backs of the masses.

At the same time, however, against the extortion of the US and the EU, we must not forget for a moment that it is an inalienable right of the Turkish people to choose the political leadership they want. Even when we believe that this choice does not serve its interests, we are obliged to uphold

this right against the imperialist forces that attempt, with the threat of hunger, to force people to accept political leaders willing to align with the imperialist hegemonic policy.

This, of course, can not in any way mean that we will overlook the criminal activity of Turkish capitalism, the AKP government and Erdogan itself within the country against the working class, the left, the Kurdish people and those who fight for the rights and the freedoms of the popular masses. We also do not overlook the criminal action of Turkish imperialism against the Kurdish national movements in Afrin and Iraqi Kurdistan.

The opposition against the Turkish bourgeoisie, the AKP government and Erdogan is the work of the people's forces and the oppressed of Turkey. Our duty is solidarity and support for these struggles.

However, the economic and diplomatic war that is currently being launched by the US government will result in further strengthening the authoritarianism and militarization of the Turkish regime, and possibly even its ability to inactivate the resistance of the masses, posing the threat of imperialist aggression.

That is why we must declare with determination that we are against the economic sanctions that American imperialism is putting at the expense of the Turkish people. To call on the workers and every progressive person in the US and the EU to oppose the plans their governments are planning against the people of Turkey and the Islamophobia climate with which they are investing these plans.

Let's turn to the people of Turkey, the movements and the left for a common struggle against the authoritarianism and militarization of our "own" governments, against the imperialist aspirations of our own "own" ruling classes.

Our solidarity and the common struggle of the popular masses of Greece and Turkey to serve as an example of internationalist solidarity and cooperation of the masses in the Middle East and the Balkans to claim

and defend our democratic rights and freedoms for a common future without wars and oppression, for a common socialist perspective.

In order for this call to be heard, our voice must now become strong enough:

Against the economic attacks of American imperialism, we stand on the side of the people of Turkey.

Tuesday 14 August 2018

Labour must stand firm on antisemitism code of conduct

3 September 2018, by Socialist Resistance

For months, there has been a concerted and vicious campaign orchestrated by key figures of the right of the Parliamentary Labour Party, with backing from most of the mainstream media, including the BBC. The mainstream Jewish press in Britain has also participated – taking the unprecedented step of publishing a common front page in which they allege that an “existential threat to Jewish life in this country that would be posed by a Jeremy Corbyn-led government”.

It is clear that the goal of this campaign is to prevent Jeremy Corbyn from being elected Prime Minister. Remarkably, given the ferocious barrage of smears against the Labour leader, the party is not suffering in the polls. There are reports that Labour’s membership is growing. Large meetings are taking place to plan action and to resist this coup. Many people understand what is going on.

Allegations of antisemitism apparently endemic to the Labour Party are the latest cynical ploy in this war against the Labour leader. The very same people fought to prevent Corbyn being elected in the first place and then worked tirelessly – and fruitlessly – to remove him. This assault should be defeated in the same way that the previous attacks have been – by standing firm, sticking with the principled politics of Corbyn’s leadership campaigns and the 2017 manifesto.

What is at stake is not only a vital discussion about discrimination, about

racism and about antisemitism. The vitriol against Corbyn and his team now is as nothing in comparison with the boulders that will be hurled at the whole movement during the next general election campaign, whenever that comes. And that too will pale into insignificance with what we will be confronted with if we face that down and elect a Labour government under Corbyn’s leadership. We ain’t seen anything yet – and concessions now stand us in very poor stead for the fights to come. They miseducate our supporters and give confidence to those who are anyway implacably opposed to us.

Antisemitism

Antisemitism is, as the Jewish Voice for Labour model resolution sets out, “hostility or hatred directed at Jews”. [59] And, as it also points out, the NEC Code of Conduct on Antisemitism states emphatically: “Labour is an anti-racist party. Antisemitism is racism. It is unacceptable in our Party and in wider society”.

All forms of racism are on the rise in Britain – and in many parts of the world. They need to be challenged, especially inside working class organisations, as do all forms of oppressive behaviour: sexism, homophobia, transphobia and discrimination against disabled people. The left should reject the notion of hierarchies of oppression – like forms of prejudice and discrimination themselves, this view is

used to divide and weaken our struggles. United we stand.

Antisemitism, like all forms of racism, has its particular dynamics. Stereotypes based on racism abound – and the internet, as well as being a powerful tool for radical organising, also makes the circulation of hate speech – sometimes consciously and sometimes unthinkingly – more pervasive. The left should not minimise the pernicious impact of such myths – either when written or where they facilitate acts of discrimination and violence against individuals and communities.

The code of conduct agreed by the last NEC meets this test. *Socialist Resistance* supports it. The NEC text crucially also sets out what antisemitism is **not**; it is not “legitimate criticism of the state of Israel or the ideology of Zionism”. We think this is vital – in our view accusations of antisemitism have been made in some cases where what was actually at issue was support for the struggle of the Palestinian people – including the growing Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

Palestinians silenced

Of course the people who are most directly affected by this are Palestinians themselves. British Palestinian Arab and Labour Party member Chris Khamis wrote about

this back in April – yes that’s right, this campaign has been going on that long. [60] Ghada Karmi put it like this in July “I hope that the party will maintain its code of conduct. If replaced with a word-for-word copy of the IHRA document, then I, as a member, would be prevented from speaking about what happened to me and my family – our dispossession, forced removal and permanent ban from our home purely because we were Arab.”

And an important statement has been issued by 84 migrant and BAME organisations, organised by Palestinian groups, which points out that adopting all the examples would in fact be in breach of Article 10 of the Human Rights Act. [61] *Socialist Resistance* agrees with this assessment and calls on the Labour Party and the whole Labour movement to stand with the Palestinian people – and with those Palestinians in Britain fighting to be heard.

We should also look at the international political context. The Israeli state continues its murderous offensive against the Palestinians, with scant outrage in most of the British media about what The Independent describes as Israel’s “heaviest barrage since the 2014 war” [62] Where were the accurate reports about the Great Return March to commemorate the anniversary of the Nakba – during which 166 Palestinians were killed by the Israeli Defence Force? Not on the BBC, that’s for sure. At the same time, the movement in solidarity with Palestine has been growing and the campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions has increased in strength and reach – including amongst Jewish communities.

The Israeli state responds to this growing movement by going to enormous lengths (with huge financial and political resources) to incapacitate those who criticise it. This operates at many different levels – from banks closing down or refusing to open accounts for the solidarity movement to an ideological assault on the aims and functioning of the movement – including painting it as intrinsically antisemitic.

The majority of politicians in the US and Europe have gone along with this approach – which is why Jeremy Corbyn is such a target. The situation is worse in France. During the Israeli assault on Gaza in 2014, solidarity demonstrations were not allowed in Paris. The French Supreme Court ruled on 20 October, 2015 that simply calling for a boycott of Israeli products would be illegal and punishable by law – and activists have indeed been prosecuted. Emmanuel Macron said during the presidential campaign in 2017: “Boycotting Israel has been condemned by France and there’s no reason why we should discuss the matter again.” The aim of course is to replicate this situation everywhere. Free speech only for some.

Bad Jews and good Jews?

Many powerful words have been written in defence of the position adopted by Labour’s previous NEC meeting. In terms of the politics behind the attack, this article sets out very clearly that this is about Israel and Palestine not about racism towards Jews. [63]

Under the headline Labour’s crisis is over Israel, not anti-semitism, Jonathan Cook sets out the way that Jews have been divided into good Jews – i.e. those that support every action of the Israeli state – and bad Jews – those that don’t. So Margaret Hodge MP has a protective shield when she abuses and vilifies Jeremy Corbyn, but other Jews, who take a different political position, do not.

Hodge’s initial comment, denouncing Corbyn to his face as a “fucking antisemite and racist”, was disgraceful enough. But her subsequent comment that, on hearing that she was to face a disciplinary hearing over the remarks she “felt the same fear her father would have felt when he was fleeing Nazi Germany”, completely departed from most people’s reality. This comment utterly trivialised the Holocaust, and was angrily condemned by many Jews who had lost relatives to Nazi barbarity.

This despicable comment must surely

breach the prohibition in the IHRA definition and in the NEC Code of Conduct against comparing current political developments to the Nazis, but Hodge seems to have been given a free pass. It seems that it is permissible for Israel’s supporters to call their opponents Nazis.

In fact, such comparisons are not unusual in Israeli political discourse, where such abuse is common – most notoriously by current PM Binyamin Netanyahu against his predecessor Yitzhak Rabin in the months leading up to the latter’s assassination in November 1995. And Jewish supporters of Palestinian rights are regularly denounced as “kapos” (ie, collaborators with the Nazis) by Zionist fanatics in Britain.

This trivialisation of the Holocaust, and the repeated attacks on Jewish dissidents using Nazi similes, are far more antisemitic than most of the cases investigated by the NEC and continually highlighted by the press.

Amongst the many incisive articles written by Jews in Britain making similar points, two deserve special mention. One is a piece from David Rosenberg; the other is from Susan Pashkoff’s. [64] [65] Both show not only the depth of differences between Jews, but the way those who claim to speak for “the Jewish community” treat Jews who disagree with them with unspeakable contempt and indeed sometimes act to endanger their safety.

Organisations on the left like Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL), Free Speech on Israel, Jewish Socialists’ Group, Jews for Justice for Palestinians, Jewdas and the newly launched Na’amod alongside the more mainstream Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Jewish leadership council or the Jewish Labour Movement demonstrate that there is an enormous diversity of opinion amongst – and indeed sometimes sharp debate between – Jews living in Britain. [66] [67] [68] [69] [70] [71]

This should be no surprise – it’s true in every other community of migrant origin.

Indeed, as Women against

Fundamentalism pointed out time and again, if the labour movement only recognises those who are elected leaders in such communities, we are extremely likely to reinforce reactionary and patriarchal voices and at best ignore and at worst silence those struggling against them. [72] This has been true for groups like the Asian Youth Movement which took a different position to the (male) community elders about how to deal with fascist attacks and to women's groups in many communities organising against crimes like so called honour killings. Today it's true of those Jews who, in increasing numbers, assert that the Israeli state does not speak for them when it murders Palestinians, and of course those who defend Jeremy Corbyn, for, amongst many other things, his long record of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Backpedalling won't stop the vilification of Corbyn

Given all this, it should seem obvious that the NEC on September 4 must stand firm and reiterate the decisions on the IHRA made at the previous meeting, rather than given in to bullies. In terms of the detail of what is actually being debated, as well as summarising the key arguments this

piece is invaluable. [73] But tragically, it does not seem certain that this is what will happen.

Some key figures have made their position - in favour of backpedalling - clear. UNISON's General Secretary Dave Prentis flies in the face of all evidence in his *New Statesman* article. [74] Apart from supporting the scurrilous claim made by rightwing Labour councillors in Barnet that antisemitism, rather than the failure of the Labour Group leadership to put forward a radical alternative to the Tories, was what lost seats in the London Borough earlier this year, Prentis effectively blames Labour's NEC for the pages of abuse printed attacking them. Just do what is being asked by your enemies and we can focus on the real issue of fighting the Tories. This is nonsense as any trade unionist or any activist worth their salt can see. That's because we can have no common cause with the people making these demands - something they are clearer about than some of those claiming to be on our side!

Prentis's position is particularly despicable given that UNISON has a long record of work in solidarity with Palestine and probably the most detailed in supporting BDS of any British trade union. But that hasn't stopped him waving aside the concerns that the adoption of all the example have **already** been used to prevent campaigning. It's less of a surprise that Paddy Lillis of USDAW and Tim Roache of the GMB are also

arguing for Labour to back down - but it's significant given that both unions have seats on Labour's NEC.

The final piece in the puzzle of trade union leaders seems at first glance more difficult to decipher - UNITE General Secretary Len McCluskey's piece in the *Huffington Post*. [75] The original article appears under the headline "Corbyn Has Answered Concerns On Anti-Semitism, But Jewish Community Leaders Are Refusing To Take 'Yes' For An Answer" and it is republished on the JVL website under the banner "Len McCluskey comes out fighting."

It's certainly true that the burden of McCluskey's article is in line with what we have argued here. But, despite that, in the end it comes to precisely the opposite conclusion. This seems to be because he gives benefit of the doubt to organisations like the Board of Deputies, while analysing very sharply the motives of right wing Labour MPs. So he argues: "It would be for the best if all eleven were now agreed, so the party can move on." No Len, this will not have that effect at all, it will result in yet more demands - for said organisations to have a say in Labour's internal disciplinary processes for example, for them to determine who are legitimate representatives of the community etc etc, and most of all for Jeremy's scalp.

Standing firm is the only way forward!

[Socialist Resistance](#)

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2 September 2018, by **International Viewpoint**

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Different currents in the Nicaraguan Insurrection

2 September 2018, by **Crimetheinc**

As even the Russian state news service admits, the ongoing revolt in Nicaragua against Daniel Ortega's government is coming largely from the left side of the political spectrum. [76] While supporters of the authoritarian left exhort people to support "left" governments no matter what neoliberal policies they implement or how many people they slaughter, we believe that the declining fortunes of left governments throughout Latin America are not just the consequences of CIA conspiracies but also the consequence of real shortcomings of the institutional left and of government itself. Doubtless, various capitalists and state actors have their own agendas for Nicaragua and they hope to take advantage of the uprising to implement them. But ordinary people have legitimate reasons to rise up. We should identify the participants in the uprising who are pursuing goals complementary to our vision of a

world without capitalism and the state, in order to direct our solidarity towards them. Otherwise, as the Ortega government attempts to retain power by brute force, the revolt will likely be hijacked by right-wing and colonial interests.

While students were discussing what demands to make in the negotiations with Ortega, *Dissensus Nicaragua* published a translation of the CrimethInc. text "Why We Don't Make Demands" in Spanish. [77] The negotiations have broken down. Now the crisis is intensifying, with students continuing to occupy universities while the police continue killing people and Ortega refuses to back down. In the following report, our Nicaraguan correspondent outlines some of the tensions within the uprising and presents an eyewitness report from inside one of these occupied universities. [78]

Different Forces in the Revolt

I am part of the affinity group that created sosnicaraguareporte.com, in Spanish. It includes a timeline and all sorts of information. It's a good place for news. There is even a meme section!

As of this writing, over 100 people have been murdered by the state and the police in the uprising in Nicaragua. The majority have been students. On Mother's Day in Nicaragua, May 30, there was a Mother's Day march. This march broke all records for participation. The state police and Sandinista Youth attacked the march, killing 11 and injuring 79 all over Nicaragua.

We have not been able to discuss all the questions we would like to. Things

are messy and changing constantly, and we are not the majority. Nevertheless, I will try to describe the situation.

We can see some tensions inside the movement. The most noticeable are the following:

The Private Sector vs. the Autoconvocado Movements

The Autoconvocado movement (the coalition of student organizers and community organizers, independent from the Coalition of Students and Representatives in the dialogue) has been supporting a general strike as a way to escalate the situation and put more pressure on the government to negotiate and stop the killings. The private sector (which employs dozens of thousands of people and holds a lot of wealth and political power) has not advocated for a general strike, supposedly to avoid economic losses. As a consequence, for example, the city of Masaya organized autonomously and declared, independent of the private sector, that they would conduct a citywide general strike. That strike occurred and was violently repressed. Up to now, Masaya is the most dangerous and most affected city in Nicaragua, with over 10 people murdered by the police over last weekend.

Student Movements and the Student Coalition

There is very strong communication between the student movement and the Student Coalition that is representing the movement at the level of dialogue with the state. But many participants in the student movement feel that the Student Coalition is being very soft and diplomatic. The Coalition is a group of student organizers from multiple universities all over Nicaragua; they are the ones representing the movement in the negotiations with the state. The student organizers that form the coalition emerged from affinity groups that were created at the beginning of the student protests. I don't know exactly how they got so much power—it was a combination of being in the right place at the right time and knowing the right people. These students were the first ones to

present themselves as leaders.

So the power distribution is very vague and there are instances when they have been accused of selling out. The Student Coalition representatives are the ones who release the communiqués and plans of action, and the ones who talk to the press the most. Nevertheless, it is possible for student dissidents to claim that the Coalition does not represent them and to provide a different set of demands and methods.

There are also complaints that the Student Coalition does not offer space for anyone's voices besides those of men when it comes to delegating the responsibilities.

The participant in the Student Coalition that comes closest to our perspective is probably Enrieth Martínez. [79]

Managuacentrism

A lot of the power and decision-making process has been focused on students in Managua, since the capital has been the site of the major manifestations and occupied universities. But the cities that have been affected the most have been outside of Managua—cities that don't have a university campus, where the residents are defending themselves through citywide barricades and something like a general strike. There is no effective communication among people in the different cities, since the strategy has been to block all major roads and transportation. At the table of the dialogue with the state, there are no representatives from the cities that are affected the most. Here is where several groups have advocated for self-governance and self-administration as a way to take the decision-making power out of Managua.

Feminism

The first and most prominent critiques of the government and the state arose from feminists. Since the 1980s, feminists have critiqued the hierarchical and patriarchal aspects of the Sandinista Movement. In a famous speech by Daniel Ortega on International Women's day at the peak

of the Sandinista Revolution, Ortega said that the revolutionary duty of women was to give birth to the next generation of revolutionaries. This showed how the revolution viewed women and women's participation in everything. It has been feminists who have critiqued the state as connected to machista and religious culture in Nicaragua and Latin America. It has been feminists who have denounced hierarchies in the family, in politics, in culture, and in the state. It has also been women who have constantly said that the war against the people did not start on April 19, it started way before, but it was carried out against rural women and indigenous people in Nicaragua.

On the Question of Capitalism

People need to understand that the Nicaraguan people are sacrificing economic stability for social justice. Nicaragua was perceived as safe, an economic paradise for investment, but this only came about through the centralization of political power. Like Vietnam and China, a single-party centralized government has been an incentive to draw private investors.

Nicaragua's economic stability, which took 10 years to build, only benefitted the upper middle class and the upper class. This created a false sense of "progress," "development," and "stability," all of which the government celebrated. In reality, most of the people worked in informal sectors and did not have access to jobs. In this sense, participants in the student movement are forced to start asking questions: "OK, now I have graduated from an Autonomous University, now what? Where am I going to work? And at what price?" The vast majority of college majors and programs were "pro-market majors" focusing on business administration, engineering, computer science, marketing, tourism, and the like.

The student movements will need to address capitalism and neoliberalism and start to see how their struggle intersects with the anti-capitalist movement outside of authoritarian governments. These conversations have not started yet.

I think a lot of people are disappointed in the lack of international support towards people in Nicaragua. Americans only cared about us as long as they could come to Nicaragua to vacation and enjoy cheap things. On an international level, many of those who support the Nicaraguan insurrection are not asking hard questions about their own governments and structures. Hopefully, we can find a way to make would-be allies start addressing these questions themselves. It's true, we are seen as a "legitimate" movement that wants "democracy" (whatever that means). If we succeed, we will see how many countries will support our efforts to collectivize, autonomize, and decentralize.

Will the United States still support us after they realize our intention to go ever further left? Will a centrist government create the conditions for more radical politics to emerge? This is a long-term plan; the Ortegas will do the best they can to stay in power at whatever cost. They would prefer to stay in power in a destroyed country than give up power in a way that leaves the country stable.

I think the conversation regarding "politicians," "elections," "the state," "political participation," and "the police" are all up in the air. It's an opportunity to create new local concepts. After everything that has been lost—entire towns burned to the ground and children executed in the street—we will not settle for less. Whatever government comes next will need to radically change what it means to do politics.

I think we are trying everything from every possible angle, and it will be the people who will decide what best fits their spiritual needs. We are attacking state power from every angle, some angles more "institutional," "democratic," and "legitimate" than others, but somehow these are all complementing each other.

Unfortunately, we don't know if we are moving forwards or backwards. We just know what the government is doing everything, desperately to survive, and every single day, they lose more support. As the saying goes, *El que no critica a su gobierno, no*

quiere a su madre! Those who don't criticize their government don't love their mothers.

Appendix: Inside an Occupied University in Managua

After a week of communicating with my contact inside the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua (UNAN), I received a message from him: "I'll be at the main entrance in 15 minutes. I can meet you there if you want to come inside, meet everybody, and see what we've been up to."

For a week, I had been participating in a support system helping the occupation at UNAN from the outside. At first, my contact, Guadalupe (a pseudonym) had advised me not come inside for fear that infiltrators might recognize me and harass me outside. But as things seemed to have settled down, I was invited in.

With about 30,000 students, UNAN is the largest public university in Nicaragua. Students have been occupying it since May 8. Every major entry is blocked by two sets of barricades, starting blocks away from the main Portones (entry gate). Each porton is guarded by at least 15 students armed with morteros (mortars).

"Dress up as a medical student and bring a med kit, just in case anybody is watching. They are less likely to be suspicious if you enter as a ~medic," Guadalupe told me.

I crossed the main Porton and met Guadalupe for the first time. "Second in command" in the occupation, he is also a part of the committee representing the students in the national dialogue. He is 23 years old and a student at UNAN. Guadalupe was part of the first protest organizers inside of UNAN. Currently he divides his time between working inside and outside of UNAN, inside as a coordinator and outside as a delegate of UNAN as part of a larger student coalition.

The organization inside of UNAN involve "leaders" from different portones and sectors (Medical, Food, Supply) that meet up and negotiate responsibilities and priorities. These leaderships emerged out of the first week of occupation and were agreed upon by all. Since each porton is semi-autonomous, it can operate as a closed circuit in case of an attack, without the necessity of a top-down decision-making process that would involve the entire University. Roles were distributed by voluntary association and based around shifts so that everybody can rest. Main roles are: Guarding the barricades, sorting through donations, food, cleaning, guarding the portones, medical attention, communications and coalition participation.

It's important to note that the organization inside the occupied Universities occurred spontaneously. They did not follow a pre-established or pre-rehearsed organizational model. This model of organizing was the most efficient, participatory and democratic. Remember that young Nicaraguans did not have an "occupy movement" or something similar that could have provided the blueprint of how to organize. The only political models that were practiced were through hierarchical political parties, and ONG's leadership training.

Here are the rules inside the gates: everybody in the University uses pseudonyms; you are not allowed to take any photos or videos of anything; if you are texting, you have to do it with your phone facing the ground. In Nicaragua, it is very common for people to use nicknames, usually derived from physical cues like La Flaca (the skinny one), El Gordo (the fat one), El Negro (the black one), La Zorra (the Fox), El Chino (the Chinese one), El Chele (the light-skinned one), El Gringo (the gringo).

Guadalupe confirmed my identity and began to show me around the university campus. Most of the muchachos ("the boys"—a word that includes girls) were busy taking over UNI, the Engineering University, so UNAN was somewhat quiet. Later that day, the police and Sandinista Youth attacked UNI, injuring 30 students and killing one of them.

We approach the geology building, which has been turned into a medical center. "This is one of the newest buildings of this University and we are protecting it, because we plan on using these facilities in the future for our education." I see rooms full of medical supplies, and a lot of students sleeping in the hallways in sleeping bags. "Those are the muchachos from the night shift at the barricades. They sleep here during the day. Not all of them are from UNAN" some of them are neighbors that are too afraid to go back home."

The hallways are dark and quiet, but everything is clean and organized. There are cleaning crews; students know the rules, which rooms to go into and which not to go into. "We need to protect this building. It's the geology building. We are protecting diamonds and meteors that are worth thousands of dollars, but we want to save them for future generations to learn and study."

The entire university is protected. You don't see graffiti on the walls. All the classrooms are locked. The restaurants inside of the university are also protected because the occupiers don't want the occupation to affect the small business owners who need to keep a job.

We left the building and approach one of the cooking and food collection sheds. The leader of this zone is called Aymara. She administrates the food in this section and keeps a tight record of all the food donations that come in. She distributes the food and supplies wherever they are needed the most.

What do you all do for food?

"We're living off Gallo Pinto." (Gallo Pinto "rice and beans" is the most popular Nicaraguan dish). "We don't have a set time for breakfast. If the muchachos are hungry but don't want to leave their post, we'll send food their way. Every day, we must cook three meals for about 400 people." The joke in Nicaragua is that we eat rice and beans for breakfast, beans with rice for lunch and Gallo Pinto for dinner.

Aymara also showed me a shed full of food, enough food for months, all of

which has been donated by people all over Nicaragua. It is rationed out daily. Pointing to an immense pile of spoiled food, Aymara said "You see all that food? That's all poisoned food. Sometimes people send us bananas with needles inside, or bread injected with rat poison. We need to double-check everything that we receive. That's why we prioritize canned goods."

"We also managed to jumpstart five university trucks and one tractor, which we use inside and outside of the university."

This article [80] does a good job describing the leadership of women inside and outside of the student movement. I studied with the author, Madeleine Caracas, and we both started out in the same organizing committee in early April.

Each porton operates semi-autonomously. Each zone has its own medical center, food center, and bomb-making center, each with a delegate in every porton. Every porton is always ready to defend itself. Two nights before my visit, an armed man on a motorcycle rapidly approached a barricade, shooting at the students. The students defended themselves with mortars and injured the motorcyclist, who destroyed his phone before the students moved him to a local hospital. He died on the way there.

This was a very confusing scenario. The man on the motorcycle underestimated the abilities of the students to defend themselves. Why would he attack the barricades by himself? Did he plan on shooting, perhaps killing, some students and then retreating? We don't know.

Such attacks usually happen at night. Keep in mind that this university is the size of an entire neighborhood, with hundreds of buildings, classrooms, departments and soccer and basketball courts, with six different entryways. In order to add more protection at night, the barricades are moved further out of the university perimeter to create more of buffer zone.

Unlike UPOLI, UNAN does not have

the support of the local community to protect them. In this sense, the students are more exposed. UNAN is neighbored by La Colonia Miguel Bonilla, which is an Orteguista neighborhood. This community was created in the 1980s during the Sandinista Revolution, and most of the houses are owned by the police, the military, and high-ranking military officials. This neighborhood was one of the military headquarters during the Somoza dictatorship, but was confiscated during the revolution and given to UNAN students for housing and to military, police, and civilians to live in. Therefore, most of the families that live inside of La Miguel Bonilla strongly support the Orteguista government as a "revolutionary government." If you are political dissident in La Miguel Bonilla, you must keep a low profile; there have been many cases of harassment by the community towards anti-Ortega supporters. La Miguel Bonilla is also where a lot of UNAN administration officials live, the safe officials that perpetuate and institutionalize the Orteguista influence inside of the University.

The UNAN has a strong barricade in front of the entrance to La Miguel Bonilla, since a majority of the attacks have been organized inside of the neighborhood, which functions as a safe space for Orteguista forces.

What do you want to accomplish?

"We want to obtain university autonomy, a complete restructuring of UNEN [the chief Nicaraguan student union], and a complete restructuring of the internal administration of the University. Every day we spend in this university, we are sending a message to all of Nicaragua about how far we are willing to go to offer quality education for our generation and future generations."

What does autonomy mean to you?

"It means professors not getting fired because they oppose decisions that the government has been making. It means giving access to scholarships to everybody, not just the Sandinista Youth. It means taking the Orteguista party out of the University's administration. It means studying

things that matter. We need a student-centered education and not an Orteguista-centered education, and this is happening not just at the University level but also at the Primary and Secondary school education level.”

I noted Campus Security was still present in the University. I asked about their role in the university during the occupation. Guadalupe told me, “They work here because they are privately hired, so they don’t want to lose their jobs. They have helped us identify infiltrators and have been extra set of eyes and ears their own communities, to help the students. They’re on our side.”

For context, in Nicaragua, Campus Security is nothing like the police or “private security.” They do not carry

weapons; they do not have the power to turn people in to the police. This job was created in the 1990s when so many revolutionaries were jobless. These jobs are done at a very low wage by very poor families, usually protecting empty lots.

What message do you have for students around the world?

“Hopefully we can inspire students to occupy their universities and start building the kind of university they want to study in.

“It’s also super important for Universities to have a good relationship with their neighborhood. That way you can involve the community in matters that affect the university and start building solidarity.”

The students I met and spoke with in UNAN seem to have developed an unbreakable bond based on solidarity that crosses gender and class backgrounds. They appear willing to die for each other and to protect the future they believe in. They have spent over three weeks building barricades, conspiring, living together, and protecting each other, forever changing what it means to be a student in Nicaragua.

What comes next? Will other forces intervene in Nicaragua to maintain and intensify neoliberalism? Or will the rebellion expand its scope and analysis to take on the forces beyond the Ortega regime?

06 July 2018

[Crimetheinc](#)

Where to Begin?

1 September 2018, by [Against the Current](#) Editors

These forces have consciously encouraged and exploited well-known factors including the growing respectability of white racial resentment, Christian religious fundamentalism, and above all the profound erosion of the labor movement and decline of real wages and job security, fueling and reinforcing fear and anger within much of the white electorate. Similar ominous trends have grown internationally. They are expressed in racist anti-immigrant hostilities and in a real, although distorted, revolt against the global ravages of neoliberalism.

Trump seized on all this during and after the 2016 election, and has also hooked up with the nastiest elements of anti-immigrant and xenophobic currents in European nations. His jaw-dropping performances at the G7, NATO and Helsinki summits may appear to policy elites as the acts of a buffoon. More importantly, however, Trump must be recognized as a skilled manipulator of his base, and both

agent and intimidator of his Republican enablers, even if he’s overmatched when his petty wannabee-godfather act runs up against the real thing in Vladimir Putin.

By comparison, much of the liberal left had hoped that Barack Obama’s presidency would be transformational in a progressive direction. Those expectations were sadly beached on the shoals of Obama’s “post-partisan” corporate centrism and ultimately drowned in the Hillary Clinton debacle. In fact, much of what president Obama actually did “aggressive prosecution of whistleblowers, mass deportations, expanded drone warfare, welcoming the reactionary coup in Honduras, overthrowing the Libyan regime with no thought of what would follow” opened the way to many of Trump’s atrocities.

Where Trump is most likely to fail is where he’s swimming against dominant currents in the global

economy” notably, in imposing protectionist tariff barriers against U.S. allies as well as adversaries. Possibly, as with his North Korea and NATO performances, Trump will end up declaring victory without getting much of substance. That appears to be the case with the United States and European Union backing away from the cliff of crippling auto and retaliatory tariffs.

Why hasn’t Trump been reined in by a Republican establishment who know perfectly well that he’s a liar, fraud, swindler and probably criminal racketeer? His stratagems of enriching the rich while dealing in faux-populist rants and racist appeals have yielded results beyond what supposedly conventional Republican politicians could manage.

The underlying Republican agenda includes gutting and ultimately privatizing Social Security and Medicare, eliminating what’s left of Obamacare and wiping out Medicaid, deregulating the banks again, and

creating a nonunion America. Following the infamous Janus decision, rightwing institutions are mounting aggressive campaigns for public sector workers to drop their union membership. [81]

Previously, these efforts have proceeded only incrementally. George W. Bush's second-term agenda of privatizing Social Security crashed, as did John McCain and Mitt Romney's campaigns when they ran against Obama (who did nothing to support unions, but wasn't out to destroy them). Trump gives the Republicanmen and the super-rich what they know is the best chance they'll ever have to carry out a brutal, anti-democratic and unpopular transformation in the service of power and privilege, not to mention misogyny.

Much of the non-affluent part of Trump's voting base, captivated by dog-whistle white identity and nationalist appeals, don't yet see what's being done to them. That point, most deeply understood and eloquently expressed by Rev. William Barber, organizer of the New Poor People's Campaign, needs to be at the center of what's called "the resistance."

What Can Stop the Madness?

That resistance has been heroic, and at times massive. From the spontaneous outpouring against the first Muslim travel ban, to nationwide actions at immigrant detention centers, to Black Lives Matter, to the Women's Marches and Spring 2018 teacher walkouts and so many other actions large and small, people have mobilized and organized almost nonstop against the Trump gang's atrocities.

The progressive legal community has mobilized massively around deportation and detention abuses, with at least some successes. A huge fight is promised over the Kavanaugh Supreme Court nomination, especially its threat to labor, abortion and queer rights.

Besides the near-impossibility of sustaining these struggles at a mass level, the burning issue for huge numbers of people, right now, is the question of power. What can be done to stop this administration's assaults on women, on labor, on health care, on voting and basic democratic rights, and the unforgivable crimes against humanity perpetrated every day at the border and in our communities against asylum seekers, refugees and immigrant families?

One proposition comes from the dominant corporate power center of the Democratic Party and much of its subordinate liberal wing: It's the voters' or the non-voters' fault. You should have worked full-out for Hillary Clinton. Have you learned your lesson? Now, to "take back the Congress," you have to back whatever Democrat is on offer or is presumed more "electable." Once in control, Democrats would supposedly act to control or impeach Trump, block his far-right judicial appointments, etc.

There are multiple problems with this dreamlike scenario. First, because the House of Representatives election is effectively rigged by extreme gerrymandering and voter suppression, the Democrats are highly unlikely to flip the majority. Second, if they did they are unlikely to be unified around impeaching Trump, which would inflame the right wing in any case; and third, even if they did so there is no chance of a two-thirds Senate vote for removal. (The only real possibility for Trump's removal would arise if the Republican leadership and the capitalist ruling class were to turn against him.)

A second perspective is emerging from the startling victory of insurgent Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in New York's 14th Congressional District primary, as our readers undoubtedly know, sweeping out longtime leading Democratic figure Joseph Crowley with a grassroots campaign appealing to voters in the Bronx and parts of Queens boroughs of New York City.

A proud member of Democratic Socialists of America, Ocasio-Cortez become an inspiration for a number of other self-declared socialist candidates in other primary races. (To

our knowledge, her support unfortunately doesn't extend to socialists who are running as independent or Green Party candidates, outside the Democratic Party's tentacles. Under pressure, she's also softening her admirable pro-Palestinian stance.)

Most importantly from our perspective, by all accounts the success of Ocasio-Cortez has newly inspired thousands of folks to join the socialist movement, and like Bernie Sanders' campaign, helped put socialism into the U.S. political discourse. That means there are critical discussions to be had "what socialism is all about, its relationship to ongoing social struggles in our society and globally, and how to fight for it" which for a long time involved relatively small numbers of activists, but now concern some tens of thousands and perhaps soon hundreds of thousands of organized and engaged people.

That's potentially a huge advance, and we modestly suggest that this magazine with our "socialism-from-below" perspective can be a helpful asset. (In fact, our currently running series on the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth might offer a worthwhile starting point.)

The problematic side of the recent developments is the revived notion that an energized "progressive wing" will develop inside and take over the Democratic Party. This permanent delusion has made the Democratic Party the graveyard of movements, and the most powerful barrier to independent working-class, African-American or anti-capitalist politics for many decades.

In fact, keeping progressive forces within the two-party trap has been the Democratic Party's most outstanding service to U.S. capital's political "stability."

A kind of left politics can, and probably will, carve out an enlarged niche within the Democratic tent "but that will not change its corporate-dependent and stagnant neoliberal center, nor turn it into a progressive or even small-d democratic party. The hard struggle for a new independent

politics needs to engage both the Democrats' voting base, and the question of how to break the reactionary, racist stranglehold on the huge numbers of working-class and lower middle-class Trump and Republican supporters who are voting against their own rights on the job, the health of their own communities, and their children's very survival.

The Democratic Party's electoral strategy, with its orientation toward prosperous suburban and upper-income "socially liberal, fiscally conservative" sectors, takes the party's own popular base for granted and has nothing to say to the non-affluent part of the Trump supporters.

Everything else about the daily spectacle — the outcry over Trump's fawning before Kim Jong-un and Vladimir Putin and contempt for U.S. allies, his dismissal of Russian support for his presidential campaign and for far-right European parties, his lying twitstorms — are all secondary. All the blathering about Trump's "treason" in Helsinki is so much empty noise within the echo chamber of establishment elites of both capitalist parties.

Bernie Sanders' 2016 campaign showed the capacity of a pro-labor, socially progressive message to reach that voting base. The Clinton campaign and the corporate Democratic leadership stifled it —

remaining committed to the sacred neoliberal global institutions and so-called "rule-based" free trade regimes that destroy the lives of working class and poor people around the world, and to their blind "America was always great" mantra — while mass incarceration cripples African-American life and while sectors of small town and rural America wither and slowly die, hospitals close, jobs disappear and opioid epidemics rage.

Already, as an energized progressive base emerges — inside, on the fringes of, and outside the Democratic Party — voices of cynical wisdom warn that the party must turn not leftward but toward the "center" in order to be electable. But if the center is what the U.S. population wants, it includes universal health care, preserving abortion rights, protecting social security and getting serious about the climate change catastrophe. If it's what corporate America is prepared to accept — as Hillary Clinton arrogantly lectured Bernie Sanders, "this isn't Denmark" — then all social considerations are subordinate to the needs of profit, and the Republicans and neoliberal Democrats keep winning, along with the corporate rulers behind both parties.

The Struggles Ahead

The position of this magazine has consistently been for independent political action, outside the capitalist parties and aimed at building a new party based on the movements of working class and oppressed people. That remains the essential goal. But even after everything we've seen in recent years, from the Occupy upsurge to Black Lives Matter, #Me Too, the brilliant victory of the West Virginia teachers and the mass post-election "Resistance," we can't claim a road map or formula for getting there.

To reiterate one of our earlier observations, the most important fact is that the discussion involves a vastly expanded and energized activist base. We suggest a few vital starting points for readers' consideration:

— "The Two-Party System in the United States," by Mark A. Lause, reprinted from [Against the Current](#).

— "The Two Souls of Democratic Socialism," by Kim Moody, and the subsequent responses [82] with [Moody's rejoinder](#).

— "Why Socialists Support Jovanka and Gayle," by Mike Parker.

Let the discussions and struggles unfold. The opportunities and the urgency are equally great.

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