



IV537 - October 2019

Canada - After the federal election: the dangers, and challenges, that lie ahead

31 October 2019, by **Pierre Beaudet**



The “right-wing wave” the Conservatives hoped for proved to be little more than a ripple. In Ontario, and in particular the immense metropolitan area of Toronto, the fear campaign mounted by the Liberals was effective. Premier Doug Ford was the perfect scarecrow. The “Ford Nation” of the angry suburbanites had little presence. In Western Canada there was little change. The Tory super-majorities in Prairie ridings did little to increase that party’s overall representation in Parliament. While they picked up a few seats in the Atlantic provinces, the Liberals maintained their overwhelming majority there. In Quebec, as expected, the Tories made no headway, winning only 8 seats. Their far-right offshoot, the climate-change denier Maxime Bernier was defeated and his People’s Party of Canada went nowhere, polling less than 2%.

An initial conclusion: Canada is not fertile ground, at least for now, for the kind of ultra-reactionary wave that we have been seeing in the United States, England, Germany and elsewhere. Notwithstanding many nuances, this is positive.

The Liberals saved their day despite

the serious mauling delivered to Justin Trudeau’s cultivated image of a young and dynamic modernizer. Now deprived of a parliamentary majority, however, it was a victory by default, a rejection of the Conservatives especially in Ontario. The Liberals’ achievements since their election in 2015 were scarce. Their major promises “on the environment, a “feminist” foreign policy, reconciliation with the First Nations, etc.” were revealed as little more than fine words, far short of the changes that are so necessary. The Trudeau government’s discourse has shifted from that of Stephen Harper, particularly in relation to the Indigenous, but in reality there has been little change.

Economically, Canada’s relative prosperity is largely a spillover from the apparent but ominously fragile boom in the United States, where Trump has simply postponed the toxic effects of his economic policies; almost everyone predicts an imminent rebound of the great recession, which will hit the Canadian economy very hard, given how closely anchored it is to Wall Street’s “and reaffirmed in the new NAFTA successor deal, yet to be ratified.

As expected, the New Democratic Party took a hiding, especially in Quebec. Only the most naïve could

have thought that Jagmeet Singh, with his skilful evasions, could save things for a party that under Thomas Mulcair’s stewardship had become little more than a milder version of the Liberals. The party had little credibility in Quebec, despite the last-minute attempts taken by deputy leader Alexandre Boulerice to plug the holes in this hull of a sinking ship. With only Boulerice to represent it from Quebec, the NDP is now back to where it was before 2011, when it swept up 59 seats in the province in the “orange wave.”

The Bloc québécois is clearly the big winner, taking enough seats from both the NDP and Liberals to limit the latter to managing a minority government for the next period. The Bloc and its leader, Yves-François Blanchet, skilfully courted the nationalist vote that tilted in the Quebec elections last year toward the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ); the BQ’s rise from 10 to 32 seats has no doubt also given some renewed hopes to what remains of the Parti québécois.

The Bloc’s gains hint at the possible formation of a new nationalist alliance linking the CAQ and PQ around defense of Quebec, not as a project of emancipation but rather as a defense of identity and provincial autonomy. Since this is Quebec, and not Alberta

or France, this defensive nationalism does not assume a far-right expression (although many progressives in English Canada do not understand this). In the last analysis, Blanchet adopted the centre-left discourse that was long associated with the PQ around defense of the environment and social programs, because in Quebec those are objectives cherished by a sociological majority.

Now, allow us to make some forecasts.

The Liberals will govern with the support, both implicit and explicit, of the Conservatives. On most essential issues the two major parties have much the same vision, which corresponds to that of "Canada Inc." The shift in recent years toward a Toronto-Calgary financial and resource axis has disrupted the postwar historic bloc with the unions and rising middle classes — centred in industrial Ontario and a rising Quebec — that spawned the limited social welfare provisions now under increasing attack.

The differences between these parties pertain more to how this is to be done. A faction of the Conservatives, led by Jason Kenney, favours harsh and brutal cutbacks and restrictions on critics, while placing the blame on the "grasping" Quebecers living off equalization grants and the profits from the tar sands. It's a rational project, but in the present circumstances it lacks credibility. The Liberals do not differ radically, but prefer a "war of position" that weakens the provinces (especially Quebec) through a political and economic centralization that facilitates the turn in Canada's political economy. Neither party, however won much more than a third of the votes cast. Although the Conservatives' total vote was marginally higher than the Liberals', both Trudeau and Tory leader Andrew Scheer emerge weaker politically.

In view of the election results the now-minority Liberal government may well be inclined to curry Tory support on major projects, for example by speeding up its planned expansion of fossil-fuel production and export.

As for the New Democratic Party, the

election marks a further step in its long-term stagnation, interrupted in the past only by a few very fleeting advances as in the 2011 "orange wave." It seems unable to reinvent itself, to offer a credible alternative to the dominant projects of Canadian capital. Although public opinion polling identified climate change as a major concern, the NDP spoke with a forked tongue on some major environmental issues: for example, endorsing the B.C. NDP government's massive LNG and natural gas pipeline project while opposing a similar project in Quebec. After some hesitation Singh came out in opposition to the Liberals' Trans Mountain bitumen pipeline expansion, but the party was hobbled by the conflict between the B.C. government, which opposed TMX, and its Alberta NDP counterpart which had championed it while in government.

On Quebec, the party has ultimately failed to engage with the progressive nationalist consciousness of the Québécois. Its major attempt, the 2006 Sherbrooke Declaration, endorsed Quebec's right to national self-determination but said its national character could be "expressed in the context of the [existing] Canadian federation." Underlying its ambiguities is the party's inability to incorporate within its conception of state power the plurinational reality of the Canadian social formation and the ways in which that reality is denied and violated through the constitutional regime established in 1867. Moreover, the NDP (like much of the left) has never understood the role of the federal state as the mainstay of the domination and class interests of Canadian Capital, including its subaltern Quebec component.

Is it time — once again — to declare "the party is over" and find ways to begin anew in building a broad anticapitalist left? Easier said than done. At present the Canadian left is dispersed and fragmented and seems more inclined to focus on organizing and campaigning around particular issues (environment, feminism, Indigenous solidarity, etc.) rather than attempting to build a united radical left alternative. The positive experience of progressive

regroupment in the building of Québec solidaire, from which many lessons can be learned, is largely unknown in Canada Outside Quebec.

What can the Bloc québécois really achieve in Ottawa? It can exert some sort of pressure on the minority government, but its means are limited. Meanwhile, the big winner in the election is François Legault, who emerges with his soft nationalist agenda reinforced, giving him greater ability to confront the unions and the environmental coalitions. And he is certain to take advantage of the foreseeable neoliberal alignment of federal Liberals and Tories to accelerate the turn to austerity already heralded.

However, we must be cautious in our predictions, as there are many contingencies that remain unclear, including the next resumption of recession in the U.S.

A few thoughts, perhaps, on what all this may mean for the Quebec left. Throughout the federal campaign Québec solidaire, which as an independentist party does not participate in federal elections, kept silent, even in the face of the explosive debate among the other parties over what to do if anything about the Legault government's Bill 21. A major reason was the QS leadership's fear of reigniting the difficult debate in the party over identity and "values" sparked most recently by the CAQ's Bill 21, a debate that left behind some bitter feelings. The firm and positive position adopted at the QS national council meeting in April did not meet with anything like universal acceptance, even among the party membership.

We agree with the decision taken by a large majority of the council members to oppose Bill 21, on the grounds that the bill's discrimination against faith communities and genders that identify their personal religious beliefs through various forms of clothing (e.g. the Muslim hijab) is inconsistent with true laïcité or state secularism, which registers state neutrality toward religion. But what the QS debate may not have addressed adequately is the insecurity that continues to plague many Québécois — especially in regions outside the

Montréal metropolis where very few if any Muslim women or other ethnic minorities are encountered — over their national culture and language, in short identity, in a continent and a state that are overwhelmingly non-Francophone and predominantly English-speaking. The CAQ, the Bloc and the PQ have effectively wielded this insecurity to begin forging a new right-wing nationalist alignment in which Bill 21 is a key element, camouflaging its divisive xenophobic content behind opposition to the “multiculturalism” program originally manufactured by Trudeau Senior as a means to reduce Quebec’s foundational national identity to just another residual ethnic identity in the Canadian popular consciousness.

Québec solidaire still needs to find ways to address these underlying insecurities by deepening our inclusive and emancipatory project to include a stronger defense of Québécois culture and language. Our project, which is already characterized by its commitment to ecology, feminism and altermondialisme, could benefit from some additional explorations. We cannot be indifferent to the gap between Montréal and the other university towns where QS is strongest, and the rest of the nation in which the working-class and popular

majority are likewise seeking a better life, in dignity. The point of departure, as our sympathizers in the regions often remind us, is that our project cannot thrive without the creation of a new political space recognizing French as the common language, and deeply attached to democratic traditions — a true popular sovereignty that comes from the people and is deeply imbued with a sense of social solidarity. A project that is inclusive, democratic, secular (laïc) and popular.

We can take inspiration from Scotland, where the rising movement for independence is strongly supported by the people referred to as “immigrants” even if they have lived there for two or three generations. And why is that? Because a new left in recent years has redefined the project as a call to transform the society, to break from the neoliberal prison of the British state, and to promote the interests of the great majority of Scots in their diversity and their utopias.

And there is another task awaiting us, one that is equally monumental. We cannot change Quebec without changing Canada. We must at all costs avoid the terrible error of the right-wing Catalan independentism, which from the outset ruled out the forging

of an alliance or at least closer links with the left in the Spanish state. Yes, we know this is not Spain and there is no Podemos or anything resembling it west of the Ottawa River. The Canadian left, such as it is, will some day have to make its own “revolution in the revolution,” incorporating in its program, among other things, a plurinational conception of the Canadian social formation.

Will that be done in or through the NDP? Can it begin with a totally new project? Will it proceed from the local or municipal level, progressing to a higher level? Those are some of the questions confronting our Canadian comrades. Perhaps we can help them, even if only minimally, by waging alongside them the struggles that will develop against climate catastrophe, the austerity and selective repression that awaits us with the next federal government. And to put at least a few grains of sand in the alignment of the Canadian state with the neighboring Empire and its endless wars.

[Life on the Left. October 23, 2019](#)

Wednesday 23 October 2019

The World Up in Arms Against Austerity and Authoritarianism

30 October 2019, by Dan La Botz

Around the world, people are rising up in arms, on nearly every continent and in more than a dozen nations. In the last six months there have been rebellions in France, Catalunya, Puerto Rico, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Chile, Ecuador, Honduras, Haiti, Iraq, Sudan and Algeria. These rebellions have in general had a popular and left leaning character and they are angry, militant, and defiant. The common feature is these are rebellions of the lower middle class, the working class

and the poor. These various movements have everywhere overflowed the banks of the political system. The waves of protest beat against the foundation of the state. The activists in the street everywhere call into question the system, whatever that system where they live is called. When the governments have attempted to crush these movements, the people fight back, refusing to give up the streets. What lies behind these rebellions, what has caused them, and

where are they going?

The political situation in each of these countries varies tremendously and the detonating events were quite different: from an objectionable new law to a stolen election, from decades-old dictatorships that have become unbearable to increases in public transit fares. In Lebanon it was the imposition of a tax on Whatsapp telephone calls. In Ecuador the government’s decision allowed an

increase in the price of gasoline. In Chile an increase in the metro fare. In Honduras it was the discovery that the president aided his brother who led a drug cartel. In Puerto Rico it was a corrupt and misogynist president. In Hong Kong the promulgation of a law that infringed on local autonomy. In Catalunya in the State of Spain, the meting out of long sentences to Catalan nationalist protestors. In Iraq the people have risen up against unemployment, corruption, and an unresponsive government. In Algeria and Sudan, the populations' weariness with longstanding authoritarian governments. In Nicaragua, a social security pension reform. In Haiti too protests against a corrupt and authoritarian president.

Everywhere, there was a different trigger. Yet the central issue everywhere is the desire to be treated with dignity and respect.

There are common elements among these rebellions: economic inequality, the imposition of austerity, and governmental abuse of their power. The feeling is, they don't care about us. In many of these countries the state has lost its legitimacy and the citizenry no longer has confidence in the historic political parties, but generally speaking there is no political party in a position to put forward an alternative political agenda or a new leadership. Yet the revolts have shaken the powers-that-be in each country and sent powerful shockwaves through the international political order. We seem to be in a period of synchronized though uncoordinated political revolts demanding democracy and a better life. We have been here before.

This is not the first time that there has been an apparent international simultaneity of revolt and even of revolutions. The first such wave—almost an entire epoch—occurred in the last quarter of the eighteenth century with the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1776, then the French Revolution of 1789, followed by the Haitian Revolution of 1804 and then the Latin American Revolutions of 1810 to 1821. Another such wave occurred with the European Revolution of 1848 that swept through

France, Germany, and the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, and we might include in that wave the Chartist movement in England. The period from 1917 to 1919 brought revolutions in Russia, Germany, Austria, and Hungary, as well as the Ottoman Empire. And while 1968 brought no revolution, it was a year of radical upheavals from France to Czechoslovakia, to Mexico. Just as today, during each of these periods of radical upheaval the detonating events in each country were unique, yet at the same time one could see common elements and often also similar dynamics. While in most cases the bourgeoisie put itself at the head of the revolutionary movements sooner or later, still it was working people and the poor who generally gave these rebellions their radical thrust and provided the cutting edge.

In different periods, different conditions created the pre-revolutionary situation and a wide variety of events sparked the revolutionary movements, but it is usually possible to discern commonalities in each wave. The growth of international trade, imperial rivalries, and the contrast between the old aristocratic order and the emerging bourgeois society conditions the revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The rise of capitalism in England and then in France, the factory and then the railroad, together with the rise there of the liberal state and representative government, drove the conflict of 1848 as the ideas of the West pushed East, until the threat of working class revolution drove the bourgeoisie into the arms of the aristocrats, and those together then crushed the democratic and socialist movement both. The expansion and then the domination of capitalist financiers and industrial corporations in rival states led to modern imperialism and then to world war in 1914, and the war with its millions of dead and massive destruction led to revolution and then to the collapse of the old empires: Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman empire. The Russian Revolution of October 1917, an uprising from below of workers and peasants, led to the attempt to spread workers' councils and socialist revolution throughout Europe and

beyond.

The Driving Force Behind the Upheavals

Today's revolts in all of the countries we have named are driven by several forces that have reshaped the balance of power between nation states as well as the social classes within those states and led simultaneously to the crisis of the neoliberal order and the more significant final collapse of the post-World War II order. The transformation of China into a highly successful capitalist society, the fall of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the 1990s, and then the 2008 recession taken together have almost erased the old division of the world into capitalist, Communist, and Third World nation or the more recent developed and developing nations. We live now in a world with a mosaic of extreme wealth and unnecessary poverty in nearly all countries.

The driving forces underlying these developments—some of them hardly visible at the moment through the water-cannon's jets or the clouds of tear gas—will be found in financiers' reorganization of the world economy, driven by the desire for profit and economic control. The financial and corporate moguls have in the last fifty years, and at an increasingly rapid pace in the last twenty, transformed industry by satellite and microchip, by computers and automation, by new forms of managerial organization of the workforce and have created workplaces overseen by electronic surveillance. The incredible augmentation of production throughout the world—from mineral extraction to manufacture to services—all channeled through international trade agreements and carried by the logistics industry with its warehouses and shipping containers has, within the neoliberal economic framework, led to an enormous growth in economic inequality. Everywhere the capitalist class and its political partners have enriched themselves at the expense of the working classes and the poor. All of this has led to tremendous and well-

justified resentment by the majorities in countries around the globe.

There is no doubt that in the aftermath of the Great Recession of 2008, we entered into a new political period where rebellion alternates with repression, beginning in 2011 with Movement of the Plazas in Spain, Occupy Wall Street in the United States, the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa. The economic crisis also gave rise to new rightwing nationalist parties and political personalities, from the Northern League in Italy to the Alternative for Germany (AfD), from Boris Johnson in England to Donald Trump in the United States. The ramifications of the crisis are still felt almost everywhere, though North America (Canada, the United States, and Mexico) remain so far practically immune to the radical contagion.

In all of the recent upheavals, we see the working classes and the poor rising up and taking action outside of or even against the social organizations and institutions, the labor unions and the political parties that have in the past pretended to represent them. When the left political parties and union bureaucracies have attempted to restrain these movements, as they have in many places, the workers themselves have either bypassed those institutions or they have tried to force them to act and have striven to push aside the current leaders and to alter the organizations' policies. Without political parties of their own working people have often been unable to formulate a clear program, but their militant actions and their slogans have made it quite evident that they demand an altogether different sort of society, one where workers' voices are heard and their needs met.

These concurrent revolts have diverse characters. In France the Yellow Vest movement, which for months tied up traffic throughout the country and then took their protest to the wealthiest parts of Paris, is made up of working people who have no unions, the hairdresser and the handyman, people who have not been defended by industrial unions of the General Confederation of Workers (CGT) or the Socialist Party. In Chile students

detonated the rebellion by refusing to pay the new higher fare and jumping the turnstiles, but when the government put tanks on the streets for the first time since the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, the dockworkers walked out on strike. In Hong Kong everyone from restaurant cooks to computer programmers have joined the protests. In Nicaragua the elderly were joined by students and then by the general population that barricaded entire towns.

Almost everywhere the governments have responded with attempts to repress the movement using riot police, water cannons, tear gas, beatings, arrests. Almost everywhere there have been deaths and severe injuries. In some places like Hong Kong and Nicaragua, the police have been supplemented by gangsters or paramilitaries. In Sudan and Chile, the army was sent out to crush the movement, while outside of Hong Kong the Chinese Peoples Army remains massed on the border, awaiting a call to intervene. But the people refuse to give up the street, call out others, look for new avenues of protest, and the many-headed hydra just keeps reappearing around the next corner. As the revolts spread, they can begin to shape the contemporary *Zeitgeist*, legitimizing the idea of rebellion and raising the question of revolution.

Still, one must not exaggerate and we must remember that all of this turmoil takes place against a backdrop of entrenched despotisms and authoritarian governments that rule most of the world's people: the Communist Party dictatorship that manages capitalism in China, the personal dictatorship of Vladimir Putin and his oligarchic mafia in Russia, Bashir al Assad in Syria, the personalist authoritarian regimes of Narendra Modi in India and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, as well as the new rightwing government of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil. Those governments keep their populations locked down to prevent precisely the kind of militant movements for change we are discussing here.

Stand with the People in Rebellion

Returning to our discussion of the revolts themselves, where much of the population either sympathizes with or joins the protests, these become popular rebellions, that is, rebellions of the entire population. Consequently their class character may become vague and indeterminate, even if is the working people are driving them forward. Similarly their demands for democracy are sometimes unclear and undeveloped. Their call for democracy may obfuscate the inherent contradictions between those who want a liberal state and parliamentary democracy—dominated by the banks and business—and those who want some sort of working class democracy where everyone has an equal voice and vote. Precisely because these are mass upheavals they contain within them many social groups and widely divergent ideas and are riven with controversy and debate—and that is both necessary and very good.

The fact that many of these revolts are popular and not led by leftist parties and not guided by socialist ideologies, and that they contain many contradictory currents, has caused consternation among leftist groups both in the United States and elsewhere. Their confusion arises from the fact that they have not for almost fifty years had to try to understand and interpret such mass popular movements. When one Hong Kong demonstrator carries a sign that says "Trump Liberate Us" or a handful of Nicaraguans goes to Washington and speaks with Republican congressmen, leftists in other countries may abandon the rebellion because they have no experience with mass popular movements and their complexities and contradictions. Even in their own countries leftists may be unable to comprehend what's happening, as in France where for months much of the left characterized the Yellow Vests as fascists.

We should, on the contrary, recognize that mass popular revolts enter into a political quest and a search for their

program and leaders. We know from history that that if and when social revolts become political, the leaders, parties, and programs will be tested in the struggle against the old order and in the contest between different tendencies within the movement to establish a new order. The movements need time to work out their views, perhaps to divide into different or rival positions. And to get that time, they need our solidarity.

Here again we can see some trends, though they are only that and not yet definite political alternatives. In places like Hong Kong, which want to keep the dictatorship at bay, or in Algeria or Sudan where the movement rises to overthrow and old dictatorial order, the initial demand is for a parliamentary democracy and civil rights, which represents an enormous advance over dictatorship. The same is

true where the population thinks the government is betraying democratic norms, as in Puerto Rico, and Honduras.

Still, history suggests that in struggles for parliamentary democracy, working people will also raise economic and social demands while their struggles may produce new institutions as alternatives not only to the old parties but perhaps even to the old constitution and the parliament. In other places, such as France and Chile, from the very beginning the struggle over economic issues and for democracy are completely intertwined. The truth is, however, that with the exception of Algeria and Sudan, and perhaps Chile, almost none of these countries is in a pre-revolutionary situation, and in virtually none of them has the social rebellion given rise to a revolutionary

political party. Yet it is also true that much of the world at this moment is a laboratory searching for the cure for capitalism, and the social scientists running the experiments are in the streets.

All of these struggles deserve our support, unconditional in many cases, though not uncritical. We support those fighting for democracy in the street, but we also understand that, much like ourselves, they have yet to clarify their political positions and produce the necessary political tools to change the society. We are witnessing a great concurrent movement from below for democracy and economic justice across the world and we stand with those movements.

October 26, 2019

[New Politics](#)

Syria, refugees, and solidarity

29 October 2019, by Leila Al-Shami

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
Warsan Shire "Home"

Crossing the Mediterranean Sea is fraught with danger. During 2018, an estimated 2,277 people died in their attempts to enter Europe. [1] They were among the 141,500 refugees and migrants who reached Europe's shores via the Mediterranean route that year. Some 10,400 of those migrants were Syrians arriving to Italy, Greece, Spain and Cyprus.

Those who survived the journey received a mixed response. On the one hand, the influx of refugees and migrants to Europe (and other countries around the globe) has provided a scapegoat for those in power to blame for their countries' problems, and has therefore contributed to a climate of increasing xenophobia and nationalist sentiment. On the other, there's been an outpouring of solidarity on the grassroots level, from organizing

practical support in host communities, to protests that declare "refugees welcome". While such efforts are vital and should be built upon, there's a fundamental problem with solidarity that only starts at Europe's borders and doesn't address the reasons why asylum seekers arrive in the first place.

Since 2011, when the Syrian state began its war against a pro-democracy uprising, over half the population has been driven from their homes. While both extremist interlopers and opposition forces have caused displacement, the main cause is the violence of the state and its foreign backers. Their actions include the relentless aerial bombardment of population centers and mass arrests of dissidents. Many monitors cite the figure of half a million killed (a figure over two years old). The country lies in ruins, with 27 percent of housing and two thirds of educational and medical facilities damaged or

destroyed. [2] The breakdown of public services and destruction of the economy and livelihoods, which has thrown some 80 percent of the population into poverty, are further drivers of displacement.

Despite an increasing global consensus that the war is winding down, Syrians are still fleeing for their lives. The UN estimates that between the end of April and August of this year, more than 570,000 were displaced by the regime and Russia's bombardment of north-western Syria. Many of these are likely to have already been displaced multiple times. Most remain trapped inside Idlib province, sleeping out in the open, under trees, as there's no more room in the sprawling camps. Others are amassed on the closed Syrian-Turkish border, where border guards have regularly shot, and killed, those who tried to cross.

Activists organized largely symbolic protests, declaring that Syrians would

storm the border and flee to Europe, and on 30 August hundreds did manage to break across. They hoped that the threat of thousands of brown bodies reaching Europe's shores would spur the international community into action to stop the continuing slaughter; something which daily images of children trapped under the rubble of their destroyed homes and the sounds of their parents' anguished screams had failed to achieve.

Despite talk of a 'refugee crisis', only 11.6 percent of the global Syrian refugee population has made it to Europe. Most remain in the region, initially welcomed by neighboring countries, but now increasingly seen as a problem. In Turkey, which hosts over 3.6 million Syrian refugees, more than any other country, incitement against refugees formed a key part of recent electoral campaigns. [3] On social media, disinformation campaigns spread hatred and division, sparking anti-Syrian protests and attacks on Syrian-owned businesses. In July, thousands of both registered and unregistered Syrian refugees, including children, were detained across the country, primarily in Istanbul, pressured into signing 'voluntary' repatriation forms and deported to northern Syria. [4]

Hostility is also growing in Lebanon, where a third of the national population are refugees - the vast majority of them in a precarious situation without legal residency. A recent government decree prioritizes employment for Lebanese workers over foreigners, with reports of Syrians being dismissed from their jobs. There has been increasing racist incitement with leading politicians depicting refugees as an existential threat to Lebanon's stability and prosperity and calling for their return to Syria, arguing the country is now 'safe.' Refugee encampments have been subjected to raids and evictions. More than 5,600 structures housing Syrian refugees were destroyed in Aarsal by the military in June. Such hostile measures are designed to coerce Syrians to return home. [5] In Lebanon, too, 'voluntary' repatriation forms have been used as a tool of forced deportation. [6]

The idea that the war is nearing an

end and Syria is now 'safe' for refugee return is gaining in popularity among those whose sympathy for Syrians' continued suffering is wearing thin. One of the main promoters of this narrative is the regime itself. In September 2018, the Deputy Prime Minister Walid Al-Moualeem, reported to the United Nations General Assembly that the regime's "war on terror is almost over", [7] Syria has "become more secure and stable" and that "doors are open for all Syrians abroad to return voluntarily and safely." It uses the issue of refugee return as leverage with which it hopes to secure funding for reconstruction, money which Human Rights Watch warns will be co-opted by the regime and used to "fund its atrocities, advance its own interests, punish those perceived as opponents and benefit those loyal to it." [8] Far-right groups in Europe also seized upon the narrative of a safe, post-war return. Following visits to Damascus, German politicians from AfD and activists from Generation Identity called for the repatriation of Syrian refugees.

These calls for return must be resisted. While Syrians are returning home, due to the precarity and hostility they face in host countries, there are reports of returnees being detained by security forces on arrival. The Syrian Network for Human Rights reports that between the beginning of 2014 and August 2019, 1,916 refugees were arrested on return to Syria, including 219 children. All were detained by the regime. Of these, 638 have been forcibly disappeared and 15 have since died under torture. A hot conflict still rages in parts of the country and even areas which are now free from daily bombardment are far from being 'secure and stable'. [9]

The Syrian Association for Citizens' Dignity examined the situation in formally opposition held areas, which returned to regime control after indiscriminate bombings and siege warfare. In most cases 'reconciliation deals' were agreed under Russian auspices, in which those affiliated with the opposition were guaranteed the protection of their rights, including protection from persecution and forced recruitment into regime forces for at least six

months.

These guarantees have not been honored. Numerous youth have been forcibly conscripted into regime militia and used as dispensable cannon fodder on the front lines; forced to fight against former comrades. In May, dozens of youth from Dara'a, northern Hama and the Damascus countryside, formally opposition fighters, lost their lives on the Hama frontline, precipitating Dara'a's largest demonstrations since 2011. [10] Those who refused to fight on behalf of the regime have been arrested, disappeared or killed by security services. Former members of the armed and political opposition and their families, media activists and humanitarian workers are primarily targeted. [11]

Solidarity must address root causes.

While the EU's official position is that Syria remains unsafe for refugee return, the climate for refugees and migrants is increasingly hostile. EU states have implemented stricter border controls and quota systems on arrivals, stopped search and rescue operations at sea, and criminalized solidarity. Far right groups are gaining in strength as refugees and migrants are demonized as posing an existential threat to (white) Europeans. It's vital that people continue to resist these measures, and that those fleeing war, persecution and poverty are given safe haven and support to re-build their lives on arrival. If the relatively small number of refugees can be used today as an excuse for restricting freedom of movement, building walls and impenetrable borders, increasing the powers of the security state and fomenting divisions based on race, religion, or national origin, what will tomorrow bring when the effects of climate change and ecological collapse cause vast movements of people around the globe?

Solidarity must address root causes. Increased pressure must be put on the regime to end its systematic abuse of human rights including arbitrary

detention and the ongoing bombardment of population centers and civilian infrastructure. All those who have committed war crimes must be held accountable. Calls for the repatriation of refugees should be opposed unless they're voluntary, safe and dignified and monitored by independent actors. A good entry

point for solidarity is to support Syrian Civil Society organizations, which are collectively trying to highlight the continued suffering of those who have been forcibly displaced from their homes through a campaign entitled 'Half of Syria'. [12]The campaign aims to document and humanize the experience of displacement, shed light

on the reasons why Syrians are still fearful to return home, and counter attempts to pressure refugees to return. Ultimately, unless people are protected from slaughter at home, they will continue to seek safety abroad.

[Crisis](#)

Bolivian Horizons: An Interview with Pablo Solón

28 October 2019, by **Jeffery R Webber**

With 83.8 percent of the quick-count votes verified, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal's website indicated that Evo Morales of the Movement Toward Socialism was leading with 45.3 percent, with Carlos Mesa of Citizen Community in second place with 38.2 percent. It appeared as though there would be a second round.

At this point, the TSE inexplicably shut down the live transmission of the quick-count tabulation of ballots after the 83 percent of votes had been counted. Twenty-two hours later, on Monday evening, the transmission of quick-count results was restarted, with the website now indicating 95.63 percent of votes counted. The distance between Morales, the front runner, and Mesa, the runner up, had grown significantly over the intervening period. The difference separating the two candidates was now said to be 10.12 percent according to the quick-count, and this after Morales had announced that once the rural votes were counted he was sure there would be no need for a run-off.

Oppositional protests contesting the results kicked off Monday evening throughout the country, including the torching of several departmental offices of the electoral tribunal, just as MAS supporters simultaneously took to the streets in celebration. It will be days before the detailed count is finished, but the margin of difference in the detailed account appears to be

closer, making a run-off election very likely. It would be held on December 15, 2019.

It is useful in this context to take a step back and to consider what is at stake in these elections. One important perspective on this issue is captured below in the conversation I had with former Morales government official, and now left-oppositionist, Pablo Solón in La Paz, Bolivia on August 29, 2019.

Today, Solón is the director of Fundación Solón, an institution established in 1994 by Pablo's father, the artist Walter Solón Romero, with the intention of "fomenting creativity and the critical perspective of rebellious spirits." With the passage of time, and the death of Walter in 1999, the artistic foundation became a centre for the interpellation and search for alternatives through art, analysis, and activism with the aim of confronting social and environmental injustices and changing the socio-economic system fundamentally.

Jeffery R. Webber: I am in the offices of the Fundación Solón, in La Paz, Bolivia, with Pablo Solón, the director of the foundation. To start with some personal background - you were the Ambassador to the United Nations during Evo Morales's first term. What was your role within the administration in that initial

period, and how would you characterize the government of Morales during his first term in office?

Pablo Solón: My relation to indigenous and peasant movements stretches back to the decade of the 1990s. Originally, we conceived of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) as a political instrument of social organizations. The objective was not to construct a political party in the traditional sense, but rather for the social movements, and in particular the peasant and indigenous movements, to have a political arm with which to intervene in elections, but with the social movement always retaining decision-making power, not the party.

In that period, I met Evo Morales. In 2000 the "Water War" against the privatization of water in the city of Cochabamba occurred, and later the "Gas War" and the struggle against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Here in Bolivia we built a very strong movement that we called the Bolivian Movement of Struggle Against the FTAA, which was coordinated through the Fundación Solón.

In this context, as a result of the Electoral Court refusing to grant legal status to the political wing of the social movements under their initial preferred name, the Political

Instrument for Sovereignty of the Peoples, the leaders of the political arm opted to appropriate the already legally existing but politically defunct acronym of the MAS, which had not been a party of the left, but rather an organization with origins in a split from a party with Phalangist characteristics – this is where the name “socialist” in the MAS comes from. It was thus under the banner of the MAS that the political instrument of the social movements intervened in the 2002 national elections.

I was never a member of the party, because we never thought it was necessary. When the MAS won the elections in 2005, Evo Morales invited me to form part of the government. In 2006, I formed part of a team which was charged with advising the government on themes of international politics and I was a representative on the themes of integration and trade. In that period, Bolivia sat in the *pro tempore* presidency of what was called the United Nations of South America, in which I was Bolivia’s ambassador. In that role I led the negotiation of the agreement which constituted the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR).

I was also in charge of undoing the trade agreement we had with Mexico and negotiating the proposed free trade agreement with the European Union, which obviously did not come to pass because the EU simply wanted us to sign off on whatever they desired. Later, I was the Bolivian ambassador to the United Nations, from 2009 to June, 2011.

JRW: And how would you characterize the first administration of Evo Morales in general terms?

PS: The first phase of the Morales government lasted from his assumption of the presidency in 2006 to the end of 2009. It was a period of heightened polarization and confrontation in Bolivia. At the beginning it was very difficult even to travel to some regions of the country which were in opposition to the government, such as Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando, and Sucre. We were almost at the brink of civil war.

The government was able to dismantle that conspiracy through fundamentally democratic mechanisms, convening referenda and elections. Referendums in order to decide if the government would continue in office, as well as the prefects of the departments, which are now called governors. There was also a referendum to approve the new constitution, followed by national elections in 2009.

Support for the government went up in each of these democratic consultations, and for proposals arising from the Constituent Assembly process. It was a period of high polarization which in a sense had a happy ending, because Evo Morales obtained more than two thirds in congress and was re-elected as president in 2009. The resistance and the sabotage of the extremely reactionary oligarchy was defeated.

However, this first government already exhibited some negative elements which would later rise to the surface. The government of the MAS is a government of individuals who when they entered government didn’t have any experience of governing. The overwhelming majority had not played any part in previous governments. They were new to this, lacking experience in state administration and with uneven capacities and training.

One of the mistakes that the government made, for which I am also responsible, was to involve too many leaders from social movement organizations in the administration of the government. We weakened the social organizations through the incorporation of their leaders into the state apparatus.

This was a grave error. We did not consider the importance of maintaining the independence of social organizations from the state. The error was to fail to recognize that within the state we were going to suffer through a process of transformation and that, therefore, there had to be a kind of capable counter-power – not only to exercise control over those of us who were in government, but also to transfer more areas of decision-making and action from the state toward this counter-power of social organizations.

We did precisely the opposite. We build an ever more important cult of personality around the figure of Evo Morales. This allowed him to win the second election overwhelmingly, but it laid the basis for the disaster that would come later.

Once two thirds of congress had been secured, a dynamic of monopolizing all of the institutions of the state began. From the position of the central government, judicial power was monopolized, as was the Comptroller’s Office, and the Human Rights Ombudsman. It was a totally incorrect perspective to see this as the strengthening rather than the weakening of the process of change. The independence and authority between powers of the state ended up being abolished, and there was no counter-power from civil society. Everything fell under control of the power of the executive, and a government extremely personalized around the figure of Evo Morales. After the election of 2009 there was a change of direction in the orientation of the government.

In 2008, Evo Morales put forward 10 commandments which were seen as necessary to save the planet, in which he opposed biofuels, mega-hydroelectric projects, and genetically modified crops. Once he had obtained an absolute majority he did not deepen the original program that we had, but instead sought out pacts with sectors of the opposition, based on serious concessions, and in particular with the agribusiness sector of the eastern lowlands, which had sabotaged his government during the first term. These concessions included everything from allowing genetically modified organisms to promoting biofuels, promoting the export of meat, and not following through on the regulation of the social-economic functions of medium-sized landholdings and business-scale landholdings, which allowed large landowners to preserve their ownership of land.

The sectors that were against the government in the first term began to vote together with the government on almost all the laws having to do with agribusiness. For example, the law on ethanol was approved unanimously in

Congress, as much by the opposition as by the MAS officialdom. The laws that incentivize the burning of forests (Laws 337, 741, 303, 1171, and others) were approved with the support of the opposition, which expressed the interests of the agribusiness elite of the departments of Santa Cruz and Beni.

JRW: What was the motive, or state rationality, of the pact with the agribusiness elite? Because, in a sense, they had just been defeated in political terms by 2009, so why negotiate, and why on their terms?

PA: The prevailing logic in the government was no longer to advance toward agro-ecology, but rather to guarantee governability and their next re-election. From this perspective it was better to have these sectors on our side, so that they didn't generate conflicts and instead supported us. In order for this to work you have to give them some of the things they ask for, but they repeatedly ask for more, and, in the end, the government ended up implementing the agribusiness program. How did the "process of change" benefit from this arrangement? There have been three terms of this government and there is a possibility for a fourth one. If one listens to the agribusiness sectors in meat, soy, sugar, and so on, they are very content. They have gained with this government what they were unable to gain previously, including under neoliberal governments.

JRW: So is this the fraction of capital with the most power in the government today?

PS: The government made an alliance with this sector, which provides them with certain benefits, in exchange for continuity in power. They are not two equal partners. This agribusiness sector, ultimately, does not want Evo. It is profoundly oligarchic and racist, but it has been doing good business under this first indigenous government. So, its logic is: we do good business, they are in power. And we continue going forward.

Therefore, in the midst of all of the forest fires occurring in Bolivia at the moment, both actors, the government

and the agribusiness oligarchy, have announced with jubilation the first shipment of meat to China. No other government could have done this in the midst of the tragedy of the fires. There are various studies demonstrating the large-scale impact of ranching on forest fires and deforestation. However, the government has prioritized this alliance, thinking that it's the best way to increase the probability of re-election.

JW: When and why did you leave your position in the government?

PS: I resigned from being ambassador in New York because my mother was ill. I told Evo Morales that I had to take care of my mother, that one who does not take care of one's mother cannot care for Mother Earth. But I always maintained a close relationship with him. Although I was no longer in government I went to see him when necessary, without any problems. But we began to part ways, first over genetically modified crops, in 2011; and secondly, the rupture came over the matter of the TIPNIS, the construction of a highway through indigenous territory and a national park. The drop of water that overflowed the glass was the repression over the TIPNIS project in Chaparina on September 25, 2011. At that moment, publicly, I sent a letter to Evo Morales telling him that this was intolerable. Since then, we have never spoken again.

JRW: We are now in a pre-electoral period and you have noted publicly that there are no parties which have a perspective on the environment appropriate to the scale of the ecological crisis. Can you explain the key features of the various party programs and provide a cartography of the electoral contest and the options, in electoral terms, facing Bolivians at the moment?

PS: The opposition to Evo Morales is an opposition focused more on democratic themes than on economic ones. Morales made a mockery of the 2016 constitutional referendum which said no to his re-election. Evo, through the control that he exercises over the constitutional tribunal, illegally

modified the constitution with a totally absurd argument that the right of indefinite re-election is a human right.

So we have an opposition that concentrates on these democratic aspects, but in terms of agro-industry, and the agribusiness sector, they do not offer any alternative, with some even advocating the much further strengthening of the existing orientation of the government in this respect. I don't see any of the political parties wanting a change in the course of action in relation to big agribusiness. Almost all of the party programs give very little importance to the question of nature, they don't mention the subject of the rights of Mother Earth. The governing party is the only one that mentions them, but as they themselves admit it is only something to promote in international forums, they don't offer any measures to make it a reality in Bolivia.

The opposition has not made this issue an axis of contention. Citizen Community, the party of ex-president Carlos Mesa, has some important policies in relation to the environment, for example, regarding the generation and distribution of electricity, but when it comes to the eastern lowlands the party prefers not to touch the problem of agribusiness. None of the parties have expressed opposition to mega-hydroelectric projects, much less opposition to Rositas, which is the mega-hydroelectric project that they want to build in Santa Cruz.

JW: OK, this is your sense of the party terrain. You mentioned earlier that a critical error of the first term of Morales's rule was the integration of social movement leaders into the state. Turning to the area of social movements, then, what is your take on their power and significance in the current conjuncture?

PS: It's very poor. We all wanted the government to win a second term in 2009, and to win decisively to put an end to the resistance of the oligarchy. But very shortly after obtaining two thirds in congress the ideology that came to prevail within government circles, of which vice president Álvaro García Linera is the purest expression, said: we don't accept

independent thinkers, there can be no independent thinkers. Here everyone must agree with what Evo Morales and Álvaro GarcÃa Linera say.

So what they have done is weaken social organizations, transforming them into simple echoes of the government's line, without a critical or positive position of their own. The social movements are in a much worse state than they were prior to the Water War of 2000. They have less capacity for autonomy, for projecting demands, for self-determination.

Those which have confronted the government have been divided, criminalized, and in some cases incarcerated. Fear has been generalized. Within the government there are many people who disagree with the official line, but they are not going to say this publicly because they will lose their jobs. Anyone who wants to keep their job has to accept the line coming from above. It's a type of totalitarianism which is distinct from the military dictatorships. There are some cases in which the mechanisms are more perverse, and in others more subtle, designed to keep quiet those who have a different position.

JRW: In the present conjuncture, what is the position of the most important business confederations, such as CAINCO, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Santa Cruz? Are they openly supporting some parties more than others? What are the desires of domestic and international capital in these elections?

PS: They are not going to say anything publicly. What they hope is to be able to continue their business no matter who wins. If Evo wins, they'll continue alongside Evo. If the opposition wins they will go along with it. At the moment they are not involved in any public campaign in favour of one or another candidate, but simply thinking of their pockets.

JW: But apart from their apparent neutrality, you don't think they are financing specific parties, that they have a preferred outcome?

PS: Well, they haven't said anything

publicly, so one cannot say with any evidence.

JRW: There is no publicly available financing of particular campaigns?

PS: Public? No. Behind the scenes, all of the parties must be receiving something. For example, Bolivia Says No, the party of Ãscar Ortiz, surely has the financial support of agribusiness. Bolivia Says No is the party which most closely represents their interests. Bolivia Says No's platform is to export the Santa Cruz model to the rest of the country. They want to introduce a new export plan for the Amazon.

The Santa Cruz oligarchy has learned that, first, it has to protect its business interests, and so it is not going to confront the government, especially when they are receiving such benefits. They are not going to campaign openly against the government. Under the table, they might be financing here or there, but they know that Bolivia Says No has no chance of winning these elections. So why would they do it publicly?

JRW: The global crisis of 2008 began to have a serious impact on many parts of South America beginning in 2012, more or less, depending on the country. But Bolivia was something of an exception, insofar as it exhibited higher levels of growth and macroeconomic stability. It's obvious that the Morales government never loses an opportunity to announce this fact. How do you explain Bolivian economic growth, in contrast, say, to the open crises in Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, and elsewhere? Is it going to last, or has the crisis simply not yet arrived in Bolivia?

PS: Here as elsewhere - Brazil, Venezuela - we lived through a boom, in spite of the crisis of 2008, because of the price of commodities, and in particular the oil price continued climbing until 2014. The crisis began that year when the price of oil began to fall.

Until 2014, Bolivia and various other countries in the region, were in ascent thanks to an export model rooted in

certain products that enjoyed a high price on the international market. The crisis began in Bolivia when the price of oil fell to almost \$40 per barrel, having reached a high of \$100 per barrel, and the price of oil impacted upon the price of Bolivian natural gas sales to Argentina and Brazil.

The government was able to accumulate enormous foreign reserves during the boom period. Foreign reserves reached \$15 billion. Before the Morales government, Bolivia's foreign reserves never surpassed \$1 or \$2 billion.

In order to avoid the repercussions of the crisis, the government began to spend its foreign reserves, and began to take on debt. Today the external debt is around 25 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), and growing. The government also sells national treasury bonds on Wall Street, which is another form of indebtedness. In this way the crisis has been alleviated. The government has controlled the crisis in anticipation of the October elections.

After the elections, whichever party wins there will be an economic austerity package. It is almost impossible to maintain an exchange rate of 6.96 Bolivianos to the dollar, when one looks at the fall of currencies in Argentina and Brazil. The fall has already begun, but it has been tempered momentarily by strong public investment. Unfortunately, these investments by the state have not been in viable productive sectors. There has been a lot of investment in infrastructure. Investments directed toward productive sectors have been very poorly chosen, for example, the sugar mill in San Buenaventura or the urea plant. That is, these investments haven't generated a new productive economic matrix capable of generating resources in the short term.

The current economy no longer depends primarily on the export of natural gas, as was the case until 2014. Today mining mineral exports are first, and in third place is agribusiness. But the international situation is terrible due to the crash in soy prices. The government maintains this sector with subsidies, but they

cannot do so forever. After the elections, we are going to see an increase in gas, diesel, and electric light tariffs.

JRW: Do you think Morales is going to win in the first round? Is there any possibility that he won't win the election?

PS: I don't know, because Bolivia is a very volatile country. A month ago, everything suggested that Evo would win in the first round, but today I don't know. The impact of the ecological disaster of the forest fires will have an effect on his chances. Whether he will recover or not in the coming days and weeks, we don't know. In any case, no one is going to win in the first round. There's going to be a second round. Today, I don't think it's possible that Evo will win in the first round. But the situation could change - Bolivia is a very dynamic country.

JRW: How do you understand the particular political situation in Bolivia within the wider region's dynamics? For example, if we look at immediate neighbours, we see the extreme right in power in Brazil, and the possible return of (Kirchner) Fernández-Fernández in Argentina. So if the situation is volatile in Bolivia, this is also true at the regional level. What is the role of Bolivia within this regional scenario?

PS: For the government of Evo Morales the best scenario would be the return of Kirchnerism in Argentina. It would give him oxygen, and the government is supporting the campaign for Kirchnerism's return. Were Evo to win, the government would likely prolong for a longer period the maintenance of certain subsidies than if a more neoliberal government were to be formed. But there will come a time at which you can't prolong the subsidies even if you want to, because you haven't created a new economic structure that would allow you to do so. If Evo wins he is going to implement a package of economic austerity, whether in a gradual or shock manner. I don't see political options in the region which are proposing the kind of genuine change that would allow us to escape

from this vicious circle, between populisms of the right and populisms of the left, which have distinct political discourses, but which in essence combine in supporting an extractivist economic model for export to the detriment of nature.

JRW: In the Brazilian case, Dilma Rousseff introduced an austerity package in 2014, after having campaigned on precisely the opposite political program. In hindsight, we can see that this was a turning point in the process which eventually resulted in Jair Bolsonaro gaining the presidency. So it would seem there are political dangers which accompany the implementation of austerity by progressive governments. If you are correct that in the Bolivian case should Evo win he will introduce austerity measures, what forms will the likely political complexities that follow assume in the immediate aftermath?

PS: If Evo wins, the right will radicalize and if Evo doesn't win, in five years we will have a similar situation to that in Argentina today. Because if Evo doesn't win, it will be Carlos Mesa of the opposition who will have to apply the hard measures. As soon as Mesa begins to apply such measures it will be incendiary for the population and supporters of the MAS, and Evo will be seen as a saviour. Essentially, however, there are no structural differences in the programs, whoever wins, in relation to key sectors such as agribusiness.

JRW: What is the strategy, then, for people such as yourself, who are trying to maintain a leftist position independent from that of the government? What to do in the present moment? Should the emphasis be on re-building a movement from below over the medium- to long-term?

PS: I don't think there is any other alternative. Between the two existing electoral poles there is no alternative. We have to build and rebuild something different, and learn from our mistakes. Because we had very strong movements until 2006, until we arrived in government. So we have to be very self-critical concerning the

errors we committed so that the new movements don't repeat them.

At this point, the dichotomy between the left and right is not essential. We are not talking about building another big boss politician (caudillo) with which to confront Evo Morales or another neoliberal party. We are talking about rebuilding the social fabric of social movements and of new actors so that they can begin to self-govern and self-organize. That kind of movement, today, is very incipient in Bolivia.

Fourteen years ago it wasn't the case. There was a very mobilized, autonomous, and self-governing movement. To recompose that will be difficult. The worst aspect is that this disarticulation of social movements, of the social subject, was not done by a government of the right, but by a government of the left. The social subject was able to survive despite the repression and brutality of the dictatorships and the policies of neoliberal governments. At certain moments it was severely damaged. But under this government, our own government, a government that we brought to office, a terrible phenomenon has been produced: the Aymara and Quechua indigenous community, which resisted colonization for 500 years, is today very weak because an indigenous government is promoting a very consumerist, developmentalist perspective of western modernity. As a result, Aymara and Quechua communities, and their alternative vision of Living Well (Vivir Bien), is weaker today than before the arrival of this government. It should have been exactly the opposite scenario.

JRW: Changing themes, let's concentrate for a moment on the catastrophe of the fires in Chiquitania, the tropical savannas of the department of Santa Cruz. In general terms, what is the scale and depth of this ecological crisis, and what does it entail?

PS: Well, in quantitative terms we are talking about a burnt area of 1.8 million hectares (JRW note: now 5.3 million hectares). The Minister of Defence said yesterday: "But it wasn't all forest, only 500,000 hectares was

forest.” Even with the figure of 500,000 hectares of burnt forest, it’s a catastrophe.

In 2016, a year of high deforestation, almost 300,000 hectares were deforested. Now we are surpassing 500,000 deforested hectares. According to a report on the hotspots generated by NASA satellites, a third of the fires are in protected areas of Bolivia. That’s incredible! Ten percent of these fires are in untouched, primary forests.

It’s terrible from the perspective of the forests, greenhouse gas emissions, animal life, and ecosystems. These are life systems that are being destroyed. This is going to have impacts on water and rain not only in those zones but in other regions as well. We are accelerating the sixth extinction of life on earth.

JRW: What kind of economic transition, then, is needed in Bolivia?

PS: What the government should have done is what we had originally proposed. When we arrived in government we said we are not going to support agribusiness, we were going to support communitarian agroecology which would preserve nature, fundamentally directed toward the local market. But the government, prioritizing re-election, preferred to make agreements with agribusiness and this is the result.

Other options are possible. For example, if one wants to export meat one can do it, but in smaller quantities and within limits – meat produced in an ecological manner, without destroying forests, meat with a high price, directed toward consumer markets that are willing to pay more

to preserve forests. In order to do this, it is necessary to totally reorient agricultural activities so that they can exist alongside the forest, rather than being developed at the cost of the forest. Promoting exports of chestnuts, of asaÑ fruit, in short a series of other products that are in the forests and which can be cultivated without destroying the forests.

From the point of view of lithium, Bolivia also has an opportunity if we develop it in an appropriate manner; likewise, in the case of solar energy, especially given that we are one of the countries with the highest levels of solar radiation.

This would imply a break with the developmentalist model.

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[Political Economy Research Centre](#)

Impeachment and Imperialism

27 October 2019, by [Against the Current Editors](#)

During the 1968 campaign, Nixon reached out to the government of South Vietnam to ensure that outgoing president Lyndon Johnson’s attempts at a last-ditch peace agreement would fail. Known as “the Chennault affair” for the rightwing operative Anna Chennault who carried it out, the full story is told by John A. Farrell [13]. Indeed Nixon won that election, and the war would last another seven years, inflicting even more death and devastation on Vietnam than between 1962 (when John F. Kennedy began the secret bombing of South Vietnam) and the upheaval of 1968.

Fast forward: Reagan’s 1980 campaign contacted the rulers of the Islamic Republic of Iran to ensure that U.S. diplomats held hostage in Iran would not be released until Jimmy Carter’s presidency was done. As if hiding in plain sight, the story is laid out by Kai Bird [14].

Indeed, in a theatrical gesture the

hostages in Iran were released on the day of Reagan’s 1981 inauguration. Shortly thereafter Reagan’s operative William Casey, installed as CIA director, authorized Israel to sell military equipment to Iran – a forerunner of the “Iran -Contra” clandestine sale of U.S. weapons to Iran, with the proceeds secretly allocated to fund the murderous contra war against Nicaragua.

It’s difficult to overstate how the consequences have shaped today’s chaos in the world, and in U.S. politics. The Reagan presidency was the era when the United States supported both Saddam Hussein in Iraq’s invasion of Iran, and Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda movement in the U.S. proxy conflict with the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The ultimate results have been the virtual destruction of Afghanistan, and later George W. Bush’s invasion of Iraq with all the ruinous events that have followed.

And not only that – the counterrevolutionary U.S.-backed Central American genocidal wars of the 1980s, along with “free trade” that destroyed much of Mexican and Central American agriculture and the insane bipartisan U.S. “war on drugs,” directly brought about the hemorrhaging of those societies and the desperate flight of so many people toward the United States. That’s the direct background of today’s crisis and the unspeakable brutality of the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers at the border.

What’s New About Trump?

So much for the myth that Trump’s appeal to Russia for dirt on Hillary Clinton in 2016, and his attempt to extort Ukraine for “opposition research” on Joe Biden in 2020, mark something new and an unheard-of

degradation of “our democracy.” But beyond the spectacular spread of this scandal “involving his attorney general, secretary of state and personal attorney as players in the extortion scheme” two fundamental points arise from these earlier cases as well as the present one.

First, there actually is something different about Trump. Contrary to some fashionable left rhetoric, Trump is not a fascist. Rather, he’s a thief, or as Samuel Farber has perceptively put it, a “lumpen capitalist”. [15] His fundamental loyalty is only to himself and his shady business interests. Yet those degenerate qualities also make him a useful tool for the real agenda of billionaires, corporate deregulators and privatizers, white nationalists, reactionary religious fanatics, and the fossil fuel industries with their all-out drive to maximize extraction and profits before the clock runs out for humanity.

That combination controls the agenda of today’s Republican Party. Because its obscene reactionary social and economic agenda cannot hope to win a majority by democratic means, it seeks to rule permanently through voter suppression, racial gerrymandering, executive orders and stuffing the judiciary with rightwing cadres. The regime we’re living under today has been gaining momentum long before Trump came along, and it will not disappear with him.

This is an authentic capitalist ruling class agenda, yet also one that could create a massive crisis for the system’s economic stability and political legitimacy. With Trump’s pseudo-populist rhetoric and crude nationalism, racist appeals and sadistic anti-immigrant orders he’s a useful front man for the worst forces of reaction and greed. All that along with his love affairs with international dictators who know how to fawn on him, rather than ideology or mass mobilization, makes him a menace to humanity.

He’s also unusually crude. Unlike types like Nixon and Reagan, Trump is confident to act right out in the open, including undisguised witness intimidation and incitement to violence. His “high crimes and

misdeemeanors,” perpetrated on a daily basis, are barely hidden if at all.

His tactics for getting away with one week’s scandalous behavior are to do something more outrageous the next, whether it’s the Muslim travel ban or family separations at the border or dismantling every environmental protection, pushing the citizenship question on the census or his daily blatant, shameless lying.

In the process he’s demonstrated what everyone now knows, including (especially) his aides and the Republican leadership that enables him “that the administration he’s assembled is a bottomless corrupt cesspool, that his mind is an open sewer and his mouth a running toilet.

But what Trump’s tenure has taught us is that for a considerable time, none of this brings him down. The Republican leadership and party faithful not only have stuck with him, they mostly love his performance even if they privately fear and loathe him. In general, the method works “so well that some of Trump’s worst atrocities are hardly even noticed. A case in point is the brutal reduction of the number of refugees to be admitted annually to a miniscule 18,000” at the very moment when close to 70 million people globally are displaced by war and assorted natural and unnatural disasters.

At a certain point that’s impossible to precisely predict, Trump’s kind of behavior can become a liability “to the institutional system to which he has no loyalty, or to his party. It might be when an economic downturn looks like a serious threat. Or perhaps when it appears that he might drag the Republicans down in 2020. Or when his precipitous, treacherous betrayal of the Syrian Kurdish forces drives the U.S. military, diplomatic and “national security” elites into a frenzy.

But while these are dangers for Trump’s regime and enablers, as this statement was drafted they haven’t yet reached the point of a decisive rupture between the broader interests of the system and its current venal “executive committee.” Instead there’s an impeachment crisis “which like our election season may be nasty,

brutish and long” that erupted as the revelations of Trump’s political extortion of Ukraine gave the hesitant Democratic leadership no real choice.

We don’t believe that the impeachment inquiry came about through “pressure from the masses” or the progressive minority of Congressional Democrats pushing it. Rather, the fact that Trump was openly repeating his 2016 appeal to Russia, by shaking down the new Ukraine president to work with Trump’s filthy attorney general Barr and his unhinged personal lawyer Giuliani, simply meant that with no Democratic response he’d be free to just keep doing it.

At this early stage we won’t try to guess where the impeachment process goes. The outcome depends not on the Democrats, but on the Republicans and their base. We’re not predicting that Republican support for Trump will collapse; but if it does, we suspect that it won’t happen in ones and twos, but rapidly. On the one hand, no Republican in the Senate or inner circle can afford to be the first defector. On the other, no doubt those who are closest to him know that there’s a whole lot more criminality waiting to be uncovered, or covered up.

It’s Imperialism, Stupid

There’s a more basic, second point to pursue here. If we look back to those earlier machinations of Nixon and Reagan, and connect the dots to Trump’s 2016 and 2019-20 gambits, the element of continuity is clear enough. It’s about imperialism. That’s what gives the presidency the power to coerce and manipulate foreign leaders (and in Trump’s case of course, their ability to manipulate him too).

Imperialism, and the accompanying ideology that the United States has the inherent right to dominate the world, inevitably in the 20th and 21st centuries created an imperial presidency and its corrupt opportunities. Donald Trump is the malignant outgrowth partly of that

tendency â€” along with the profound failures of U.S. capital to meet the basic needs of huge sections of the working and middle classes left behind in the rush to globalization and corporate “prosperity.”

To see the logic of imperialism, look at the Democrats’ and media’s main charge leveled against Donald Trump, which from Ukraine to Syria goes: “He’s threatened our national security with his behavior that undermines our professional diplomatic and intelligence services, and causes our allies not to trust U.S. leadership.”

The complaint is not about the sadistic U.S. sanctions that are contributing to starvation and death from lack of basic medical supplies in Venezuela, or the severe hardship in Iran from the drive to strangle the economy of that country (where there used to be a reservoir of popular admiration for the United States â€” no longer). Throwing away the lives of millions of people isn’t the problem. Rather, it’s “weakening our leadership.”

In this debate the massive war crimes of Nixon and Reagan are bracketed to the side as “mistakes” or “excesses” because, in the conventional accounts, they acted in the framework of strong U.S. “leadership of the Free World” in the Cold War. A couple of million dead

and many millions of poisoned Vietnamese, and the shattered societies of Afghanistan and Central America, were acceptable collateral damage since ultimately “our” side won the Cold War and the Soviet Union dissolved.

Nixon was finally brought down, not by his 1968 secret maneuvers to keep the war going so he’d get elected, but by the 1972 break-in at the Democratic Watergate Hotel headquarters â€” carried out by his secret “Plumbers” gang, which was created to plug the leaks about how badly the war was going.

Socialists, to put it mildly, do not worship at the feet of the “Founders” and “Framers” of the United States and its Constitution. They had issues â€” slavery, genocide, extreme patriarchy among them. But in the framework of their time, they did understand some things. Evidently they recognized that a crook like Donald Trump could become president and use the office for self-enrichment, including colluding with foreign powers.

That’s why, for example, they included a clause forbidding “emoluments” as well as an impeachment process as a check on tyranny. What’s not clear is whether they could envision the corruption not only of a president but

of a major political party, and a big part of a federal judiciary, mobilized to enable and protect him. They could hardly have imagined the massive coercive power of a global imperial hegemon with its “military-industrial complex” and political apparatus, subject to presidential orders and whims.

In that sense, Trump’s accusers have a point when they say that the practice of U.S. representative government (such as it is) stands at considerable risk. But let’s not forget that the state institutions whose “integrity” the Democrats are eager to defend include the monstrous national surveillance apparatus, the FBI with its murderous history of repression of dissident movements and leaders, and the CIA with its global record of interventions and assassinations.

How the current crisis plays out for Trump’s own criminal presidency is a big open question. But it’s important to impeach more than Trump. Restoring a “status quo before Trump” is no answer to the mess capital has made. We need a revolutionary insurgent movement to impeach imperialism too!

October 24 2018

[Against the Current](#)

Egypt: Massive repression against mobilizations

26 October 2019, by Joseph Daher

The protesters denounce the authoritarianism of the Sissi regime, and especially the economic situation which continues to deteriorate, particularly due to austerity measures, accentuated in 2016 to obtain a loan \$12 billion from the International Monetary Fund. The government

floated the Egyptian pound, which has lost 50% of its value, and phased out all subsidies on staples. The poverty rate has further increased and more than a third of the country’s 100 million inhabitants now live on less than â‚¬1.50 a day.

Relations with Western states and the sale of arms to the Egyptian regime are still in good shape. The US president has described Sissi as “his favourite dictator”. Against repression and austerity, we express our solidarity with the masses in Egypt!

Iraq: A wind of anger blows

26 October 2019, by **Joseph Daher**

The movement is mainly affecting Baghdad and the south of the country, while Iraqi Kurdistan and the Sunni-majority areas of the country, which have suffered great destruction during the multiple military conflicts since 2003 and the war against Islamic State in Mosul, are for the moment spared.

The overwhelming majority of protesters are denouncing the processes of Islamization and the confessionalization of social and political life, calling for civil status and inclusive citizenship. The famous slogan of revolutionary processes “the people want the fall of the regime” has also been heard on many demonstrations.

The protest movement also denounces the corruption, unemployment and

decay of public services in a country chronically short of electricity and drinking water. These demands for social justice and economic redistribution in the face of destructive neoliberal policies cannot be dissociated from demands for the end of the confessional political system, which determines political representation based on community identities - religious, ethnic or confessional.

Protesters also denounced Iran’s role in the country, chanting “Iran, Iran, Out, Out”. Indeed, Tehran has had a massive political influence in Iraq since the US occupation in 2003, through its support for Islamic fundamentalist Shiite movements and its armed militias. As a result of the protests in the country, Tehran has also deployed a surveillance system

along its border with Iraq.

The Iraqi government responded to the violent mobilizations, killing more than 100 people and injuring more than 6,000 people between October 1 and 6, while accusing protesters of being “saboteurs” and “unidentified snipers”. At the same time, Baghdad announced on October 6 a series of social measures in response to protesters’ demands, ranging from housing assistance to the allocation of payments to unemployed youth, as well as the construction of 100,000 dwellings.

Since 2015, Iraq has experienced repeated popular protests. This wind of protest shows the determination of broad sectors of Iraqi society, especially among the youth, in demanding radical change.

“The People Want the Fall of the Regime”

25 October 2019, by **Joseph Daher**

Over the last week, Lebanon has been rocked by a massive protest movement, larger than any the country has seen in decades.

The demonstrations erupted after the government announced it would implement new taxes, including on instant messaging applications like What’s App. Against the backdrop of austerity measures and an ever-deepening socio-economic crisis, workers and others without wealth decided enough was enough.

They surged into the streets, denouncing the very foundations of the political and economic system. In their eyes, all of the major parties are implicated in their misery.

Against Social Injustice and Sectarianism

The working and popular classes in Lebanon have been buffeted by declining living standards for years.

Between 2010 and 2016 the incomes of the poorest households stagnated or dropped, and unemployment remained stubbornly high: only one third of the working-age population had a job, and joblessness among those under thirty-five ran as high as 37 percent. Between 40 and 50 percent of Lebanese residents lacked

access to social assistance. Temporary foreign workers, estimated at 1 million, were denied all social protections. According to a study by the Central Statistical Office, half of workers and more than a third of the country’s farmers were below the poverty line.

And as for the top of society? Between 2005 and 2014, the richest 10 percent pocketed, on average, 56 percent of the national income. The wealthiest 1 percent, just over 37,000 people, captured 23 percent of the income generated “as much as the poorest 50 percent, more than 1.5 million people.

Lebanon’s political and economic rot

has triggered some protests in recent years: in early 2011, during the Arab Spring; in 2012 and 2014, over labor conditions; and in the summer of 2015, over sanitation. But the scale and breadth of the current demonstrations far outstrips previous ones. Protests have exploded not just in the capital of Beirut, but across the country: Tripoli, Nabatiyeh, Tyr, Baalbeck, Zouk. On Sunday, an estimated 1.2 million people turned out in Beirut, and a bit more than 2 million total demonstrated throughout the country — this in a nation of 6 million.

The social composition of the movement also distinguishes it from past protests: it is much more rooted in the popular and working classes than the middle-class-heavy demonstrations of 2011 and 2015. As the scholar and activist Rima Majed writes, “The mobilizations of the past few days have shown the emergence of a new class-based alliance between the unemployed, underemployed, working classes, and middle classes against the ruling oligarchy. This is a breakthrough.”

The enormous demonstrations in the northern city of Tripoli and the surrounding region speak to Majed’s point. North Lebanon represents 20.7 percent of the country’s inhabitants, but 46 percent of the extremely poor and 38 percent of the poor. Health care is substandard, while dropout rates, unemployment, and female illiteracy are among the highest in the country. No large-scale development project has occurred since the 1990s.

Yet Tripoli’s protests have been described as the “carnival of the revolution,” with a festive atmosphere and DJs playing in the city’s main square to tens of thousands of protesters. Earlier today, representatives from doctors, engineers, and lawyers’ professional unions published a joint statement declaring their support for the city’s protest movement.

A final distinguishing characteristic is the movement’s actively non-sectarian cast. Signs and messages of solidarity between regions and across religious sects have multiplied since the protests’ emergence — for example,

between the Tripoli neighborhoods of Bab al-Tabbaneh (majority Alawite) and Jabal Mohsen (majority Sunni), where armed conflicts raged in recent years; and between Sunni-dominated Tripoli and southern, Shi’a-majority cities like Nabathieh and Tyr. Demonstrators are not only denouncing neoliberal economic policies and corruption, but the whole sectarian and pro-business regime. As one of the main slogan of the popular movement puts it, “Everyone means everyone.”

Protesters are now calling for general strikes, and certain sectors have already been affected. Demonstrators have blockaded roads to grind economic activity to a halt, and some schools, universities, private businesses, and banks have closed.

Earlier today, President Michel Aoun declared he was ready for a dialogue with protesters to “help save the country from collapse” and suggested a government reshuffle was possible.

The Ruling Class Response

Political representation in Lebanon is organized along sectarian lines at the highest echelons of the state. The president is required to be Maronite, the prime minister Sunni, and the president of the chamber of deputies Shia. Lebanon’s sectarian system (like sectarianism more generally) is one of the main instruments used by the ruling parties to strengthen their control over the popular classes, keeping them subordinated to their sectarian leaders.

In the past, ruling elites have been able to quash movements through repression or by playing up sectarian divisions. This time around, the ruling parties have responded with small carrots and a big stick.

Following the first night of protests, the government cancelled some of the taxes it had proposed. When the mobilizations continued to blossom, Prime Minister Saad Hariri gave his governmental rivals a seventy-two-hour ultimatum to back his preferred reforms and on Monday, announced

his 2020 budget plan: no new taxes, the symbolic halving of ministers and lawmakers’ salaries, cost-cutting steps like the merging or abolishment of some public institutions, and the privatization of the state-run power sector.

These measures, supported by all the main parties, will not improve the lives of ordinary people, as Hariri has claimed. They are largely the fulfillment of demands by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Conference for Economic Development and Reform through Enterprises (CEDRE) agreement, which Lebanon signed in Paris in April 2018. In exchange for about \$11 billion in loans and aid, the government agreed to pursue public-private partnerships, bring down debt levels, and enact austerity measures.

In addition to this suite of reforms, the ruling parties have launched a volley of attacks both verbal (accusing some sectors of the movement of being “infiltrators” or representing “fifth columns” serving foreign interests) and physical (meting out severe repression against protesters). Amnesty International has decried the country’s security forces for its violent attacks on peaceful protests in Beirut: firing huge amounts of tear gas into crowds, chasing down protesters at gunpoint and beating them. In the southern city of Nabathieh, protesters have been assaulted by partisans and municipal employees belonging to Amal and Hezbollah, two Shi’a political parties.

All told, hundreds of protesters have been injured, and six have been killed since demonstrations broke out last week.

Expectations and Challenges

While on the upswing, Lebanon’s protest movement faces considerable organizational challenges if it is win progressive reforms. The main one is the lack of popular institutions that can channel demands, organize protesters across sectarian and geographical differences, and win out over more conservative elements,

which are already calling for a technocratic government or military rule.

The weakness of working-class institutions is a longstanding problem. Sectarian parties have actively tried to weaken the labor movement since the 1990s, forming separate federations and trade unions in a number of sectors in order to win significant power in the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers (CGTL). As a result, the CGTL has been unable to mobilize workers despite intensifying neoliberal policies. They are conspicuously absent in the current protest movement.

The Union Coordination Committee (UCC), the leading actor in the labor protests between 2011 and 2014, has been similarly hamstrung. At the UCC's January 2015 election, the sectarian parties united against the combative trade unionist Hanna Gharib, who only managed to draw

support from independents and the Lebanese Communist Party. Ever since the election, the UCC's influence has waned.

What workers need is a democratic and independent trade union movement, one that is autonomous from sectarian political parties and which incorporates foreign workers. Alternative structures of representation and organization are absolutely crucial to challenging the domination of the sectarian and bourgeois ruling parties.

One promising sign: organized feminists and students have joined the protests and intervened in coordinated ways across the country. Women in particular have participated in massive numbers, with feminists pushing for women's rights and equality within the movement. Against the Ruling Elite

The demands of the protest movement for social justice and economic

redistribution cannot be separated from their opposition to the sectarian political system, which protects the privileges of the wealthy and powerful. The Lebanese ruling sectarian parties and different fractions of the bourgeoisie have exploited privatization schemes and control of ministries to build and strengthen their network of patronage, nepotism, and corruption, while the majority of Lebanon's population, both foreign and native-born, suffer poverty and indignity.

In taking to the streets en masse, Lebanon's protesters have pushed their country into the pantheon of regional popular uprisings that began in late 2010 and continue to today, as the events in Sudan, Algeria, and Iraq can attest. Their demand is as unambiguous as it is ambitious: "the people want the fall of the regime."

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Spirit of war in Turkey: Party of War vs Party of Bread

24 October 2019, by **Metin Feyyaz**

Of course, neither this war spirit in Turkey today, nor the one in Germany in 1914 are spontaneous, they are a construction. If you listen to the public radio station in Turkey, there is a short segment from "the war front" almost in every 15 minutes. Sometimes it is a paragraph from a soldier's letter, sometimes a short message from a soldier, sometimes just an anthem or declaration. If you turn off the radio and switch to the TV, you can see news reporters pretending they are actually in a war zone with military outfits while they are taking cover from non-existing bullets or a TV commentator posing wearing bulletproof jacket with a sword in his hand declaring he is ready for war. Newspapers talk about industrial workers as "soldiers in

factories" while the biggest labour union in the country is preparing a video full of tanks firing artillery shells and special forces soldiers during their military drills, declaring its support for the war and claiming that workers are on the "work-shift for motherland." [16]

When the unions in public sector enterprises signed a collective bargaining agreement with a pay increase even lower than the official inflation rate, they defended themselves by saying that our country is getting ready for the war and we have to prepare also economically for the war and he claimed those who criticized this collective bargaining agreement are terrorists and their supporters. War is a good excuse for

everyone who wants to attack workers' rights. Erdoğan has initiated this war in a time while country is struggling with an economic crisis and Government has declared a new austerity programme which will cut workers' rights substantially. [17] Now in the atmosphere of war and national mobilization, it is almost impossible to discuss any of these issues without being labelled as traitor. So basically politics has been divided between two main political sections "The Party of War" and "The Party of Bread"; while Turkey is engaging a war in Rojava, inside the country "Party of War" is also engaging a fierce war against the "Party of Bread".

When Erdoğan brought out the

military uniforms, the opposition also lined up to wear them. The parliamentary opposition which built a de-facto coalition in the local elections in June (and before that, in March) and somehow managed to sustain this coalition or at least cooperation after the local elections has also joined the "Party of War". During the parliamentary vote on sending troops to war, all parties in the parliament except HDP, voted in favour of the war while the president of the main opposition party CHP declared that they are voting in favour of the military operation even though "this tears their heart out". But even their support for the military operation was not good enough to save them from harsh criticisms of nationalists for not supporting "our troops" enough. Once they jumped into the ranks of Party of War, nothing would be good enough for their new comrades to accept them as the full members, they will be always asked to do more, until the time comes that they became the new

danger for the country.

While war propaganda is going on full speed, any anti-war statement, demonstration or even social media postings are confronted with arrests and attacks. The police declared that 839 people's social media accounts have incriminating content regarding the military operation and 186 of these people were detained by police. These statements and arrests are just to intimidate and prevent any real criticism against the war. The nationalist mobilization among the society also creates more room for racist/fascist attacks. Just in one week, one person was lynched for speaking Kurdish in public and killed and another person was attacked and hospitalized. Youth organization of Grey Wolves (extreme right movement in Turkey) gathered all their members in front of Ankara University and attacked left-wing students by declaring that "universities are standing side by side with our glorious

army" and they will "scrape the terrorists off from the universities".

But unfortunately repression is not the only reason for lack of a peace movement. The left in Turkey is atomized and disoriented. The radical left's lack of ability (and lack of desire) to form a political alternative for so many years has led to this situation where there is no political representation for calling for peace, nor any propaganda for workers' rights against the war. With this gap it is too easy for the Turkish ruling classes to win the proletariat to their chauvinistic, militarist war policies. At a time when economic crisis and austerity policies are hitting the workers most, when wages are suppressed with the excuse of war, the urgent duty of the left is to expose how these militaristic policies are also against the daily needs of working class and win millions of members of "Party of Bread" into the peace movement.

The International Left Must Come to the Aid of the Hong Kong People

23 October 2019, by Fourth International Bureau

The Hong Kong government, a puppet of Beijing, launched a new round of attack on 4 October by banning mask-faced demonstration through invoking the 1922 Emergency Regulation Ordinance. Ironically the law was enacted by the then British colonial government to repress, unsuccessfully, the general strike led by the seaman's union - then under the CCP leadership. This time the colonial act has been invoked again by a Chinese led Hong Kong government to crack down on its "fellow country folks".

The Hong Kong people have always been denied the right to run their own affairs, be it under British or Beijing's rule. Unlike the British, Beijing did promise Hong Kong people universal suffrage, only it never bothered to

honour this promise. In fact, it has proven itself, in the aspect of "national identity", to be more repressive than the British. Years before the China Extradition bill, Beijing already tried to impose its chauvinist version of "national identity" on Hong Kong which the British had not done: it tried to make the Hong Kong government enforce the "National Education curriculum" and the "National Anthem bill", and there have also been efforts to replace Cantonese with Mandarin as medium of teaching. These attempts were all defeated by protest. Therefore, when the China Extradition bill was tabled the Hong Kong people knew very well that a complete show down with Beijing was now inevitable.

The 2 million participants on the 16 June march showed that the

movement enjoys majority support. The movement is not demanding independence, as Beijing claims. Like all former colonial people, the Hong Kong people are also entitled to the right to self-determination, including the option of independence. However, the Hong Kong movement is unified under the very moderate "five demands". There is a small and loose current that aspires for independence, but it has no influence in the movement.

Unlike the previous generations, young people do yearn for a Hong Kong identity, but this does not necessarily imply wanting independence. It is also precisely a reaction to Beijing's increasingly nationalist and chauvinist policies. China, under the CCP, has today

evolved into a repressive society that few in Hong Kong want to associate with, hence the aspiration for a “free Hong Kong”. The rise of a “Hong Kong identity” is not an isolated event either. There has been a rise of national sentiment among Taiwanese, Tibetans and Uyghurs as well. Like Hong Kong this is also a response to Beijing’s chauvinism. It could be safely stated that today Beijing itself is the cause of a great centrifugal force now gripping hold of China. Before it can attain its goal of national unification and glory, it is already losing the heart of Taiwan, Tibet, “Xinjiang”, and Hong Kong.

The absence of a sizeable leftist current in Hong Kong is a reflection of a remarkably weak labour movement. The horrible practices by the CCP, under the name of “communism” and “socialism”, continuously discredit leftist ideas, creating a hostile environment against it. This explains why the current movement is still limited to the five demands and fails to raise any socio-economic demands despite the huge inequality in the city. Yet the youth is forced to appeal to labour in the course of the struggle, and the joint effort of the youth and the unions made possible, for the first time for half a century, the outbreak of a general strike which paralysed half of Hong Kong on 5 August. The more the left can prove the strength of labour in real struggle the more it is able to prove its relevance once again.

Beijing accuses the movement of being an agent of “foreign intervention”. Given Hong Kong’s colonial legacy, the pan-democrat parties do have long-term links with the US and the UK’s establishment parties. Yet they have no leading role in the current movement at all. They only play a supportive role at most. No one can dismiss the fact that it is chiefly led by thousands of radical youth who give the movement its direction. They have no link at all to any current political parties, and they admire spontaneity so much that they deeply distrust organization and parties, and have close to zero political experience. Their inexperience led some of them to believe that the US is a genuinely democratic country. They have made mistakes, but they are not controlled

by any “foreign forces”. Actually, they are not controllable by anyone.

A recent survey showed that nearly 40 per cent of students claim to be “localist”, but how the radical youth interprets this varies among themselves. Long before this movement the nativist interpretation had the largest influence amongst those who claimed to be “localist”. However, when this movement evolved into a huge mobilization it necessarily displayed multiple and conflicting tendencies. While there is a nativist current exhibiting anti-Mainland immigrant sentiment, there was also a much bigger demonstration trying to win over Mainland Chinese visitors. The left’s responsibility is to join the struggle and convince the youth with its democratic and inclusive position rather than standing outside of it.

That is not to say that “foreign forces” are entirely irrelevant, or to deny that they are interested in intervening in Hong Kong. But Hong Kong is not comparable with Ukraine. While the EU and the NATO are new players in the Ukraine’s turmoil since the turn of the century, the UK and US have always been tacitly recognized by Beijing as stake holders in Hong Kong. The so called “one country, two systems”, enshrined first in the 1984 Sino-British joint declaration and then in the 1997 Basic Law, was from the beginning a historic compromise by Beijing with the West in exchange for the latter’s permission to be re-integrated with global capitalism. The Basic Law’s solemn promise of “the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years” is first and foremost to appease Western influence and business interests. That is also why the Basic Law allows Hong Kong to keep its own British law, that its courts are allowed to hire foreign judges (article 92) and even to the extent of allowing foreigners to be employed as public servants from low to high grades except the ministerial and Chief Executive level (article 101). These clauses effectively protect the Western commercial and political interests there. Hence it is not in their interest to de-stabilize Hong Kong. This also explains why the UK and US quietly told the Hong Kong pan-democrats to

accept Beijing’s political reform package in 2014 prior to the outbreak of the Umbrella Movement.

It is Beijing’s unilateral change of its Hong Kong policy, and especially its attempt to table the China Extradition bill, which is directly responsible for both the Hong Kong turmoil and the Western criticism of Beijing over the bill. After all, the bill not only targets Chinese, but also any foreigner who happens to be in Hong Kong. Accidentally there is now a narrowly defined common interest between the West and the Hong Kong people over the China Extradition Bill issue. Both want the bill to go away. Yet even after the bill was withdrawn, Hong Kong autonomy is still in danger, therefore a tricky situation still persists: although Hong Kong working people’s interests are fundamentally different from the Western governments, nevertheless in appearance both are demanding that Beijing honour its promise over Hong Kong autonomy. The US “Hong Kong’s Human Rights and Democracy” bill shows that the US ruling elites continue to try to tie the Hong Kong issue to their own foreign policy. The left needs to remind Hong Kong people that this shows that the US Empire is never their real friend; and that their democratic friends have to be found among the millions of US working people who are opposing Trump.

While both Mainland China and Hong Kong are capitalist there is, in terms of human and labour rights protection, a big difference between the two. While the latter allows, although with visible limits, the existence of a social movement, the former allows none. Actually, it is this Hong Kong feature which increasingly worries Beijing. Since the turn of the century, more and more people in the Mainland have begun to imitate Hong Kong’s social movement and started organizing, informally or through NGOs. This was the price Beijing had to pay for making use of Hong Kong to help build China’s new capitalism. Increasingly Beijing has found the price too high, and since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, Beijing must have thought that it had become strong enough to tear apart the Basic Law. This law tries to keep frozen a

kind of capitalism which fundamentally discriminates against and exploits the working people, and is hence reactionary. However, it also contains clauses which protect human and labour rights. The international left must support the Hong Kong people's struggle to defend and expand their rights, not only because of the intrinsic value of their struggle, but also because their struggle continues to inspire China's own social movement, however small and downtrodden it is now.

Whatever weakness the anti-Extradition bill movement has displayed, it is of great historical significance: it is the first ever democratic movement in a part of China which is simultaneously massive, radical and rebellious, so powerful that it even successfully forced the government, backed by Beijing, to retreat. It is the re-awakening of a democratic consciousness, dressed in a "Hong

Kong identity". The political strike has also left a deep mark in the consciousness of working people: it teaches them the great value of non-conformance. The Hong Kong movement also exposes the great weakness of China's "perfect authoritarianism". For more than four months Beijing has been unable to restore order in this city. Hong Kong, with its colonial legacy, for good or for bad, has become a painful thorn in the flesh of the dragon. The dragon is already in increasingly bad health. The death of this beast in the hands of progressive social movement is crucial for the future democratic transformation of China. This has also become one of the most important issues in the 21st century. On the one hand, the rise of Chinese capitalism has created the largest working class in the world and in history, while on the other hand its authoritarian capitalism is also one of the biggest threats to humanity and the planet's

climate. A democratic transformation in China is a prerequisite for solving all these problems. This also makes our support of Hong Kong people's fight for democracy and justice even more urgent than ever.

Stand with Hong Kong People!

Five Demands, Not One Less!
Boycott Chinese Overseas Investment!

Democracy for Hong Kong and Mainland China!

Down with One Party Dictatorship!

Reject the Trump and Johnson Governments' interventions!

International Solidarity Among the Working People and All Progressive Forces!

Executive Bureau of the Fourth International

21 October 2019

Defend the democratic rights of the Catalan people against an unjust sentence and against repression

23 October 2019, by Fourth International Bureau

The sentence of 12 pro-independence social and political leaders, nine of them to prison sentences of between 9 and 13 years, is perceived as a collective punishment of an entire people who dared to confront the political regime of the post-Franco transition and the institutional system of the 1978 Constitution. It is an unjust and illegitimate sentence after a long judicial process loaded with irregularities and in which the magistrates used existing legislation in a regressive sense - in a logic that we can call judicial war. The "independence process" is explained to a large extent by the radicalization of very wide swathes of the Catalan population when the attempt to reform

the Statute of Autonomy of 2006 was completely disfigured by the PSOE government in the Spanish Parliament. Later, this was taken to the Constitutional Court by the reactionary right represented by the PP. This was seen, far beyond traditional nationalist currents, as genuine collective humiliation and anti-democratic imposition. Thus it is unpredictable what impact the recent ruling will have in the long run and what scenarios it may open up in the future.

Remember that, after two years of pretrial detention, this sentence hands down 104 years in prison to the accused, proclaiming them guilty of sedition and embezzlement of public

funds. The harshness of the sentence (globally higher in years of imprisonment than that imposed on the individuals tried and convicted for their direct participation in the military coup of 23 February 1981) and the political nature of the trial have provoked deep popular indignation in Catalonia. The key content of the sentence is that they have been condemned for a public riot and lawless behaviour for the events that took place in the months of September and October 2017. This implies a criminalization of the right to collective protest and of the exercise of fundamental rights, such as those of expression, assembly, association and demonstration. It is

civil and collective disobedience that has been condemned with this sentence, which from now on will set a precedent to be applied extensively to any form of protest or peaceful resistance against the decisions, laws and sentences that may come from state authorities.

A new leap in political involution

The anti-democratic regression of the post-Franco Spanish monarchy is nothing new. The LOAPA (a law destined to stop the decentralization of the State after the "failed" coup d'état of 1981), the State terrorism practiced by the governments of the PSOE in the 1980s against ETA, the "gag law" approved by Rajoy to contain the struggles of the indignant after the 15M (and which severely limits the freedom of demonstration, assembly, strike and information) and the savage repression of the referendum of 1 October 2017 in Catalonia have marked a repressive hardening of the Spanish State. Although this dynamic is already taking place at the international level as an effect of the crisis of hegemony of neoliberalism and the authoritarian hardening that accompanies it, it is no less true that the nature of the post-Franco transition, which renounced judging the crimes of the exponents of the previous regime and purging the state apparatuses coming from the dictatorship, reinforces these dynamics. Nevertheless, this sentence constitutes a real turning point, a very serious threat to social movements and the left and a very dangerous precedent for the future of democracy in the Spanish state as a whole.

Dynamics of mobilisation and self-organisation

After years of massive pro-independence mobilizations and with broad support from the Catalan population (more than 80% in the polls) for the demand for the right to self-determination (also called the "right to decide"), the sentence has led to more militant and forceful mobilizations (with a repertoire of civil disobedience and cuts in communication routes of which the high point was the occupation of Barcelona airport on the 14th, mimicking the methods of struggle of Hong Kong activists) and still very largely peaceful. The general strike of last Friday 18 October, which converged with the so-called "marches for freedom" has been the most massive mobilization so far, ending in a demonstration with more than half a million participants.

Stop the repression: solidarity with the Catalan people!

Nevertheless, there have been important minority clashes with the repressive forces, something unprecedented so far. These clashes have been used by the repressive forces to generalize an increasingly harsh and indiscriminate repression, particularly against the youth, with the active participation of the Catalan police as well. In a pre-electoral context, the incidents have opened a broad campaign of criminalization of independentism, and dissidence in general, which we openly denounce. Not only are extraordinary repressive methods being used that have led to 194 arrests (16% are under 18), the pretrial detention of 28 demonstrators (the attorney general's office has ordered the provisional detention of all those arrested in the midst of the

riots), 576 wounded (of whom 4 have lost sight of an eye due to the shooting of riot control equipment); but there have also been numerous aggressions against the media by the police. Moreover, aggressions against demonstrators by extreme right-wing groups (sometimes with the clear connivance of the repressive forces) have also been observed, both in Catalonia and in other territories where there have been solidarity mobilisations.

Faced with the mobilizations in Catalonia, the Spanish government has no other policy than the threat of reinforcing repression and, under pressure from the right and extreme right three weeks before the new general elections, says it will not rule out any repressive scenario, including the application of the National Security Law (which would allow it to directly control the Catalan police), Article 155 of the Constitution (which would mean the abolition of Catalan autonomy) or even a state of emergency.

We call for solidarity with the forces in Catalonia and the Spanish state as a whole that are fighting for rights and freedoms against the escalation of repression and reiterate our support for a democratic solution to the ongoing political conflict, which cannot be reduced to a problem of public order.

Freedom for political prisoners! Amnesty!

Release all arrested and imprisoned demonstrators!

For the Catalan people's right to self-determination!

Stop the police and fascist repression!

Executive Bureau of the Fourth International,

21 October 2019

Lebanon's 'October Revolution' must go

on!

22 October 2019, by **Rima Majed**

The ‘streets’ of Lebanon have exploded in massive protests since October 17th. Following months of austerity and dire economic conditions, a shortage of US dollars that caused a serious threat of devaluation of the Lebanese currency resulting in a potential crisis of gasoline and bread, the continuing power and water outages, and a catastrophic week with wildfires ravaging the country and exposing the ruling class, the government met on Thursday and agreed to impose new taxes on the people, including a tax on Whatsapp calls. [18]

While the uprising is not merely caused by the Whatsapp tax specifically, the newly agreed upon taxes (later reversed following street pressure) were perceived by most Lebanese as a ‘vulgar’ reflection of the government’s total neglect of people’s hardship and its priority to protect the interests of the ruling upper class at the expense of the majority of the population.

Not completely unexpected, mass protests have ravaged the country. While Lebanon has witnessed in its recent history similar massive “street explosions” against the ruling class (such as in 2015), the Lebanese ‘October Revolution’ of 2019 marks an important turning point in the history of contentious politics in the post-civil war era. After almost three decades of neoliberal policies that resulted in the deepening of class divides, people have taken to the streets this time to clearly denounce the ruling class that stands as the guardian of neoliberalism (and its own class interests), beyond sectarian divides that are usually an effective tactic deployed by the leaders to divide the streets. This time, the revolution started with the poorer classes of unemployed or underemployed - usually the backbone and constituencies of the hegemonic sectarian parties through complex

networks of clientelism - turning against their ‘patrons’.

Thousands of ‘motorcycle riders’ mobilized on Thursday evening, following the government’s decision to impose new taxes, to block roads with blazing tyres and paralyze movement in the capital Beirut. The road blockades quickly spread to other regions and people started to gather in squares and roads across the country in a show of anger that clearly targeted all the rulers - for the first time, without any exception. The initial mobilizations that took the shape of a riot have - maybe surprisingly for some - gathered hundreds of thousands around them. While the protests of 2015 were led by a group of civil society organizations mainly representing the middle classes and rejecting most signs of riot or civil disobedience under the banner of protecting the protests from “infiltrators”, the recent protests have started specifically with those usually (and wrongly in most cases) considered to be the “infiltrators” themselves.

Not only is the tactic of protest different from previous movements in terms of road blockades and civil disobedience, but the scope of the protest is also much wider with regions such as the Beqaa, Tripoli, Nabatiyeh, Tyre and Zouk mobilizing in huge numbers, and the lexicon of the chants is clearly different with curse words and swearing at politicians forming the bulk of the slogans! The resonance of such “osé” chants with the wide majority of protesters in the squares, many of whom would have rejected and denounced such slogans a few years ago, speaks of an extreme level of anger that can challenge authority and morality at once (even amongst the middle classes!). These differences in the current movement compared to previous ones are not details, they reflect deeper social transformations

that have reached an extreme and that have been reflected in the radicalization of the movement. The mobilizations of the past few days have shown the start of the emergence of a new class-based alliance between the unemployed, underemployed, working classes and middle classes against the ruling oligarchy. This is a breakthrough.

Despite attempts by the regime to play the usual card of talking about “infiltrators” and the presence of “fifth columns” (which in most cases is no other than the regime itself), it is impressive how little resonance this discourse has had on protesters so far. This is not to say that such a discourse has been completely eliminated and such scenarios have been ruled out, but rather to highlight the importance of the newly emerging class-based awareness that is focused on targeting the ruling elites rather than dividing itself. If this can be sustained and organized in the coming weeks, this will probably mark the most important turning point in Lebanon’s post-war history of contention.

While the hopes are high and the scenes from the streets are heartwarming, three main points are important for the movement to take into account in order to push this breakthrough forward:

1. It is crucial to organize. This has already started and it is taking various shapes and forms, however the movement still needs to develop its organization without shying away from having a leadership. Leaderless movements are unsustainable and can rarely propose clear alternatives. They also are not accurately ‘leaderless’. Usually, in such cases, an unannounced leadership stays behind the scenes and coordinates the movement, however it remains unaccountable. Usually, this ‘unannounced leadership’ is the most pre-organized groups and the

ones that have the most financial means to cover the costs of sound systems, transportation, distribution of food and water, etc. However, a movement leadership does not need to be extremely hierarchical and traditional or completely horizontal and unapparent. The emergence of a trustworthy leadership that can represent big sections of the protesters, coordinate at the regional levels and highlight the priorities of the transitional period is crucial to sustain the movement beyond the street mobilization of the first weeks.

Organization is also important beyond the immediacy of the protests now. It is time for the opposition in Lebanon to perceive itself as such and for different groups to organize based on their social and economic interests and coordinate together (which the ruling oligarchy excels at!). It is in times of such street explosions that we lament the lack of previous organization and we feel the need for having our networks better activated and expanded. Reactivating and building new unions, organizing in our workplaces, organizing as unemployed, organizing as women, organizing in our neighborhoods, organizing as students, etc. are all important forms of organizing that can form the scaffolder of the coming period. Some forms of such organization, such as feminist groups and student groups, already exist and are amongst the most beautiful aspects of this uprising. More of this is needed, and more coordination is crucial amongst the various groups and amongst the different regions of the country.

2. Raising clear demands that are revolutionary enough but specific enough. There are many demands in the streets, primarily socio-economic of course, but the movement has not developed a clear set of demands that can shape a desirable and convincing alternative. This is not a call for "pragmatism", but rather a call for progressive demands to take over some of the populist demands that have become widespread in the streets. The calls by many protesters for an army takeover is amongst the most dangerous demands going around. It is unfortunate that we still need to write those lines in 2019 after

all that we have seen in the Arab region in terms of the consequences of army intervention in uprisings. It is also ridiculous to talk of an army take over or a military rule in a country where the current president (Michel Aoun) is an ex-army commander and the current army commander (Joseph Aoun) is a (far) relative and (unvocal) supporter of the president.

This is not to mention that it was specifically the Lebanese army (not only the security forces) that unleashed its most violent repression against the protesters on Friday evening. How can we trust an army that is defending the ruling class and using barbaric violence against protesters? A different, yet related, type of populism widespread in the streets is the prevalence of Lebanese nationalism obvious in the flags, the repetition of the national anthem (often accompanied with the "nazi salute"), and the nationalist songs from 2005 that are played most day long from the loud speakers of some groups, making the more radical and progressive voices less heard. Sure, it is great for the Lebanese people to surpass sectarian divides, but Lebanese nationalism is not necessarily the opposite of sectarianism, nor is it usually a progressive sign. It is exactly this same nationalist discourse that justifies racism against Syrian or Palestinian refugees - a discourse shaped and deployed by the very ruling elites people are protesting against (the champion of this racist and nationalist discourse being the most cited name in the chants of protesters: Minister Gebran Bassil). This is a slippery slope that we should not fall into. What mobilized people in their millions is not the lack of unity or patriotism, it is rather the lack of justice and socio-economic rights.

Let's stay focused on that since this is the only common denominator amongst the 1.2 million who mobilized so far. Such socio-economic demands can include (1) immediately cutting off the salaries of the current and past presidents, MPs, ministers, and first rank officers, (2) demanding the Lebanese banks to wave the national debt that has eaten up most of the country's budget in the past three decades, (3) imposing progressive

taxation, (4) immediately solving the cuts in electricity and water (at the expense of the cartels of private companies of generators and water suppliers), (4) demanding a sustainable and ecological solution for waste management, etc. Other demands at the regional levels can emerge related to the specificity of each region in the country. At the political level, some protesters are demanding the resignation of the government and others are demanding the resignation of the president, while many are demanding both at once. While I personally am not convinced that resignations will lead to actual change (it is a cosmetic act that can give the impression of a victory in the streets while the regime reproduces itself), it is important for demands of resignation to be accompanied with demands for trials and prosecutions.

We do not want the ruling class to resign and be able to get away with its crimes, we want justice! The judges of Lebanon (many of whom have historically played a crucial role in protecting the ruling class) have to be held accountable and pressured to play their role. An important statement was issued on Friday by the Lebanese Judges' Association siding with the people against the ruling class. This should be taken seriously and acted upon. [19]

3. The risk of containment and cooptation is not yet null. While it is true that this uprising is spectacular in how the constituencies of political parties have turned against their own leaders, the risks of containment and cooptation are still there (even if less likely than previously). The ruling class has in all its figures adopted the same discourse so far in addressing the protesters: "you are right", "we understand you", "we feel you", but "beware"! Even the performative move of the Lebanese Forces ministers to hand in their resignation to the Prime Minister does not really speak any different language. They have all acknowledged being in the wrong, and each is trying to contain its street in its own way.

The 72 hours ultimatum that the Prime Minister gave himself (ironically!) kicked off with heavy repression in the streets and hundreds

of arrests. [20] This was followed the next day with a violent attack in the southern city of Tyre on peaceful protesters by the militiamen of the Amal party followers. Such is the face of the promised changes to come after the 72 hours ultimatum. The hope of the ruling class to kill the movement with violence is an old tactic. This violence can take the shape of direct security forces or army violence and arrests, or it can be indirect state violence through its 'thugs' and

'militiamen' (as also seen with the 'baltagia' in Egypt or Syria). While this might not work fully this time, the regime usually uses violence hand-in-hand with its other tool of containment: clientelist networks. Sectarian leaders don't only threaten people in their jobs and social provisions, but they also threaten to remove their protection and go after the ones that oppose them (especially if they remain in power, as in 2015!). The dismantling of the clientelistic networks can only fully happen with

the dismantling of the whole regime of sectarian consociationalism mixed with neoliberalism.

The revolution has already paid a high price with at least 6 martyrs and hundreds of injured in the past three days. Lebanon has a golden opportunity for the formation of an alternative, we should not let the ruling class reproduce itself again. Lebanon's October revolution must go on!

The October 2019 uprising

21 October 2019, by **Tendencia Socialista Revolucionaria**

The secondary students lit the fuse by fare evasion in the Santiago metro. That was a week ago, as a reaction to the rising price of fares that exceeded the equivalent of one dollar per trip in a country where the minimum wage is just US\$437 per month. The acts of evasion multiplied rapidly, joined by employees travelling to their workplaces. The government, deaf to protest, occupied the subway stations with militarized police (special forces) that were quickly overcome. The subway network is the backbone of transport in this city of 6 million inhabitants, with a total of 136 stations.

A call was made for a day of protest on Friday 18 October on social media. And people took to the streets massively in Santiago, with barricades, street closures and violence. That night the metro fires began. First four stations. Now 41 stations have been burned out in different lines of the subway network.

The situation is getting tenser minute by minute. The government decreed a state of emergency (a state of constitutional exception that allows restriction of democratic freedoms). After 30 years, the city of Santiago saw the military again in the street.

But people were not intimidated. They did not back down but advanced. Yesterday we were thousands in the streets shouting, "soldiers out". The military authority hardened its hand, decreeing a curfew after 10 pm. The curfew was not respected. We were in the streets until after midnight. We withdrew to rest because the fight continues.

The government has run out of any ability to give a political response. Yesterday it announced the cancellation of the fare rise, without understanding that the problem of fares is the symptom of a much more structural and deep problem.

We are a people which 40 years ago was subjected to the most extreme neoliberalism known on the planet. They privatized education. To study you have to borrow from the banks. During the governments of the *Concertación* and *Nueva Mayoría* and as a result of enormous student uprisings (2006 and 2011), some fee exemptions were established that are completely insufficient. Young people live in poverty. To retake a course is very expensive. They commit suicide in the face of so much pressure.

They privatized health. We have

health for the poor and for the rich. The rich have very expensive, luxurious private clinics. The poor can die waiting for medical care. A couple of days ago the "Van Buren hospital" in Valparaíso collapsed, for lack of state budgeting. The families in our neighbourhoods support each other when someone gets sick by selling things, organizing dinners and exercising solidarity. And the ministers make fun of us. They say it is good to queue at surgeries because we can "interact socially".

They privatized water. This vital element is in the hands of a minority of employers dedicated to mining, agribusiness, forestry and avocado production for export. They are own the water and have caused a disaster of unimaginable scope. Ancestral peasant communities (indigenous and Chilean) see their animals die due to lack of water and fodder. And those animals are their livelihood. They draw from them milk; they make cheeses and generate a sustainable economy of self-subsistence. These communities are dying in the sight of indifferent governments and political authorities.

For the benefit of mining they are destroying the glaciers that constitute

our freshwater reserves. Seawater desalination has begun, but in private hands and it is projected as a new business. And today, 20 October 2019, as a result of this social upsurge the thieves released the waters of several rivers that until yesterday were dry while today water runs through them! It was not drought it was looting! They privatized social security. They established a model of forced saving of 13% of wages to pay pensions, the money managed by corporations called AFP (administrators of pension funds). For the generation that started working in the 1980s, it was time to retire and the amount of pensions is equivalent to a third of the minimum wage, about US\$141. That means dying in poverty after a lifetime of work.

They implemented employment legislation that keeps the workers atomized. The companies are fragmented through a chain of contractors and subcontractors, external and in-house, obliged to negotiate separately. The right to strike has been severely limited. The result is a social disaster. More than half of the population earns less than US\$563. People who have worked for years have turned to working more hours to increase their income. Overwork and indebtedness are two chains that squeeze the necks of our fellow citizens.

The social upsurge that started in October 2019 in Chile expresses rejection, hate and deep rage in a people that has endured silently for too long. The "democratic" regime inaugurated in 1990 and headed by the Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia (Christian Democracy, Socialist Party, Radical Party, Party for Democracy), did not mean the improvement of the living conditions of the popular masses. This is the "democracy of the rich". This democracy did not end the privatizations carried out under the

dictatorship and has refused for years to question the fundamental pillars of the economic, social and political regime designed and established under the dictatorship. What is at stake is the survival of extreme neoliberalism that only serves world capitalism and a minority group within Chilean society.

In contrast to what has been described we highlight that in a few years the existence has been consolidated of a few economic groups allied to transnational capital. They are listed among the richest in the world. They own Chile. They own the political parties of Chile. They own the Parliament. Few parties and parliamentarians escape the pressure, by blackmail and corruption, generated by these mega powers.

The government and big business face this upsurge with serious concern. It is not what they saw coming. They have been surprised and know they have no valid interlocutor to silence the protest. They will try to raise the dead to play the role of "representatives of the people". Among them we visualize Communist, Socialist, CUT, and even Frente Amplio personalities.

Yesterday, 19 October 2019, the *Coordinadora feminista 8 de marzo* (8 March Feminist Coordination) convened, together with secondary students grouped in the *Asamblea Coordinadora de Estudiantes Secundarios* (ACES - Secondary Student Coordinating Assembly) and the *Movimiento Ecologista Agua y Territorios* (MAT - Land and Water Ecological Movement), a press conference that was held today. Many student, resident, feminist and environmentalist organisations participated as well as some workers' organizations. The CUT did not participate. The *Movimiento No Mas AFP* does not participate either. Surely these last two movements are waiting quietly in their homes for a government call so that they can

emerge as valid interlocutors.

The press conference was held today. The first thing is that we call a general strike for tomorrow, Monday 21 October. The second is that we demand the end of the state of emergency. The end of the curfew. We call for organization of the territories to provide them with a policy of class independence and distrust of those who have betrayed us again and again.

Then we met as the 8 March Coordination, to plan our action tomorrow in what will be our first general strike under "democracy". The city is restless, with the transport service interrupted, with water cuts, with shopping centres ransacked, and subway stations on fire. And the outbreak is spreading to the regions which are rising against neoliberalism, the looting of water, the high cost of living and the privatization of roads and tracks.

The state of emergency was originally decreed for Santiago and Puente Alto. Then it was extended to Valparaíso, O'Higgins, Bio Bio and Coquimbo. We do not know how this situation will develop. We already have dead, wounded and prisoners. We do not know how many. We will inform when possible.

This social uprising in Chile, an "exemplary" country subjected to the dictates of transnational capital, is one more within Latin America. This expresses the deterioration of world capitalism. We call on all international organizations to have a common understanding of this moment and to join revolutionary forces to end the bloodthirsty capitalism that subjects us to misery and death.

Tendencia Socialista Revolucionaria

20 October 2019

Santiago de Chile

Palestine: “No Liberation Without Free Women”

21 October 2019, by **Joseph Daher**

Young Palestinian women activists mobilized around the TALIAAT movement to denounce all physical, psychological, economic and political violence under the slogan "no free country without women's liberation" or "dignity, freedom, social justice".

According to official figures, nineteen Palestinian women have been victims of femicide since the beginning of the year. The actual figures are probably higher. Despite an amendment to article 99 of the Palestinian Criminal Code in 2018, which allows judges to reduce sentences for so-called "honour crimes", reports show that feminicide is on the rise in the West Bank, Gaza and the Palestinian community in Israel.

Broad support and some attacks

The TALIAAT movement mobilized for the first time in Ramallah on 26 September, bringing together about 100 women after further violence by a man against his wife. Other demonstrations were held at the same time throughout historic Palestine, including in the cities of Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, Nazareth and the Gaza Strip, as well as abroad, such as in Beirut and Berlin, calling for a "unified cry" in support of Palestinian women. Women's movements in the Middle East and North Africa, particularly in Tunisia and Algeria, have expressed their support for the mobilizations.

Despite this broad support, the movement has been attacked by conservative and reactionary Palestinian sectors, accusing it in particular of "distorting the image of the Palestinian man to serve external agendas". In other words, TALIAAT is accused of betraying the Palestinian

cause.

On the contrary, many Palestinian feminist and progressive sectors have affirmed the connection between women's struggles and the liberation of their people against Israel's colonial, racist and apartheid state. Yet, mobilized Palestinian women have affirmed that any liberation and emancipation project, including the fight against toxic masculinity, patriarchy and violence against women, must be deeply rooted in Palestinian political and social movements to fight against the Israeli colonial project. They also called for opposition to attempts by the State of Israel to recover their movement. As the movement's main slogan proclaims: "this revolution is a decision against patriarchy and colonialism".

[Syria Freedom Forever](#)

Latin America and the global reactionary wave

20 October 2019, by **Martín Mosquera**

Globally, the ruling classes have the initiative, but they have failed to establish a new hegemony or stabilize a new relationship of forces between the classes. Even in this defensive context for the popular classes (or a reactionary context in the case of Brazil), the capitalist offensive is slowed down by social resistance, and although legal and media persecution and repression of social struggles is increasing, it has not been possible up

to now to stabilize new authoritarian political regimes (the Colombian militarized state has a long history). The policies of the rightist governments are advancing, but they are gradually losing their mass base and face recurring situations of social mobilization or electoral setbacks, although without the emergence of an alternative political and social bloc. We could define the regional situation as "hegemonic instability", to use an

expression of Poulantzas.

The 1930s in slow motion?

In the 1990s, Tony Cliff said that a stage had been opened that could be defined as "the 1930s in slow motion". The formula had many limitations. Fundamentally, he ignored the meaning of the cycle that opened with

the capitalist restoration in the East and the neoliberal offensive, that is, a historic defeat that would remove for a long period the idea of a socially viable alternative to capitalism. One could hardly speak of a revolutionary threat on the part of the working class, such as the one that characterized the political polarization of the 1930s.

However, if we take into account the tendency, typical of historical analogies, to highlight similarities more than differences, we can see that, despite everything, the formula contains a moment of truth. In the wake of a new historical crisis of capitalism we witness the slow eclipse of a world. At a pace less accelerated than that of the 1930s, we see a certain political-social equilibrium slowly eroding, with its political representations, its ideological conceptions and its culture. In the space left by the decline of traditional parties, which have managed capitalism since the post-war period, new political phenomena emerge, many of them unwholesome. Despite the new social struggles, the spiral of defeats of the working class has not been broken, so that the relationship of social and political forces tends to favour the far right as a way out of social unrest.

Capitalism has evolved after all its major crises (1873, 1930, 1973). Each time it was a profound transformation, affecting not only the exclusively economic terrain but also the articulation of the entire capitalist system, involving changes in the political, institutional and ideological field. We do not know what world we will find at the end of the current transition, but for the moment we can see that authoritarian state reinforcement is one of the great contemporary trends. Trump's US, Bolsonaro's Brazil, Putin's Russia, "liberal-Stalinist" China, the growth of the extreme right in Western Europe (the "cradle of social democracy"), Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East, are all examples of a world that becomes more hostile by the day. Towards the end of the 1970s, Marxist authors such as Poulantzas announced the consolidation of an "authoritarian statism" as the normal form of government of capitalism. However,

ascendant neoliberalism could be articulated with consensual forms of political domination and appropriated entirely the "floating signifier" of democracy. Before the fall of the Berlin wall and the disarticulation of the "socialist camp", a triumphant capitalism closed the "century of extremes" and proclaimed victory in the long-running dispute between "democracy and totalitarianism". The marriage of the market economy and liberal democracy was then presented as the "end of history". Now, at the time of the hegemonic crisis of neoliberal capitalism, the hegemonic chain between democracy and neoliberalism is broken and a progressive tightening of the coercive factor of political domination is developing.

There is also another, more worrying (frightening), option. That the authoritarian involution does not only rest on the need of the ruling classes to strengthen the coercive factor in a context of crisis of hegemony but is also the result of a "pressure from below". It would not be a mere radicalization of the traditional right, which is imposed by the lack of alternatives and the demoralization of the left and the oppressed, but the extreme right managing to capitalize and tune into popular discontent. In other words, since neoliberal capitalism has generalized a social environment of insecurity, employment instability and commercial anomie, the desire for "order" begins to be a "popular demand". It would not be, in this case, only the emergence of an authoritarian individualism, the sinister shadow of traditional liberalism, which carries its desire for "respect for property and the individual" to punitive consequences, but an authoritarian turn expressing a "desire for community" and collective protection of the popular classes against the unleashed impersonal forces of the market. In this second case, the new authoritarian right would have greater potential to build hegemony.

Argentina, Brazil

and the new Latin American right

The rise of Bolsonaro to the government of the Latin American giant imposes the return of the debate on fascism. Are we effectively facing a contemporary form of fascism? We must remain rigorous and not use the term lightly. It is not a synonym for "authoritarian capitalism" or an appropriate qualifier for any military dictatorship or repressive Bonapartism. On the one hand, it is clear that none of the current phenomena of the extreme right are a simple repetition of historical fascism. But to say that no historical experience is the same as another is a triviality. It is, in any case, about knowing if the phenomena of the 1930s offer useful references in thinking about the current world, where we see all kinds of authoritarian experiences reborn.

In my opinion, fascism differs from other reactionary and authoritarian movements in that it is dressed in the clothing of rebellion (against politicians, finance, elites and so on) and this allows it to capitalize on popular frustrations of different types in a programme that fuses "liberation" with authoritarianism. This is the core of the contradictory, enigmatic and peculiar nature of fascism. It is a movement that seeks to institutionalize methods of civil war against the working class, the left and democratic rights driven by a great reactionary mass mobilization. George L. Mosse defines it as a "bourgeois anti-bourgeois revolution", Togliatti as a "reactionary mass regime", Enzo Traverso as a "revolution against the revolution". All definitions attempt to capture the same paradoxical nucleus. [21]

Is a new social authoritarianism emerging in Latin America? Are we witnessing the emergence of a far right phenomenon with mass weight of which the Brazilian government is only the clearest expression? What is its relationship with the preceding "progressive cycle"?

An explanation of the backward movement of "progressivism" that

associates its redistributive measures with the emergence of a hostile social subject resulting from these same policies is very widespread. These governments, having taken social layers out of poverty, have allegedly built a new middle class that had access to consumption and is loaded with the aspirational dimensions typical of traditional middle sectors which are politically represented on the right. Latin American governments have made their own gravedigger, the same people who benefited from their policies. A tragic account of these experiences is thus built, where all radicalism is functional to reaction and every popular policy builds a hostile social subject. This “iron cage” of possibilism is the favourite account of those who believe that progressive governments went further than their societies wanted and thus were exposed faced with conservative reaction.

This explanation should be able to pass the test of contrast with the classic experiences of “class engagement” of the 1940s and 1950s (Varguism, Peronism and so on). They were also characterized by a more intense generalization of popular consumption, but it is incontestable that in that case they allowed the consolidation of these governments as lasting popular identities (Peronism, paradigmatically) instead of producing their decline. We have to look more closely at this question.

Kirchnerismo made access to higher levels of private consumption the way of carrying out its lukewarmly redistributive policies and did not involve the mass movement as active social subjects, instead making the population a passive beneficiary of vertical policies emanating from the state. It was normal, then, that this political component be obscured and self-adjudicated exclusively to personal private effort. This obscuration could then be radicalized into a “meritocratic individualist” conception hostile to the politicization of social needs and the intervention of the state, which Macrismo attempted to gather and stimulate.

However, empirical studies (or simple demographic analysis of the vote) show that the social layers most

hostile to progressive governments were not the direct beneficiaries of their policies, but rather the “relative disadvantaged”, those who were less benefited than other socially more impoverished sectors, and who felt their cultural status had been injured by this “pairing” (at times more imaginary than real). Here there appears what the Argentine political scientist Juan Carlos Torre calls “the political corollaries of social fragmentation, the prejudices of the lower middle classes against the poorest sectors. As sociology tells us when it emphasizes that the use of stigmas is likelier the closer the populations are to social or cultural contrast, and as the testimonies of anthropologists and journalists tell us, in the neighbourhoods of the lower middle classes the vision of the poor as “lazy” and “living off the state”, and whose very close presence is a source of insecurity is widespread.” [22] The formal working class, then, shows tendencies to reject welfare, immigration and to be more inclined to legitimize repressive policies and rigid hierarchies. In a way, a good part of this social sector acts politically and perceives itself symbolically, in rejection of the most impoverished sectors dependent on the informal economy and state assistance, in a similar way to the old middle class of the era of the nascent Peronist working class.

Kirchnerismo produced a broad welfare network that brought a broad social sector out of extreme poverty, without generating, in exchange, a new threshold of employment rights for the formal working class (as opposed to historical Peronism), beyond a gradual recovery in wages after the economic depression of 2001. This aspect ended up expressing itself in the conflict between the majority sectors of trade unionism and the last CFK government over the so-called “income tax” (actually a tax on the relatively high wages of a sector of the working class). These sectors felt their personal effort parasitized by an ineffective and corrupt state and in return they considered that this money was drained to social plans for the most pauperized sectors (the “lazy living off the state”). A new reactionary mythology, strongly stimulated by the media, was

generalized within this growing “social right”: poor women get pregnant to collect social allowances for children, the poor live off the state without working, the state drains the resources extracted from the “productive Argentina” towards corruption and clientelism. Each of them meant putting an exasperated negative load on a popular law and turning criticism of a government into a questioning of elementary democratic values.

To the extent that *Kirchnerismo* developed friction with the ruling classes from 2008 onwards, a right-wing politicization of a mass sector was developed in the heat of the “anti-populist” mobilizations (2008, 2012, 2014), mainly based on the middle classes, but also layers of the formal working class described above (although to a lesser extent). Unlike what happened in 2001, when the middle classes staged huge “anti-neoliberal” popular mobilizations and turned mostly to the left, the current electoral failure of Macrismo does not break the previous political loyalties and world views of its social base. That is to say, even if Macrismo is about to be evicted from government, the base of Macrismo will not be adequately defeated, where rejection of the politicization of social needs, the positive view of the market as a resource allocator (“the crisis is working”) and the demand for order and repressive intervention against crime and social protest are combined. A mirror reaction, slow in developing and still in the minority, to the “2001 cycle”: that is, to the centrality of “politics” (and the state) as a solution to social demands, the quasi-permanent presence of street mobilization, the limitation of the coercive factor in response to social protest and a (moderately) progressive government as a state representation of this cycle. That said, a mass base for future alternatives or political realignments remains available.

In Brazil, the relationship of forces is substantially worse but there are very significant symmetries. According to a recent text by Perry Anderson, the drastic reduction in poverty that Lula produced managed to turn a social mass that previously barely survived in the informal economy into a PT

electoral stronghold. "Millions had been lifted from acute hardship and knew to whom they owed it. But, egged on by interested journalists and the ideology of the time, the regime took to boasting of its achievement as the creation of a 'new middle class' in Brazil, when the social promotion of most of those affected was not only more modest – formal jobs and higher minimum wages raising them to something like the position of a new working class – but more precarious. Politically... the official propaganda boomeranged: its effect was to invite identification with the consumerist individualism of the actual middle class, rather than with the existing working class." [23] This popular sector was raising its social aspirations and felt very badly hit when the economy entered into recession. The frustration was particularly felt among young people who had benefited from previous policies and especially from the extension of higher education. Here was one of the sources of the new young right wing that emerged little by little from the mobilizations of 2013.

However, the fundamental change was happening in the "true middle class". Anderson continues: "Big business, the working class and the poor had all benefited from PT rule. Professionals, middle management, service personnel and small employers had not. Their incomes had increased proportionately less than those of the poor and their status had been eroded by new forms of popular consumption and social mobility." [24] It was in this social sector that the bulk of the popular reaction to petismo was based and that is why Haddad's electoral support remained very strong in the poor northeast of the country.

Bolsonarismo responds to the experience of the middle sectors and the petty bourgeoisie during the PT governments and the economic crisis and social deterioration of recent years. "The anti-petismo of the last five years – says Valerio Arcary – is a

Brazilian form of the anti-leftism, anti-egalitarianism or anti-communism of the thirties. It was not a bet by the main nucleus of the bourgeoisie against the danger of a revolution in Brazil... His candidacy is an expression of a reactionary mass movement of the middle class, supported by minority fractions of the bourgeoisie, in the face of the economic recession of the last four years." [25]

To this authoritarian radicalization of the petty bourgeoisie, we must add the social influence of evangelism (22% of the population) which, responding to the "wishes of community" in the most pauperized sectors of the population, has advanced significantly within popular religiosity and accumulated a remarkable political power in Brazil (they had already placed the vice president during Lula's two terms, José Alencar).

In a very general sense, we see that the emergence of a far-right phenomenon in Latin America is a response to the "progressive cycle". Not only to their governments (more radical in some cases, more social-liberal in others) but to the political dynamics that began with the popular uprisings of the beginning of the century and their political and social reverberations that imposed limits on the offensive of the dominant classes. The cases of Argentina and Brazil would find rapid parallels in the petty bourgeoisie in Venezuela or in the eastern crescent of Bolivia, where fascist components are evident. Although the popularity of AMLO is still very strong and the right appears disjointed, some initiatives stuttering into life foretell the possibility of such a phenomenon also in Mexico, although the "progressive" dynamic is just beginning, and it is premature to make certain forecasts.

However, care must be taken in comparing the authoritarian reaction to "Latin American populism" with

interwar Communism. Not only because the revolutionary threat against which historical fascism reacts is absent in the "progressive cycle", with the partial exceptions of Venezuela and Bolivia. But because the country where a government with semi-fascist characteristics such as Bolsonaro's is currently advancing is precisely where the working class was already more defensive and where the "populist threat" was clearer and domesticated. The discrediting of the PT before the impeachment was broad enough to make very likely defeat in a future "normal" election. It is necessary to avoid, then, the instrumentalist excess of supposing that fascism is simply the bourgeois response to a crisis situation.

A rigorous balance sheet of Latin American "progressivism" is crucial for the next period, incorporating the bleak image of the current authoritarian right-wing reaction. For years, the PT model was referenced by #moderate lefts of different types, contrasting the slow advances and broad alliances of Lulismo with the radicalism of the failed experience of the Chilean Popular Unity or the Bolivarian process that developed in parallel. However, a quick look at the Latin American geopolitical landscape shows a relevant trend for our strategic debates: the radical experiences of Venezuela and Bolivia, despite having faced the most aggressive hostilities (military coups, separatist attempts, interventional manoeuvres) are the ones that achieve the greatest sustainability and penetration in the popular classes. The herbivorous left of Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Honduras or Paraguay, which fantasized about the strength of its moderation, its broad alliances and its conciliatory policy with the bourgeoisie, quickly showed its remarkable weakness confronted with the pressures of the dominant classes.

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Denmark's Red-Greens: what answers when the climate crisis shakes up politics?

19 October 2019, by **Dick Nichols, Søren Søndergaard**

Søndergaard was a member of the Danish Parliament from 1994 to 2005 and Gladsaxe Town Council from 2006 to 2007. He also served as a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

In 2007, Søndergaard was elected as a Member of the European Parliament for the People's Movement against the European Union (EU). After resigning this position in 2014, he won election to the Danish parliament in 2015 as an RGA MP for Gladsaxe: he was re-elected in the June 5 general election this year.

Søndergaard spoke with Green Left Weekly European correspondent Dick Nichols after the RGA's 30th Annual Meeting, held in Copenhagen on October 5-6.

The June 5 Danish general election saw a victory for what in Denmark is called the "red bloc"—the Social Democrats, Socialist People's Party (SF), Social Liberals and RGA—over the "blue bloc"—the Liberals (Venstre), Danish People's Party (DF), Conservatives and Liberal Alliance, with 15 seats in the 179-seat parliament shifting from "blue" to "red".

On June 25, the Social Democrats announced they would form government with the support of the other red bloc parties.

Given that the Social Democrats have adopted the xenophobic and discriminatory immigration policies of the previous Venstre administration, was this result really an advance for progressive politics?

The result can't be understood in terms of immigration and refugee policy alone, although the Social Democrats certainly continue with the

essence of the DF's approach—the rhetoric is different but the content is practically the same. That's why DF was the biggest loser on June 5. With this change in position the Social Democrats did help displace immigration as the number one issue in Danish politics, although it's still that for a lot of people.

Yet that shift by the Social Democrats wouldn't alone have won the election for them—even less so for the red bloc as a whole. What counted most were people's mobilisations around the two biggest issues at this election: firstly the need to act urgently on the climate crisis and secondly the need to reform our system of day care for young children, one of the weakest points in our social welfare system.

These mobilisations put the right-wing parties on the defensive with the result that climate and child care became the lead points in the political agreement ["A Fair Direction for Denmark"] that the red bloc parties signed to allow the formation of a Social Democratic government [led by prime minister Mette Frederiksen]. [26]

How did climate get to be the number one issue in Danish politics?

The climate movement exploded here about a year ago, with demonstrations of 50,000 in Copenhagen. Next came the longest dry spell in Denmark in memory and the unprecedented reduction in Arctic sea ice. This brought the message of climate change home to the whole population, and at that point climate emerged in opinion polling as people's number one concern.

The negotiations over forming government were the longest since 1988. Why?

Firstly, because the Social Democrats, who had campaigned in the election for a 50 per cent reduction in Danish greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 [compared to the 1990 baseline] had to accept the 70 per cent target that the other red bloc parties were proposing. Without the Social Democrats accepting the 70%, which they did before the final agreement was signed, they could not have formed government.

The other main point of resistance was immigration and refugee policy—the Social Democrats kept arguing that tight immigration controls were needed to keep the Danish welfare system sustainable. In the end they gave way on a number of secondary points—the uninhabited island of Lindholm won't now be used as a detention centre for asylum seekers and Denmark will again start accepting refugees under the United Nations quota system.

The final agreement reflected the June 5 election result: the Social Democrats' vote went down slightly even as they picked up an extra seat, while the SV and the RV, who were seen as committed to the 70% target and to restoring and improving the welfare system, picked up 15 seats between them.

Yet the RGA lost a seat, going from 14 to 13. Nonetheless, the mood at your congress was upbeat....

That's precisely because of the government understanding reached with the other red bloc parties—all RGA members see it as a big step forward. Denmark now has the most ambitious greenhouse gas reduction target in the world, and the agreement also commits the government to strengthening the welfare system and fighting inequality. Other goals are

combatting the tendency to centralisation, increasing equality in education, advancing social integration and helping achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Regardless of whether we won or lost a seat or two, the RGA played a key role in achieving this result. Our Climate Plan 2030 showed, on the basis of statistics everyone accepts, that a 70% greenhouse gas reduction by 2030 is achievable, and helped to shift public opinion in its favour. It's why the Social Democrat environment spokesperson (now environment minister) Lea Wermelin had to stop calling the target "utopian" and why the Liberals themselves now support it. In fact only one Danish party is still holding out against the 70%.

But given the key role RGA members have been playing in the climate movement, the lack of recognition by the voters must have been a bit disappointing...

Of course, but let's keep the loss of a seat in perspective. Twenty years ago the RGA was one of Denmark's minor parties and at times struggled to meet the two percent threshold [for parliamentary representation]. Now it's consolidated as one of the medium-sized parties that come after the Liberals and the Social Democrats.

It's true that at these elections we were again overtaken by the Social Liberals and the SF after beating them in 2014, but this too has to be kept in perspective. In 2014, the SF paid dearly for participating in a Social Democratic government which locked out school teachers and sold off part of the state energy provider to Goldman Sachs. Many former SF voters then turned to us in protest against the performance of their party.

However, memories fade, especially among the bulk of the population that doesn't follow politics obsessively. The SF at this election was seen most as the party supporting the parents who have been protesting against shortcomings in the system of day care and as the most practical tool for keeping the Social Democrats honest on social policy generally. Many who protested against the SF in 2014

returned to it this time around.

As a result the RGA has fallen from fourth to sixth party in the parliament and lost its position on the parliament's speakership panel, which organises its order of business. Also the media now tend to come to us only after getting the comments of the other red bloc parties. But these are minor irritations in a scenario that is strongly positive for the RGA.

The loss of votes to SF must have been offset by winning the support of former supporters of [green party] The Alternative?

Yes. The Alternative made the bad mistake of presenting themselves as a "green bloc" alternative to the red bloc: they would not in any circumstances support a Social Democratic government and their leader would be a third candidate for prime minister. Given that this meant votes for the Alternative could now help the return of the Liberals, many of its supporters in 2015 came across to the RGA at this poll, as The Alternative lost four of its nine seats.

How do you expect the Frederiksen government to move to implement "A Fair Direction for Denmark"?

This document is not the traditional list of legislative measures that a new Danish government announces for presentation to parliament, but rather a statement of goals and of broad measures for achieving them. That gives the government room to manoeuvre and drag its feet and the ability to plead insufficient finance or business sector resistance whenever it gets into trouble with implementation, especially with regard to climate.

At the same time, I would expect the government to move rapidly to implement the agreement's less difficult commitments, not the least because in this way the Social Democrats will get the credit for a program that is generating a lot of enthusiasm.

Of course, the action of the government will depend greatly on the strength of the movements whose mobilisations are reflected in the government agreement. RGA

members will definitely be working to make sure that the climate and other movements don't ease up now that the Liberals are out of government.

How will the RGA respond to those aspects of the government's policy with which it disagrees?

We have made it clear to the government that they cannot expect our vote for any measure that worsens the situation of working people and people on welfare, or of the environment. Our commitment is to the agreement and not to necessarily supporting the government on the many issues the agreement doesn't cover.

Most importantly, if RGA judges that a conflict has arisen with the government that puts the objectives of the agreement at serious risk we shall not hesitate to call for the matter to be put to the vote of the people. Let the people decide if a basic breach of the agreement has taken place.

How does this stance relate to the RGA's perspective, stressed at its 2018 annual meeting, of working to create a third, radical, pole in Danish politics as an alternative to the seemingly permanent non-choice between the Social Democrats and Liberals?

Our medium-term objective is still to help consolidate a radical pole around the SF, RGA and The Alternative, but it's obviously not on the agenda at the present point in the political cycle.

For the perspective to have some chance of realisation it would need a shift by the SF away from its standard approach of keeping the Social Democrats honest. That's not going to happen: given that this orientation has just now had some success in the form of the agreement for government, it would be naive to view a third pole as a short term prospect. It will require a crisis of the Social Democracy itself to put it back on the agenda as an immediate goal.

Each year the RGA Annual Meeting adopts a detailed position on some key aspect of contemporary politics. In 2021 it will reconsider its position on the European

Union, which to date has been to support Denmark's withdrawal via referendum. Also, in the May 26 elections to the European Parliament the RGA stood in its own name for the first time, in addition to continuing to support the candidate of the People's Movement against the EU. Amid claims that the RGA is softening its anti-EU stance, RGA candidate Nikolaj Villumsen won a seat while the People's Movement candidate Rina Ronja Kari did not. What's happening with the RGA orientation to the EU?

Two trends are pressing the RGA to reconsider its orientation towards EU: the first is the spectacle of Brexit, the second the need for supranational action around climate.

Brexit has had a traumatic impact here, because it has dramatised the fact that exit from the EU has unpredictable, potentially very bad, consequences, especially if done without agreement. The once common attitude that Denmark would be better off "if we just left" has suffered a lot. Before Brexit, opinion polling gave around 40% support for a Danish referendum on leaving the EU, and the RGA supported it: the latest poll has support for such a referendum at only 19%.

At the same time, many comrades involved in the climate movement, aware that the sort of measures we put forward in our climate plan have to be adopted on a European scale, stress the need to intervene in the EU institutions to get serious continent-wide action.

Well and good. But has the nature of

the EU changed? It's still the same neoliberal monster that the Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties created, and it still operates to impose discipline on member states in the interest of big, especially German and French, capital.

We've just had a telling example of that here in Denmark. The transport part of the government's climate plan foresees a ban on diesel- and petrol-driven driven. Message from Brussels to our environment minister: that is illegal under EU regulations because such measures have to be taken EU-wide. The result, of course, of pressure by the German and French motor industries.

So, I don't think our basic analysis of the EU should change because the EU hasn't changed. However, we should accompany all efforts to force the EU to adopt progressive measures and go through the learning experience with those proposing them. And the RGA needs to clarify for itself how a democratic alternative to the EU can actually "really" get constructed on the basis of the struggles against it. So let's have the discussion.

What is the most important challenge the RGA has faced recently?

The RGA has had to modernise, but without losing its radical character...

Modernise?

Yes, a survey was done about what people thought of the RGA, and we got a lot of interesting answers. For example, the RGA was only for people who are not normal, only for minorities, not for ordinary people,

they like violence...all that stuff.

We worked hard to get rid of some of these impressions, and that means when you've written 38 times in your program that you want a revolution, out with all that "now you have it in once.

This could give the wrong impression that when we're talking about modernisation we don't want a radical change, that behind that word "modernisation" we're introducing a right-wing shift. But what we said very clearly is that we wanted a modernisation without going to the right.

Yes, of course, there is a danger that some rightward tendencies will look to clothe themselves in the rhetoric of modernisation, for example in relation to the EU. Of course we should talk so ordinary people can understand and of course we should have a tactic that can help people to learn, but at the same time, how much should we change or hide our fundamental opinions? That issue is still unsettled in the RGA.

And the biggest challenge now?

The biggest challenge facing us is to maintain the big mobilisations around climate and social issues so as to make sure that the common governmental platform agreed with the other parties gets implemented. Or, if that battle's lost, to make sure a broad alternative to the left of the Social Democracy gets built. That is the decisive test in front of us.

October 14

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A new cycle of popular resistance to neoliberalism has opened

18 October 2019, by Mario Unda

Popular resistance returns

Popular resistance, which had suffered years of repression and persecution under Rafael Correa, is back. In eleven days of paralysis, various social sectors were mobilized: initially, bus and truck drivers, indigenous people and workers. The transport workers announced a strike that lasted two days and ended after the negotiation of an increase in fares. But that did not stop the social wave: the indigenous movement and the trade union movement, which were already preparing actions against government policies, came to the forefront, and attracted the solidarity of students from several universities who organized health care brigades and shelters, especially for indigenous women and children; then feminist groups were activated and finally, in the last two days, broad sectors of the popular and middle classes of the urban population. As had happened before, the people were at the confluence of the struggle, some in an organized way, some spontaneously. Like any convergence of these characteristics, its future is yet to be defined, and it will be a central element of reality in the immediate future.

Convergences and fragmentation of the popular movement

The convergence in this moment presents certain differences with respect to the previous ones, which had been articulated around a social movement: students in the 1970s; the trade union movement in the first years of the following decade; the indigenous movement between 1992 and 2002; or the explosion of the urban middle class in 2005. Now, however, the axis is a difficult and incomplete convergence of indigenous peoples and workers.

One of the effects of the *CorreÃsimo* attack on social movements was the

weakening of the proximity between them, the outcrop of suspicions and the predominance of particularisms. In these eleven days of struggle, a tendency towards approximation, as well as the limits it faces, could be observed. That is why the government, although defeated, managed to manoeuvre, even if only to gain time. Its tactic was always to divide the mobilization by taking care of particular demands: the rise in fares demobilized the transport workers. Then it tried to separate the indigenous peoples from the workers: at one point, the government and the media stopped referring to the demands of the trade union movement and concentrated on the offer of compensation for the countryside; at first they did not obtain results, but finally they managed to separate the two central actors from the popular movement in the dialogues: on Sunday they met with the indigenous people to discuss decree 883 and postponed until Tuesday a possible dialogue with the trade union movement, which will take surely place already without the heat of mass popular mobilization. At the same time, it sought to separate public sector workers from the rest of the trade union movement, announcing its willingness to review the measures that particularly affect them: wage reductions and holidays.

The government has thus shown its willingness to negotiate fragments of the package in order to maintain the possibility of implementing the central nuclei of the neoliberal model: privatization and the overexploitation of labour and nature. Time will tell whether or not they succeed in your endeavour. And time will also tell if the popular movements manage, after this intense day, to resume the necessary approaches and links to face the challenges that will come. The construction of a clear political horizon and an action program are essential to move forward on this path.

A first confrontation with

the repressive and antidemocratic tendencies of the bourgeoisie

The Moreno government, after an initially hesitant approach, has become an expression of the neoliberal will of the monopoly groups and the IMF. This happened in the middle of a series of tug-of-war episodes, in which the government gave more and more to the wishes of business interests, but without fully applying the requested measures, so that their actions were always considered by them as insufficient. The signing of the letter of intent with the IMF sealed the shift of the government towards neoliberalism but delayed the application of the required measures. The same letter of intent to the IMF explained the reason: Appendix 3 referred to the risks of unleashing social protests with the measures that would be implemented.

This allowed the deployment of two tendencies: the first, the rapid solidification of the bloc in power, with a single discourse used by the government and the IMF, business associations and their organic intellectuals, the US government and the mainstream press, all pointing to a rapid implementation of "painful but necessary" measures; this resulted in an intense campaign through the media in the last half year.

On the other hand, it seems that the bloc in power came to the early conclusion that its programme could only be imposed violently. As time went by, virulence, inflexibility, threats and scare tactics gained space in their pronouncements. The climax came in these days of conflict, and the nakedly repressive and antidemocratic nature of the bourgeoisie and neoliberalism was clear. It was not only to accuse the protesters of being vandals, criminals and terrorists, but to threaten them with application of the penal code invented by Rafael Correa, which provides for three-year jail sentences for participating in protests. Defence minister Oswaldo JarrÃn launched an open threat with

fascist connotations: he spoke of using lethal weapons against the mobilized people and recalled that the military is prepared for war. With this, the National Federation of Chambers of Industry of Ecuador circulated a manifesto in which it demanded from the government "immediate action by the Armed Forces and the National Police to restore order and social peace in strict application of the state of emergency" as well as "the prosecution of the perpetrators, accomplices and enablers, as well as the material and intellectual perpetrators of the crimes that have been committed, under the protection of the Comprehensive Organic Criminal Code".

The governmental actions went in the same direction: a few hours after the protests were initiated, a state of emergency was decreed for 60 days (reduced to 30 by a complacent Constitutional Court), followed by militarization and curfew. It was not just bravado, as the figures provided by the ombudsman show: between October 3 and 13, government repression caused at least seven deaths, 1,340 wounded and more than 1,150 detainees. This is the greatest violence against social protest in the last 30 years.

However, neither repression nor threat managed to stop the mobilization. The last curfew measure, set by the Armed Forces between 3 p.m. on Saturday and 3 p.m. on Sunday, could not even be applied: the *cacerolazo*, turned into true popular festivals in the neighbourhoods of

Quito, in fact prevented its application. We should note however that the implementation of the neoliberal model will resort to the application of the most brutal violence and the groups in power have revealed their violent and criminal nature. In addition, this violent mentality has begun to permeate in certain groups of middle sectors.

Populism and the crisis of democracy

Two more issues should conclude these first reflections. The first: it seems that the return to neoliberalism will not be able to easily stabilize its reign, and the "structural crisis" of the state, which Agust n Cueva was talking about at in his time, is once again facing us as an unavoidable horizon. [27] If the crisis of 25 years of the previous neoliberal stage brought us Correistic populism, the crisis of populism throws us back to neoliberalism; but this new neoliberal wave is already born in crisis: the increasingly rampant violence of the ruling classes and their governments is the first sign; social resistance is the answer that is already brewing. The result cannot be other than fragile and restricted democracies.

The second: as this day of intense struggle showed us, the construction of the people will also be a field of conflict. The right will compete there,

combining its rediscovered violence with mass mobilization attempts. There will also be competition with *Corre sta* populism, which has demonstrated in these days that it still has the capacity to influence popular urban sectors, as it had recently shown in the local elections of March this year. And the popular movement will also compete, that is to say the autonomous social movements, probably around the workers and the indigenous peoples, who will be placed at the centre of the conflict in the attempts to implement the neoliberal model. Which tendency prevails will mark the tone and colour of the times to come.

The right and neoliberalism have lost the first battle, but can we assume that they will stop there? It's unlikely. Just after the dialogue, the dispute opens on the content of the new decree that will replace 883: that will tell us something. Will the government dialogue with the workers offered on Tuesday be fulfilled? What outcome will it have? What will be the next movements for the ruling neo-liberal bloc? Will they support Moreno or prefer to get rid of him? Will the popular movement find and build paths for approaches and articulations or will it go astray within the narrow limits of corporate interests? The only certain thing seems to be that a new cycle of popular resistance against neoliberalism has begun. It has started with great strength, but it will have much harder work ahead.

Quito
14 October 2019

No to the invasion and occupation of northeastern Syria by the Turkish army

17 October 2019, by Alliance of Middle Eastern and North African Socialists

Last week, after U.S. president Trump announced the withdrawal of US troops from Northeastern Syria on

October 9th, Turkey began the bombing of its Syrian border regions and cities. The authoritarian and

reactionary Ankara government launched another military operation in northeastern Syria.

Northeastern Syria has been controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a military alliance of Kurdish, Arab and Assyrian fighters, dominated by the Kurdish forces of the People's Protection Units (YPG), the military branch of the Kurdish Movement of the Democratic Union Party (known by the Kurdish acronym PYD). Ankara has labelled it a "terrorist" organization because of its links with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) of Turkey.

More than 100,000 civilians have already fled the areas bombed and threatened by the Turkish invasion. 200,000 more are threatened with displacement.

The Turkish army's offensive is conducted in cooperation with Syrian fighters of the so-called Syrian National Army (SNA), a coalition of reactionary and Islamic fundamentalist groups financed and led by the Turkish government. The SNA has already committed numerous violations of human rights, particularly in the Afrin region, currently occupied by the Turkish army.

This military operation is Turkey's third invasion of Syria since 2016: The first, in August 2016 was titled "Shield of the Euphrates"; the second, in January 2018 was called "Olive Branch". It led to the occupation of the Afrin region in March of the same year, and resulted in the forced displacement of more than 150,000 people, most of them Kurds, with many human rights violations still ongoing.

This Turkish military aggression is a continuation of the Ankara government's war against Kurdish liberation movements and their representatives in Turkey, including the Democratic People's Party (known as the HDP), and in neighboring countries, especially Syria and Iraq.

Another objective of the Turkish government in Syria is to forcibly transfer Syrian refugees from Turkey to the areas east of the Euphrates.

Since the summer of 2019, Turkey's government has accelerated campaigns of forced expulsions of Syrian refugees towards Syria. Thousands of Syrian refugees in Turkey have been subjected to mass deportations or forcibly returned to Syrian territories. Turkish authorities and media agencies controlled by Ankara have also blamed Syrian refugees as the cause of the socioeconomic and political problems in the country.

A few days ago, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened to "send" millions of Syrian refugees from Turkey to Europe in response to European criticism of his military offensive in Syria. Once again, Ankara instrumentalizes Syrian refugees as a political commodity in its relations with the European Union which is also guilty of maintaining cruel, racist and deadly policies toward refugees. The European union has closed borders in the face of people desperately fleeing for their lives. The European Union is therefore complicit in the Turkish assault.

Turkey's aims are to establish a "safe zone" of control and dominance along its border, where it can manage flows of internally displaced persons, forcibly repatriate refugees from Turkey, while also attack the PYD and its Syrian Democratic Forces.

At the same time, the Turkish invasion in northern Syria will most probably strengthen the resurgence of the various jihadist group, notably the so called "Islamic State". On October 11, five IS militants escaped from a Kurdish-run prison. The extremist group claimed responsibility for a bomb that exploded in the city of Qamichli.

The Alliance of Middle Eastern and North African Socialists also condemn the role of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (known as the Etilaf), composed mostly of liberal and Islamic conservative and fundamentalist

groups and personalities, and other Syrian reactionary groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, in their support for Turkish plans against the northeastern areas. They are still maintaining their chauvinist and racist policies and statements against the Kurds in Syria.

We express our solidarity with civilians in northeastern Syria and the rest of the country. The people in the Northern Syrian province of Idlib are continuing to suffer from indiscriminate bombardments by the Assad regime, the Russian as well as the U.S. governments.

We condemn Turkey's new military operation and occupation in northeastern Syria, carried out with the complicity of the Trump administration. We state our full support for the popular and progressive resistance, both civilian and armed, in the Northeast of Syria against the Turkish led military aggression.

We denounce the interventions and the presence of other foreign forces in Syria (Iran, Russia and the United States). All these international imperialist and regional powers are enemies of the liberation and emancipation of the peoples of the region.

The Alliance of Middle Eastern and North African Socialists reiterates its support for the right of self-determination of the Kurdish people in Syria and in other countries in the region.

We also reaffirm our opposition to the dictatorship of the Assad clan-led Syrian regime and the Islamic fundamentalist movements, which are the two main pillars of the counter-revolution in Syria.

In the face of these enduring and destructive counter-revolutionary offensives, the best defensive is International solidarity. We stand with the communities in Syria and elsewhere in the world struggling for self-determination. The fight is universal!

Revolution, project and democracy - notes on the Hirak

16 October 2019, by **Nadir Djermoune**

To grasp this dynamic, critics and analysts use analogies with other phenomena which are similar or considered as such, those closest in time and space, such as the current Sudanese movement or the Tunisian revolution, to more distant ones like the Russian or French revolutions. These analogies are obviously necessary, if at least we refrain from erecting them as models. They make it possible to place the future of Algeria in world history and in a structured debate around a set of common theoretical, methodological and historical references that the various critics take up, here and elsewhere.

This is what we will revisit in this contribution starting from the reality on the ground.

Rupture, continuity or transition?

The popular movement underway has no a priori ideal to be realized. Like all the movements that have punctuated the modern history of humankind, it seeks first of all to find new political and social relations, in other words to find the best way for cultural, economic and social development. The revolutions of the 20th century, all in societies considered “backward” in terms of economic development (Russia, China, Algeria, Vietnam, Cuba and so on) had the objective of “development of the productive forces”. Are we witnessing today a blockage of the development of these productive forces which would be the prelude to a social revolution? [28]

Anyway, staying with the Algerian case, its evolution since February 22 clarifies these issues for society. If the motivation that prompted the

movement was, in its beginnings, on the ground of “rediscovered dignity”, it rose to a crescendo in a critique of what is called the “System”, a critique that however remains essentially moral. This is what the fundamental slogan of the movement “*Klitou l’bled ya serraquin*” (“You stole the country”) expresses. The criticism of the regime is at a moral level with legal implications and avoids a profound critique of the neoliberal economic system. Today, the thieves denounced by the *Hirak* are presented as “*Issaba*” (criminal gang, in Arabic).

This is a hub of the movement. On the ground, criticism develops that Gaid Salah tries to “get closer to the real people who demand action”, and to denounce him would be “an abandonment of the aspirations of the masses to the judgment of rotten and corrupt politicians.” This is what, for example, one of the influential members of the “Panel”, the structure set up by the government to negotiate with the political oppositions for the organisation of elections, journalist A. Belhimer argues; “the army accompanies a peaceful revolution, protects it and refuses to confiscate it, and laboriously but courageously catches its breath after a long period of empty instrumentalization”. [29] This constitutes support, barely critical, for the military institution.

On the other hand, there is the criticism that Gaid Salah is rather “in the phase of intimidation” of the protest movement. If he tries to gain popularity by accusing every social and professional category, from the young man accused of raising the “*Amazigh*” emblem to the businessman or entrepreneur and industrialist, now “oligarchs” accused of embezzlement and corruption, “this may be the prelude to something more serious”, runs this correct view, which

is constructed at the rhythm of the *Hirak*.

Unless you are naive, you must not minimize this risk. The important thing is to warn that the population has the right to know the reasons for incarceration and to require trials in full transparency. This claim is democratic. It is even potentially revolutionary in the context we live in, where any realization of a transitional demand of this kind involves ruptures, especially in justice, since it is at this level that the key issue is located.

This translates politically into two competing positions. The first advocates the passage through a presidential election that restores as soon as possible the political stability of the regime and the system. The second calls for a rupture with the current state of affairs, and therefore a period of transition to a new situation in tune with the aspirations of the people in motion, with a sovereign constituent assembly as a focus.

However, the prospects for a fair and democratic outcome for this phase of struggle are receding. But the movement did not fail, even if we did not take the “*Casa d’Elmouradia*” on the model of the “taking of the Winter Palace”, or that “of the palace of Carthage” (in the Tunisian case). The nature and scale of the movement requires a dynamic of rupture and transition. The term “transition” emerges as the best able to translate actions to consider in the short or medium term but then immediately poses the question: how to lead this transition and towards which objective?

The form this transition will take depends, in the last instance, on the balance of power that is built up according to the rhythm of the

struggles and the confrontation of projects. The idea of the Constituent Assembly, for example, was very much in the minority in the aftermath of 22 February. It was not about waiting for a relationship of forces favouring the poor to be established to demand this assembly, but rather forcing back the regime to prevent a consensus and compromise between it and factions of the oligarchy. Its function is to arm the people in struggle with a political slogan to concretize the “departure of the system”. That’s what happened in part. Today, the idea of the constituent process has won over a part of civil and political society. Whatever the outcome of this phase of struggle, whether presidential election or constituent assembly, the challenge is for us to deepen the process leading to social and political emancipation.

To consider that the movement is not finished must not, however, prevent us from underlining its contradictions, or the stalemate in which it finds itself today.

The “Gramscian” paradigm

The fundamental contradiction in today’s *Hirak* reminds us of the historical dilemma diagnosed by the Italian Communist leader Antonio Gramsci during the Italian crisis of the 1920s. A dilemma that holds true at every revolutionary stalemate.

It was during the crisis of world capitalism of 1929 that Gramsci spoke of the “crisis of authority” or “crisis of hegemony” of European capitalism, writing that: “If the ruling class has lost consensus, that is, if it no longer ‘leads’ but only ‘rules’ - it possesses sheer coercive power - this actually means that the great masses have become detached from traditional ideologies.” [30]

This means that the political conditions for a revolutionary denouement are not yet met. This type of historical situation is characterized in the oft-quoted phrase: “the crisis consists in the fact that the old is dying and the new is not yet born”..

It is in this impasse between a

discredited regime, incapable of governing, and a popular movement that is not yet capable of building a new power, that Bonapartism can emerge, notes Gilbert Achcar (see *The People Want*, University of California Press, 2013). This was the case, with all due proportion, of Boumedienne in 1965. It was also the same type of contradiction that generated an Islamist fascistic dynamic in Algeria in 1991. Today, the alarmism of some circles, including neoliberals, who seek a quick solution through a presidential election, acts in this direction, the objective being to find a “Bonaparte” and thus avoid an intervention of the masses organized for a broad democratic solution.

However, our present situation is undoubtedly different from that of 1965 or January 1991 and is still further from Gramsci’s Italy. The crisis is not as acute, either economically or, to a lesser degree, politically.

It is a crisis that occurred, however, after decades of dismantling the “social contract” on which the hegemony of state capitalism, built in 1965 by Boumedienne, was based. Since the 1980s and the initial economic opening known as “infithah”, neoliberal destabilization and precarisation of socio-economic conditions have slowly but surely fuelled a general retreat on identity markers (religion, ethnicity, culture, nation) as well as a drift towards neoliberal ideology.

This raises the question of whether this situation is a consequence of the global crisis of capitalism that the world is experiencing, or rather the product of a specific crisis in the state, rentier and patrimonial system that characterizes this part of the world. as Achcar points out in his study of the Arab world. This question remains open and cannot be dealt with within the limits of this contribution.

Be that as it may, short-term action suggests an unrestrained democratic demand.

Class democracy or class critique of democracy?

By democracy, we must understand the conquest by the people of political power. “The presupposition of democracy is politics” said the French activist and philosopher Daniel Bensaïd. [31] This is the starting condition for all economic development and social emancipation. This is where the immediate challenge of any revolution lies

This issue is well highlighted by the Algerian *Hirak*. The debate on constitution or presidential election that we raised above expresses this economic issue. To proceed by a platform of cultural, social and economic demands addressed to the regime is a form of recognition of the legitimacy of this regime. However, in a historic moment when millions of people on the street claim the departure of this regime, this posture is akin to a support of the “regime” and the “system” in place!

“Democracy is the resolved mystery of all constitutions. Here the constitution not only in itself, according to essence, but according to existence and actuality is returned to its real ground, actual man, the actual people, and established as its own work. The constitution appears as what it is, the free product of men...”, Marx emphasized in his “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”. [32] And he added in the continuation of his argument that “democracy is the essence of every political constitution, socialised man under the form of a particular constitution of the state... stands related to other constitutions as the genus to its species; only here the genus itself appears as an existent, and therefore opposed as a particular species to those existents which do not conform to the essence. Democracy relates to all other forms of the state as their Old Testament. Man does not exist because of the law but rather the law exists for the good of man. Democracy is human existence, while in the other political forms man has only legal existence. That is the fundamental difference of

democracy.” [33]

It is not therefore a question of starting from a metaphysical vision of democracy. It is a question of starting from reality, and this is ultimately a social reality. Every man, woman, group, association or political party, according to the position of each on the social chessboard which is structured according to the layers and social classes, develops a critique of democracy. So, there is a class critique of democracy and not a class democracy, just as for Marx, methodologically, “there is not a class political economy, but a class critique of political economy.” [34]

From this point of view, the most democratic attitude is to organize a sovereign constituent assembly that will see the mobilized people build a new beginning from a new social and political power struggle. And it is according to this new balance of power that a new dynamic can be envisaged. This new reality will obviously not be the end of history but will allow us to initiate or continue the same democratic and social struggle on new bases and from new rules. To paraphrase Daniel Bensaïd, it is always to go further, to transgress permanently its instituted forms so as to extend permanently and in all fields access to equality and citizenship.

The second attitude that favours the passage via a presidential election is rather trying to curb this momentum. It protects the interests of the oligarchy in power. This gang of criminals, *Aissaba* in Arabic, is not a

simple malformation of the regime that ruled the country under the reign of Bouteflika. It is the tip of the iceberg of the neoliberal economic system, which constitutes the dominant ideological matrix of the system and is broader than the sphere of the regime. The hidden part of this iceberg, which has not reached this level of malfeasance, has not totally lost the battle.

However, the form of organization and protest, the very nature of the movement, the lack of organization of the movement from workplaces and sites of life, urban neighbourhoods and villages, keeps that movement in a state of fragility and a defensive attitude of denunciation, unable to take offensive initiatives in the direction of the conquest of power. The call for forms of self-organization by the forces of the “democratic alternative”, however late, is just and necessary for a more enterprising future. But its realization is far from being achieved. And even if it were effective, its democratic and subversive reach in the service of the majority and the poor depends ultimately on its component and content. It would constitute another space of political and ideological struggle, in other words the site of a permanent struggle.

The mere existence of self-organization is never the absolute guarantee of a truly democratic solution. Criticism in the service of the underprivileged and underprivileged classes must remember the example of the *Aâçrouch*, the self-organizing

structure that emerged during the 2001 revolt that affected part of Algeria, Kabylie, as it must also remember the Iranian example of 1979.

This autumn, Gaid Salah is reviving his presidential political project after having, apparently, consolidated his bases within the military and security institution. At the same time, he anticipates the upcoming economic reform, inspired by neoliberalism, which aims to revise the rule 49/51 governed foreign investment in Algeria. This project, however, stumbles on the lack of credible political personnel to undertake it calmly. For its part, the popular movement is content with its “war of position” and rejection. It would benefit from redeploying to workplaces and daily living spaces for more active, organized and offensive action.

But in any case, the outcome of this contradiction will pave the way for a transition to new, more promising horizons, given the open breach in the system. Revolutionary political commitment is not based on any progressive scientific certainty but on a reasoned bet on the future. At first there was the indignation, the indignation of prostrating oneself before a person more dead than alive. Now, as indicated by Bensaïd, “indignation is a beginning. A way to get up and get going. We are indignant, we rebel, and then we see”. It is now a question of seeing, collectively, how to move beyond indignation.

The war for Erdogan’s survival means poverty and death for us!

15 October 2019, by **Sosyalist Demokrasi için Yenyol**

The Palace Regime, for whom there is no alternative except to take up arms against any sign of weakening or any defeat in order to consolidate itself, once again chooses to drag the

country and all the peoples of the region into disaster

It failed to react when ISIS was encamped on Turkey’s borders and

jihadiist gangs were entering city centers, taking lives with their bombs in our squares; their ruling mentality opened the door to all this. It cannot bear even the smallest achievement of

the Kurdish people who defended the most basic human values with their lives against those murderers. It does not hesitate to declare mobilization to eliminate an imaginary threat under the circumstances of current economic crisis, poverty and unemployment, and to send the children of thousands of laborers to the front where they will walk into death.

The Syrian adventure of the Palace, which reinforces hostility against the Kurds, claiming that they are providing security at the borders of the country, and seeks support from the public with unbelievable arguments including that they will resettle refugees in the "evacuated" regions, can only and exclusively bring disaster to the peoples of the region.

While it seems to be understood that no one can expect any good from the deranged one sitting in the White

House, it is also clear that the attitudes of other actors in the region, especially the Kremlin and Damascus, will not be towards the establishment of peace. The Syrian army's recent intervention will also most likely have detrimental effects on Rojava's experience of autonomy and its democratic advancement. As for the European Union, it is itself struck by the cynicism and irresponsibility it has shown to migrants through its despicable agreement with Turkey, which Erdogan threatens to abolish now.

On the other hand, while it is evident that what happened is not related to "the survival of the state" but to the survival of Erdogan and his associates, those who used to be referred as a threat to that very state are today supporting the calls for war. This shows that the opposition, which was assumed to be inclusive and long

lasting, is eminently fragile and far from having common values. The regime has once again managed to line up the opposition behind itself with its contemptible war card.

While the foundations of the Palace are eroding, the duty to dissolve the militarist-chauvinist climate and raise the struggle for peace and bread is again on the shoulders of socialists, labor and democracy forces. The first step is to shout our slogan with all our strength, confidence and faith:

No to war!

Peace now!

Sosyalist Demokrasi için Yeniyol/ New Course for Socialist Democracy

Fourth International section in Turkey

15 October 2019

Letter of support to the peoples of Ecuador

14 October 2019

We appeal to your own words at the United Nations, where you called upon world leaders to consider "the respect for human, economic, social and cultural rights" as the main pillar to governance.

It is essential to mention that, as part of the international human rights obligations that you yourself have highlighted, is the duty to provide appropriate measures to guarantee and ensure respect for human rights. The duty to guarantee these rights entails ensuring and protecting by any means necessary the individual and collective rights of all the people living in Ecuadorian territory, mainly the rights of Indigenous Nations. Your government is not only failing to fulfill this obligation, it is violating it flagrantly, instigating repression and violence, jeopardizing the life, dignity, wellbeing, integrity and freedom of all citizens. Above all, it is acting directly against the self-determination of

Indigenous peoples, who are clearly stating their position regarding the economic measures that you have taken. All this entails international responsibilities that fall upon you and your government.

The present State of Emergency is excessive and nonsensical; it fails to meet international standards inasmuch as there has been no assessment of proportionality nor analysis of the need for these measures. It is therefore evident that these actions have been taken in bad faith.

The signatories of this document "intellectuals, academics, activists and members of organizations in Latin America and other regions of the world" reiterate our resounding condemnation of the excessive use of force and the constant intensification of violence by the authorities, and we express our solidarity with CONAIE and the other social organizations

presently in the streets.

We emphatically condemn the use of force that has already resulted in various deaths, numerous injuries and children orphaned. Likewise the media has been tampered with and journalists have been imprisoned. We are watching and waiting to see what will happen as the march continues. We call upon you to uphold the human rights of those who are legitimately exercising their right to protest and to defend the collective rights of their peoples. We support the demands of the Ecuadorian people in their struggle to stop this economic adjustment package that would even further violate the human rights of the population as a whole.

If you want to add your signature or that of your organisation click [here](#)

Signatures:

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“The founding hypotheses of the Comunes and independence are no longer operational”

14 October 2019, by **Josep María Antentas**

In your book you locate the Catalan crisis as part of a general crisis of the Spanish state. Why?

Everything that has to do with Catalan independence is one of the great aspects of the regime’s crisis. The other crisis is everything related to 15M, the waves of protests against the cuts, the erosion due to economic crisis and corruption. At the same time, the current crisis also refers us to the historical limits of the state model that was created in 1978. In the end, it reflects the non-resolution of the national question in Spain, although the regional model bought time, but without solving the underlying historical problems.

Precisely, one of the problems of the independence movement, as defined by the Procés, is that it has raised a battle that is not very connected to the general crisis of the regime. It has not articulated its proposal for the future

with the need to give a concrete response to the problems generated by the economic crisis and, rather than seeking to articulate itself with the struggles against austerity, it has sought subordinate this to the fight for an independent state. It is one of the limitations that have existed. Independence is, paradoxically, one of the central factors of the regime crisis, but at the same time it has also been used to try to recompose it in authoritarian form.

In your opinion, there are two movements (15M and independence) that challenge the regime, and this has not been well understood?

For me, this is the big problem of the Catalan crisis. 15M was a moment of rejection and discomfort, which opened a political crisis and formulated proposals for the future. This is what favoured, although it was

not an automatic effect, the emergence of projects such as Comunes or Podemos. This type of process marks a path, a hypothesis. Then, independence indicates another type of future, the Catalan Republic. They are two proposals that coexist in the face of people’s unrest in a scenario of bifurcation of futures. I think the two, mostly, have seen each other as competitors. There have been people with one foot in each place, but there has not been enough dialogue between the two roads. Competition has been imposed above any attempt at articulation.

This is one of the weaknesses of the whole cycle and, in particular, of all the forces of the left, pro-independence or not. It has made the social base of the independence movement smaller than it could be and, above all, has meant that its project was less challenging than it could have been, there has not been

any dialogue with the legacy of 15M or any critical proposal regarding austerity policies. And, conversely, for everyone who ended up crystallizing in Comunes and Podemos, the fact of not having had any active policy regarding independence for many years, of limiting themselves to a wait and see position, meant that during 1 October they remained paralysed, without knowing what to do. In the end, they were engulfed by polarization. The lack of dialogue between the two worlds was a strategic weakness before and during 1 October and is a problem for their future projects.

It is clear that there are people on both sides who cannot maintain any type of dialogue because their projects are antagonistic. It is clear that the world of *Convergència* has always tried to use independence to cover its support for the cuts and that it instrumentalized the 2012 wave to mitigate its fall in legitimacy and to have a narrative and an apparent project, replacing the ultra-neoliberal rhetoric of the failed "government of the best" with which Artur Mas won in 2010. But in general, there could have been more discussion between sections of the independence movement and Comunes and Podemos. It seems to me that it is one of the limitations that we have to verify when taking stock of everything that has happened, in a scenario like the current one in which the two movements are bogged down.

The hypotheses of both are blocked. Despite being different, both were able to convey the idea that there could be a quick and easy change. No doubt it is important to motivate people and convince them that victory is possible, that you are an active subject with the ability to change things. But what has been shown is that reality is more complicated and that it had been oversimplified. There has been no lightning electoral victory for Pablo Iglesias, nor has the independence movement achieved its objectives. When hypotheses are dismantled you have the challenge of rephrasing them and rethinking the relationship between the short and long term, without giving up your goals.

This failed dialogue between the two worlds also explains their difficulties in rethinking the future, and this is a necessary task in any serious strategic rethinking. Note that the debates on Podemos or Comunes and about independence are usually separate, many of the people who reflect do so completely from within one of these areas, without much concern to develop an overall view of the political crisis opened from 2011 and 2012. And now that this cycle has been exhausted and we are in another phase, although imprecise, it is important to have a global perspective in a complex time of strategic difficulties for everyone.

Who is responsible for these sectors not having a dialogue?

Basically, it has been easier this way for both. For the independence movement, it has been very easy to believe that it just had to grow and that those who didn't favour independence would adapt or be out of the game. For the Comunes bloc, the most comfortable thing was to practice a wait and see policy, trusting that the independence movement would crash into the wall. In the short term, this was easier, because it avoided considering complex things, but in the long run it has ended up being very damaging. The apparent comfort of the present was mortgaging the feasibility of the future. This has been a very short term policy.

Do both movements now face these realities?

Yes. They come up against the fact that they have stronger adversaries. On the one hand, the 15M impulse is exhausted. Iglesias's initial path, based on a quick electoral victory, has long since evaporated. In Catalonia, the hypothesis of the Comunes of transferring the initial success in Barcelona to the Catalan sphere and stabilizing the strength of the victories in the general elections of 2015-2016 has proved unsuccessful and is no longer credible. On the other hand, the independence movement has seen the fallacious hypothesis of the law of legal transiency, and the disconnection without difficulties from the state, blocked. The founding

hypotheses of Comunes and Podemos and of the independence movement have ceased to be operative, even in the field of propaganda.

They are retreating even in respect of more conservative or reformist proposals, don't they?

Sure. Paradoxically, 1 October 2017 was the most important crisis the state has suffered since the 1970s. But at the same time, it was used by the most conservative sectors to reinforce themselves, using the strategic weaknesses of the independence movement. Despite not having a proposal to stabilize the regime in the long term, 1-O has been used to try to close the crisis of the regime in an authoritative way, but this does not solve any of its problems. In the short term, there may be the fiction, by the government, that it has enough strength to close the processes above, but the underlying causes that triggered the political and social crisis are still extant. Given this situation, the independence movement has no proposal. There is much talk about the division of independence, but less about the fact that none of the majority orientations existing within it have coherence. In reality, there is no serious rethinking of the strategy.

On the other hand, in the world of Comunes, given the difficulties, there have been internal divisions, and the temptation to abandon objectives. In the end, it is a space that is increasingly conceived as a complement to the PSOE than as an alternative in itself. When a movement is blocked, it has risks and challenges. One of the dangers is to remain immobilized in your foundational ideas, not knowing how to adapt them and not going beyond. The other risk is to start reviewing your hypotheses and end up abandoning your goals, often making it appear that you do not do so, that you are actually faithful to your usual approach, but that you are simply adjusting it to the conjuncture. People tend to mould expectations unconsciously according to real possibilities and this logic also works in political combat. The issue is how to keep your foundational goals by rethinking your strategic hypotheses to go beyond the initial limits. Precisely, I think this is what neither

the majority of the independence movement nor Comunes and Podemos are doing.

You say in the book that identity needs to be renegotiated...

Yes, making a strategic balance sheet of your existence and seeing what it takes to take another step. I don't see this happening much in the independence movement. There is a part of the old *Convergència* that wants to back down, although it has little objective basis to do so due to the immobility of the state; the world of Carles Puigdemont offers a republican rhetoric, but an autonomist practice, a lot of symbolism and little content, and seeks to play for time; the ANC and the proposals of sectors such as Jordi Graupera's are to maintain a hard independence, but reaffirm and accentuate all the limits that the movement has had. In the case of ERC, they identify the problems of the movement very well, but the solution they give may seem to many, perhaps not as a surrender, but a real abandonment of any scenario of rupture.

The CUP think that it has remained a coherent force that does not recede, but without publicly raising the limitations that the *Procés* has had. It has always been clear about them but has failed to question the movement with strategic proposals, beyond disobeying, that will modify the parameters of the *Procés*. Since October 1, it has remained too much in a voluntarist discourse, without addressing the major fundamental issues, and that is why I find it very interesting that it has opened a strategic debate in recent months, the result of which will be very important for the entire alternative world in Catalonia. The foundational problem of the *Procés* has been to disconnect the demand for independence from a critique of austerity and a broader perspective of the regime's decline throughout the state. And it seems to me that today it is the ANC itself which addresses the least the limits of the dynamic unleashed from 2012.

How is this to be solved?

The idea that the demand for independence is disconnected from

criticism of the problems of austerity is doomed to failure. Catalonia is a society where there are very different visions of things, but with many people destroyed by the crisis. You cannot drive a very broad movement without addressing the great social problems that are hurting this society as a result of the cuts, which were very severe at the beginning of *Procés*. From the beginning it would have been necessary for the movement to have adopted a program of social emergency measures to deal with the crisis.

Now, if the movement had done so, it would have strained the social base of *Convergència* much more. The Artur Mas government embodied values contrary to this. Many people made the calculation that it was essential not to lose to the Catalan right. In doing so, I think that other questions were not raised that were more important. For example, how to make a large part of the Catalan federalist left feel linked to the project. Also, how to attract a part of the more popular social base that is not so Catalan in its identity. It seems to me that this has been the great problem of the movement, which has not had a solid debate about which social bloc it should articulate.

After 9N, after two years of growth between 2012 and 2014, the movement had difficulties in going further. It is often said that the base must be widened. It doesn't seem like a correct term to me. For me you have to see the limits and reformulate it. The movement, in my opinion, would have to assume, for example, a decalogue of basic measures against austerity and relate the Catalan Republic to a project of general regime decline. I think these should be the strategic proposals that should be put on the table by the left, not so much because it is realistic right now to think that they could be taken on by the main actors, but to offer a perspective of where to go in a moment of bewilderment.

Explain ...

There has been the hypothesis, and the practice, that since the movement wants to leave the state, it simply has to build up forces in Catalonia and

what happens outside doesn't matter. There has been a unilateral project that is legitimate. The logical thing is to start by organizing yourself, but then you have to see what alliances you make if you don't want to confine yourself to a strategically very limited perspective. On the other hand, there has been the hypothesis of the Comunes, which is that we have to stop any unilateralism in Catalonia until there is a majority of change in the whole state. Neither the centralist conception of change, nor the peripheral rupture alone are strategically satisfactory, nor do they address all the complexity of Catalan and Spanish politics and society.

The problem is that there has not been a synthesis of the two points of view. In the end they are complementary, although their articulation is complex and contradictory. What the independence movement has not been able to develop is the idea that the Catalan Republic must be perceived as something that would be aided by having a Spanish Republic alongside, the relationship with which it would be necessary to specify. That is, inserting it as part of a broader movement that would bring down the regime of 1978. Failure to do so has facilitated the criminalization of the movement in the rest of the state, has encouraged apathy or hostility on the part of Spanish society and has allowed the people of the rest of the state who have shown solidarity with the movement to be quite isolated.

In October 2017, there was a spatial-temporal lack of synchronization between the Catalan crisis and the regime crisis throughout the state and between the two challenging axes of the cycle opened in 2011 and 2012. There are no perfect proposals, but when thinking about strategic reformulations and how to better articulate the Catalan rupture, the global rupture of the regime and the change of social model, I find it interesting to revise points of view such as those raised, with differences, by figures such as Joaquín Maurín or Andreu Nin in the thirties, not to extrapolate them anachronistically to the present, but to try to reflect today with more perspective.

Could it be too late now?

It has been seven years since 2012 and five since 9N. If things had been done differently, we would be in another situation. Now, assuming we are where we are, what is the next step? For some it is to stay at the heroic level and move forward without doing any analysis of the correlation of forces, for others it is to play for time or, at best, to seek a horizon of lukewarm progressive-democratic reform. Actually, if you think from the point of view of independence, the most necessary thing would be to reinvent yourself to get rid of the initial defects of the movement. If you think from the point of view of Comunes or Podemos, maintaining the challenging nature of these projects would mean reversing – which is objectively impossible – the dynamics already started with Vistalegre in the case of the Iglesias formation and the failed birth of Catalunya en Comú. All these fundamental questions, of course, are mixed in with the situation and with the immediate need to articulate a unitary and challenging response to the judgment of the trial...

In the book you talk about the concept of Eurocomunism ...

Yes, employing a little the simile with the Eurocommunism of the 1970s, using the term that was used to explain the policy that the Italian, Spanish and French Communist Party had when they evolved towards a social democratization of their programme and towards a more electoralist orientation, while maintaining a rigid internal bureaucratic structure. Quite quickly, the world of Comunes has assumed this more electoral, more institutional, more normalized existence, hence we can talk about a tendency to become Eurocomunism.

I also believe that its behaviour on October 1 cannot be separated from this. The fact that when a political crisis arrives, a large political force that theoretically is pro-rupture plays such a lukewarm role instead of trying to deepen the crisis in a constituent sense more favourable to its programme, also has to do with the increasing institutionalization of its vision of things. This does not mean that they are a party fully comparable to the conventional ones, but it does

show that the path they have taken has been exhausting their emancipatory potential and will continue to do so progressively.

Does this trajectory of Comunes make the creation of an alliance with the pro-independence forces more difficult?

It seems to me that there is little prospect of dialogue between the independence movement and Comunes. In addition, in the current stage of bewilderment and defeat, it sometimes appears as a caricatural thing, as a dialogue between two spaces that are losing their ground-breaking drive. In contrast, in the previous period, before October 2017, their collaboration could have been offensive. All the debate about the support for the government of Pedro Sánchez that has taken place in the last year and a half is a caricature of this alliance between Comunes and the independence movement. There is a difference between synergies of rupture and collaboration to adapt to the logic of the lesser evil against the PP.

It also speaks of the lack of relationship between the world of the CUP and Comunes...

It seems important to me. And even more when almost nobody talks about it. They are two political spaces that, despite their differences, have shared a critical vision of austerity policies and the majority parties, many of their activists have shared spaces of social militancy. Obviously, when competing at the electoral level, it is normal that there are tensions, but that the two spaces have had such a differentiated policy and have not been able to have a dialogue is problematic. It involves a fracture of the social sectors most critical of neoliberalism. This is, however, a debate, we might say, of the previous phase, which serves as a balance sheet of the years behind us. Although it is still a pending subject, we are now at another stage...

No one has believed in popular unity?

Each has interpreted it in their own way, either using one concept or another, and has basically understood

it as a unity around their own space and their own programme. It is legitimate, and partly logical. The thing is how, while doing this, you can go further at the same time. It seems to me that it is one of the issues that explains many limitations of these years. It could have led to more bridges of dialogue and discussion. Because deep down we see that all alternative political sectors, referenced in the struggles of the recent past, have difficulties and a shared need to reorient themselves. It is not very clear where to go, and nobody has an impeccable proposal, we must restart from a certain collective humility in this regard.

What seems pertinent to me today is to think about how a new confluent space can be built in Catalonia that brings together all those who are outside the most institutionalist logic and want to do politics in a pro-rupture way, keeping alive the ground-breaking drive of the dual cycle –15M and the Procés– that is over, and be part of the new radicalism and emergent movements. And if we think about the scenario of a possible new economic crisis, it will be decisive whether we have been able to take this step or not...

What do you mean when you say that the pro-independence movement has had a fetish for the state?

It is the idea that, given the problems, a state is the solution. It is a very debatable proposal in itself. A state in itself is no guarantee of anything: it depends on the correlation of forces, on the policies that are applied. The idea that everything that cannot be done now can be done with one's own state has been sold. Actually, it's not like that. A state is not necessary to stop an eviction, and having it is not a guarantee per se that it is not done. On the other hand, a state within the euro, which signs the TTIP and has economic policies dictated by the European Central Bank or the German government has a very limited sovereignty. There has been a lot of conceptual fetishism that considered that the state was the guarantor of everything, without considering too much what a state is and what role it plays at the present time, nor what

relationship exists between states, international organizations and financial power.

The independence movement, except for that part linked to the CUP, has not discussed what sovereignty is in the monetary or economic field, for example, when it has spoken a lot about the will to be sovereign. If you think about it, it is contradictory. This is also one of the limitations of its project, which has had a very simplistic view of what is sovereignty, democracy and the relationship between both. Sovereignty has been understood exclusively from the national point of view, but not in the popular aspect, and democracy has been understood very much in terms of representative system and very little in the sense of social self-organization or the ability to decide on all areas of social life, after decades in which neoliberalism has drastically reduced the issues that fall within the scope of conventional political decision.

Is this desire to take state power as a priority also one of the problems of Podemos?

It is not that there is no need to take state power. The question is why you take it and seeing that the government is only part of the power of the state, and that getting there makes sense if it serves to initiate a process of social transformation that, inevitably, will be neither linear nor simple and will meet the resistance of economic power and the state structures themselves. To get into government to end up adapting as Alexis Tsipras did in Greece ... do you have a project of breaking with the economic powers or you end up adapting.

Podemos plays with the idea that

there could be something intermediate between rupture and complete adaptation, but its evolution has been very clear. In the end, you win an election and you get into the government of the state, and if you are not willing to have a policy of confrontation with the economic powers, what do you do? And given the difficulties in obtaining the desired lightning victory, we have seen how Podemos has been modifying its *raison d'être* in a double sense, first abandoning the most disruptive aspects of its program and, second, ceasing to have the objective of being an alternative to PP and the PSOE so as to run as a minor partner of Pedro Sánchez.

The argument is that being part of a government with the PSOE would guarantee politics of change, but the reality is that the policies that could be made by Podemos would be derisory and, at the same time, Podemos would have to swallow all the contradictions of the PSOE, that collide directly against the very nature of Podemos and the public perception of Podemos. For various reasons, the independence movement and Podemos have proposed strategic proposals that were limited. The independence movement for not wanting to talk about an economic and social model and Podemos for having designed a very electoralist conception of change and for formulating very superficial alternatives.

Another thing you question is how internationalism has been understood within the independence movement ...

In general, it has not given much weight to internationalism and has only looked out in a diplomatic sense, seeking institutional international support. This lack of perspective is

closely related to the fact of having nothing to say about the crisis of the European Union. The independence movement has not placed its project much within the framework of the current EU crisis and the political crises that have shaken many of its member states. Within the independence movement there is a minority internationalist vision, that of the CUP, but basically understood as solidarity between the emancipation movements of the stateless nations and not so much as an international alliance of the subaltern classes.

In any case, having an internationalist perspective, regardless of how this concept is specifically understood and which variant is embraced, is the basis of an emancipatory project, especially in today's world. We need to move towards a new internationalism of the 99%, which somehow tries to give a coordinated response to all the subaltern movements. The rise of the new feminism and the movement for climate justice are today outstanding examples.

However, most emancipatory groups and organizations are still very focused on politics within the borders of their state, partly due to the very depth of the political crises that have shaken many countries since 2011, but it is necessary to strengthen mobilizations and international initiatives. For me that does not mean disregarding local and concrete politics or the national issue. Often a fallacious contrast is made between internationalism and the national question when in fact, the defence of the right of peoples to self-determination, and in particular by the movements that are part of nations and states that deny this right to others, is an inescapable condition for genuine solidarity.

Ecuador: Brutal economic decisions (“paquetazo”)

13 October 2019, by **Diego Borja Cornejo**

In the official line, president, vice president and ministers have followed the same script: "There was no alternative", that's what they asserted. Furthermore, they even argued that it is necessary to eliminate fuel subsidies (gasoline and diesel), so that collapse of dollarization as national currency is avoided. They keep stating, obsessively, that public spending must be cut, even if it carries high costs like violating the labor rights of state servants in a serious and unconstitutional way. And they intend to affirm that, by reducing the capital outflow tax (ISD) or by lightening, eliminating or getting lower importing-and-business-charges tariffs, they are acting at the service of "common interest".

The fact is that the alliance between government, the institutions of commerce, the association of private banks and other business associations, have given in, with no displeasure, to what the International Monetary Fund (IMF) dictates in the agreements that have been signed with the regimen.

Indeed, the economic measures of October 1 - which are the first among others that will be sent gradually to the National Assembly such as economic reforms, as announced by government spokesmen -are deeply harmful for most people, damage the economy and do not contribute to solve any of the fiscal or current account problems. It even puts the dollarization system at risk.

The elimination of subsidies aiming: extra gasoline with ethanol (which price will increase by 75%), to extra gasoline (which will rise by 60%) and to diesel (that will increase by more than 200%), makes the price of all goods and services more expensive (in the context of a country which is expensive already). Therefore, small farmers in the mountains have mobilized immediately, due to this measure that increase their transportation costs and the price of all products (especially those that they buy from the urban sector), leading to a further deterioration of their poverty

situation.

It should be mentioned that rural poverty rates increased from 38.2% in December 2016 to 43.8% in June 2019; while extreme poverty rose from 17.6% to 17.9%, in that period. Likewise, the reaction of secondary students, university students and residents, especially from Quito, is understandable, since poverty in the Capital increased from 7.9% in June 2016 to 11.9% in this year; and extreme poverty from 1.7% to 3.6%, in the same period. The rise in transportation prices in Quito, for example, means that a person who takes 4 buses a day, will go from a transportation cost of 1 dollar per day to 1.40 dollars (42 dollars per month), equivalent to 10.6% of the minimum monthly salary.

It has been announced that the salaries of public employees will be reduced, through other measures such as the renewal of occasional contracts with 20% less pay; the contribution of one day of salary per month and the decrease from 30 to 15 days of vacation per year. Brutal measures in a country where adequate employment fell from 41.2% in December 2016 to 37.9% last June; and where the forecast for economic growth for this year, according to the IMF itself, is -0.5%. If prices rise, if growth is negative and wages are frozen or decreasing, the logical result is a drop in purchasing power and a tremendous deterioration in living conditions. But there is also the perverse idea of the civil servant as a vague and unproductive person (that is why the holidays are reduced by half the time), which is part of the strategy for devaluing public elements, to sustain the proposal, also a fundraiser, of "Monetize" public assets, read privatize them.

But due to the difficulties of the living conditions of the population, the benefits are added to the import and business sectors, at the expense of the already deteriorated external sector. In a dollarized country, where the non-oil trade balance closed last year with

a negative account balance of USD 4,958.5 million, by means of the "package", it is decided to eliminate or reduce tariffs for capital goods (machinery, equipment and agricultural raw material and industrial), cell phones, computers and tablets. Likewise, the capital outflow tax (ISD) for some imports and the tax for vehicles of less than USD 32,000 are reduced by half. All these measures will have a negative impact on liquidity, due to the outflow of dollars, thus compromising dollarization.

It is outrageous that in a falling economy since 2017, where bank profits have increased from USD 396 million in that year to USD 554 million in 2018, the "economic package" of October 1 keeps on increasing the benefits of Great economic powers. This is how, it was decided to tax with a pyrrhic contribution to companies with revenues exceeding USD 10 million per year, which will generate only USD 100 million annually for the treasury (less than 0.1% of GDP); as well as eliminating- indiscriminately - the advance of income tax. These tax benefits are added to those who have already received last year - delinquent businessmen or evaders, when the government forgave fines-interest and surcharges on debts with the Internal Revenue Service (SRI), with the Ecuadorian Institute of Security Social (IESS) and with the municipalities, in an amount that borders USD 4,000 million (about 4% of GDP).

According to the announcement of the Minister of Economy the day after the package, it will generate revenues of USD 2,986 million and the "fiscal sacrifice" - read direct transfers to importers and entrepreneurs - will be USD 713 million. On the other hand, the "social compensation", for an increase of \$ 15 to the "poorest", will only mean USD 54 million, if it is for the 300,000 new poor, or USD 234 million, if it is for the one million 300 thousand citizens who would receive the human development bonus, in the best scenario. Yet, this is not certain.

What is clear is that the tariff and tax measures do not contribute to solving the fiscal deficit, or the problems of the external sector, nor the productive

problems. They aggravate, of course, the already deteriorated living conditions of the majority low-and-middle-income-sector of society.

Quito, 9 de Octubre de 2019

CADTM

No absolute majority for the SP, the right suffers an historic defeat

12 October 2019, by **Alda Sousa, Luis Branco**

The big question at the beginning of the election campaign - would the SP win a working majority which would allow itself to be freed from the 'comrade' parties on its left with formed the *geringonça* - was answered negatively in the final weeks of campaigning as the PSD (Social Democrat Party - right of centre) climbed back in the opinion polls. [35]

It was a sign that the disappointment of rightwing voters would not be as great as predicted earlier. Nevertheless this recovery was not enough to avoid an historic defeat of this political force: the PSD finished with less than 28% - its worst result this century - and the CDS fell to 5%, going from 18 to only 5 seats.

This fall in support for the right was not a surprise and repeated the same tendency seen in the May European elections. It was due to the lack of a political alternative to a PS government whose popularity was based precisely on reversing austerity measures implemented by the 2011-2015 PSD/CDS (CDS-Peoples Party - right of centre) government. The recovery in salaries, employment and the economy as a whole left the right without a consistent political project for this general election. So it tried to fill this vacuum with attempting to take political advantage from some ongoing legal cases such as the robbery of arms from a military barracks in 2017 (and their later recovery achieved after negotiations with the robbers). This rather bizarre episode has meant the then Defence minister has been charged in the courts.



The first table above compares the results with the last general election and the second one shows the percentage of votes and the number of seats.

The PS increased its share from 32.4% in 2015 to 36.7% in 2019 and won 106 seats, 21 more than in 2015. There are still four seats to be allocated from the overseas emigrant votes which are normally split between the PS and the PSD. The new parliament sees a strengthening of the PS ranks which, despite not winning an absolute majority, has more MPs than all the right of centre parties put together. Nevertheless it still depends on the positive votes or abstention of the other left parties in order to get its policies through.

The Bloco got 9.6% of the votes, down from 10.2% in 2015 but kept its 19 MPs although these were elected in a different spread than last time. The loss of an MP in Porto and another in Madeira was compensated by an increase in representatives in Braga and Aveiro. For the first time the Bloco's parliamentary group has a majority which comes from constituencies outside of the two big metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto. This tendency marks a greater homogeneity in the Bloco's electoral support across different areas of the country and has been happening for some time now.

Only the PS has managed to reap an electoral dividend from the positive

results of its minority government while the parties to its left that supported it have seen the electorate react in a different way. While the Bloco has maintained its seats and widened the gap with the fourth national political party, the PCP has lost 116,000 votes and won 12 seats, 5 less than in 2015. This was no surprise and confirms the tendency expressed in the European elections when the PCP lost one of its three MEPs. On the other hand, the PAN (People, Animals and Nature party), which emerged as an animal rights party but has expanded its political framework to environmental issues and voted in favour of the PS budgets - has continued its rise in support, from one to four MPs.

Something else novel about this election was the entry of three new parties in parliament - each with a little more than 1% of the vote: Libre (Free) linked to the European Greens, Iniciativa Liberal (Liberal initiative) with ultra-liberal policies and a campaign based on the social networks and Chega (Enough) whose main leader is a TV football commentator with a xenophobic attitude and is supported by sectors of the extreme right wing in the Portuguese police. The entry of an MP from the extreme right into parliament ends the Portuguese 'exception' - of which there is less and less in Europe. However a counter-tendency is the election of three black women for the first time in Portugal on the Bloco, PS and Libre slates.

Tensions between the PS and the Bloco featured in the election campaign

Given the dissatisfaction of the right wing electors in relation to their traditional leadership, Antonio Costa (SP leader and Prime Minister) aimed to attract this key sector in order to win a working majority. He did this by repeated attacks on the Bloco, including by comparisons with the Spanish political situation. The socialist leader said that a weak PS and a strong Bloco, similar to the PSOE (Spanish social democrats) and Podemos (radical left) after the April elections there, would lead to the same political deadlock and instability. Costa even ended up re-writing history, belittling the role of the Bloco in establishing the geringonca, saying that it came about ‘in spite of the Bloco’. The Prime minister heaped praise on the PCP for its role in the government stability which contrasted with those attacks on the Bloco. The high point of this tension happened in the television debate with Catarina Martins (Bloco leader) reminding the PS leader about the meeting that took place between representatives of the two parties on the morning of the 2015 elections, even before the results were known, where the road was opened to the formation of a government supported by the left.

We also saw a PS strategy of trying to make a link in voters’ minds between the Bloco, instability and profligacy. This was headed up by Mario Centeno, a Finance minister, (and leader of the Eurogroup meeting of finance ministers) after another TV debate where a Bloco leader discussed the

financing of the investment proposals in the PS programme and the absence of clear accounting of other important initiatives. In the hours that followed Centeno was forced to reveal to journalists an updated version of what the promises would cost. It was therefore established that these were far from those figures given to Brussels for the Stability Mechanism. In response to the PS attacks the Bloco put forward as the central message of its campaign that it was the party that ‘guaranteed stability in peoples’ lives’ in terms of their salary, the pension and employment. It pointed out to the PS the damage of political instability with the threat of the backtracking of the government last May over the then imminent approval of a measure that would restore to teachers all the career progression that had been frozen in the last decade. But the big difference between the Bloco and the PS has always been on the question of the Labour Laws after the government signed an agreement with the bosses in negotiations and then got it passed in June with the votes of the right wing. These measures will increase precarious work since it lengthens the probationary period and generalises very short term contracts.

Negotiations are taking place now...

On election night the Bloco and the PCP made it clear that in spite of the PS not getting a working majority there was no doubt about its legitimate right to form the next government. The president will ask Antonio Costa to form a government this week and negotiations will start over the government programme. Costa stated on election night that he would first look to get the eventual support for the whole parliamentary

term from his two comrades of the geringonca, but would also negotiate with PAN and Livre

The PCP leader, Jeronimo de Sousa, said he was open to dialogue with the PS although he voiced a preference for approving each government action and a written agreement for the four year term. We will see whether he sticks to this or if the disappointing results on Sunday will lead him to keep to this line. For her part Catarina Martins, stated that the Bloco was ready to negotiate an agreement for the whole term which included key elements of its platform such as the reform of the labour laws, an increase in salaries and the recovery of public services. Although she accepted in the case of this agreement being impossible her party could negotiate the viability of each state budget.

In the talks now underway it will be up to the Socialist Party to choose if it wants to invest in the National Health Service, in public education, in sustaining employment, in increasing the national minimum wage or in a national housing programme. This would be the true stability that the country needs. Antonio Costa promoted the Portuguese exception outside the country, referring to a Portugal that had managed to roll back austerity while being faithful to European treaties and agreements. In the end it was only an exception because it managed to break with those agreements and increased salaries and pensions, stimulating the economy through increased consumption and internal demand. After reversing the worse policies of the Troika and the right wing government the Bloco wants to be the guarantee that there will be no retreat but new advances in favour of working people.

9 October 2019

Betraying the Kurds

12 October 2019, by **David Finkel**

I think we can fairly suspect that the transcript record of the Trump-Erdogan phone call has been stored on that same “classified” server where the “quid pro quo” call to Ukrainian president Zelensky, and (as we’ve learned) those to other foreign leaders, are stashed to stay safe from the reach of whistleblowers and Congressional investigators. It might be inconvenient to reveal that Trump made sure Erdogan knew the coast was clear for his long-planned invasion of northern Syria.

In the present case, there wasn’t even a material imperial interest in pulling out and leaving the Kurdish forces and civilian population hung out to dry. It was just Trump’s whim. Keep in mind that the U.S. force in northeastern Syria is hardly a big strike force. It is (or was) a small presence as a tripwire against Turkish incursion and a logistical/intelligence support for the Kurdish forces fighting the “Islamic

State” (ISIS). Pulling it out doesn’t represent a U.S. withdrawal from “endless Middle East wars” as the big tweet boasts “those troops won’t be coming home, they’ll be re-deployed in Iraq or somewhere nearby.

After the fact, Trump blustered that he’ll “destroy the Turkish economy” if its invasion crosses some unspecified “limits.” No one takes that seriously “not Erdogan, not the tens of thousands of fleeing civilians, not the United States’ European allies, not the Syrian regime or Iran or Russia that are contemplating how they might move into the vacuum, and not ISIS whose potential revival is justifiably feared in global capitals.

In his post-facto blathering, Trump conceded that the Kurds did the fighting against ISIS in Syria, but said they did so to protect “their own land” (of course!) and “they didn’t help us at

Normandy” (say what??).

It’s tragic that the international left has no capacity to provide material support or weapons to the Kurdish forces and people whose aspirations for freedom and self-determination, and the progressive Rojava project they’ve built amidst the Syrian carnage, are being crushed. All we have are our voices to demand that the United Nations and Europe impose emergency punitive sanctions on the Turkish regime.

The immediate prospect is a brutal conflict among multiple counterrevolutionary forces “Turkey, Iran and Russia, the Assad regime, ISIS. We can’t predict the outcome or the magnitude of deaths or the new refugee crisis. One result may be that the United States and its promises are never trusted again. That in itself would be a good lesson, but the human cost is much too high.

Trump’s “stab in the back” to the Kurdish national movement

10 October 2019, by **Gilbert Achcar**

The Syrian Kurds and their allies have paid a heavy tribute to this fight, incurring more than ten thousand casualties. They were instrumental in the containment and rollback of IS in Syrian territory. They are also unquestionably the most progressive, if not the only progressive, of all armed forces active on Syrian territory, especially with regard to the status and role of women. And yet they have been consistently labelled by the Turkish government as “terrorists” due to their close relation with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (aka PKK), the main force active in Turkish-dominated Kurdish territory.

The Turkish government, which is known to have turned a blind eye to the build-up of IS in Syria (it is even suspected of having facilitated this build-up), regards the Kurdish national movement as the main threat. It has invaded part of northern Syria (Afrin) in 2016 to bring down the YPG control of that area, and still occupies it. It has also been threatening since then to invade North-East Syria (Western Kurdistan, aka Rojava), only deterred from doing so by the presence of US troops along the SDF.

The 6 October phone call between the American and Turkish presidents is not the first one during which Erdogan

pressed Trump to withdraw US troops and thus clear the way for Turkish troops to invade the rest of Syrian Kurdish territory, nor is Trump’s announcement that he has decided to oblige. The previous time was a year ago and led to the dramatic resignation of former defence secretary, Jim Mattis, reflecting the reluctance of the US military to execute what amounts very obviously to a “stab in the back” of allies (that’s how the SDF’s spokesperson aptly called it) and the Pentagon’s justified fear that a Turkish incursion would revitalise IS, and create a chaos of which Iran will seek to take advantage

in order to complete its control of the vast territory that stretches from its territory through Iraq to coastal Syria and Lebanon.

Assailed even by fellow Republicans, Trump backtracked at the end of last year. This time however he carried on his promise to Erdogan, replying to his critics, who blame him for betraying precious allies in the fight against IS, by asserting that, in his self-attributed "great and unmatched wisdom", he would "obliterate" Turkey's economy if the Turkish forces overstepped some vague undefined limits in their invasion of North-East Syria.

There should be no mistake whatsoever about Donald Trump's motivations. The US president is no pacifist opposed to military adventures waged by his country abroad. He is a staunch supporter of the murderous war waged in Yemen by the coalition led by the Saudi Crown Prince, his murderer friend. And he stated his great admiration for the US military base in Iraq, which he visited last December, explaining how important it is for the US.

From a man who declared during his previous presidential campaign that the US should take control of Iraqi oil fields and exploit them to its benefit, the rationale is clear enough: Trump

believes that the US military should only be engaged in territories where there is an obvious economic interest for his country (and for his own interests, one might add, knowing that this presidency has gone the furthest in US history in mixing private business with public affairs). Iraq, the Saudi kingdom and other Gulf oil monarchies are perfectly fine places for US military deployment in Trump's view, unlike poor countries such as Afghanistan and Syria.

From a truly anti-imperialist perspective predicated upon the peoples' right to self-determination, all imperialist and predatory troops should be withdrawn from Syria, whether Israeli troops occupying the Syrian Golan since 1967, or the more recently deployed forces of Iran and its regional proxies, Russia, the U.S. and Turkey, to name only the main protagonists. A unilateral US withdrawal paired with an invitation to Turkey to step in, giving it thus a free hand to crush the Kurdish national movement, has nothing progressive or pacifist about it: it is all the contrary.

The two progressive front runners in next year's US presidential election have rightly understood what is at stake and have reacted in similar terms on 7 October to Donald Trump's

announcement.

Senator Bernie Sanders tweeted: "I have long believed the U.S. must responsibly end our military interventions in the Middle East. But Trump's abrupt announcement to withdraw from northern Syria and endorse Turkey's incursion is extremely irresponsible. It is likely to result in more suffering and instability."

Senator Elizabeth Warren tweeted: "I support bringing our troops home from Syria. But President Trump's reckless and unplanned withdrawal undermines both our partners and our security. We need a strategy to end this conflict, not a president who can be swayed by one phone call."

The murderous Turkish invasion of North-East Syria must be stopped. NATO allies of the Turkish government share the responsibility of this onslaught. They must stop their military support to Ankara, impose economic sanctions on the Turkish government until it withdraws its troops from Syria, and provide the Kurdish movement with the weapons it needs in fighting Turkey's invasion of its territory.

This article was first published on the [Kingston and Surbiton LP website](#).

Hong Kong : Statement from Students' Unions of Higher Institutions on the Prohibition on Face Covering Regulation

10 October 2019

The maximum punishment for violation is 1-year-imprisonment, the Regulation came into effect at 00:00 on 5 October.

Students' Unions of Higher Institutions strongly oppose the enactment of the Anti-Mask Law, and strongly condemn the regime for introducing a totalitarian Regulation

and destroying the fundamental rule of law in Hong Kong.

The Anti-Mask Law is an attempt to increase the cost for people to participate in protests and assemblies, creating white terror and seriously depriving them of their constitutional freedoms.

Sparking even greater public outcry, the Emergency Regulation Ordinance allows the Chief Executive to exercise unlimited power, bypassing the Legislative Council to make laws arbitrarily.

The legislative power under the separation of powers was deprived from the legislative body, destroying

the principle itself.

The Basic Law does not allow the Chief Executive to make laws, nor did it allow her to announce a state of emergency, thus the invocation of powers under the Emergency Regulation Ordinance is unconstitutional.

This precedent opened Pandora's Box: the regime may enact any laws that restrict freedom of the people as it wishes, including curfew, limitation of freedom of communication, confiscation of private property, etc. It could even enact local legislation for Article 23 of the Basic Law, with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

The Government claimed that the law would be handed over to the Legislative Council for negative vetting, but the fact is that the Council has no power to revoke the order made. Automatic word wrap

The Anti-Mask Law marked the official commencement of totalitarian governance in Hong Kong, the rule of law ceased to exist, and the freedoms of the people are at great risk.

Furthermore, the Anti-Mask Law does not apply to the Police, expanding their already unfettered power one step further. The Hong Kong Police now has prerogative power, they are

above the law: they can use violence as they please and arrest the innocent without any legal consequences.

The Anti-Mask Law gives the Police even more power to create charges to crackdown on protestors, cementing Hong Kong as a Police State.

The regime cited foreign examples, such as Canada, to justify their enactment of the Anti-Mask Law. However, these foreign countries are democracies, their Anti-Mask Laws were passed through legislative procedures, and the Canadian Police are not above the law. There is a fundamental difference between Hong Kong and Canada, the regime's shameful and pathetic attempt to confuse the public fools no one.

The enactment of the Anti-Mask Law sounded the death knell for Hong Kong, reminding us that Hongkongers must come out victorious in the Revolution of Our Times, or else we would never live to see the day of Hong Kong's Liberation.

"Give us freedom or give us death." Hongkongers had looked past life and death, an Anti-Mask Law will not only fail to scare off the people, but will also ignite our determination in defending our rights and freedom.

The Government's refusal to respond

to the people's demands and the delusion that strict laws would stop all resistance are reflections of its ignorance. Hongkongers will not stand around and do nothing, Students' Unions of Higher Institutions call for Hongkongers' unity: we shall never bow down to totalitarianism and die fighting until glory be to Hong Kong.

- The Student Union of The Chinese University of Hong Kong
- The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Students' Union
- Student Union of Chu Hai College of Higher Education Acting Executive Committee
- The Open University of Hong Kong Students' Union Manual word wrap
- Lingnan University Students' Union
- Hong Kong Baptist University Students' Union
- The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts Students' Union
- The Student Union of Hong Kong Shue Yan University
- The Hong Kong Polytechnic University Students' Union
- The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong Students' Union
- City University of Hong Kong Students' Union
- The Hong Kong University Students' Union

6 October 2019

Women against neoliberal reforms and repression in Ecuador

9 October 2019

Because of the national mobilizations, the Lenin Moreno government yesterday decreed a "State of Exception" and enabled the Police and Armed Forces to assume control and order throughout the national territory, suspending the right to freedom of association and meeting to preserve the security of the State, limiting the right to freedom of transit, and determining that necessary

requisitions are executed to maintain the services that guarantee order and internal security.

The result of this State of Exception, on noon October 4, is 267 detainees nationwide who have reported gunfire shots, hits, motorcycle violence and inhuman treatment by the Police; two fellow indigenous leaders arrested (Marlon Santi, coordinator of

Pachakutik; Jairo Gualinga, youth leader of CONAIE); a young man who, due to the impact of police repression, is in a severe condition; Luis TimpantuÃ±a, a university student who lost his eye due to the impact of a tear gas bomb; a young man injured in Cuenca with a tear pump on the cheekbone; and many people we don't know yet, since the mass media in the country is hiding this reality from the

world. Both the Office of the Ombudsman and the IACHR have pronounced themselves denouncing the excessive and disproportionate use of the state apparatus against the protesters, and have urged the Ecuadorian government to guarantee the right to protest and human rights.

We know that it is the state policy that has violated Ecuadorians, by restricting not only our legitimate right to protest but also our possibilities to realize dignified lives. The signing of an agreement with the IMF and the neoliberal policies imposed by the Government constitutes a hard blow against the Ecuadorian people, and against those who are historically in situations of greater inequality, injustice and violence: women, young people, peoples and nationalities, the working class.

The more social injustice and alliance of the government with the national and transnational ruling classes, the greater discontent in the streets of organizations, movements, groups and popular sectors. The more politics of fear and repression, the more voices demanding that human rights be respected.

Given the Police and Armed forces brutality we hold President Lenin Moreno and his Minister Maria Paula Romo directly responsible for the physical and emotional integrity of the detainees; and we demand their immediate freedom.

We demand that the right to protest of the entire Ecuadorian people be guaranteed and the State of Exception be withdrawn throughout the national territory.

We call on the international community, feminist, women, popular and indigenous organizations to pronounce themselves on the severe situation of Ecuador and to be vigilant for the fulfillment of human rights.

We will continue together, until dignity becomes customary !!!

Collective signatures from Ecuador

ALAMES Ecuador

Movimiento de Mujeres de Sectores

Populares Luna Creciente

Asociación Femenina Universitaria

Colectivo Desde El Margen

Mujeres por el Cambio

Colectivo de Mujeres Universitarias

Mujeres de Frente

Ruda Colectiva Feminista

Plataforma Nacional por los Derechos de las Mujeres

Coalición Interuniversitaria contra el Acoso Sexual

Organización Ecuatoriana de Mujeres Lesbianas - OEML

Frente de la Mujer Trabajadora de CEOSL

Colectiva Runa Feminista

Colectivo Feminista

Colectivo Simpatizantes de VI Internacional - Ecuador

Colectiva Lilas en Acción

Eco-Justicia Abya Yala

Plataforma Vivas Nos Queremos

Colectivo de Antropólogas del Ecuador Campaña Aborto Libre Ecuador

Las Comadres

Federación de Estudiantes Secundarios del Ecuador

Colectiva Escuela Viva

Juventud Revolucionaria del Ecuador

Pueblo Shuar Arutam

Mesa de Género de la Universidad de Guayaquil

Plataforma de Mujeres Caminando Hacia la Igualdad-Imbabura

Fundacion Dayuma

ALDHEA

Surkuna

Colectivo de Geografía Crítica del Ecuador

Asociacion de Estudiantes de Gestión Local-UPS

Movimiento de Mujeres de El Oro - MMO

Coordinadora de Mujeres Fronterizas - CODEMUF -Loja
Colectivo de Mujeres Interuniversitarias
Secretaría de la Mujer de la UNE

Centro de Estudios del Trabajo Memoria

Organización Feminista Luchar

Red de acompañamiento en aborto -Las Comadres

Taller de Comunicación Mujer

Plataforma por la Tierra y Territorios Sostenibles

Sistema de Investigación sobre la

Problemática Agraria en el Ecuador - SIPAE

Instituto de Estudios Ecuatorianos - IEE

Corporación de Gestión y Derecho Ambiental ECOLEX

Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio FEPP

Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Negras CONAMUNE - Capatulo Carchi Fundación ALDEA

Movimiento de Mujeres Guayaquil
Asociación Femenina Universitaria-AFU Nacional

CEPAM Guayaquil

Plataforma de Mujeres Caminando hacia la Igualdad

Colectiva Carishinaenbici

Individual signatures Ecuador

Milena Almeida, 0913869889

Manuela Villafuerte Merino, 1714999990

María de Lourdes Larrea

Martha Arotingo, 1003176722

Gina Benavides

Lina MarÃa Polo Rojas	Guadalupe Vernimmen Aguirre 091866292-5	Nathalia Bonilla, 1710576735
Natalia Sierra	Tamara MejÃa. 0925754160	Lisset Coba, 1709196974
Natalia Alexandra Angulo Moncayo	Bertha MartÃnez PeÃafiel, 0913117156	Cecilia Jaramillo Jaramillo
Karla Calapaqui	Melissa Moreano	Paola Maldonado Rivadeneira
Maria Paula Granda	Geovanna Lasso	Alexandra Gisela Bueno Dumes
Cris Vega	Diana Vela Almeida	Lady CalderÃn Desiderio
Tania Bichara	Milena Paola Almeida MariÃ±o, 0913869889	Fanny Susana Silva Barreno
Milena Almeida, 0913869889	Paulina Palacios Herrera, 1706316666	Aura Isabel Carrillo Unda
Manuela Villafuerte Merino, 1714999990	Sandra Elisa Castillo AtehortÃa, 1751554658	Miryan Loor Bravo
Maria de Lourdes Larrea	Zaida Almeida GordÃn, 1716117435	Marjorie Lopez Merchan
Martha Arotingo, 1003176722	Cristina Ãlvarez Vivar, 1713280939	Graciela Ramirez, 1714639133
Lina Maria Polo Rojas	Kati Alvarez	Lidia Marina Ayala Ortiz
Natalia Alexandra Angulo Moncayo	Mariana Alvear	Joselyn Alexandra Pispira Espinoz
Annabelle Arevalo	MarÃa JosÃ GutiÃrrez GuzmÃn, 1726227992	Erika Arteaga Cruz
Cristina Morales Saro	Flor Toapanta Tumipamba, 1720029089	Silvia Bonilla
EstefanÃa Alejandra EspÃn Armas	Viviana Elizabeth Herrera Ayala, 1720114402	Alejandra YÃpez JÃcome
Ana MarÃa Morales	Monica Alejandra Rojas Puente, 1719370353	LiliÃn Basantes, 1001991155
Cristina Vera Vega	Silvana Haro Ruiz, 1414127295	Nalda Bustamante Apolo
Paulina LeÃn Crespo, 1707878763	Marcela Arellano Villa, 1709414658	Soledad Angus FrerÃ 0930330741
Bertha DÃaz MartÃnez, 0922023684	Erika Ramos Rubianes, 1710685270	Valeska Chiriboga Escobar 0923517031
RocÃo MartÃnez. Ecuador, 0905848099	Marcela Arellano Villa	Patricia GÃlvez Z, 1703757773
Amaranta Pico Salguero, 1716026305	AndrÃs Fernando RodrÃguez, 1715817464	Johanna Romero Larco, 0104736160
MarÃa Auxiliadora Balladares, 0909835407	Andrea Lecaro Briones, 0928811504	Fanny Elizabeth Herrera, 1713471413
MarÃa Fernanda Moscoso, 1705375119	Lila Penagos, 1750231969	Annabell Guerrero ,0801826785
Glenda MarÃa Rosero Andrade, 0915856421	Nancy Burneo Salazar, 1714194584	VerÃnica Potes , 0911100881
Tatiana Elizabeth Ugalde Ortega	Cristina Burneo Salazar, 1713670758	MarÃa Fernanda Recalde, 1712333408
Matilde Ampuero Ochoa, 0907730741	Andrea Villarreal Donoso, 0602910382	Samay SchÃtt, 1757377773
VerÃnica Burneo Salazar, 1715194592	Marisol RodrÃguez PÃrez, 1709801219	Vanessa BÃsquez Salas, 0201576667
Carlina Lucia Derks Bustamante, 1716056377	Ivette Vallejo, 1705357844	Sybel Martinez Reinoso, 1709662975
MÃnica Mancero, 170895756-6		Lizbeth Zhingri, 0106550783
Cristina Ãlvarez Vivar 1713280939		Laura Patricia VillacÃs Luna, 1709600124
		MarÃa Melina Wazhima MonnÃ, 0103557385

Jahiren Noriega Donoso, 1721921359	Movimiento al Socialismo - MAS	Grupo LUCHAS - Venezuela
Sonia Sobrino Andrade, 1725958134	Espacio Feminista - Brasil	Colectivo Feminista Ecorazonar -PerÃº
Cinthya Raquel Bailón Herrera, 0924873672	Jusfeminina, UFBA - Brasil	Asociación Servicios Educativos Rurales (SER) - Peru
MarÃaa Almeida MontÃºfar, 1716042492	Comuna - corriente interna del PSOL, sección brasileÃ±a de la IV Internacional	Centro de Estudios Regionales de Tarija (CERDET) - Bolivia
Collective international signatures	Mujeres del Movimiento Izquierda Socialista	Grupo de Trabajo de GeografÃas CrÃticas de las Desigualdades Mundiales - Alemania
ALAMES El Salvador	Feministas del Movimiento de los Pueblos	Colectivo Sin Fronteras - MÃ©xico
Movimiento por la Salud Salvador Allende - El Salvador.	Por un socialismo feminista desde abajo Frente popular Dario Santillán - Corriente nacional	Remjina - Red de Mujeres IndÃgenas y Afroamericanas- MEXICO
Red Latinoamericana Feminista	Movimiento por la unidad latinoamericana y el cambio social	8M Migración/Antirracismo Madrid o 8M- EspaÃ±a
Colectivo Miradas Criticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo - Uruguay, PerÃº, MÃ©xico, Brasil, EspaÃ±a y Ecuador.	Izquierda Latinoamericana Socialista- Movimiento 8 de abril Yonofui, Argentina	Democracia Socialista - Argentina
Malandra Colectiva Feminista - MÃ©xico	Frente AutonomÃaa, Territorio y Revuelta (ATR) - Argentina	Colectiva Feminista Socialista Las Voces de Lilith - MÃ©xico
Colectiva Feministas con Voz de MaÃz MÃ©xico	Frente de Trabajadoras de la Comunicación Chaco (FTCC) - Argentina	Sindicato Independiente de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores AcadÃmicos de la UNAM - MÃ©xico
Colectivo de Igualdad de GÃnero (CIGO) de la Nueva Central de Trabajadores - MÃ©xico	Red de GÃnero y Comercio - Argentina	Tercer Encuentro de Mujeres de AmÃ©rica Latina y el Caribe
Mujeres Transformando el Mundo - Chiapas, MÃ©xico	Asociación Lola Mora - Argentina	Red Jarilla de Plantas Saludables Patagonia- Argentina
Centro de Educación Integral de Base -MÃ©xico	Revista Amazonas	Alkarama - Movimiento de Mujeres Palestinas en EspaÃ±a
Colectiva Voces en Aquelarre-Colima MÃ©xico	Grupo Salud Autonoma de la Cazona de Flores	Union de Mujeres Campesinas de Honduras
Coordinadora Nacional de Usuaras y Usuarios en Resistencia (CONUR) - MÃ©xico	Plurales - Argentina	Mujeres Bicibles IberoamÃ©rica
Las Libres Organización feminista - Guanajuato MÃ©xico	EconomÃaa Feminista Emancipatoria - GT CLACSO	Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (CINEP) - Colombia
Investigación y DiÃlogo para la Autogestión Social - MÃ©xico	Colectiva Actoras de Cambio - Guatemala	Iniciativa Mujer Rural y Derecho a la Tierra - LatinoamÃ©rica
Asociación Civil feminista de Oaxaca - MÃ©xico	Asociación Feminista La Cuerda	Articulación Feminista Marcosur (AFM)
Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en AntropologÃaa Social - MÃ©xico DF	Colectiva de Mujeres Feministas de Izquierda	CISCSA - Argentina
Educación y CiudadanÃaa A.C.- San Luis de PotosÃ, MÃ©xico	Mujeres con Valor construyendo un futuro mejor -MUVACOFUM - Asociación de Mujeres de Peten Ixqik	SOS Corpo - Brasil
Coordinadora Socialista Revolucionaria (CSR)-MÃ©xico	Asamblea Feminista de Guatemala	CDE - Paraguay
	Colectiva Agroecofeminista Casa Colibri/Rochoch Tz'unün Asamblea General de Trabajadores (AGT), Venezuela	Cotidiano Mujer - Uruguay
		Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán PerÃº
		CPM Micaela Bastidas - PerÃº

CLADEM -PerÃº	Noelia Correa GarcÃa	professora da PUC/SP e militante do PSOL
Paro Internacional de Mujeres - PerÃº	AlÃ Aguilera	
DEMUS - PerÃº	Mina Navarro, docente UABP MÃxico	TÃssie Oliveira dos Reis - militante-DiretÃrio Estadual do PSOL CearÃ.
Grupo regional de Salud Internacional y SoberanÃa Sanitaria CLACSO	Juliana Vanessa Maldonado Macedo (CIESAS)	Maria da ConsolaÃo Rocha - professora, presidenta do Psol Minas
Red Latinoamericana de Sistemas y PolÃticas de Salud ALAMES	Sandra odeth Gerardo PÃrez. (CIESAS)	Ana Carolina Andrade - militante feminista e membra do DiretÃrio Nacional do PSOL
Colectivo de Salud ELAM-MÃxico	Gabriela Zamorano, MÃxico	
Rosas Rojas-MÃxico	Maria Teresa Sierra, MÃxico	Anita Prosperi Queiroz - militante feminista y ecosocialista del PSOL Brasil
A Coletiva - Portugal	Rosa MarÃa Cabrera Lotfe	
Gauche Anticapitaliste, SAP - Belgium	Yeny Charrez Carlos, fundadora del Movimiento Mujeres con Poder.	Tuanne Almeida de Souza - feminista e do DiretÃrio Municipal de Vila Velha - ES
SolidaritÃS - Switzerland	Rodrigo Castillo Aguilar - MÃxico	SÃmnia Bomfim, Diputada Nacional de Psol en SÃo Paulo - Brasil
Ensemble Ã Gauche Vaud - Switzerland	Viviane EspÃrito Santo Rodrigues, professora do Instituto Federal do Rio de Janeiro.	Fernanda Melchionna, Diputada Nacional de Psol en Rio Grande Sul - Brasil
NPA - France	Julia Matos de Pina - Rio de Janeiro, Brasil	Luciana Genro, Diputada distrital de Psol en Rio Grande do Sul - Brasil.
Socialist Resistance - Britain	Caio Leonardo Bessa Rodrigues Presidente da ComissÃo de RelaÃes Institucionais e Governamentais Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil	Nathalie Drumond por la Direccion Nacional de PSOL
Individual international signatures	Daniella Meggiolaro Paes de Azevedo	Manuela M. M. Silveira, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro - Brasil
Nancy Fraser, - New School for Social Research- Nueva York - EEUU	Fabiano Silva dos Santos, advogado, doutorando em direito pela PUC-SP.	Natalia Quiroga economista feminista UNGS
Amaia PÃrez Orozco - EspaÃa	Graziano, advogado, Vice Presidente da subcomissÃo de Direitos Humanos da OAB/SC ThaynÃ Jesuina FranÃa yaredy advogada Vice presidente da comissÃo de igualdade racial da ordem dos advogados do Brasil Gisele Cittadino	Karina Bidaseca (UNSAM/UBA)
Ana Silvia MonzÃn, sociÃloga feminista	Assino TaynÃ	Melisa Sotelo
Xochitl Morales Alcantar	Ana AmÃlia Camargos Professora PUC/SP e vice presidente da CDH da OAB/SP	Delfina Magnoni
Sandra Iventh GonzÃlez, docente UNAM	Cheron Moretti, educadora, feminista de MMM y Comuna-Psol, Brasil	Fabiana Andresen. Argentina
MarÃa Enriqueta Burelo Melgar, Grupo Amplio de Mujeres, Chiapas, MÃxico	TÃrzia Medeiros, feminista militante de la Marcha Mundial de Mujeres, PSOL en Brasil	Sandra Gil Araujo, Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani - Argentina
MarÃa VÃzquez	Jacqueline Parmigiani - militante feminista, AntropÃloga - executiva do PSOL ParanÃ	Lilia ParisÃ -Argentina
Ana MarÃa CerÃn CÃceres - Colombia/MÃxico	Rosa MarÃa Marques - economista,	Magali del Valle Marega - Argentina
Diana RodrÃguez VÃrtiz estudiante de posgrado, UNAM, MÃxico		Paula Cainzos -Argentina
Sara Lua GonzÃlez Forster		Patricia Castillo
Libertad GarcÃa Sanabria		Mirna RamÃrez
Wendolin Arenas Morales		Maya Alvarado
Gabriela Huerta Tamayo		MarÃa JosÃ Rosales Solano
Alicia Hopkins Moreno		
Lilian Balderas GarcÃa		

Diana Garc�a	Leticia Hernandez Salinas. Cuernavaca Morelos - M�xico	Trabajo Feminista Partido del PRT - M�xico
Asamblea General de Trabajadores (AGT),-Venezuela	Aime Jezabel P�rez Godinez militante del PRT- M�xico	M�nica Jim�nez Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME)
Esmely Maril� Coello - Venezuela	Griselda De Fuentes Rojano-Profesora de la ENAH - M�xico	Elizabeth Monta�o del SUTIEMS (Sindicato de la Uni�n de Trabajadores del Instituto de Educaci�n Media Superior)
Nieves Tamaroni - Venezuela	Nadia Violeta Cangas Montelongo - Coordinadora Socialista Revolucionaria M�xico	Ana Laura Ram�rez Huitr�n de la Red de Trabajadoras de la Educaci�n - M�xico
Vilma Vivas - Venezuela	Paola Casta�eda - Bogot� - Colombia	Norma Camacho de Asociaci�n Sindical de Trabajadores del Instituto de Vivienda del Distrito Federal - ASTINVI - M�xico
Zenaida Montero - Venezuela	Andrea Mar�a Navarrete Mogoll�n - Colombia	Margarita Estrada Igu�niz, CIESAS-CDMX
Yajaira Coello - Venezuela	Josefina Ch�vez, feminista mexicana	Melania Hern�ndez, M�xico
Rosal�a Zingales De San Crist�bal, Valencia, Pto. Ord�z y Caracas	Tania O. Valadez George- M�dica y Profesora de la UNAM-M�xico	Leticia Padilla Ciudad Ju�rez - M�xico
Luz Palomino de Caracas - Venezuela	Guadalupe Quijano Garc�a. Colectiva Voces en Aquelarre - M�xico	Mary Carmen Larralde Hurtado, Secretar�a de G�nero Sindicato de la UNAM - STUNAM
Al� Marcano - Venezuela	Blanca Radillo Murgu�a. Estudiante de la Maestr�a en Ciencias Matem�ticas, UNAM	Graciela Delgado de Ciudad Ju�rez
Rosa Montalvo Reinoso - Per�	Wendy Araceli Hern�ndez Mart�nez- Psic�loga - M�xico	Carolina Robledo Silvestre, Catedr�tica Conacyt Ciesas Ciudad de M�xico
Diana Miloslavich -Peru	Lesly Elizabeth Sol�s Mendoza, estudiante de posgrado UNAM-M�xico	Adriana Z�rate Escobar, FLACSO - M�xico
Mar�a Susana Paponi -Per�	Heather Dashner Monk-activista feminista- M�xico	Dra. Rosalva A�da Hern�ndez Castillo
Claudia Ayola Escall�n - Organizaci�n Caribe Afirmativo	Ana Mar�a L�pez Rodr�guez- Profesora en Universidad Chapingo- M�xico	Mar�a Isabel Cedano - Per�
Marcela L�pez Villa - Colombia	Dayana Sevilla Osornio- Mexico	Ibis Fern�ndez - Per�
Sandra R�tiva -Colombia	Alicia Mendoza Guerra, feminista, militante del PRT -M�xico	Cecilia Olea Maule�n - Per�
Juliana G�mez -Colombia	Andrea Medina Rosas abogada feminista -M�xico	Diana Miloslavich Tupac - Per�
Orfa Margarita -Colombia	Osmayra Solorio Loeza - Feminista Morelia Michoac�n M�xico	Gonzalo Basile - Rep�blica Dominicana
Briseida Barrantes de Polo Ciudadan - Panam�	Ver�nica Cruz, Las Libres Guanajuato -M�xico	Susan Pashkoff, Women's officer of Leyton and Wanstead Constituency Labour Party (personal capacity) - Britain
Ana Harcha Cort�s - Chile.	Sara Lovera periodista - M�xico	Terry Conway, LGBT officer of Islington North Constituency Labour Party (personal capacity) - Britain
Mar�a Luisa Garita - Costa Rica.	Melisa Mor�n Esteban, Comisi�n de	
Andrea G�mez Jim�nez - Costa Rica,		
Carmen Delcid Misericordia Tejedora de Sue�os.		
Rosa Aurora Espinosa G�mez		
Alison Frye, Profesional de Salud P�blica-EUA		
Cheryl Martens - EUA.		
Paola Cabello, Colectiva con Letra F - M�xico		

In defence of Greta Thunberg

8 October 2019, by **Daniel Tanuro**

The author of the *Impossibility of Green Capitalism* and numerous articles for Contretemps, Daniel Tanuro looks back at this campaign, which began immediately after the media highlighted the action of the young girl who accuses the business community of being responsible for climate change and governments of doing nothing commensurate with the threat and the extreme urgency of responding to it.

You don't have to look far to find the source of these ever-growing waves of hatred. This source is the national-populist, climate denying, sexist, racist and antisemitic extreme right-wing. It is spreading like a cancer, especially since the election of Trump, Brexit, and the successes of the German AfD, the French FN/RN and the Italian Lega, among others. The photoshop montages showing Greta alongside financier Georges Soros or a fighter of the Islamic state clearly show the antisemitic or Islamophobic intentions of these circles.

The links of this extreme right with fossil capital are proven, in particular

through the European Institute for Climate and Energy (EIKE). EIKE collaborates with the Heartland Institute, a US climate denying think tank funded by the oil sector and the Koch Group (the most powerful private company in the US, active in the fossil fuel sector and chemicals, violently climate denying). If we dig a little deeper, we find in the campaign against Greta Thunberg all the nebula of collaborators in reactionary think tanks and other climate denying "institutes" funded by Exxon and Chevron. Notably the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) from which Myron Ebell, a member of the Trump transition team at the head of the EPA, Breitbart News, etc., came.

The main themes of the charge against Greta Thunberg are the same on both sides of the Atlantic: that she goes back to school to learn what she doesn't know; that she is a puppet in the hands of Al Gore and green capitalism; that those who pull the strings use disabled children to impose a dictatorship of emotion; that she calls for a strike because the world is over, that's totalitarianism;

that poor girl is an illuminated woman, a sick woman, etc. [36]

Most of these elements were present in the commentary of Jordan Bardella (FN/RN) during Greta's visit to the French National Assembly.

We can see that climate denial does not explain everything, far from it. The hatred against Greta Thunberg is all the more vicious as the target is a woman, and a young woman. A young woman who is not afraid to accept herself as she is, with, as she herself explains, her different personality [37]. A brave, determined, intelligent, sensitive young woman who knows what she's talking about. A young woman who expresses herself very clearly, in the name of youth, in the name of the future, and does not hesitate to face the powerful with cheerful insolence. In a word: a witch.

When it comes to attacking a woman, what some call the "tradition of liberty" often makes France, unfortunately, the place where the most pestilential unpleasant smells are released. Those from Bernard Pivot's exceed everything [