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New lessons from the popular struggle in Ecuador: preliminary ideas

29 June 2022, by **Christian Arteaga**

Undoubtedly, the specificities and the platform of demands of the indigenous movement are characterized by the inclusion of demands of sectors of the middle and popular classes, which are hit, with a different intensity and virulence, by the neoliberal policies of the government. But also, in situ, we need to look at the forms of urban resistance. This text elucidates four ideas

thought up in the heat of the mobilization, which can subsequently be refined to present a broader picture of this new cycle of conflict and demands.

This is an indigenous uprising... and also a popular one

The new historic bloc created in 2019 demonstrated the strength and interlocution abilities of the indigenous movement as a fundamental organized actor mobilized in resistance against the neoliberalism that was being implemented with greater strength by the Moreno government. However, it also exhibited the organizational limit of organized urban movements (which in, in the past, were part of the

Coordinadora de Movimientos Social) but that also motivated - with difficulty and in a defensive from - its recomposition for the popular social fabric in the capital.

The progressive uprising that began on 13 June 2022 is however far from that of 2019 in terms of strategy and mobilization. In the latter case, urban social movements were substantive in defending and mobilizing every day, in a complex unity, but with the participation of high school and university students, especially from the Central University of Ecuador (UCE), neighbourhood residents, the anti-fascist movement, teacher trainers, women and surrounding communes. Almost all this diversity of actors converged decisively in the UCE, to sustain a permanent mobilization, joined by spontaneous sectors of young people, housewives and neighbours, among others. At that time, this struggle phased between the countryside and the city, allowing two very important convergent actors and strategies to be established: first, the takeover of territory up to Quito by the indigenous movement and second, sustained and diverse mobilization, in the face of a repressive onslaught throughout the city.

The uprising showed the re-emergence of the urban movement

Although the organized urban sector was of central importance in the nineties and the first five years of this century, it had experienced more than a decade of demobilization, harassment and weakness from 2007 to 2019. The turning point came in 2019, because this exposed the need for convergence between the countryside and the city. If then, the urban movement was able to sustain the mobilization and resistance to the government and its repressive apparatuses, for no more than a day and a half, today it is completely different, the mobilizations are daily, without rest, characterizing a determining variable in the praxis of the urban sector.

We exemplify this with the unusual force - although it is a historical feature - of the peri-urban sectors, for example, the south of Quito, the neighbourhoods of Nueva Aurora, Cutuglahua, Guamaní, Lucha de los Pobres, Unión Popular; the southeast like Edén del Valle, Obrero

Independiente, La Forestal up to Conocoto and, passing through, La Toggla; the northwest like La Comuna, Atucucho, Jaime Roldós, El Condado pobre and to the north, San Antonio, Carapungo, Calderón to the Oyacoto sector; finally, the centre north and south from the Central University to La Villaflora.

This institutes two central elements – first, that the peri-urban sectors share many of the exclusions and shortcomings of the rural world, that is why their demands and resistance are powerful and urgent; the second is social regroupment in the city, in addition to the still complex strengthening of the mobilized urban sector, as a new element in the popular struggle and resistance against the current neoliberalism.

This uprising exhibits class struggle and anti-colonial struggle

This connects with the previous point because it is clearly observable that the foci of resistance to the onslaught of the Policía Nacional are the peri-urban neighbourhoods, essentially working class and impoverished. The battles in the sectors of the south and north, show a total distance from the spontaneity of the inhabitants, if not a process of organization and learning to mobilize, which goes hand in hand with the characterization of a class identity. We say, then, that the effects of the increasingly brutal measures of neoliberalism concern the basic questions of subsistence and survival such as the daily costs of food, transport and public health in the

popular classes. On the other hand, in the sectors of the middle classes tending towards the popular camp, the priorities are embodied in everything relating to higher fuel prices, rather than basic subsistence itself.

However, these two attacks came together, in a scenario of class confrontation against the Lasso government and against the upper and upper middle classes. In terms of the latter there is also a strong inter-bourgeois conflict characterized by disputes between and on bank financial capital (Banco Pichincha and Guayaquil) as another ingredient of the country's general crisis.

On the other hand, and as part of this drift, the racialized component of the protest, thus, the indigenous movement, has historically wielded and wields a proposal for a plurinational state, which goes beyond ethnicity. Which has met with the most visceral responses from the hegemonic *mestizo* based on racism, classism and xenophobia. This is based on statements, and coverage on social media and television channels and a bourgeois public opinion that posits the idea of an attack on Quito, a strictly indigenous rebellion, therefore uniquely representing the interests of this sector. They seek to associate the indigenous movement with *Correísmo*, when we know that the latter, since 2019, based its administration on discrediting the Conaie indigenous organisation, because they rejected its extractivist policies. So, the anti-colonial component is shown in this struggle, against these racist discourses and practices.

The university is moving rightwards

This point is unprecedented in the mobilizing processes in recent years, and it is the role adopted by the university institutions. Their resistance to popular demands to open their doors and campuses to turn them into fields of peace and accommodation for the brothers and sisters of the nationalities, is evidence of a worrying rupture in their role, not only as builders of possible knowledge, but of expanding solidarity spaces to the vulnerable and impoverished sectors of the country. This act exposed in a pristine way the articulation of the private sectors of the Chambers, in this case the Chamber of Commerce, for example, with the Catholic University of Ecuador, through its principal, Fernando Ponce Leon. In addition, the lukewarm nature of the press releases of the main rectors calling for dialogue, combined with the quietism of many lecturers about what is happening in the country, elucidates how Lasso's discourse poses an important niche in the public university, as shown through lecturers who uncritically repeat their policies in digital portals, or question the organizational forms of students using the argument of violence, among other things.

These days have shown that the only possible politics and democracy is that of the people, in the streets, the tumultuous. Politicizing politics starts by no longer thinking that it can be done from social networks, quietism is one of the harmful components of neoliberalism, the real possibility of all change and construction is the people as a force and as history. Nothing else.

Two projects confront each other once more

28 June 2022, by Fernando López Romero

Indigenous and popular mobilization and the state of emergency

Although in a more veiled tone, it is the same message from the Minister of Government, David Jimenez. It is also the cry from the business associations, from the banks and big media. After several days of silence Guillermo Lasso spoke of dialogue on Thursday 16 and on Saturday 18 he declared a state of emergency in the provinces of Imbabura, Pichincha and Cotopaxi, where the indigenous and popular mobilizations have been the strongest this week.

For several days social mobilization has been growing in Quito and on Friday afternoon it reached its highest level. The map of mobilizations in Quito lays bare the situation: they are the poorest peripheral neighborhoods in the south of the city and the social periphery of the north and the valleys, together with the center of the city, where the indigenous mobilizations and the presence of the urban poor has been stronger; as they were in October 2019. There have been no mobilizations directed towards the National Assembly, the objective of the protest is clearly the Executive Power and the figure of the banker Guillermo Lasso.

The declaration of the State of Emergency raises the level of confrontation from the Government, and is the response to CONAIE's announcement: yes to dialogue but without neglecting mobilization and with results.

The "Indigenous Narco-Conspiracy"

For the government, the businessmen, the chorus from the right-wing media, the political right that includes broad sectors of increasingly reactionary and racist middle classes, and that deep and dark State of the security services, the indigenous and popular

mobilizations are seen within the framework of a macro conspiracy: it is *correismo* [1], in conjunction with organized crime, who are trying to bring down Lasso; the indigenous movement is their tool for this purpose. That is the meaning of the statements on Friday the 17th from Bogotá to the Teleamazonas newsagency by María Paula Romo, former Minister of Government under Lenin Moreno, who was pointed out in the report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as the main person responsible for the harsh repression of October 2019. In this explanatory framework, the message resonates that we need to work to get out of the economic crisis, whilst social struggle is disqualified as vandalism and barbarism.

The two options of the banker

There are two options. The first is to increase repression. Along these lines, the first big mistake was the arrest of the President of CONAIE on the night of Monday the 13th, which, in the best style of how Lasso's performance as President has been, was like shooting himself in the foot as it only served to accelerate the incorporation of new indigenous sectors, social organizations and popular sectors into the mobilizations. A second measure has been the immediate incorporation of the army against the mobilizations, although they are still in the second row behind the elite police troops. Like many similar bodies in Latin America, the Ecuadorian police have been advised by the Israeli government and, since the beginning of the mobilizations, they have used fast-moving motorized cavalry along with rubber bullets against the demonstrators. The third measure is the imposition of the State of Emergency and the announcement of the increasing, even lethal, use of force.

The State of Emergency entails the Metropolitan District of Quito being declared a security area under the control of the Armed Forces, a curfew from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., the abolition of the inviolability of the home and the prohibition of public demonstrations

and mobilizations. Guillermo Lasso thus takes refuge in the state apparatus.

The second path is the adoption of immediate measures, no longer repeating a dialogue without results in order to buy time as well as dilute social discontent. Only one measure has been announced by the government: the price control of essential products, however only intermediaries have been accused of speculation. But it has not been said which products will be controlled, whilst among those products that have risen the most, in addition to flour, is cooking oil at manufacturer prices, not intermediary prices. The oil sector, both palm growers and refiners, as well as agribusiness as a whole, are among those that have benefited most from Lasso's liberal policies.

These immediate measures have to do with the price of fuel; the extraordinary profits of financial capital that were maintained during the pandemic, drowning small and medium-sized bank debtors; the advance of mining on indigenous territories, which increased during the pandemic; the demands for fair prices by the producers of corn, bananas and rice, who are also drowned out by the banks and big capital; the supply of medicines for public hospitals; the increase in budgets for education that have been reduced since the end of Correa's mandate; a favorable and immediate line of credit for the popular and peasant economy.

That programme meets the demands of the majority of the population, but it is not Guillermo Lasso's. There are many voices that have long pointed out that this is possible, that it could be done with a change in the policy of submission to the IMF and by reducing the enormous rates of profit of big agribusiness, the big telephone companies and finance capital.

It means changing course, abandoning the dogma of neoliberalism and betting on another economic plan, and refusing to represent finance capital.

Two projects for the country

Conspiracy theories about what is happening in Ecuador crash into reality. None of the huge problems that were present in the great social outbreak of October 19, in which very broad popular sectors that were not part of the indigenous movement were mobilized, have worsened after two years of pandemic and one year of neoliberal government.

There is a project for a country of the majority, which in various ways organizes itself, expresses itself and resists. Then there is a country project of the great business elites, constantly plundering others and constantly failing. It is that of the sucretization of the businessmen's debt in 1982 and that of electoral fraud; of the Washington Consensus and of the bank holiday; of extractivism and the dictatorship of financial capital. [2]

The data presented by academic institutions, official bodies and social organizations are in plain view and show the confrontation between the two projects for the country: the country of capital accumulation through the dispossession of community territories, of the assets of small owners, and of the wages of the workers, the country of the order of savage capitalism; the other, a country based on the interests of the majority, on social and environmental justice, on the expansion and deepening of democracy, on the redistribution of wealth, a Plurinational and multicultural Ecuador.

On one side is the defense of the health of macroeconomic indicators, compliance with agreements with the IMF and international banks, and the increase in profit rates as an almost religious mandate; waste and luxury. On the other side, an immense and growing urban and rural poverty, the growth of homelessness, malnutrition, anguish and migration.

A statement by the University Council of the Central University of Ecuador on June 14 sets out the dimensions of the serious situation we are going through. There they state:

The recovery of macroeconomic indicators has not been reflected in an improvement of employment rates or in the standard of living of Ecuadorians, especially in rural areas. As of December 2021, according to the National Institute of Statistics and the Census (INEC), 4 out of 10 Ecuadorians in rural areas are poor and two out of 10 Ecuadorians are in extreme poverty. A situation that could be aggravated by the international context and the lack of appropriate government policy.

On the situation of higher education and public health, it added:

Public education at all levels has been affected by a sustained reduction in the budget, especially since 2019. Basic and secondary public education suffered a budget cut of 911 million dollars between 2019 and 2020 (source Ministry of Finance). Public higher education

reductions totalled 326 million dollars in these years. In health, the reduction in 2020 was 227 million (source Ministry of Finance). The trend has not been corrected by the current government.

A government policy that favours resources obtained from increases in oil revenue and tax collection, in order to reduce the fiscal deficit and strengthen the international monetary reserve, is questioned.

The declaration of a state of emergency as a preamble to a possible dialogue aggravates the situation. With this, Guillermo Lasso has drawn a dividing line between the social organizations and the government, increasing tension even further, and has summoned the political class itself, which, in general, has been very harsh in its questioning of the presidential action: they are with me, or they are with me... It is a very high stake for such a weak government.

The State of Emergency and the increase in repression may yet be able to contain social struggle, but only for now. As long as the social organizations do not suffer a strategic political defeat that dismantles them, and as long as the causes of social discontent remain alive, the struggle will persist. The neoliberal programme, under way since the return to democracy, could only be imposed through an openly authoritarian and right-wing regime.

Translated by David Fagan for International Viewpoint.

The emergence of an alternative in Sudan

27 June 2022, by **Paul Martial**

A disastrous coup

To counter its isolation, the junta is trying to rely on Muslim extremists

from the former dictatorial regime of Omar al-Bashir. In 1989, he seized power with the complicity of the fundamentalists led by al-Turabi. The latter had imposed a particularly

restrictive Islamic regime and had been the champion of war against the people of South Sudan by invoking jihad. Ten years later, al-Bashir got rid of al-Turabi but kept the

fundamentalists, well established in the state apparatus and unwavering supporters of the dictatorship. They were dismissed during the revolution, but al-Burhan has just reinstated them.

The economic situation is catastrophic, commodity and energy prices are rising, and Western loans are frozen. The only solution for the dictatorship is to try to find other donors. On the very day of the Russian intervention in Ukraine, Hemidti was going to Moscow to seek diplomatic and financial support. Given Putin's setbacks, it's not certain that the Sudanese generals can count on Russia's financial assistance. Another solution is Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, both interested in maintaining the dictatorship. Indeed, thousands of Sudanese fighters have been sent by Hemidti to Yemen to fight against the Iranian-backed Houthis.

For the junta, the diplomatic and economic disaster is also political, as it tries in vain to put down popular mobilizations that are not weakening. Demonstrations succeed one another with the only slogan being the departure of the junta.

Political alternative

This demand for the departure of the junta does not correspond at all to the agenda of the various mediations

driven by the West via the UN or the African Union. Their solution would be to return to the previous situation with a sharing of power between military and civilians. This proposal is inconceivable for those who lead the struggle, primarily the resistance committees which, through the neighbourhoods of the country's major cities, structure the movement. They play a leading role in the mobilizations, and now they are present in the political debate.

We have previously talked about the charter of people's power that is under discussion. The greater Khartoum resistance committees presented this at a press conference in mid-May. It includes democratic demands such as equal rights regardless of gender, race or religion, a total break with the military regime including judicial punishment for those responsible for the coup. At the security level, the charter favours an overhaul of military institutions and the withdrawal of troops from Yemen. An economic recovery plan against poverty, the fight against corruption and the cessation of the involvement of the army in economic activities. Finally, and perhaps a major step forward, the charter considers that the source of power must be the rank and file.

The political solution proposed by the resistance committees is:

The formation of a legislative council made up of the living forces of the revolution, which functions in a federal way: neighbourhood councils, federated at the level of cities, federated at the regional and finally national levels. This bottom-up legislative council, federally organized, must become the main political organ of the country. The aim is to transfer the maximum power from the centre to the regions, and to the local level.

This desire to organize popular control is the result of recent experience of negotiations after the revolution where the resistance committees were discarded in favour of the political class. It also reflects the more distant history where the popular movements have supported, against the military regimes, the two main Sudanese parties from the religious brotherhoods. Each time these parties have led the country to bankruptcy.

Such a charter should lead us to redouble our efforts to carry out concrete solidarity actions such as union twinning, like Britain's National Education Union which has forged links with members of the Sudanese Teachers' Committee and supported them during their strike on wage issues.

17 June 2022

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **[l'Anticapitaliste](#)**.

Labor: Two Visions of the Way Forward

26 June 2022, by **Dan La Botz**

The AFL-CIO held its convention in Philadelphia on June 12, for the first time electing as president a woman, Liz Shuler, and also for the first time a Black man, Fred Redmon, as secretary-treasurer. While some other organizations began to elect women and Blacks to leadership positions in the 1970s, the AFL-CIO has only now

done so, as usual decades behind progressive developments.

Unions are in trouble. Only 10 percent of workers are organized and only 6 percent in the private sector. Shuler promised to do something about that: "Just as the AFL invested to create the CIO [Congress of Industrial

Organizations] for industrial organizing in the 1930s today, we are launching the Center for Transformational Organizing—the CTO. This is the vehicle that will accelerate and convert the energy of this moment to take our movement into the next century. The CTO will bring together the brightest

organizers, technologists, and researchers.” All with the goal of organizing high tech industries. “In the next 10 years we will organize and grow our movement by more than 1 million working people,” she said. “How’s that for a goal!” As several top union officials said, in reality, it’s a pathetically small number that would not create enough momentum nor change the balance of forces.

Beyond that, the AFL did not create the CIO, rather the conservative John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers, seeing that leftists were beginning to organize heavy industry, led several unions that left the AFL in 1935 to create the CIO to both organize industrial workers and keep the left in check. In 1949 the CIO expelled the Communists from the union and in 1955 the AFL and CIO merged.

The AFL-CIO with 12.5 million members is the largest labor organization in the United States, but it invited no representatives from the two most exciting labor organizing campaigns currently taking place, not the Amazon Labor Union that recently succeeded in organizing the first Amazon facility of 8,000 members, nor Starbucks Workers United, that has

organized over 150 coffee shops. The AFL’s bureaucratic mentality made it impossible to invite either group of workers because they are not members of the federation, Amazon’s union being independent and Starbucks being affiliated with the two-million-member Service Employees International Union, that is not part of the AFL-CIO.

The circumvention’s featured speaker was President Joe Biden, who pledged to be the most pro-labor president ever, but whose labor legislation and social programs have been stalled in Congress.

The other labor meeting, the Labor Notes Conference in Chicago, Illinois from June 16 to June 19, represented practically the opposite approach to union matters. The Labor Notes Conference, which has no official standing with the AFL-CIO or any other labor organization, brings together union activists from scores of different unions. The conference, attended by 4,000 people with many more watching online, opened with five speakers that included Starbucks and Amazon workers who are organizing their workplaces. Labor Notes, a labor education center, places rank-and-file workers at the

center of its work and sees their role as central to a revival of unions.

A theme of this conference was reviving the strike, workers’ most important tool. A good deal of the conference dealt with the issues of Black and Latino workers, with some workshops conducted in Spanish. Scores of workshops offer rank-and-file workers the opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas. While most of the conference dealt with organizing workers to fight employers, there were also sessions with authors of books on labor, music, and the arts.

The featured speaker at the Labor Notes Conference was Senator Bernie Sanders, self-proclaimed democratic socialist and twice candidate for U.S. president. He called upon workers to use their power to change the political direction of the country, to make government do more for workers.

The AFL-CIO’s top leaders offer a bureaucratic and technical solution to workers’ problems, while Labor Notes offers a model emphasizing the initiative and creativity, the courage and struggle of rank-and-file workers.

19 June 2022

The Rightwing’s Supreme Court Coup

25 June 2022, by **Against the Current** Editors

The overturn of *Roe v. Wade* not only declares war on women’s bodies and rights. As legal scholars immediately recognized, the leaked Alito Supreme Court majority opinion throws open a challenge to every basic right assumed to flow from the Fourteenth Amendment and the elementary principle of personal privacy — same-sex or interracial marriage, LGBT rights, incredibly even legal contraception.

Yes, the absurd “life begins at fertilization” doctrine creates a wide-open door to religious rightwing fanatic state legislatures to outlaw

long-established methods of birth control, starting with IUDs and morning-after pills. “Parental consent” might be tested out as a legal ploy, or morning-after pills criminalized as abortifacients.

The silver lining in this deeply evil ruling is that, as the saying goes, what’s done in the dark will come to the light. Whatever the motivations for leaking the draft ruling may have been, we salute those who made it public — meaning that the popular outrage could explode last spring, rather than as the Court majority intended, in the summer political

shutdown preceding the November midterms.

Chief Justice Roberts is righteously outraged by a leak that violated long-entrenched secrecy of the Court’s drafts and deliberations. Yes, confidentiality was established practice — so was stare decisis, meaning respect for precedents, especially when those had been confirmed in subsequent rulings. So was some decent restraint in overthrowing established rights, and concern for the human consequences of doing so.

Alito has thrown all that in the garbage in the service of a viciously reactionary ideology. Roberts, it's reported, didn't want to "go all the way" to consummating the destruction of *Roe*, preferring to shredding its substance by upholding the Mississippi 15-week ban while leaving *Roe* stripped naked but formally in place. Roberts' concern is the precious "legitimacy of the Court." *That legitimacy, now at a low point, is precisely what needs to be destroyed.*

The Making of a Monster

Roberts himself birthed the monster that he no longer controls. It began with the Court's negation of a century of campaign finance law, followed by the gutting of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Under Roberts' pretense that Barack Obama's election meant that racism no longer matters in election practices, he enabled the entrenchment of the WSCOTUS (White Supremacy Court of the United States) majority doctrine.

Something needs to be said here about the composition as well as the function of this Court. It was under the influence of mass social movements — Civil Rights and Black Liberation and feminism above all — that Justices like Thurgood Marshall and Ruth Bader Ginsburg got to the Supreme Court.

These were not only powerful legal minds but veteran fighters for equal rights and justice. For a couple of decades, the Court took on the appearance as a —backstop for basic rights, even if inconsistently so.

Contrast them with the current six-person WSCOTUS majority. The three Trump appointees, who've done nothing in their lives except to be groomed by right-wing dark money and the Federalist Society to reach their present station in order to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, will perpetrate whatever malicious mischief opportunity may provide. The practice began back in 1991 when Clarence Thomas, even before he lied about harassing Anita Hill, lied about never having discussed *Roe* in law school.

That set the precedent for the succession of reactionary nominees to evade saying where they stand "on cases that might come before the Court" — openly lying with impunity in their confirmation hearings.

When Brett Kavanaugh told the Senate Judiciary Committee that *Roe* was both a precedent and "repeatedly confirmed" by subsequent opinions, there was exactly one person in the whole United States who apparently didn't know he was lying through his teeth — Susan Collins, the pro-choice Republican Senator whose vote assured his confirmation.

The leaked Alito opinion, even if it might be sanitized a bit around the edges (like removing his scholarly footnote citing a 17th-century English barrister proclaiming abortion to be murder, and who also advocated the execution of witches), says very clearly that with the far right now firmly in control of the Court, what used to be rules of the legal and political game no longer apply.

Along with state legislatures running riot with anti-choice and voter-suppression and intimidation laws, legislatures are putting in place the power to overturn elections when they don't like the results.

The destruction of reproductive rights and basic democracy is a seamless whole. Beyond the right to abortion, as crucially important as that right is in itself, this opens a more intense phase of a constitutional and political legitimacy crisis that's been stewing in the United States for a decade or so.

Battles to Come

It's no coincidence that the most aggressive anti-abortion laws proliferate in the same states where maternity and infant mortality rates are already highest. Or that the most vicious anti-abortion politicians are also the most vociferous enemies of fixing this country's tattered and disgraceful public health system, costing hundreds of thousands of lives during the COVID pandemic.

This is entirely logical behavior for a misogynist and racist right wing that

cares about "sacredness of life" only before it's born. But the brutality of that logic intensifies the level of public outrage around the overturn of *Roe*. That in turn may affect how rapidly some states move to protect abortion and other reproductive rights, and whether the federal-level Democratic Party grows enough spine to defend women's rights more than verbally.

On the symbolic level, Senate Majority leader Chuck Schumer called a vote on the Reproductive Freedom Act already passed by the House of Representatives, but with no chance of reaching the 60-vote threshold to break the filibuster. Another symbolic, but more significant, show of defiance would be for the Senate Judiciary Committee to convene immediate hearings, charging Brett Kavanaugh and Neil Gorsuch for lying to Congress in their confirmation hearings. Don't hold your breath...

It would be way too much to hope that Joe Biden would use presidential power to order abortion services to be provided in U.S. military hospitals, let alone announce nominations to expand the Supreme Court in order to restore abortion and voting rights. It's illusory and enervating, rather than energizing, to dream of such miracles.

But there are bitter imminent fights that the federal government won't be able to evade. State governments where abortion is banned post-*Roe* will seek, for example, to criminalize the use of abortion pills that are authorized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), along with telemedicine counseling that's become widely employed during the COVID crisis.

Since the federal government controls interstate commerce and the post office, it will be compelled to take a stand — or be complicit in the crackdown — on essential medical services. That becomes even more important if and when states try to prosecute pregnant people, or those assisting them, for going to other states for abortion services.

The biggest fights may occur within states — in Michigan for example, one of over a dozen states where snap-back anti-abortion laws will be in

effect immediately after the Supreme Court ruling. Michigan's 1931 law is being challenged before the state supreme court by both Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Planned Parenthood, charging that it violates protections in the state constitution.

In fact, a preliminary injunction is currently in place as the Planned Parenthood suit is before the court. In response, the legislature sued to overturn the injunction.

On another front, signatures are being collected for a ballot initiative — just over 425,000 are required — to place a reproductive freedom provision into the Michigan constitution. This referendum importantly goes beyond a narrow defense of *Roe* to cover a full range of expanded rights to contraception, pre- and post-natal care and childbirth, as well as miscarriage management. That's especially significant since maternal and infant mortality, particularly in low-income and people of color communities, remain high.

Intriguingly, Michigan's attorney general and seven prosecutors in the most populous counties where most of its reproductive health clinics are located, have pledged not to prosecute abortion cases if the state ban goes into effect. (The 1931 law criminalizes medical staff who assist an abortion. The only exception is to save the life of the pregnant person.)

What will happen if rightwing county prosecutors try to pursue residents

going into counties where abortion services continue in defiance of the 1931 law? What if rightwing militants threaten or perpetrate violence against providers and patients?

It's not hard to imagine the multiple levels of confrontation and chaos that can result from a deeply unpopular reversal of a basic right that more than two generations of people in the United States have assumed was an established fact.

It is true that restrictions have limited access to abortion. Most important is the Hyde Amendment that denies federal Medicaid funding for abortion. Whether the Democrats or the Republicans dominated Congress this amendment has been renewed every year since 1976.

How Much Further?

We should know by now that when constraints are removed, rational behavior need not prevail. (In a different context, George W. Bush's 2003 invasion of Iraq and Vladimir Putin's present invasion of Ukraine are examples of irrationality with well-known catastrophic results we've explored in previous editorials and articles.)

It's not probable that even the most troglodyte of state legislatures would attempt to abolish marriage equality. The likelier tactic would be something

like resolutions empowering county clerks to deny licenses based on their "personal conscience" against same-sex or interracial or interreligious or whatever other marriages they happen to disapprove.

Outfits like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) are available to advise the levels of bigotry that might pass the SCOTUS test. Ultimately, the Supreme Court might be asked to restore the hideous Clinton-era Defense of Marriage Act that was struck down in 2013, the era before the white-supremacist misogynist monster took full control.

There's no need to outline the sinister possibilities, as the list is endless and the creativity of the reactionary imagination has few limits, nor is it constrained by public opinion. What were once considered norms and rules of law, of process, of politics have been shredded.

For the defense of abortion rights in particular, it's not a question of whether to be "in the streets" or "in the legislature" or "at the ballot box" or "through civil disobedience." We need to be everywhere.

It is impossible to overstate how far basic rights can be driven back if the attacks aren't forcefully resisted. The right wing's coup by Court might have begun with its decades' long march to overthrow *Roe*, but it absolutely will not end there.

Source July-August 2022, [ATC 219](#)

The Rail Strikes Are Entirely Justified

24 June 2022, by [Aaron Bastani](#)

As each strike encompasses a 24-hour period, overnight work won't take place either, meaning a later start and fewer services even on days when daytime staff are present. In short, Britain's railway network will either shut down, or be severely disrupted, for a week.

Britain's billionaire-owned papers and Partridge-esque TV hosts are depicting the strikes as selfish. [3] Yet what the RMT is demanding is the bare minimum for any union worth its salt. Alongside no compulsory redundancies - which is absolutely necessary if the government is serious about increasing passenger numbers -

it's asking for an 11% pay increase. In other words, the RMT wants wages to keep up with inflation so workers don't become poorer in real terms.

This is all the more justified given that RMT members swallowed a pay freeze last year. According to the [union's calculations](#), a worker earning £35k

has already lost spending power equivalent to £3,150. If there's another freeze for 2022, that will rise to £7,788.

The current cost of living crisis means we can expect [these kinds of setbacks](#) for workers across much of the wider economy. The difference is that in the rail industry, workers are sufficiently organised to push back. While this makes them a target for Britain's reactionary media, for the rest of us, they offer the template for a high wage economy.

With 2022 expected to see the biggest hit to living standards since 1956, it should come as no surprise that the RMT's response prefigures events elsewhere. From 20 June to 11 July, the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA) will ballot more than 6,000 of its members at Network Rail. This comes after the union already announced strike ballots among members at Avanti West Coast, CrossCountry, East Midlands and West Midlands Trains. Meanwhile, members of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) are striking later this month at Hull Trains, Greater Anglia and Croydon Tramlink. [4]

The strength of feeling among ASLEF members, who have historically been more hesitant to strike, is no different to that of the RMT. Indeed, [99% of the union's members](#) on the Croydon Tramlink voted to strike next week, on a turnout of 86%. While politicians might lambast the 'militancy' of trade unions and their failure to reflect members' interests, not a single MP enjoys this level of democratic legitimacy.

While rail workers are expected to see the value of their wages fall by at least 10% this year, industry fat cats are rolling in it. The chief executive for Network Rail, Andrew Haines – who recently said the strikes would make a pay increase harder – earns more than £585k a year (before bonuses). Jeremy Westlake, the organisation's chief financial officer, earns £415k. Network Rail's seven managing and group directors each earn around £330k – roughly twice the prime minister's salary. Anit Chandarana, until last month Haines' chief of staff, made £160k – twice what Mick Lynch, the RMT general secretary, earns. Among all the anti-union slander, you will struggle to find this mentioned by The Sun, Times or Telegraph.

Private operators are no better. Patrick Verwer, boss of perennially crisis-stricken Southern Rail, [took home £482k](#) in 2019. Matthew Gregory, the CEO of First Group PLC which operates several lines across the UK, received [a basic salary of £635k in 2018](#), and can earn as much as £1m in additional bonuses. A private business can pay what it likes, you might say – but that fails to wash when firms are administering public services with taxpayer subsidies.

While demanding pay restraint and threatening job cuts, it's unclear what the government actually wants. Central to Tory plans for 'levelling up' at the last election were proposals to expand the rail network. Indeed, they even went as far as to claim they would "restore many of the Beeching lines". It's hard to reconcile opening services closed for 60 years with laying off staff.

Grant Shapps, the transport secretary, appeared to admit as much when he recently claimed that "unlike the past 25 years, when rising passenger demand year after year was taken for granted [...] today the railway is in a fight." With passenger numbers temporarily down, the government spies an opportunity to bully unions with diminished leverage. Yet when Shapps announced the creation of Great British Rail last year, he declared how "growing the network and getting more people travelling" was a "core aim".

And while passenger numbers are below their pre-Covid highs, they are recovering: the industry generated £5.9bn in ticket sales in the year to March – nearly three times that of the previous year. What's more, [statistics from the Department for Transport](#) show passenger numbers were 90% of pre-Covid levels by Thursday 19 May, rising to 92% over the following three days. If the Tories are actually serious about growing rail use, then even the work from home revolution shouldn't mean job cuts.

Real wages in the UK have been stagnant for more than a decade. Now, in the shadow of Covid and a spike in inflation following the war in Ukraine, this will only get worse. Anyone who wants Britain to become a high wage economy, values public services and wants to address the climate crisis should support these strikes. Industrial action is the step ladder to a more prosperous and equal society.

21 June 2022

Source [Novara Media](#)

Brutal repression as social struggles rise in Iran

23 June 2022, by [Behrooz Farahany](#)

These were sometimes national actions organized simultaneously in

dozens or even hundreds of cities in the case of teachers' struggles,

something never before seen in the 43 years of the history of this regime.

This means that tens of thousands of activists have been involved in organizing these struggles.

Historic strike in the oil sector

In the past, struggles were focused on the late payment of wages, or blocking closures of work units. But last year the demands were for higher wages, respect for the rules of career development provided for in the statutes, indexation of salaries and retirement pensions to inflation, the parallel increase in pensions and wages, and of course, the right to strike and to form independent organizations.

Among these strikes was the largest in the history of the Islamic Republic: more than 100,000 workers in the oil and petrochemical sector went on strike in more than 12 departments in southern and central Iran. The strike lasted two months and ended only with the satisfaction of most of the demands. The increase of around 115% in teacher mobilizations, compared to the previous year, is the striking phenomenon of this period. Retirees have also organized regular national events.

The water crisis and drought threaten agriculture, and even the supply of drinking water. They are combined with the sudden increase in the prices

of basic necessities, following the government's very neoliberal decision to apply the "true prices" of basic products.

Several protests erupted in dozens of cities with overtly political and subversive slogans going as far as "Death to Ayatollah Khamenei!" the most powerful figure in the state. There were deaths and dozens of injuries. The ongoing struggles affect industrial complexes, such as the Hepco steel plant and the Haft-Tapeh sugar refinery, education, as well as retirees.

Hunger strikes

The regime fears the growing solidarity between sectors of activity, as well as their beginning of convergence which shows that a certain threshold of organization and collective consciousness has just been crossed. The authorities have set up a highly sophisticated system of repression and surveillance based on competing security forces and focused on sporadic arrests of known organizers of the mobilizations. Despite this, the Iranian authorities have found that the number of protests and demonstrations has continued to grow.

As arrests and/or warnings to well-known activists had no effect, the authorities decided to strike a blow

and take action brutally. Taking advantage of a tourist trip by two French trade unionists, Cécile Kohler and Jacques Paris, and their meeting with well-known figures of Iranian trade unionism, the authorities arrested more than ten Iranian trade unionists on charges of "propaganda and conspiracy against the Islamic regime, in collusion with a foreign power". The two French nationals were also arrested and charged with espionage.

Some of those arrested went on hunger strikes, immediately joined by others, already imprisoned, who began "hunger strikes in solidarity". To date, the total number of hunger strikers is 61, an unprecedented phenomenon in Iranian jails. Protest statements in support of the imprisoned activists are pouring in from around the world. The "Collective of French Trade Unions for the Defence of Iranian Workers", with the support of two Geneva trade union structures and components of the Iranian diaspora, organized a rally on 10 June in Geneva, in front of the ILO headquarters.

The economic, social, political, ecological and even moral crisis (with revelations of the theft of public money by state officials) has reached a critical level, which can lead to an open confrontation between the people and the regime.

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

House Committee Says Trump Was at Center of Attempted Coup

22 June 2022, by **Dan La Botz**

The hearing's revelations represent a landmark in American history. Only former president Richard Nixon's Watergate scandal, involving his agents' break-in at Democratic Party headquarters and other dirty tricks to win the 1974 presidential election, even comes close. And when

threatened with impeachment, Nixon resigned.

Now we have a U.S. president accused of a seditious conspiracy and organization of a coup d'état, the first such attempted interruption of the peaceful transfer of power in 234

years under the Constitution. While the media had previously made this case and many on the left believed that Trump was responsible for the insurrection on January 6, no government body had previously said so. The House hearing, the first of five that will be broadcast, puts

tremendous pressure on Attorney General Merrick Garland and the Justice Department to indict Trump, who still leads the Republican Party and has declared himself a candidate for the presidential election in 2024. Garland has said, "We will follow the facts wherever they lead," but he seems to be reluctant to indict Trump.

The two-hour television broadcast carried by all major channels except Fox, watched by twenty million people, included videotape of the violent attack on the Capitol and both taped and live testimony, making clear that the events of January 6 were not a peaceful protest demonstration run amuck, but a planned attack. Fox News, which supports former president Trump, aired without commercial interruption rightwing commentators Tucker Carlson who called the House hearings "lies."

The Republican Party opposed holding the hearings and only two Republican congressional representatives, Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger, participated in the committee. The

Republicans subsequently voted to expel Cheney from the party leadership. Both Cheney and Kinzinger are viewed by Trump and his followers as traitors.

What happens now?

The political problem is that over 40 percent of Americans have been convinced by Trump's "big lie" that he won the election, even though every court ruled against his election challenges. Those people are unlikely to have their minds changed by the hearings.

So, the question arises: What happens if the Department of Justice indicts Trump and tries him? There is among some liberals the fear that indictment of the former president will in the current climate will inevitably be perceived as a partisan persecution of Trump. If Trump is put on trial, they argue, this could both further divide the country and incite his followers to more violent action. On the other

hand, many progressives believe that Trump should be indicted. Some Democrats fear that if the Justice Department doesn't indict Trump, Biden will continue to be perceived as weak and ineffective, as well as irresponsible. The far left is too small to have any effect on these debates, and hasn't said much about them.

It doesn't seem that these hearings will have much impact on the mid-term elections of November 2022 that the Republicans are expected to win, which would give them control of both houses of Congress and the power to shut shot down the House investigation of January 6. Trump, who still leads the Republican Party and is running for president in 2024, could win. All of this makes the Attorney General's decision critical, but even indictment and conviction would not stop Trump from running for president. There would have to be a change in the minds of the American people.

12 June 2022

Parliamentary elections show growing mistrust of French state

21 June 2022, by l'Anticapitaliste

In Guyana in particular, the victory of Jean-Victor Castor, from the MDES (Mouvement de décolonisation et d'émancipation sociale), as well as that of Davy Rimane (LFI) in the 2nd constituency are the long-awaited political translation of the social movement of 2017, which had highlighted the shortcomings of the state in this territory. The NPA and the MDES share important positions against French imperialism and for the social demands of the working classes. In the 2nd constituency, Philippe Poutou supported Christophe Pierre in the first round, who defended a break with French domination, a voice for indigenous

people and for social demands. He obtained 11.1% of the vote and, for the second round, it seemed obvious to support Davy Rimane, a figure of the social movement.

In the first constituency, the result was unprecedented, with none of the candidates supported by the bourgeoisie reaching the second round. The unexpected outcome will see Yvane Goua, spokesperson for the Trop Violans association, at the forefront of many social movements since 2017, and Jean Victor Castor, deputy secretary general of the pro-independence MDES, confront each other. The two candidates defend a

position of radicalism towards the French state and project themselves in the perspective of an emancipating statutory evolution from French tutelage. Yvane Goua defends more populist positions than Jean Victor Castor who defends a global project of emancipation put forward by the MDES.

The right saw its two candidates being left behind, and as for the four lists supported by the various members of the majority of the CTG (all identifying with NUPES), their assembled votes would not have allowed them to reach the second round! The second round promises to be close and activists

politically close to the NPA have already gone back to campaign to elect the MDES comrade.

In the second constituency, the outgoing Macron-supporting deputy came out ahead but with a smaller lead than in 2017. He will be opposed as in 2017 by trade unionist Davy Rimane, supported by LFI. Christophe

Pierre, who received the support of Philippe Poutou, ceded third place by a few votes to another leader of the 2017 social movement, Manuel Jean Baptiste. The second round promises to be close, in 2017 only 51 votes separated the two candidates, requiring a new second round. A victory for Davy Rimane combined

with the victory of a protest deputy in the first constituency could open a new page in the long march towards the emancipation of French Guiana.

It is to be hoped that these electoral victories will help build a movement against French colonialism and for the victory of the social and democratic demands of oppressed peoples.

Defeat for Macron, breakthrough for the far right: urgency of a fighting left

20 June 2022, by NPA - Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste

The defeats of several leading Macronists, from Richard Ferrand to Christophe Castaner including Amélie de Montchalin, who join Blanquer defeated in the first round, testify to the rejection of Macron and his ilk. [5]

Macronia weakened against a background of political instability

The composition of the National Assembly presages a continuation and amplification of the situation of political instability, with a minority “presidential majority” unable to govern alone. Given policies he pursued during his first term and the radically anti-NUPES campaign between the two rounds, Macron will undoubtedly seek support to his right, hardening his policies even further.

The democratic crisis is continuing and growing, with a very high abstention rate and a significant distortion of votes due to the voting system, which still does not include any form of proportional representation. Abstention is particularly high among young people and the working classes, who felt little interest in a campaign that the government did everything to make inaudible.

Against the danger of the extreme right, a surge on the left

With 89 MPs, the Rassemblement National has achieved a historic score, and confirms its process of “normalization”, with a real presence in several regions (in the north, east and south-east) and breakthroughs in others. The RN will certainly have fewer MPs than the left, but its capacity to cause harm will be considerably amplified, as it seeks - unfortunately with success - to take advantage of the political instability and the democratic and social crisis. The fascist threat is there, and the current government bears a heavy responsibility, through its policies and speeches, for this dangerous phenomenon.

The NUPES scores show the existence of a significant and positive dynamic on the left. The FI has four times more MPs, which confirms the presence of a significant rejection “from the left” of Macron and neoliberal policies, and of an aspiration for more social justice, ecology and democracy, and even of a hope for a better world. Despite our criticisms of the NUPES, the NPA called for a vote for its candidates we welcome the fact that millions of

people have seized on its candidates to express their anger against Macron by voting for a left breaking with social liberalism.

Struggle and rebuild an anti-capitalist political force

From today we must prepare the struggles of tomorrow, relying among other things on the militant dynamics generated by the campaigns of some of the NUPES candidates. We must constitute or perpetuate collectives ready to lead the coming battles against authoritarian neo-liberalism, starting with the defence of our pensions, which should be a struggle of the whole political and social left, as well as that for the defence and revival of public services.

In a situation where the danger of the extreme right is asserting itself, there is also an urgent need to build tools of resistance and organization for our social camp, including at the political level. We need a broad political force to defend the interests of the vast majority of the population and the perspective of another society, free from capital and social and ecological disasters.

Anger in India over Modi's new army recruitment plan

19 June 2022, by **Radical Socialist**

India like all hegemonistic powers spends unnecessarily and unjustifiably huge amounts of money on its armed forces because it wants to "power project" and not merely to territorially protect itself. "Power Projection" and having a "Sphere of Influence" or being "Naturally Pre-eminent in the Region" are all euphemisms for wanting to dominate, and when desired, bully weaker countries in the neighbourhood and beyond. India has the second largest armed forces in the world; its annual defence budget is the world's third largest; and it ranks fourth largest as an importer of arms. It is also desperate to build up a huge public-private military-industrial complex. In addition, the Indian army has been used massively for suppression of internal dissent.

India also has the largest number of under-nourished and mal-nourished people as compared to any other country in the world. Official statistics that are publicised seriously underestimate the proportion of people below the poverty line as well as the size of the those "vulnerable" and at constant risk of falling below or near that poverty line which in any case does not cover minimum levels of "basic needs" such as health, education, housing, social security, etc. In short, its public welfare systems are a longstanding and enduring disgrace! This BJP central government, like previous ones, is not in the least interested in shifting financial resources from the defence sector to address these areas. Rather, under the BJP dispensation, privatization of healthcare, of education, contractisation of jobs, the growth of joblessness hand in hand with the growth in wealth of the top

(approximately) 325000 households to above Rs 10 crores has augmented disparities beyond its predecessors.

It is within this overall political-strategical framework of pursuing regional hegemonistic ambitions, strengthening nuclear and non-nuclear military capacities, and communalising the whole coercive apparatus of the armed forces, the paramilitaries and the police, along with a steeply right-wing economic policy, that we must understand its latest measures, namely widening the pool from which the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) is to be selected as well as Agnipath.

Widening the pool for CDS selection means destroying the principle of prioritising seniority and making sure that the CDS chosen is solidly pro-Hindutva as well as becoming even more subordinate to Modi's PMO. The Agnipath policy has two key purposes. First, by creating greater competition for a more restricted number of full-time recruits, make it clear that those willing to support Hindutva ideology and practice will be favoured. Those with the four-year 'tour duty' experience (through which they would have learned to use sophisticated arms) can then become part of other paramilitary forces or form private militias for control by Hindutva forces operating through and outside state and central governments. Secondly, yes, there is an economic purpose---to shift expense burdens from paying pensions but NOT to promote public welfare or to create more decent and secure jobs. It is to release more resources for technologically strengthening and streamlining the military war-fighting capabilities.

Around 60% of India's defence budget currently is spent on salaries and pensions whereas in China it is only one-third.

Why has there been a public outcry and protest actions in various places by youth including those who in some way lean towards Hindutva? The reason is obvious---in a country where unemployment is rising to unprecedented levels and where insecure forms of employment at miserable wages are rampant and routine, one sure avenue of decent existence, albeit very small, indeed tiny in the overall scheme of things---some 60,000 recruits annually---is now being cut by three-fourths and more. A look at the recruitment patterns of JCOs and other ranks in the army show a preponderance of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Bihar, Rajasthan - some of the core areas of Hindutva militant cadre recruitment, as well as scenes of recent violence. Caste and community data is not openly given as the army professes to be above caste and community, but sufficient data exists to show preferences. For example, the President's Guard, considered an elite regiment, is dominated by Rajputs, Hindu Jats and Sikh Jats. A CNN-IBN report of 2014 suggested that out of India's huge army, only about 29,000 were Muslims, though at the officer level India has had eight Muslim Major Generals till the same period. Clearly, the trends do suggest that the same population that has been voting heavily for the ideological stance of the RSS, ignoring other socio-economic issues like rising prices, destruction of health care, or complete dismantling of the public sector, is also the biggest force going into the

army.

The Agnipath scheme is a cynical move. When huge masses see joining the army as a principal road to economic security, the propaganda about soldiers being in the army for patriotic reasons is blown up.

Instead of welcoming the move, as the rulers had thought, large masses of their supporters have temporarily deserted them and have taken to the streets. Trained in violence over the previous years, aware that the state will be far softer on violence committed by Hindu upper and intermediate caste young men, they have been blocking roads, attacking government buildings, occasionally attacking MLAs and ministers, and setting fire to all manner of things, including trains.

The response of considerable sections of the left, while not totally unanticipated, has still been deeply disappointing. It is astonishing that the Indian Left of CPI/CPM/CPI-ML

Liberation while attacking this policy are doing so for all the wrong reasons that do not challenge but feed into the overall project of this Hindutva government; that ignore the need to oppose anti-poor neoliberal priorities as well as opposing the hegemonist ambitions of the ruling class and its ideological drumbeaters

Our stand on these are based on the following principled positions:

1. We stand for reduction of military spending for power display
2. We oppose the glamourization of the armed forces in the name of national security and justifying military spending under that banner.
3. We condemn and oppose the extensive use of the armed forces for suppression of domestic dissent by the reactionary Indian state.
4. We believe that the best way to achieve security with neighbouring countries is through diplomacy, and

settlement of all disputes through peaceful negotiations and mutual give and take.

5. We oppose India's massive military hardware imports, and also the build up of nuclear weapons for military power play.

Accordingly, in the current situation

NO TO AGNIPATH

NO TO COMMUNALISATION OF ARMED FORCES AND SOCIETY

NO TO HEGEMONIST AMBITIONS AND BEHAVIOUR

YES TO MASSIVE DIVERSION OF FUNDS TOWARDS PUBLIC WELFARE AND JOB CREATION

NO TO ANY SUPPORT FOR EXPANSION OF FULL TIME PROFESSIONAL ARMY IN THE NAME OF MORE JOBS FOR THE NEEDY

Source : *Radical Socialist*, 18 June 2022

Breakdown of relations between Mali and France

18 June 2022, by **Paul Martial**

Mali's choice to leave the G5 Sahel military alliance of Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad is motivated by the refusal to grant it the rotating presidency that rightfully belonged to it. Beyond the symbol that undermines the unity of the Sahelian states, this departure should not have many consequences on the military apparatus. Created in 2014, this structure has struggled to emerge due to lack of funding. Although it has been operative since 2017, it has never managed to play a leading role compared to the UN mission of MINUSMA or the French operation Barkhane. Experts describe the functioning of this alliance as a juxtaposition of bilateral military cooperation on the borders of different

countries.

The other decision concerns the renunciation of three texts governing the presence of military forces, French within the framework of Barkhane, and European with Takuba. For the transitional authorities, this rupture is with immediate effect while the Quai d'Orsay intends to take its time for the total evacuation of its troops. These differences in timing could lead to incidents or conflicts.

Imperialism losing

momentum

This rupture is taking place in the context of a weakening of France in Africa, as shown by the series of demonstrations against the policies of Paris. In Burkina Faso and then in Niger against the passage of the Barkhane convoy, which caused the death of three people, without any serious investigation having been carried out. In Dakar, demonstrations against the indictment of the main oppositionist Omar Sonko led to the ransacking of French brand shops. Just recently a similar scenario occurred in N'Djamena, Chad.

The decline of Paris is perceptible at

all levels. Its diplomatic blunder pushed the Central African Republic into the arms of the Russians who did not ask for so much. We also see the decline in its economic influence and its inability to score significant points in the Sahel conflict. In other words, the jihadists are winning the war. This conflict, located in northern Mali at the beginning of 2012, has spread over a large part of the Sahel and is now reaching the coastal countries of West Africa such as Benin, Côte d'Ivoire or Togo.

Former French president Hollande, by recklessly declaring that Operation Serval would eradicate terrorism, not only gave false hope to the people but above all suggested that this problem could be dealt with militarily without dealing with the political, economic and social aspects that feed the conflict.

If the justified recriminations of the African peoples against the policy of

France were well perceived by the diplomatic services, the responses of the French Foreign Office were not up to the task. The few cosmetic measures announced at the Africa-France summit in Montpellier did not have the desired effect.

Lost or persisting illusions

The political situation in Mali is very unstable. The country's authorities have just announced that they have foiled a coup, the fourth since the junta took power. At the same time discordant voices are being hunted down and imprisoned. Omar Mariko, the leader of the African Solidarity for Democracy and Independence (Sadi) party, is in the crosshairs. However, it is difficult for the putschists to pass him off as an agent of the France when his organization was the only one to express strong reservations

about the French intervention in Mali.

The putschists did not liberate the country, they simply changed masters. From now on it is Russian imperialism that dictates its law. The more isolated the country, the easier it will be for the mercenaries of the Wagner company to continue their abuses against civilians and plunder the country.

The first decade of the century was the peak of the craze for the idea that China would save and develop the continent, while in the 2010s Obama was looked to, on the grounds of his Kenyan origins. Today the portrait of Putin is brandished in the role of saviour. In this enumeration, there is no irony or judgment but a simple observation of the consequences of the cruel absence, for the peoples, of a real political and social alternative.

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

Support the student mobilizations in Greece!

17 June 2022, by Andreas Sartzekis

By creating a university police force (OPPI), prime minister Mitsotakis and his far-right government want to terrorize university youth. In recent days, many students have been injured or arrested during big mobilizations.

In fact, since the summer of 2019 when Mitsotakis, a former student at a US private college, became prime minister, with the appointment to the Ministry of Education and Religion of a bigoted ultra-neoliberal, Niki Kerameos, students have mobilized, at that time against the abolition of university asylum. But long before this date, the right, with the help of its tame media, was attacking the public universities, accused of being dens of the left and drugs. Students were preparing for an active resistance against a multifaceted repression.

The Aristotle faculty at Thessaloniki has been at the forefront of

mobilizations but also provocations: the cops did not hesitate to bring in a water cannon vehicle to better repress ... which allowed the students to organize a fine press conference in front of the machine! Faced with this anti-youth policy in the name of "Law and Order", protests and demonstrations are permanent: a demonstration of 5,000 students and sectors of the workers' movement in Thessaloniki on 27 May; in several university cities, notably on 2 June, exasperated teachers shouting at the MAT to disappear so they could teach; condemnation from Amnesty International; a student text with hundreds of signatures denouncing the attempt to transform the university into a "socially sterile place delivered up to praetorians and the interests of private companies"...

And the results of the university elections were a blow to the

government - with each department organizing elections by lists of tendencies, in fact political factions, in the absence of a (re)unified student unionism: while for about 40 years it was the right-wing tendency that prevailed, it fell to about 27%, with the CP tendency (KKE) in the lead with about 34%, the radical left tendency not far off 20%, and Syriza obtaining 2.5%.

Of course, the constant repression aims to impose a project that Kerameos has just tabled: to drastically reduce the number of students in public universities (with 20,000 prevented from access in 2021), to conclude agreements for degrees meeting strictly the needs of companies, with increased social selection (transition to scholarships on criteria which are no longer social but of "merit") and threats to the existence of small colleges in medium-

sized cities. The second axis: to modify the administration, by abolishing collective functioning (the university president, instead of being elected by hundreds of colleagues, would be elected by a "council" of 11 members,

including five from outside the university) and breaking up democratic student life, aiming to eliminate the current politico-union groupings... The college of clientelism, such is the vision of the right and the

minister.

In this situation, the movement will surely expand - what is clear is that it will need all the international solidarity it can get!

Strike as long as it's needed !

16 June 2022, by Effe Deux

In 2019, thousands of us across Switzerland responded to the call made by the Feminist Strike collectives by taking to the streets to defend visibility and an end to the discrimination suffered by women and dissidents of the sex-gender system.

Three years later, there is greater awareness of the legitimacy of the issues raised in particular by the Manifesto. But the 19 demands contained therein are still not heard.

A pension 37% lower than that of men

Faced with the government's neoliberal offensive around the AVS 21 project, feminist collectives throughout Switzerland have mobilized by taking up the issue of pensions and supporting the referendum. On 25 Marc, 2022, more than 150,000 signatures, three times more than the necessary number, were deposited with the Chancery. The message is clear: we refuse to pay for the reform of a capitalist and patriarchal system that discriminates against us throughout our lives.

On average, in Switzerland, women receive a pension 37% lower than that of men and therefore suffer more precariousness and poverty. In terms of paid work, women, and in particular women with a migrant background, are in the majority in precarious and low-paid occupations. Jobs predominantly held by women are poorly paid because the skills required are considered "natural" and their arduousness is not recognized. Finally, 70% of free domestic and reproductive work is carried out by women. Essential to the functioning of the capitalist economy, domestic work is nevertheless devalued and rendered invisible.

This hardship and precariousness have an impact on women's physical and mental health. However, here again, access to dignified care remains discriminatory for women and people who dissent from the sex-gender system. Even today, research too often fails to include female, transgender and non-white subjects in medical studies, leading to the creation of biased knowledge and contributing to poor care and prevention.

All in the street on 14 June

Access to care is even more violent and stigmatizing for queer, racialized, fat and disabled people. By offering only a hidden vision of sexual health, maintaining a significant cost of contraceptives, and stigmatizing our right to access to abortion, our health system is part of a society that seeks to control female and dissident bodies.

That is why we will continue to mobilize. Because the history of struggles has shown us that asking is not enough, we must take: let's all take to the streets on 14 June 2022!

In solidarity with all feminists who are fighting, everywhere, to defend their right to a dignified life and to defend our demands, let us fight as much as is necessary to build a political balance of power capable of dismantling this capitalist, cis-heteropatriarchal system, which oppresses, exploits and kills us. The revolution will be feminist, of solidarity and internationalist, or it will not be.

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **solidarités**.*

Kanak independentists present common

candidates for legislative elections

15 June 2022, by **USTKE**

At a press conference on Tuesday 17 May at Karigou in the town of Dumbéa, the Kanak independence movement announced the names of its candidates for the June 2022 legislative elections. Grouped around Wasissi Konyi, representative of the Palika in the political bureau of the FLNKS, the independentist candidates presented themselves, along with their alternates. Why were they standing? What were their goals?

"The independence movement must be represented in the National Assembly, it must be in the negotiations with the French government when they start. The independentists will ask for bilateral discussions," announced the spokesperson for the Front. Following the last two congresses, that of the FLNKS and the popular congress, on 7 and 8 May at the N'Dé tribe, the independentist, progressive and nationalist forces made this commitment, and they reaffirmed that "the Nouméa Accord is a process of decolonization, the country is on the road to emancipation". "The goal is to get into the second round, it is completely achievable," indicated the FLNKS spokesperson, before the candidates took the floor to introduce themselves and explain their participation in these national elections.

"In the National Assembly, our independence movement is not represented"

In the first constituency (Nouméa, Îles-des-Pins, Loyalty Islands): Wali Wahetra, representative of Palika in the Province of the Islands at the congress, originally from Drehu, has been a teacher for thirty years. In the

Congress, she is the Vice-Chair of the Education and Culture Committee. "It's a huge responsibility. The independence movement has chosen us to be ambassadors". During her speech, she recalled the five positions on which the Front and its allies agreed: "Challenging the political legitimacy of the last referendum consultation; the accession of New Caledonia to its full and entire sovereignty by the transfer of the last remaining powers; the non-negotiable maintenance of the achievements of the Nouméa Accord, which is guaranteed by the principle of irreversibility; maintaining New Caledonia on the list of countries to be decolonized; a categorical refusal to choose a new status within the French Republic. The bilateral format was recorded at the N'Dé congresses," she said. "The first constituency is represented by Nouméa, Île-des-Pins and the Loyalty Islands. The delimitation of boundaries (decided by the then Minister of the Interior Charles Pasqua in 1986) is totally iniquitous and unjust. We want to call on the solidarity of the New Caledonian people, if they have the values of democracy at heart. In the National Assembly, our independence movement is not represented. We would like to go there to have our own say. The last Kanak deputy who went to the Assembly was Rock Pidjot in 1986 and since then the independentists have never been able to be elected because of these boundaries. This is partisan and completely unfair. It is a colonial attitude of the French state..."

"We must tell the ordinary Caledonian that

they must no longer be afraid"

Her alternate is Jean-Fidéli Malalua, fourth Vice President of the USTKE (Union of Kanak and Exploited Workers). He has been active in the trade-union movement for fifteen years. He says he is "battle-hardened from politics and especially from social questions". He is of Futunian origin, he was born in La Foa in 1973. "I have taken up a cause that corresponds to my convictions, it is the struggle of the Kanak people. I'm not hiding from you that it's not easy". Questions might arise. "Why go to the National Assembly if you are asking for independence? Why participate in these elections? It is precisely the opportunity to go there to give a certain tone to the vision of the country and to give our point of view to the elected members of the National Assembly, but especially to Caledonians of all ethnic groups. As a non-Kanak and especially one of our generation. This country is viable together. We have to tell the average Caledonian that they don't have to be afraid anymore. We need respect from the Caledonian voters ... In the word independence, there are clichés that scare people... In Kanak and Oceanian culture, the search for consensus means that we have to discuss anyway...", he explained, saying that the politics of fear would lead nowhere. "The mosaic of communities gathered around an independence project is not exclusive. It is a common project and of general interest," he concluded.

"We are proud to be in this fight"

In the second constituency (the municipalities of Grand-Nouméa and the rest of the territory), the candidate

is Gérard Reignier, former head of the Union Calédonienne and the FLNKS. "What we want is to have a representation in the National Assembly to make heard the voice of independentists and nationalists, of those who want this country to become a nation with all its populations in a common destiny". "The load is heavy but the combat is beautiful," he said. "We are proud to be in this fight. We hope to win and bring back some truth to the National Assembly... We have the duty to inform the French political class, but also French public opinion, which is in favour of the full sovereignty of our country. The words liberty, equality,

fraternity should not be besmirched. Perhaps France will be less beautiful without New Caledonia, but certainly if the French state, along with the independentists, allows this country to access its full sovereignty, France will be greater," he added.

His alternate, Marie-Pierre Goyette, was president of the USTKE from April 2012 to December 2015. Currently, she is vice-president of the honorary college of the Trade Union Organization and vice-president of the Labour Party. A teacher by training, she got involved very early in the trade union struggle. This trade union commitment will enable her to make

the link with the field of politics. She was elected to a municipal council, to the southern province and to the congress. "I am mixed-race, I am proud of my New Caledonian family who arrived through prison. [6] And I am proud of my Kanak culture in which I was brought up". She wanted to send this message to the government: "It is out of the question to touch the composition of the electorate, that is the reason for our commitment to these legislative elections."

*Published on the USTKE website and in the weekly **Anticapitaliste**, issue 619, 9/06/22.*

Setback for Macron in "third round" of French elections

14 June 2022, by **Dave Kellaway**

The margin of victory for the coalition led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon was around half a percentage point. NUPES scored 26 per cent followed by Macron's Ensemble on 25 per cent and Le Pen's far right National Rally (RN) came in at just under 20 per cent. [7] French politics is still currently structured around these three political blocs. The traditional conservative party which came out of the Gaullist tradition, the Republicans (LR), got 11 per cent

Notable successes for the left included the election of Danièle Obono, a black woman leader of the LFI (La France Insoumise - France Unbowed) who has received much abuse from the right [8] and the first place of Stéphane Ravacley, a left-wing baker who did a successful 11 day hunger strike to stop his 18-year-old Guinean apprentice being deported. He beat Macron's candidate.

Since it is a first past the post electoral system over two rounds, the popular vote will not translate into the same proportion of seats. At the moment NUPES is projected to get

between 150 and 190 seats whereas Ensemble is predicted to get between 255 and 295. A working majority is 289 so at the moment it is likely, but not certain, that Macron will just about do that. Of course Macron could govern without 289 seats by doing deals with the other blocs, particularly the LR, but it would make it more difficult to get controversial legislation through like increasing the retirement age.

The limits of Macron's popularity were seen in the elimination of the former hated Minister of Education, Blanquer, in the first round. His attacks on teachers have received their just desserts. Macron has still failed to create a solid political base. His success has always been based on skilful manoeuvring, taking advantage of the crisis and decline of the mainstream left and right of centre parties. At the same time the rise of the hard right and fascists allow him to present himself as the safe alternative to the extreme right. Today he is trying to extend the notion of a bulwark against extremes by red baiting Mélenchon. His ministers keep

talking about a French Chávez or a risk to the French role in the European Union.

Despite the good showing of the left, particularly compared to 2017 when there was no unity among the left and ecologists, the campaigning slogan of "Mélenchon Prime Minister!" will not become reality. It will be the main opposition bloc in parliament and its political centre of gravity will be more radical than the previous social liberal Socialist Party. The LFI will have the biggest number of MPs within the left/ecologist alliance. On paper the LFI has an even more radical left social democratic programme than Corbyn's.

Only 47 per cent of the French electorate bothered to vote, a new low for these elections. This expresses a real disgust at and alienation from the political system. It also shows both the difficulty and opportunity for the left coalition. Even before the first round, the left recognised that one way of completely blocking Macron was to convince the abstainers to vote for progressive reform. Current

projections of seats could change significantly if there were to be a big mobilization and a cut in the rate of abstention. Mélenchon made his post election speech centre on the nation of *deferlement* – general mobilization for the second round.

Although the NUPES are through to the second round in over 300 seats [9], there is a much smaller stock of potential votes from those parties which did not make it through. NUPES already regrouped the whole of the left except for candidates of Lutte Ouvrière (Workers Struggle), which always rejected the coalition, and the few supported by the NPA (New Anti-Capitalist Party), which generally voted for NUPES except where social liberal PS candidates were standing. These currents only got about 1.4% of the vote and so will not weigh heavily. [10]

On the other hand, Macron can expect to pick up a good part of the LR vote whether its candidates are standing against NUPES or the hard right RN. Where NUPES are running off against the RN the LR vote is more likely to go to the hard right. Leaders of Macron's coalition have been much more ambivalent about supporting NUPES candidates against the RN as a "republican duty". Some have come

out clearly for a NUPES vote while others say that it has to be on a case by case basis since some NUPES candidates do not share "republican values". [11] Of course, Macron was happy to bleat on about solidarity with republican values when he relied on left voters voting for him in the second round of the presidential elections in order to defeat Le Pen.

The near 20 per cent for Le Pen is much better than in 2017 and is a success for her reactionary current. It will help to further embed her hard right politics in the political institutions. This time she is more confident about getting the 15 seats needed to have an official parliamentary group which confers definite advantages. It will further change the relationship of forces between her current and the mainstream rightwing. Her absolute refusal to make any agreement with the pro-Vichy, fascist Éric Zemmour has paid off politically. He even failed to make the second round in a constituency where he had done well in the presidential elections. It looks like he is very much a busted flush – a balloon pumped up by the media in the preliminary phase of the presidential elections. Le Pen's continued threat to the left is her popularity among some working class

communities.

Any weakening of the dominant class enemy is always helpful to working people's struggle to defend their gains and build a fairer society. Macron has to get his reforms through parliament and therefore a working majority is important. It is a practical motivation for people to vote left in the second round. Even if, as likely, NUPES fails to block Macron in parliament, the fact of having around 100 MPs on a radical left position could well help any mobilizations. The social liberal PS will not be the leadership of the left.

The anti-capitalist and revolutionary left will be doing their best to mobilize for the second round but will also be calling on NUPES to develop the struggles outside parliament. If you cannot stop reactionary bills going through parliament, you have to do it by mobilizing forces on the streets. In recent decades, France has seen various neo-liberal reforms, including by Macron, stopped by mass demonstrations and strikes. Progress in the unity of the left and greens can give confidence to such movements.

14 June 2022

Source *Anti*Capitalist Resistance*
Footnotes by IVP.

Nicaraguan government outlaws feminist groups serving vulnerable people

13 June 2022, by **Dánae Vílchez**

Reproductive healthcare services, shelters for survivors of gender violence, and loans and training for peasant women – to cite just a few activities run by feminist groups – are vanishing as a result of the government ban, say activists.

"It's a delusion of absolute control," says María Teresa Blandón, a sociologist and prominent feminist who coordinates one of the affected

groups, La Corriente. The authorities "know there is critical thinking, a defence for human rights and a democratic vocation in feminist organisations," she told openDemocracy.

Last month, the Nicaraguan National Assembly – which is controlled by the ruling party, the Sandinista National Liberation Front – terminated the legal status of 50 civil society

organisations, including La Corriente and six other feminist groups.

President Daniel Ortega's regime has outlawed 267 NGOs since 2018, including 40 women's groups serving vulnerable groups, according to the Mesoamerican Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative. Many of them were affected by a 2020 law that forced any group receiving funds from international donors to register as a

“foreign agent”.

La Corriente refused to register, arguing it was against their right of association and the Nicaraguan constitution.

“It is a policy of sweeping away any form of organisation that is not under state control. Even though we don’t have a partisan perspective, they have declared us a mortal political enemy,” Blandón said.

Since its founding in 1994, La Corriente has provided inclusive education for women and LGBTQ youth, and managed development projects. It is one of the leading voices denouncing violence against women and LGBTQ people.

Blandón said: “Women’s groups, like other civil society organisations, do work that the state does not do, not because it is not its responsibility, but because it has not been part of its priorities.”

With their legal status revoked, La Corriente and other groups were no longer eligible for international funding, so had to shut down operations.

The prospects for women and the LGBTQ community are bleak without these groups working on their behalf. There is no legal protection for LGBTQ people in Nicaragua, and sexism and homophobia are widespread. In the first four months of this year, the country has reported 22 femicides (there were 71 in 2021).

In 2018, there were 13 shelters for women and children survivors of gender-based violence. Today, only three remain open – and they have to operate clandestinely, to avoid government persecution, a source from the Nicaragua Feminist Articulation told openDemocracy.

Damaging women’s health

One of the first feminist groups to close was one of the oldest, the Matagalpa Women’s Collective (Colectivo de Mujeres Matagalpa, CMM), set up in 1984 by leftist women

activists. It gained legal status as an NGO in 1990, to work with women in impoverished communities in Matagalpa department, a countryside area ravaged by the US-funded civil war in the 1980s.

Nicaragua is one of the lowest spenders on public health in Latin America, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Only Guyana, Honduras, Venezuela and Haiti spend less. For decades, CMM provided more than 10,000 women per year with reproductive and mental health services, legal support, and protection from violence.

“We have always been a critical voice against the state, demanding public policies for women to enjoy their rights in areas where the state does nothing,” a member of the group (who asked not to be named for fear of reprisals) told openDemocracy.

CMM’s legal status was revoked last August, but state-led harassment started in April 2018, when civil unrest erupted in the country and the group became involved in anti-government protests that were crushed by the authorities. (At least 325 people were killed, according to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and Ortega’s regime was accused of committing crimes against humanity.)

Three foreign members of CMM have been deported, and several Nicaraguan members forced into exile. CMM activists who still live in the country face harassment and persecution.

“We have been called everything, from terrorists to lesbians to being financed by ‘Yankee invaders’ to money launderers,” said the anonymous activist. Since Ortega took power in 2006, “Matagalpa’s people experienced brutal repression, peasants were murdered, and we feminists needed to raise our voices,” she added.

She fears that closing CMM’s office and halting its projects will damage women’s health and allow gender violence to flourish: “The government thinks it is harming those of us who

work in these organisations, but it is harming the women our projects have benefited for years.”

Rural women abandoned

The Rural Women’s Organisation (Coordinadora de Mujeres Rurales, CMR) was one of the few formally organised spaces for rural women in Nicaragua. It provided loans and agroecology training to peasant women, while also fighting for more equitable tenure of farmland.

With resources provided by international aid organisations including Oxfam – which was itself banned from working in Nicaragua, in 2021 – CMR distributed loans to women to purchase plots of land or seeds. It also campaigned for a law to create a fund to provide lands to rural women (only 20% of landowners are women, according to the last agricultural census). The law was passed in 2007 but never implemented by the government.

CMR’s legal status was revoked in May, meaning it could no longer support more than 600 women in the north-east of Nicaragua.

“With our projects, women can access credit through cooperatives. Unfortunately, banks do not lend to women farmers. Sadly, we will be unable to help them that way anymore,” María Teresa Fernández, president of CMR, told openDemocracy.

Feminists as ‘enemies’ of the government

Nicaraguan women’s rights groups have been at odds with Daniel Ortega since 1998, when his stepdaughter Zoilamérica accused him of sexual abuse, and feminists stood with the victim and demanded justice. Ortega and his wife Rosario Murillo began to attack feminists, branding them murderers financed by the “Yankee empire”.

Ortega, a former leftist guerrilla commander during the Sandinista Revolution of 1979, was president in the 1980s and then re-elected in 2006.

As he became an increasingly authoritarian ruler, he managed to sustain a left-wing rhetoric while forging a close alliance with conservatives - supporting, for example, Nicaragua's total ban on abortion in 2006.

Blandón from La Corriente, who was a supporter of the Sandinista Revolution, highlights the widespread "macho" culture of Ortega and other Sandinista leaders who are eager to retain their privileges.

"The marriage of feminism and the Left was bad because we [women] were very faithful - and the revolution

leaders did not want to hear our proposals," she said. "The breakup was inevitable, and it was only the beginning of a conflict that has got worse and worse."

It's not only feminist groups that are affected. Social and rights activism is diminishing in general in Nicaragua, as many other groups also shut down their activities out of fear, according to a recent local report.

With no projects to run nor options to raise funds, feminist activists are seeking ways to sustain their work and resistance. CMM will continue supporting community efforts to

organise, and denouncing "human rights violations and authoritarian rule", a member told openDemocracy.

"Women tell us 'they can't take away our knowledge'," Fernández from CMR said.

As for Blandón, she says La Corriente will survive as a group, because "feminism does not depend on funds or a physical space". "Our work will continue because they cannot take away our right to think and build critical consciousness," she said.

1 June 2022

Source: [openDemocracy](#).

"The right to self-determination is something the left has always defended"

12 June 2022, by **Ilya Budraitskis**

There are already a number of left-wing media outlets - OpenLeft, Novo.media, Rabkor, Socialist.news by Socialist Alternative. Why did you decide to create a new left-wing media rather than taking one of these projects as a basis? Is "После/Posle" more of a personal project?

To begin with, the situation for all media, not only left-wing, has changed very dramatically in the last three months. In fact, all media outlets that exist in Russia have to choose between following censorship or speaking openly about the war and exposing themselves to the risks of harsh state restrictions and repression. Our new project is uncensored. We will talk about the war; we will analyze the war, its causes, and its course. We will talk about the position that the left can take against Russian aggression and propaganda.

"После/Posle" is an open platform, it will not only feature the statements of our collective members, but will also feature a variety of voices, such as

those of the Ukrainian left, many of whom are now involved in resisting Russian aggression. It is also very important that our site will be bilingual - almost all the material it will contain will be dubbed into English. We are open to an international left-wing audience, which currently feels an acute lack of information about what is happening in Ukraine, and which now needs to hear the position of the Russian and Ukrainian left. At least by these criteria, our publication will be quite different from anything that exists now.

Who else is on the team apart from you? Do you aspire to a unifying role for the whole left?

Besides me, there's Ilya Matveyev, with whom we've been doing the podcast Political Diary for quite a long time - it will now be published as part of После/Posle. There are also a whole range of other participants whom I can't name at the moment. We plan to expand our editorial team over time, but I wouldn't say that we're claiming a unifying role - we're not planning for

our media project to develop into a political organisation. But of course, we want to be part of the discussion that is taking place on the left in Russia, Ukraine and the world, and to make sense of the challenges we will face on February 24th.

Just about the challenges: your project has clearly stated an anti-war stance. But some parts of the Russian Left also have this stance: there is a war between two right-wing projects in Ukraine, one western Atlanticist-liberal and the other reactionary Putinist, which means that the Left should be "above the fray" and wish "a plague on both houses". What do you think about this position? And do you think the Russian left should be on the side of Ukraine in this war?

We in "После/Posle" do not believe that this is a war between some "projects". It is Russia's war against Ukraine in which Russia is the aggressor. Any attempt to move away from this simple statement is a departure from the leftist,

internationalist position, for which there has always been a fundamental distinction between the aggressor and its victim, between a large imperialist nation and a small nation defending its right to self-determination. The fundamental right to self-determination is something that the left has always defended, something that was extremely important to, for example, Lenin. It is this right that is now being challenged by Russian aggression and the Putin regime.

If we recall the speech Putin made on the eve of the invasion of Ukraine, in it he said quite clearly that it was Lenin's national policy, its principles of self-determination of the nation that led to the "mistake" that Putin considers the very appearance of Ukraine on the map - and which he intends to "correct". Thus, Russian aggression against Ukraine also means aggression against Leninist ideas.

Ukraine is now an example of a nation's struggle for self-determination - a struggle which is extremely important to all leftists. This does not mean that we think the Ukrainian regime is leftist or progressive. We understand that it is a right-wing, nationalist regime, and its level of nationalism will only increase as the war drags on and takes more violent forms. But that does not mean that Ukraine, fighting for its independence, should not be supported by progressive forces.

Indeed, Putin has threatened Ukraine with "real decommunisation". On the other hand, the symbols and symbolic actions of the Russian side in this war refer back to the USSR. These include the red Soviet flag, the restoration of Lenin monuments demolished by Ukrainians, and the renaming of streets in the occupied territories from the names decommunised by Ukrainians back to the conventional "Volodarsky Street". How should the Russian left deal with this dialectic?

It is no secret that the Putin regime has long and actively exploited Soviet nostalgia and Soviet symbols, almost entirely excluding their original

socialist content. The red flag in the hands of Russian soldiers is no different from the Russian flag - it is simply a sign of statehood, of state power, a sign of the Russian armed forces, which from the perspective of the Russian regime is a direct continuation of the Soviet army. We believe that this symbolism covers the deep gulf between what Russia is today and what the Red Army was when it was first established by Lenin and Trotsky during the Civil War.

There should be no illusions here - Russian aggression against Ukraine does not turn Russia into a socialist state. The social relations that Russia brings to the occupied territories are not socialist. It is a relationship that exists within Russia itself, only in an even harsher, more perverted form. It is the power of the siloviki, the power of the elites, the power of Russian capital and state corporations over a population deprived of political and social rights. We see that in the occupied territories - in Kherson, Donetsk, Luhansk and part of Zaporizhzhia regions - there is not even a fictitious expression of popular will to join Russia. This is a direct military occupation - people living on this territory must simply submit to brute force. It has nothing to do with socialism, democracy and the Soviet government of any form.

Perhaps the CPRF party would argue with the latter. Before the war, we saw a desire on the part of the progressive left to cooperate with the party, to integrate with it and to change from within. After the outbreak of war, when the CPRF in its majority supported the aggression and even acted as its instigator by voting for the official recognition of the LPRR's independence by Russia, is there any point in attempting such cooperation? Or should we acknowledge that it is a dead cause - and the CPRF itself has buried itself with it? The huge protest potential that this party certainly had - is there any of it left after the start of the war?

I think that the huge gap between the position of the CPRF leadership and the expectations that exist among its rank-and-file supporters and voters

will only increase over time. These people voted for the CPRF not as one of the backbenches of Putin's regime, but as an opposition party capable of opposing the government's plans for social policy and the strengthening of authoritarianism in the country. The CPRF was voted for as a force capable of returning basic democratic rights to the people of Russia.

We can see that, despite the aggressive imperialistic statements of the CPRF faction members in the State Duma and the party leadership, on the ground, in the regional and city legislatures, deputies from this party are often almost the only ones capable of voicing an anti-war stance. The most recent such story took place a few days ago in Vladivostok; before that, some Communist deputies in the Moscow city Duma and other regions voiced similar views.

It is possible that these contradictions will, in the foreseeable future, lead to the emergence of a truly independent active socialist force on the wreckage of the current CPRF. And an important part of this force will be the current CPRF members and supporters. In its present form, the CPRF will undoubtedly face a very serious crisis.

Perhaps I am wrong, but in three months we have not seen many forms of peaceful left-wing protest self-organisation in the form of, for example, strikes and other trade union anti-war actions. On the other hand, we see active guerrilla action, perhaps partly carried out by people of left-wing, left-anarchist views. Can we expect the former to develop and what do you think about the latter - which of these is more promising, which of these should left-wing opinion leaders support more?

I don't think there is much choice in the Russian situation, where almost all forms of legal protest are banned. Any form of protest critical of the existing regime is somehow illegal. The only thing that can be done legally now is to stand in solidarity with Putin. The deterioration of the economic situation and the continuation of the war, for which ordinary people are paying with their money, jobs and lives, will all inevitably lead to growing social

discontent.

When all political possibilities for expressing discontent have been suppressed, protest takes forms which can hardly be openly promoted by the leftist media. But on the "После/Posle" platform, we will be discussing all kinds of protest and resistance: student initiatives, feminist anti-war movements, and forms of self-organization that we aren't currently able to predict.

In principle, in the Russian context, will we be able to see something similar to what happened in Belarus in 2020, when against the backdrop of street protests, massive strikes at state enterprises were an equally important parallel story? Or was this impossible in Russia because of its different economic system?

Russian capitalism is structured differently than the Belarusian one. We do not have so many state enterprises, state corporations prevail. Of course, the authorities are very much afraid that these enterprises will become a source of protest, not only political, but also social. Especially if we face massive wage arrears in the near future and an expansion of the practice of so-called "unpaid holidays". This could be something similar to the Belarusian strikes, and to the strikes that took place in Russia in the 1990s - remember at least the rail war of '98.

The war has rolled world politics back badly to the days of the Cold War, or maybe even earlier. The number one issue on the agenda of European states now is literal physical security. It is as if it is a retreat into right-wing conservatism, as has happened before in Poland, in Hungary. Will this process become global and what can the left oppose it? You should agree that in conditions of a clear physical threat, such

conservative cohesion makes sense.

Undoubtedly, Russia's actions have provoked a dangerous and incipient process of militarisation of Europe. This has presented the Left with a serious contradiction - the Western Left has always consistently maintained an anti-militarist position, while today participation in NATO and its reinforcement is seen by many Eastern European countries as almost the only real guarantee of security. The left in these countries understands this, but it is difficult for them to do anything about it. Obviously, the left should now reassess all the positions it has taken in previous decades, including the position that only NATO and the US were imperialist powers.

What can the left offer in a situation where the whole world risks being divided into opposing imperialist blocs, each with no progressive alternative? During the Cold War it could at least be said that the Soviet bloc, for all its obvious faults, was a bearer of ideas of social liberation and anti-colonial struggle. Today we see the choice between the reactionary NATO bloc and the even more reactionary potential Russia-China bloc. It is not enough for the left today to simply criticise their governments for militarisation. It is necessary to think about the global alternatives they can offer to this world divided into military blocs and sinking into barbarism, which is on the brink of a new deadly global war.

What about those on the left who still refuse to adequately perceive the threat from Russia? For example, we know that [French far-left politician Jean-Luc] Melanchon opposes arms sales to Ukraine; we know about the call of [American left-wing philosopher] Noah Chomsky to sit down with Putin as soon as possible and make concessions to him. Such

declarations have left many people disillusioned not only with these figures but also with the leftist idea as such. Some European leftists go further and see Putin's Russia as a force that plays on the "left" side - as it "opposes US imperialism". How to explain to them that this force is actually worse and that there is nothing leftist about it?

You are right, this is an important issue for the Western left. Even though they are unequivocally against Russian aggression, both Chomsky and Melanchon cannot welcome the militarisation of their countries and the expansion of NATO. We are talking about the need for a very serious revision of all the foundations of the strategy of the left in Western countries.

None of the sane left is a fan of Putin or believes in his anti-fascist or anti-imperialist rhetoric. Even those Western leftists who still had some illusions about the Russian regime lost them after February 24. This even happened to the German Die Linke, which has always had a strong pro-Russian wing - the party has changed its general position towards Russia and Putin drastically. This process of rethinking in the mainstream left-wing parties is just beginning. Our platform "After" is going to participate in this rethinking, it is one of our main tasks.

Now more than ever, the European Left needs confirmation or, conversely, non-confirmation of some of its intuitions about Russia's role in this war - from, first and foremost, the Russian and Ukrainian left who see the situation from within. Less than a month ago a large delegation of the Western European Left, including MEPs and national MPs, visited Lviv and held a conference there with Ukrainian independent trade unions and left-wing activists. Such actions of solidarity now also play a very important awareness-raising role.

An End to Neoliberalism? How Chile Drafted New Constitution to Rewrite Pinochet-Era Laws

11 June 2022, by **Amy Goodman, Pablo Abufom**

AMY GOODMAN: This is Democracy Now! I'm Amy Goodman, with Nermeen Shaikh, as we turn to history in the making in Chile, where the draft of a new constitution was presented this week that could replace the one implemented during the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. The president of Chile's Constitutional Convention, María Elisa Quinteros, presented the draft of Chile's new constitution during a ceremony Monday.

MARÍA ELISA QUINTEROS: [translated] It should be noted that the text we have built together emphasizes the autonomy of territories outside the center of Chile and has been the yearning of millions of Chileans. ... This draft captures the spirit of a new Chile, a Chile that, on the foundation of decades of efforts, is taking a step into the future. These are the wishes of millions of citizens who placed their dreams and hopes in this process. This text materializes a new way of treating one another, a new way of understanding life in our country, where everyone can feel protected.

AMY GOODMAN: The new constitution would recognize for the first time Chile's Indigenous peoples, codify reproductive rights, make higher education free, require gender equality in the government, and require it to mitigate and adapt to the climate catastrophe. Not included in the draft were plans to nationalize parts of the country's mining industry. Work on the final version of the draft is underway. Chileans are set to vote

on it September 4th. Some recent polls show fewer than 40% currently say they would vote yes.

For more, we go to Santiago, Chile, and we're joined by Pablo Abufom, member of Chile's Solidaridad movement — in English, Solidarity movement — an anti-capitalist, feminist organization.

Welcome back to Democracy Now!, Pablo. Talk about the significance of what took place this week.

PABLO ABUFOM: Hi, Amy. Good to be here.

Well, the first thing to say is that this finally ends with the neoliberal constitution imposed by the dictatorship. This is very important. It has been a demand of social movements, of the civil society in Chile for decades. And this is probably a new step in a political crisis that began in October 2019, where we had a huge popular revolt in Santiago, but in other big cities, in urban and rural centers in Chile, when we had millions of people taking to the streets to demand the guarantee of social rights; an end to neoliberal policies like privatization of education, healthcare and pension systems; and also gender equality and recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights. And so, this new constitution, the draft of the new constitution, it's finally a place where all those aspirations have a space, are recognized.

And this is also very relevant, because it's the first constitution that is democratically written. It was an elected body that is actually representative of a Chilean diversity, including gender parity, representatives of Indigenous peoples,

of social movements, like environmentalist groups and feminist movements. And so we have a body that is actually democratic. That is a huge contrast with previous constitutions that were written, in the case of the dictatorship, by a small group of partisan followers of the dictatorship, but also in the past that was written by a group of — small group of experts, politicians, lawyers, etc. And so, this is a completely historical milestone for our recent history.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: And, Pablo, could you talk about what you know of how much support the draft constitution has? We just mentioned that at the moment only 40% of people in Chile say that they would vote in favor of it.

PABLO ABUFOM: Yeah, we have to say that the same polls that say that are the polls that said that people were not approving the change of the constitution, or the people who said that the fascist — neofascist right-wing candidate, Kast, was going to win the election, and it was Gabriel Boric, a progressive, who won. So, there's not too much to find in those polls but a lot of the aspirations of the great losers of this process, of this political crisis — the conservatives, nationalists and defenders of the neoliberal model.

So, the actual references that we have is, it's not just the polls, but we have an 80% vote for a new constitution. We have a majority vote for representatives of social movements, of independents and leftist groups in the civil society to change a neoliberal constitution. And then we have a massive turnout to vote for Gabriel Boric as the president, as a

progressive president, against the fascist right-wing candidate. So, those are the actual facts that we have. The rest are polls that, of course, tend to be — tend to talk more about the aspirations of the people who commission those polls than the actual opinion of the people.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: And, Pablo, what about this, the fact that one of the provisions was excluded, Article 27, which would have nationalized the mining industry? If you could talk about the significance of that and, in particular, lithium and the significance, the importance of lithium to the economy in Chile, and what that had to do with this decision?

PABLO ABUFOM: Well, Chile is an economy that is based on the extraction of raw materials. And mining is the main activity in terms of extraction of copper, and now lithium has become the new thing. And so, the dispute around who can — whether the state can have an economic activity in terms of extraction of lithium or just private companies, mostly multinational corporations that are currently mining a lot of the Chilean minerals right now, that's one of the main disputes. And it mobilized a lot of support. And it was actually a popular initiative bill for the Constitutional Convention that was

proposing the nationalization of the mines and other natural resources.

And I think that we have to take into account that a constitution is not going to solve all the problems. There are still a lot of things that are going to be part of future struggles, and the constitution opens a new political period for those struggles. So it definitely is not — the constitution is not enshrining nationalization, but nationalization of natural resources as a way to solve an economic crisis that is ongoing and to pay for the social rights that are being enshrined in the constitution, it's definitely on the table, and it's going to be a part of a political struggle in the next decades probably.

AMY GOODMAN: And what are the plans to galvanize support? I mean, this is going to be a referendum all over the country in September for this constitution. And how much do you expect it will change?

PABLO ABUFOM: Well, the thing is that since the beginning of the Constitutional Convention, the right wing and the great losers of that election have been doing a dirty campaign of fake news and promoting rejection of the new constitution, even before it was written or even before we could see any of the articles. So,

they have a lot of advantage in that sense. They've been doing it for a long time. And now popular social movements and civil society are mobilizing for an approval of the new constitution, and now we are seeing that, with the draft in our hands, we're going to go to the streets to talk to people and communicate the actual changes. I think that those polls reflect the control that the mainstream media have on the political narrative in Chile. We've seen that they have been talking — most of the information that is on social media —

AMY GOODMAN: We have 10 seconds.

PABLO ABUFOM: — and mainstream media is fake news. And now we're going to see what people think about the actual constitution, the enshrining of social rights, of reproductive rights, of gender parity, of a democratic process, etc.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, we have to leave it there. We thank you so much, Pablo Abufom —

PABLO ABUFOM: Thank you.

NB: This is a rush transcript. Copy may not be in its final form.

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Some notes and analysis of the 9 May 2022 national and local elections in the Philippines

10 June 2022, by **Richard S. Solis**

THE CONTEXT

POLITICAL REALITIES AND DYNAMICS BEFORE MAY 9, 2022 ELECTIONS

Philippine society has become polarized between the followers of

former Senator Bongbong Marcos (BBM) and the opposition led by Vice President Leni Robredo.

The opposition had tried to unite themselves in order to put up a common candidate for the President in the middle of 2021 but was not successful. A group of people from the

academe and some personalities had organized themselves as volunteer group to select and screen candidates for the opposition including candidates for the presidency and vice presidency. The group called itself as 1SAMBAYAN (One People/Nation) but their efforts for a common candidate from the opposition had failed too. By

October last year, the group (1SAMBAYAN) was able to convince Vice President Leni Robredo to run as President. But by that time eight other presidential candidates had already filed their respective candidacies. Before her decision to run as President, Vice President Leni Robredo was preparing to file her candidacy in the local politics in their region.

Around this time the ruling party Partido Demokratiko ng Pilipinas - Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban), President Duterte's party had splitted between the President's men and women. One faction is called the Cusi wing (Secretary of Energy of Duterte) which is supported by Duterte and which eventually had endorsed BBM (but without Duterte). The other faction is led by Senator Manny Pacquiao and Senator Koko Pimentel - the son of former Senate President Nene Pimentel, the founder of the PDP-Laban which fought the dictatorship of Marcos Sr. The latter faction did not endorse anybody for presidency because Senator Pacquiao ran as President under another party - PROMDI (a party which means from the Province). They had anticipated that the Commission on Election (COMELEC) with all commissioners were appointees of Duterte would recognize the Cusi faction which was what had happened just before 9 May 2022.

What was the reason why President Duterte did not endorse BBM while his faction in the PDP-Laban endorsed the latter would be another boggling story.

Meanwhile BBM ran in another unknown Party - Partido Federal ng Pilipinas (PFP) when he launched his Presidency. Mayor Sara Duterte (daughter of President Duterte) had ran under another party - Lakas-NUCD (National Coalition of Christian Democrats), the party of the former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and soon to be Speaker of the House of Representative Martin Romualdez, first cousin of BBM.

It is the first time in the Philippine electoral history where the ruling party did not have a candidate for President, Vice President and even

solid line up in Senatorial candidates.

Earlier on, before Vice President Leni Robredo had manifested her intention to ran for President, it was widely known that Senator Manny Pacquiao, the boxing icon and very famous among the poor in the country had expressed his intention to ran as President- even courting President Duterte (his ally at that time) to support his candidacy. But it was also widely known that President Duterte was strongly considering his daughter Mayor Sara to ran as his replacement - because she was the leading figure as the next President as shown in the early surveys.

The split of the Ruling Party (PDP-LABAN) could be best understood in this context. The Party's President at that time was Senator Manny Pacquiao. President Duterte would want his daughter to be his replacement and was hoping that she would run under the ruling party. During this time Mayor Sarah Duterte was the Chair of her Regional Party (Hugpong ng Pagbabago -HNP- or Union for Change) and not a member of the PDP-LABAN. The split of the ruling party was the logical move to deprive and debase Manny Pacquiao of a party and support while adopt Sarah Duterte as the candidate of the ruling party. But the daughter did not agree with her father's plan and had initially decided to run for Mayor of Davao City. Pacquiao had to look for other Party to launch his presidency since he was sure that the COMELEC would decide in the President's favor.

It should be recalled when the opposition was led by a very popular actor (Fernando Poe Jr) against the unpopular President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in 2004 elections, there was a big split among the opposition - the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino - LDP (Struggle of the Democratic Filipino) resulting to a weakened Party of a popular candidate against a united Party of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Aside from dividing the opposition, President Arroyo had conducted a widespread fraud and dirty tactics to win that election as was exposed later by the "Hello Garci" scandal - when she asked a COMELEC official to ensure that she should have

at least 1 million votes more than her closest rival. She won the 2004 elections. And as what GMA had ordered through a phone conversation, COMELEC Commissioner Garcilano (Garci) the voting result was really more than a million vote over her next rival. (GMA-12,905,808 versus 11,782,232 for Fernando Poe, Jr.) it would be helpful to take note that the personalities involved in this famous 2004 split was also very much present in 2022 elections. Senator Panfilo Lacson who led the other faction of the LDP and in 2022 Gloria Macapagal Arroyo had adopted Sarah Duterte to run as Vice President with BBM as President under LAKAS-NUCD - Arroyo's party.

It would be a first time in Philippine election where the incumbent President did not endorse any candidate - including BBM. He gave his reasons for not endorsing the latter, like being drug addict, spoiled brat and lazy which does not speak well in terms of consistency and double standard treatment on Duterte's campaign against illegal drugs. Rich and famous people like BBM could not be arrested even if Duterte is sure that he has been using cocaine.

Meanwhile there was a problem for the opposition whom to direct their campaign issues because the incumbent President did not have a candidate and was still popular.

The opposition could not hit the bloody anti-illegal drugs war of President Duterte simply because he did not have his own candidate. The President's weak stance on the West Philippine Sea could not be raised against the ruling party because they did not have a Presidential candidate. So the opposition had to focus on their own platform of governance in a general/generic terms vis-à-vis the current state of government's affairs.

And during the campaign, the Marcos-Duterte tandem had refused and did not attend all the public debates arranged by the COMELEC and different media outlets. So nobody could ask or debate with them about their platform of governance. And worst was that highly paid trolls and

bloggers using all social media platforms were used to attack the leading candidate- like Leni Robredo. This kind of platforms had been used since 2016 elections and surely billions of pesos had been spent to hire trolls and content creators to attack opposition to BBM and Sarah. Tsek.Phil - the academe based which did the fact-checking found out that Leni Robredo was the number one recipient of these toxic and disinformation attacks while BBM was the one benefited most from these attacks. There is no law in the country which can regulate this kind of disinformation and toxic messaging by the paid trolls through social media.

During the pre-election period, various groups had filed disqualification charges against BBM in the COMELEC for not disclosing of his conviction for a crime of not filing his income taxes and for not paying and filing his property taxes in 1982-86. Various groups demanded COMELEC to cancel his candidacy or disqualify BBM.

He was accused of violating the Presidential Decree NO. 1994 of 1985 made by his own father at the end of his dictatorship. He was convicted and he did not appeal his conviction in the country's Supreme Court. But the case filed by various groups in the COMELEC were all dismissed a day after the Elections (May 10, 2022). All the sitting Commissioners in the COMELEC are appointees of President Duterte. The case is currently appealed in the Supreme Court.

The different Presidential candidates had focused their campaign on good governance and anti-corruption and one candidate from the Partido Lakas ng Masa (Leody de Guzman) focused on the welfare of the workers and the toiling masses and advocated the socialist alternative. Not a few progressive groups have supported Leni Robredo and not Leody de Guzman and Walden Bello tandem because for them these elections are more than advocacy and propaganda. All efforts should be focused on defeating the dictator's son. They strongly believe that helping Leni Robredo win is the most appropriate call to win and work for democratic space to continue with the democratic

mass movements and have more tactical gains towards eco-socialist alternative. The other candidates did not really focus on the issues on inflation, bloody anti-illegal drug campaign by the Duterte administration and the weak stance of the latter on the issues in West Philippine Sea. Both issues are the most unpopular in Duterte government based on the surveys. Four out of five Filipino said that the country should find alliances in the fight on what was happening in the West Philippine Sea during July 14, 2020 while in the 4th quarter of 2019 SWS survey 76% of Filipino see many human rights cases in administration's war on illegal drugs. Since then, the results of the surveys have not really changed.

BBM's campaign had revealed scant specifics on his political and economic program. But his core beliefs can be seen in two strategic areas: 1) vaguely perpetuating his father's legacy hinting of an alternative narrative different from the realities of Martial Law regime. His consistent avoidance of public debates save for sloganeering and motherhood statement of unity for all. This safe posturing has proven effective vis-à-vis the mainly disorganized opposition and often times toxic method of campaigning. The case of Leni and her thousands of volunteers would be an exception here; 2). The second strategy of BBM was simply to attract and hold on to President Duterte's supporters preferring instead to camouflage himself with vague, emitting "chill" posturing and staying above the problems and troubles. This earns for himself the title "teflon candidate" where political dirt and bickering would not stick or affect his person - a stance that gained tractions among millions of voters.

A decisive factor for BBM was when he was able to convince Sarah Duterte to run as his Vice President. BBM has overtly projected himself as the co-inheritor of the Duterte Legacy and continuing his predecessor's populist policies and programs. He has promised to adopt and continue Duterte's successful Build, Build, Build initiatives - a decisively important foundation of Duterte's economic trust investment intended to

reap rewards in the years ahead. This investment thrust, however has been dependent on foreign loans - or loan-dependent development model for a debt-driven growth - which is simply an illusion of development.

These infrastructure projects of the Build, Build, Build are expected to generate employment of around 12 million workers but this also reminds one of the massive infrastructure projects of Marcos Sr during his reign like Cultural Center Complex in 1966, San Juanico Bridge in 1969, Philippine International Convention Center in 1974 and the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant in 1982. Everyone was also aware that these projects were the source of mega-corruption of the Marcos Sr's cronies. These were definitely not "need of the people" driven projects.

Duterte and Marcos Sr seemed to suffer the same disease known as "edifice complex".

A month before the elections Social Weather Station (SWS) conducted a survey from April 19-27 about the poverty situation in the country and how do Filipinos rate themselves. The results were the following: 43% Filipinos rated themselves as poor in December 2021 while another 34% rated themselves as borderline poor.

Geographically, self-rated poor families was most pronounced in Mindanao where the number rose from 43% in December 2021 to 60% in April 2022 and in Metro Manila from 25% to 32%.

When the BBM camp has employed thousands of paid troll workers, vloggers and content creators and influencers and saturate all the social media platforms with serious consideration of the widespread dependency in social media especially among the young people developing an information seeking behavior the introduction of their version of economic social and political narratives easily get traction among millions of young people. These paid trolls have mastered the social media algorithms where a system of sorting out of posts in a user's feedback on identified relevant issues. Briefly one can see the events with all Presidents

after the EDSA People Power in 1986 so as to understand the steady economic and political regression of the country.

HISTORICAL AMNESIA OR NEGLECT?

In 1986, President Cory Aquino, had restored democracy from the Marcos dictatorship. One of her focus was to recover the stolen wealth of the country amounting to \$10 billion. The Philippine Commission on Good Governance (PCGG) was created for this task and this was the first act of Cory Aquino Presidency. She encouraged the creation of the New Constitution. The Marcos cronies were dismantled but a new crony developed popularly known as the Kamag-anak incorporation. President Cory had difficulty consolidating and strengthening the democratic institutions because she was besieged by nine (9) coups coming mostly from within her own government. She had initiated peace talks with different revolutionary groups. When President Cory took over from the dictator, the country's debt was P395.50 billions but she and honored to pay all of them including those who went to the pockets of the Marcos and their cronies. She had endorsed Fidel V. Ramos (FVR) a relative of Marcos to replace her and mainly to put down the mutinies from the security sector. Ramon Mitra was the logical successor of Cory Aquino since he had been active in the People Power revolution. He could have focused with the dismantling of the Marcos institutions and influence. FVR effectively neutralized the coups and developed his economic program - the Philippines 2000. He had initiated the implementation of the neo-liberal programs like privatization, deregulation and liberalization. He had also continued the peace talks with revolutionary groups like the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

His term started in 1992 and also the year when the Marcoses were allowed to go back to the country from Hawaii, USA. In 1998, FVR was replaced by

Joseph Ejercito Estrada - a popular actor and he started his Presidency by launching Angat Pinoy which was a poverty alleviation that mostly reflected his screen fantasy image as the champion of the masses. But his elitist lifestyle of governance (midnight cabinet meetings but mainly drinking with his buddies) alienated him from the realities of the masses. Estrada is a well-known Marcos loyalist. In fact many would say that he had the Marcos charisma but not his brains. He was ousted from office to what was known EDSA People Power 2 because of mismanagement of government and public funds. Estrada was replaced by Gloria Macapagal Arroyo by law of succession. She had launched her brand of governance and announcing the building of Strong Republic. She had the 10 point economic program which had continue the implementation of the neo-liberal programs imposed by the IMF-WB. She was boasting an increase of the country's economic growth of 4.5% before her it was 3.8% during Cory Aquino, FVR 3.7% and 3.7% under Estrada. Her governance was marred by issues of corruption and government's mismanagement. Her presidential reelection was known to be one of the dirtiest in Philippine elections. Almost half of her cabinet had resigned as a protest to the massive electoral cheatings and corruption but she survived to finish her term.

GMA was replaced by the son of Cory Aquino - Benigno "NoyNoy" Aquino and he started his government to be clean and upright following his campaign slogan of "Daang Matuwid - a straight road" with "Kung walang Kurap, walang mahirap of if there is no corruption there will be no poor in the country" he persecuted those who were accused of corruption including GMA who was put in hospital jail for 2 years and 2 former senators Revilla and Jingoy Estrada (son of former President Erap). They were all pardoned by Duterte.

He (NoyNoy) had continued to put into final stage the peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). This Aquino was also known to give preferences/favors to his close buddies - Kabarilan (buddies in gun club).

NoyNoy's presidency could have been a second chance that the people gave to the Aquinos to continue the efforts to finally dismantle the influence of the Marcoses and the influence.

In 2016, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte (PRRD) was elected into office. President NoyNoy had endorsed Mar Roxas. His main campaign slogan was to save the country into becoming a narco-state. He promised to put an end to this drug problem in 3 to 6 months. He had shown a brave front/face in confronting China in the issue of West Philippine Sea. As the term of Duterte is ending and obvious not fulfilling his promises - he simply said that all these slogans were just jokes to boast his campaign. He had promised to end corruption in the government during his term but it has even gotten worst. He promised to end the problem of insurgency but as one could observe on the ground the problem has just become more serious. Despite the Duterte administration's vulgarities and misogynistic kind of governance it has remained popular.

PRRD's administration is often considered a rupture in Philippine politics. President's first act as president was to rehabilitate the Marcoses by allowing the dead dictator's burial in the Libingan ng mga Bayani (Heroes Burial place). This act was one of the last acts in paving the way for the "come back" of the Marcoses to the national politics.

In the span of more than 36 years after the dictator was ousted and under six (6) presidencies the lives of the majority of Filipinos did not substantially change. In fact many became worse off than they were under the dictatorship as land grabbing have intensified by the big monopoly capital dislocating thousands of small farmers, Indigenous Peoples and the Bangsamoro. Corruptions have intensified that today according to Commission on Audit (COA) report in 2019 - P700 billion is lost every year due to corruption. Land reform since Cory Aquino government become a market-assisted type of land reform which enable private developers and agri-business corporations to accumulate more lands - convert its

land-usage and consolidate their holdings, public infrastructures are privatized and taxes have been anti-poor (increase of revenue tax and consumer-based tax but decrease corporate tax). All the administrations had abandoned the project of building and strengthening the national economy. Such regressive condition made millions of Filipinos to remain poor. In 1986, the poor was 23.97 million in 2013 it was 24.45 million. Currently it is more than 50% of 110 million of the total population of the country who have become poorer. This has become worst during the pandemic where millions of Filipino are socially locked-down and the social amelioration programs of the government had barely reached the poorest of the poor - the situation has become worse before it became better. And when people and their communities began to initiate community pantries to help those who would barely have food on their table - sharing food from the hungry to give to the starving - the government did give its response - that is red-tagging the community pantries volunteers. Worst still is that the government had incurred trillions of pesos of loans in the name of COVID-19 response but only a fraction went to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. In 2020-2021 the government had borrowed P5.5 trillion according to the Department of budget and Management (DBM) for mitigating the impact of the pandemic but only P616 billions was spent for COVID-19, P1.9 trillion was spent in transport-related infrastructure projects and P2.3 trillion was spent to debt services in terms of interests and principal payments. Today, the total national debt is P12.68 trillion pesos which according to Ibon Foundation each Filipino now owns P106,000.00 to pay for the national debt.

It is very frustrating to see how the Duterte government had this misplaced priorities in terms of spending. The National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) had received the following budget during the period of the pandemic: in 2020, P1.03 billion, in 2021 P19.33 billion and in 2022 - P30.46 billion. Confidential and Intelligence Fund of the government had received P8.90 billion in 2020, P4.38 billion in 2021 and P8.56 billion

in 2022 according to the DBM. During the 2021-2022 period there is zero allocation for COVID-19 amelioration program. Meanwhile the 50 richest families in the country (billionaires club) have 30% increase in their wealth during the pandemic. There has been no attempt from the Duterte administration to suspend the yearly automatic allocation of debt repayment (principal and interest) because of the pandemic. Since Cory Aquino the government automatically allocates more than 30% of its annual budget for debt payment. Last year's debt allocation was more than 1 trillion pesos.

This kind of realities caused so much frustrations and disappointments and have slowly morphed in the indignation and rejection by the people against the old manner of governance from the elite and have become open and ready to jump to candidates who they were made to think (through massive disinformation in the social media) can give them new life and hope. Different platforms of social media were used to this narrative that life did not improve after the people power revolution and present BBM's self-portrayal that he and his family also became a victim of the liberal establishment. Such narrative had a ready receptor or audience among millions of people and had become very effective precisely because millions of ordinary people have seen themselves in similar situation. BBM was able to relate and connect himself and the masses. Further, it was animated by the promise that they will collectively rise again. They coined the meaning of BBM during the campaign as Bayan Babangon Muli - the Nation will rise again - and that a beautiful morning awaited them after a long period of darkness. For such sophisticated social media narrative of massive disinformation to be successful BBM's camp has to hire an expensive but famous firm like Cambridge Analytica. Obviously millions of poor Filipinos have been convinced to this kind of narrative.

2022 MAY

ELECTION RESULTS

Thirty six (36) years and three months to this day when his family hastily evacuated Malacanang Palace after the fall of his father's dictatorship, BBM had won the 2022 Presidential elections. He brings both hope of unity to the nation and fear of a repeat of a strong man rule.

BBM get 31,629,783 votes or 58.77% of 55 million who had casted their votes. Leni Robredo got 15,035,773 votes or 27.94%. The total registered voters for 2022 election was 67.5 million and the total turn-out of the election was 82%, one of the highest in the election history in the country. In 1998, the turn out of the election was 86.5%. For the Vice President, Sarah Duterte got 32,808,417 votes or 62.53% while Kiko Pangilinan got 9,329,207 or 17.82% of the votes.

There were widespread issues of fraud and vote buying and selling like in the case in Mindanao (Zamboanga del Norte) the buying/selling of votes had reached to P15,000.00 per vote (or \$300 per vote) and if you have 5 voters in the family you easily get P75,000.00 or \$1,500. This is just one case shown in the result of our assessment of the electoral conduct in the different parts of the island. This has brought back the Jalosjos family (the head of the family was convicted of rape but was pardoned by GMA) into power once again. The elections in the Bangsamoro region are full of this kind of stories but it would take another article.

Election results were missing in the provinces of Pampanga, Sultan Kudarat and Surigao del Norte. This involved a total of two (2) million votes but not enough to change the outcome of the national elections - according to the COMELEC (but it could affect the Partylist standing) but disturbing enough that some lawmakers had expressed concerns that it had disenfranchised a good number of voters (Daily Inquirer - May 26, 2022). Election paraphernalia were found damaged in Tondo and Cavite, but no one was held accountable like Smartmatic and F2 Logistics (owned

by Duterte's friend - Dennis Uy).

The result of the election was so fast including the canvassing in both houses that everybody knew the results in 2 days while voters were still lining and waiting to vote. It became the quickest canvassing in electoral counting in the country.

In May 25, 2022 the 17th President and Vice President of the Philippines were proclaimed by the Congress of the Philippines. All the immediate families of BBM had attended this historic proclamation including his 93 years old (convicted of graft) Mother and former first lady of the dictator. In contrast, no one from Sarah Duterte's family witnessed her proclamation including her husband and her father - the outgoing President Rodrigo Roa Duterte. To date, there is no personal congratulatory statement to BBM from the President himself.

While both BBM and Sarah Duterte were proclaimed thousands of protesters were brutally dispersed by the police using water cannons even when protesters held their rally against the Marcos-Duterte proclamation in the Commission of Human Rights compound. The police had used the law during the Marcosian era- Batas Pambansa number 880 in the inhuman dispersal. The brutal way the assembly was dispersed could be a portent of things to come on the next six years.

FIRST TIMES

The elections of Marcos-Duterte has come with many first times. It was the first time that Filipinos elected a majority president and vice president (Marcos 58.77%, Duterte 61.77%) under the 1987 Philippine Constitution. FVR got only 23.6%, Estrada got 39.86%, GMA got 39.99%, NoyNoy Aquino got 41.84% and Rodrigo Duterte got 39.01%.

It was the first time in 18 years when the elected President and Vice President got elected as a team. In the Philippine, the President and Vice President are elected separately. Only in 2004 that GMA and her running mate Noli de Castro got elected as a tandem.

It was the first time in 24 years that the voting turn-out was very high - 82%. In 1998, the turn-out was 86.5%.

It is also the first time in Philippine history that the children of former presidents of the country will lead the nation as its president and vice president.

And this is the first time in Philippine history that a convicted candidate for President (BBM) won and was proclaimed. He was convicted for not filing his income tax return and for not paying his taxes from 1982-1986 when he was vice governor in Ilocos Sur. The case is currently an appeal to the Supreme Court.

THE LONG AND PROTRACTED JOURNEY OF THE MARCOSES TO POWER

The Marcoses were ousted from Power through the EDSA people power revolution in 1986. They left Malacanang in a hurry and through the courtesy of their patron - the US government which facilitated their stay-vacation in a US territory in Hawaii. The very hasty manner of their departure from Malacanang left thousands of documents of their plunders and have become the bases for the Philippine Commission for Good Governance (PCGG) to recover these billions worth of wealth while more than half of the Philippine population at that time could barely eat and survive.

In 1989, Marcos Sr died while in their vacation in Hawaii and Cory Aquino government had allowed the Marcos to return to the Philippines and expected closure for a displaced political clan.

As expected, the Marcoses went back to their roots in the northern part of the country (Ilocos Region). The Aquino regime did not give much credit to traditional practice of helping one of their own in times of need. In Ilocos this practice is called "ilihan" or a place of refuge provided in times of

war or calamities. The Marcoses did not waste time in plotting to recover their political project of getting back their influence and power towards reoccupying Malacanang. They have started to regain their political base in the North. As what is shown during these events - they were elected back in local positions - which could say something that after all in their political base - they were never discredited and still seen as the beloved sons and daughters by the people in the region. They tried their luck in the national scene, Imelda Marcos ran for President in 1992 elections (6 years after they were ousted). In this election FVR won with only 23.6% of the votes. With Imelda Marcos, one of their famous crony Eduardo (Danding) Cojuangco also ran. Imelda got 10.3% of the votes higher than Jovito Salonga - 10.2% but Cojuangco got 18.2%. Combining Imelda Marcos and Danding Cojuangco's they could have won the Presidency as early as 1992 (their combined votes percentage was 28.5%, FVR had only 23.6% of the votes). From her lost, Imelda tested the political waters and peoples' sentiment in her own province in the Visayas. She successfully won a congressional seat in Leyte first district.

BBM had tried his national acceptance by running in the Senate in 1995 - he did not get the seat in the Senate. He ran as Governor in the Ilocos Norte and easily won. Before this (1992) BBM ran as representative of the second district of Ilocos Norte and won.

From being Governor of Ilocos Norte, BBM ran and won a senate seat in 2010 (the year when NoyNoy Aquino was elected President).

In short, the Marcoses have never left the political scene after their six years of stay-cation in Hawaii.

Just before the 2022 elections, one could see that the Marcos' political clan and dynasty have almost total control of their home region. And to name a few, Mathew Manotoc - grandson of Marcos Sr and son of Senator Imee Marcos is the provincial governor of Ilocos Norte; Cecilia Marcos (widow of Marcos' nephew

and first cousin of BBM) is the Vice Governor; Angelo Barbe (Marcos Sr's nephew) is the 1st district representative of Ilocos Norte; Michael Keon (Marcos Nephew) is the Mayor of Ilocos Provincial Capital Laoag City. And for the 2022 elections, Sandro Marcos (Marcos Sr's grandson and BBM's son) ran and won in the second congressional district of Ilocos Norte. This is the clear picture of Ilocos Norte. Before the May 2022 elections - the Marcoses have total dominance of the province.

Not a few in the opposition have blamed historical amnesia or the massive disinformation about the atrocities of Martial Law and the Marcos dictatorship about the victory of the Marcoses. But the opposition (mostly anti-Marcos) have refused to see that millions of people have readily accepted the alternative narrative as presented by the social media through paid trolls, vloggers and content influencers because they have concretely seen and experienced the same sufferings (even worst) during the 36 years after dictatorship.

QUALITATIVE OR QUANTITATIVE

CHANGE?

The opposition since 1986, have given stresses and focus on institutionalizing powerful reminders of the post-Marcos dictatorship like Ninoy Aquino Day (August 21), EDSA People power revolution (Feb 25), as well as naming the international airport as Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) and the Aquino (Ninoy-Cory) 500-peso paper currency. But in terms of substantially impacting the lives of ordinary people not much have been done - precisely because international multi-lateral institutions like IMF-WB dictated the economic model of the country. And despite many years of claiming fiscal and financial stability the economy is still mal-developed, joblessness is still widespread and poverty is still entrenched. The free-market globalization policies do not definitely develop a national economy.

The dominance of the opposition in the mainstream media as seen from the Marcos' prism of presenting their own narrative (actually the mainstream media in the main are really dependent on fact-based reporting) have prompted their highly paid army of trolls, vloggers and

content creators to counter the historical truth and facts about the Marcoses. These army of trolls have perfected the information ecosystem that they have ably penetrated the values and social media dependency of the young people.

The hard truth, however is that, not much have substantially changed since the dictatorship left and people could have placed their hope to almost anybody not identified with the elite especially identified with the post-EDSA period. This explains why the opposition which is identified as Yellow, has been easily discredited and despised. Social media have made the "new Marccos" version to fill in the gap.

The 2022 victory of the Marcoses is the second chapter and chance for the political dynasty to govern the country from the center. This is a case of effectively capturing the center government from the political bases in the North, Central Visayas and Duterte's south.

28 May 2022

Source

ESSF-><http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article62840>].

The Birth and Death of the "Russian World": a History of the Concept

9 June 2022, by Ilya Budraitskis

The term "Russian world" **appears** in the 1990s, within Moscow's intellectual circles, as a response to the need for a broad cultural definition of Russian identity, which had to be different from its possible nationalist and revanchist definitions. However, having acquired a new meaning by the early 2000s the term gradually becomes the pillar of the official doctrine. In October 2001, at the so-called World Congress of Compatriots, Putin for the first time **sets out** his understanding of this doctrine: the

"Russian world" consists of "millions of people who speak, think, and feel Russian" residing outside of the Russian Federation. Belonging to the "Russian world," according to Putin, is deliberate; it is "a matter of spiritual self-determination. And since "Russia is making steady progress towards integration into the global community and world economy," "our compatriots have every opportunity to help their homeland in a constructive dialogue with [its] foreign partners." It is clear from Putin's speech that at that

moment he is more interested in those who "feel Russian" while living in London, Paris or New York than in those in Donbass, or Northern Kazakhstan. It is worth recalling that 2001 was Putin's honeymoon with the West: Russia supports the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan, while liberal economic reforms are underway — among them programs aimed at attracting foreign investment. So far, the "Russian world" refers to wealthy and influential members of the diaspora

who may serve as Russia's competitive advantage in a globalizing world.

Even a year earlier, in 2000, Pyotr Shchedrovitsky, a political consultant with ties to the Kremlin, **defines** the "Russian world" as a "cultural and human source" in the global market. Supporting the concept of the "Russian world" as a hybrid "human/technology approach" Shchedrovitsky contrasts it to the Serbian model of "resolving territorial and ethno-cultural problems by force".

By the mid-2000s, Putin's Russia makes its way in the global economy and assumes the role of a major raw materials supplier — enhancement of its "cultural source" is no longer on a priority list. At the same time, the victories of the "color revolutions" in Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2005 question Moscow's political influence in the Post-Soviet space. The Kremlin's reliance on informal networks with local elites clearly does not pay off, and the gradual alienation of the West requires advocacy work. Now the "Russian world" is fully determined by the political interests of the state: the Russian-speaking population of the neighboring countries is to become a tool for state influence, while sympathy for Russian history and culture (and in this specific sense, also sympathy for Russia as the successor of the Soviet Union) should be converted into support for its international politics. For this purpose, in the mid-2000s, the following projects are created: the *Russkiy Mir Foundation*, *RT (Russia Today)* news channel, the *Institute for Democracy and Cooperation* (a Moscow-based think-tank) and, above all, a new federal agency (so called *Rossotrudnichestvo*) backed up by the Cultural Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Each project has its mission in exercising Russian "soft power": RT focuses on "alternative news", challenging Western media and interpreting current events in a pro-Kremlin light, while the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation creates a network of conservative experts who see Putin's Russia as a bulwark for "European values" against "leftist liberalism" and feminism.

The "Russian world" now not only applies to the international community of Russian speakers but signifies a set of "values", which are promoted according to the interests of the state. As Vera Ageyeva **put it**, "securitization of the Russian world" is on the way: a situation in which cultural influence is almost integral to both "national security" and protection of the state from external threats. It is indicative that in 2008, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Alexander Burutin, **welcomes** the idea to create the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation and commends its role in "information warfares" targeted at "people and their attitudes". This interpretation implies that the borders between "soft" and "hard" power are blurred, because the content of the "Russian world" — Russian language, culture, and emotional "connection to Russia" — becomes a weapon of sorts to use in an invisible war. For the Kremlin, the "Russian world" is only a response to the West's expansion, which puts forth such concepts as "democratic elections" or "human rights" as a means of weakening Russia. Hence, it turns out that "values" as such, that is regardless of their content, cannot be of value, really: they are doomed to become a tool of national interests, serving either one country, or another. And while human rights activists or opposition members within Russia are proclaimed agents of the Western influence, those who identify themselves with the Russian culture outside Russia should become agents of Russian influence.

Following the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the conflict in Donbass in 2014, the "Russian world" no longer bears any traces of "soft power" and develops into an ideology of irredenta — a program seeking to regain country's "historical territories", which were lost — if not as parts of the Russian Federation, then at least within the orbit of its political and military control. As Patriarch Kirill, the head of Russia's Orthodox Church, **explains** at the time, the "Russian world" is "a particular civilization, and people belonging to it today call themselves by different names — Russian, Ukrainian, or Belarus. Belonging to the "Russian

world," therefore, is not a matter of personal choice; it is predetermined by fate — by origin and territory. **According to** Kremlin strategist Vladislav Surkov, the "Russian world" is where people "cherish Russian culture, fear Russian guns, and respect our Putin". In other words, being part of the "Russian world" means to be subjected to Putin, to recognize his authority and obey. One cannot think of a more concise formula showing total collapse of previous conceptualizations of the "Russian world" as "soft power": Russia cannot simply be loved for its high culture, because no one finds its social and political model attractive; but it is able to incite fear with its military might.

For a whole decade, several organizations have been building the "Russian world", and to no avail. To add insult to injury, they turned into a mechanism for embezzlement of allocated government funds. Even the Russian Orthodox Church is now morally bankrupt as millions of its parishioners in Ukraine turned their backs on it when the war began. Yet, the failure of the "Russian world" as a strategy of "soft power" is not only a product of corrupt practice. It follows from the anti-democratic vision of the state elites who are deeply convinced that people, at least those outside of the elites, are unable to master their own fates. The real "Russian world" — millions of those who speak Russian — is treated not as an equal in a dialogue, but as an "asset"; an asset to be managed and used to the benefit of the state. Today, this "Russian world" is literally a hostage and victim of the state waging a criminal war. It was the Russian-speaking Ukrainians who died under Russian bombs in Mariupol and Kharkiv or turned refugees. The Kremlin's logic has degenerated into a terrifying formula: If the "Russian world" cannot be subjugated, it can only be destroyed. This means that if Russian culture and language have a future, it can only rise on the debris of Putin's Russia.

6 June 2022

Source: the **new website** in Russian and English **Posle**.

Defend abortion rights and abolish anti-abortion law in East Asia

8 June 2022, by **Karen Yamanaka**

The application of anti-abortion law in the East Asia [12] region varies from country to country. In China, the "one-child policy" introduced in 1979 sometimes enforced abortion by public authority. On the other hand, the "two-child policy" introduced in 2016 has put anti-abortion laws into effect in some areas. As a result, many women were forced to have illegal abortions. "Childbirth control at one time and abortion control at another time" is due to the convenience of the nation and it has nothing to do with the right to self-determination.

Like China, South Korea has also managed women by applying the anti-abortion law and adjusted population as required. In South Korea, the anti-abortion laws enacted in 1953 was effectively invalidated in 2019 at the discretion of the Constitutional Court. But the Moon Jae-in regime effectively revived the de facto anti-abortion law by allowing restrictive abortion. This is just another attack against women's right to abortion.

Anti-abortion laws still exist or are not abolished completely in many countries of East Asia, and restrictive abortion laws based on week of pregnancy and spousal consent are also permitted. Violations of women's self-determination and reproductive rights at the convenience of the state have threatened their health and lives.

China

Abortion policy in China has been coordinated with population planning of the Chinese government [13]. The Chinese government has abusively and forcibly controlled and managed the bodies and sexuality of women and regulated the population. And the Chinese government has recently forced "childbirth control at one time

and abortion control at another time" against population. Abortions, including compulsory abortions by public authority, had been widespread in China for decades. With the introduction of the "one-child policy" in 1979, abortions by public authority were sometimes enforced. The "one-child policy" even forced women into forced abortion in late pregnancy.

In addition, China's traditional and strong preference for sons had increased abortions aiming at sex selection. When abortions were performed for the purpose of sex selection, daughters were aborted in many cases. As a result, the sex ratio was significantly distorted.

The "one-child policy" was abolished in 2015, but the problems of rapidly aging population and shrinking labor forces arose. Recognizing that these problems were threatening the country's economic growth, the Chinese government had changed its policy 180 degrees in the last decade. The "two-child policy" was launched in 2016, limiting abortion in some provinces. In 2018, Jiangxi Province banned abortion for non-medical purposes after more than 14 weeks had passed. And several other provinces had subsequently enacted similar rules.

In China as a whole, the introduction of anti-abortion law was discussed and there is growing concern about further control of the female body by the state [20].

In Mongolia, many strict restrictions are imposed on abortions, and safe abortions are not always guaranteed. Abortions are required to be carried out in government-approved medical facilities, which severely limits medical services. Due to bureaucratic procedures in government hospitals and long waiting times, Mongolian

women are practically forced to have illegal abortions in unlicensed private clinics. However, it is virtually impossible for low-income women especially living in rural areas to access high-cost illegal abortion services. It is estimated that this will be about the same or even worse for the most vulnerable populations in North Korea in which extremely bureaucratic procedures must be followed in government hospitals.

For the right to women's bodily autonomy

Many countries in East Asia still have de facto anti-abortion laws which allow only restrictive abortion or criminalisation of abortion. Also, the political and economic reasons of nations such as "population control" infringe on the right to have her bodily autonomy in relation to reproductive rights. Power of punishment has sometimes been used as a means of arbitrary population adjustment by the state, which has nothing to do with the right of women to self-determination and reproductive rights. A woman may terminate her pregnancy if the pregnancy would threaten her health or life. If she may not want or be able to continue her pregnancy, access to safe abortion and required medical care should be accessed without interference by the state. In many cases, making a decision to undergo an abortion is a very difficult experience for a woman and is the last resort.

We must implement legislation to decriminalise abortion and to protect the right to reproduction, instead of risking women's reproductive health or lives. Protection of women's rights

by law is also important from the historical perspective related to women's fighting for their welfare in many East Asian countries. We believe another mass social protest like #BlackProtest actions will take place

in East Asian countries and international solidarity is spreading to guarantee women's bodily autonomy and the rights of individuals such as free access to the medical abortion

services including developing policies to reduce the number of those who refuse to offer the services using conscientious objection.

8 June 2022

“The priority is to win against Macron's candidate, but also against the PS candidate, who broke the agreement here”

7 June 2022, by Penelope Duggan

Can you give us a quick introduction to the candidacy?

In the 20th arrondissement of Paris, Danielle Simonnet needs no introduction. A local councillor since 2001, she has always been very involved in the struggles of the working-class neighbourhoods of the arrondissement. As early as 2001, as a deputy mayor, she launched the first parity “citizenship council of non-EU residents”. She participated in the strong united campaign in the district for the “no” vote in the 2005 referendum on the European Constitution. In 2006, she initiated the first sponsorships for young undocumented high school students. The unitary collective for the reopening of the Tenon Hospital abortion clinic, created in 2009, has always benefited from her active and visible support, as have all the struggles of employees and users of public services (post office, transport) and private sector employees.

Elected on the Socialist Party list in 2001 and 2008, she left with Jean-Luc Mélenchon to found the Left Party (Parti de Gauche) in 2009 and has since played an important role in the Left Front (Front de Gauche), La France insoumise and the Popular Union (Union Populaire).

How does the campaign work?

This grassroots campaign is organised through general assemblies and action

groups, and in a very active way by distributing leaflets in front of schools in the morning, in the local street markets and at underground stations, and especially by door-to-door visits in housing estates in the late afternoon. The meetings, rather than being held in halls, take the form of festive open-air aperitifs in the various squares of the constituency. At each meeting, actors of local struggles are invited to speak to demonstrate that these struggles are part of national politics, because in the end it is the laws adopted by the National Assembly that will regulate everything.

This willingness to go to the people stems from the concern to mobilize the voters of the presidential elections - Mélenchon scored 45% and was in the lead in all polling stations in the constituency in the first round of the 2022 presidential elections - but also the abstentionists. We are not forgetting those who may consider themselves the campaign does not concern them because they do not have the right to vote. The campaign is defends the right to vote for foreign residents and has issued an by those who do not have the right to vote to vote for Danielle.

What are the local issues in this campaign?

The 20th is a “left-wing” arrondissement with a tradition of united-front mobilizations, notably around the issues of racism, solidarity

with undocumented migrants, and the defence of its public services such as Tenon hospital. This electoral campaign mobilizing the forces of the left, including the NPA, must serve to reinforce this readiness to mobilize in a united and collective way to face the attacks of a Macron his government or, in the case of an Assembly with a left majority, the blockages of the system against the implementation of the NUPES programme.

So the priority is to win against Macron's candidate, but also against the PS candidate, who has broken the agreement here and is presenting a candidate who is not a grassroots activist invested in the struggles and with the perspective of leading these battles.

What forces and collectives are you working with?

The campaign brings together the forces of the NUPES agreement (FI, Générations, POI, ÉELV, PCF) except the PS. The NPA is present as such with our logo on the campaign material. The campaign involves both experienced activists from different local struggles and many young people, and not young people, who were attracted by the Mélenchon campaign.

Anything to add?

The media obviously love to talk about “How the Parisian left is tearing itself

apart in the 20th arrondissement" (Le Journal du dimanche, 14 May). And, since 3 June, they have found another subject: "Legislative: two LFI candidates criticized for appearing with Jeremy Corbyn" (Huffington Post, 4 June) by bringing out the slander that Jeremy Corbyn is anti-Semitic, an accusation already made against

Danielle Simonnet herself for her opposition to the inauguration of a Jerusalem Square in Paris, with the rejection of the mention of Jerusalem as the capital of the two states on the plaque as she had proposed, and the invitation of the mayor of West Jerusalem alone. The campaign

collective remains proud to have had Jeremy Corbyn as a surprise guest bringing international solidarity at its recent people's aperitif.

6 June 2021

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

Support for the NUPES radical candidates, independent candidacies

7 June 2022, by **NPA - Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste**

Weakening them, including through the elections, is therefore an important issue in order to put our social camp, the world of work, in a better position to develop mobilizations, to build a class-struggle left, towards an anti-capitalist alternative. We must try to defeat Macron, the right and the extreme right, by getting as many as possible left-wing MPs elected, who break with anti-social and liberal policies. We therefore support candidates for a class-struggle left, breaking with social liberalism, to make the working classes heard and give them confidence in their ability to mobilize.

This is why, in the vast majority of constituencies, we are calling for support and votes for the candidates of the New Popular Ecological and Social Union ((NUPES). In the more than 70 constituencies where NPA committees exist, this support ranges from a simple public call to vote for the local NUPES candidate to the participation of anti-capitalist activists in the common campaign. This is the case, for example, in the east of Paris with Danielle Simonnet [21] and Sarah Legrain, or in Moselle with Charlotte Leduc and Lisa Lahore, as well as in many other places where the NPA is campaigning with NUPES material or with its own material calling for a

vote. This support does not silence our criticisms and above all our proposals for a programme of rupture, based on incursions into private capitalist property, the fight against all forms of repression, and so that the coalition is not just an electoral union but serves to build social struggles.

In other constituencies, faced with candidates labelled NUPES but who come from the Socialist Party, or even former Macronists, we are campaigning, where they exist, around alternative candidacies, from the NPA or from unitive collectives bringing together anti-capitalist, social movement, feminist, anti-racist or anti-fascist activists... Thus, the NPA is involved in the candidacy of Raphaël Arnault, former spokesperson of the Young Antifascist Guard, in the second constituency of the Rhône, against Hubert Julien-Lafférière, the ex-Macronist who came back via Génération Écologie and was officially invested by the NUPES. [22] This is also the case in the third constituency of Charente, with the candidacy of Alexandre Raguet, facing Marie-Pierre Noël, PS nominated by the NUPES, and Jérôme Lambert, a reactionary dissident PS.

In six constituencies (Hauts-de-Seine 1-3-5-11, Gironde 3 and Moselle 3), the majority of the local section of the

NPA chose to present candidates who were not in line with the national orientation of the NPA and consequently not validated by the leadership body. In these places, against these candidacies, we call for the election of the candidates presented by the NUPES, notably Loïc Prud'homme (LFI) in Gironde and Elsa Faucillon (PCF) in Hauts-de-Seine, both outgoing MPs.

Finally, there are a few particular constituencies where, depending on situations linked to the place taken by the French state, its oppressive policy in the face of national or colonial facts, the NPA calls for a vote for candidates defending a project of social emancipation and autonomy or independence. This is the case in Guyana (Jean-Victor Castor, MDES candidate in the 1st constituency, and Christophe Yanuwana Pierre, independent candidate in the 2nd), in Martinique (Marcel Sellaye, candidate for RESPE in the second constituency) and in the Basque Country (with support for the three candidates presented by Euskal Herria Bai in the 4th, 5th and 6th constituencies).

Montreuil, 31 May 2022

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

Union and Company Fight Guerrilla War at Starbucks

6 June 2022, by **Dan La Botz**

The current union organizing drive at Starbucks began about a year ago, in the spring of 2021, and in December of that year a Buffalo, New York store won its union election becoming the first to organize. Since then, there have been dozens more and momentum is growing. So far 100 Starbucks coffee shops—most with 10 to 20 employees—have voted to join Workers United, while only 14 voted against; that is, the union won 88% of its elections. About 120 other shops are currently conducting elections or waiting to vote. While the total number of workers is small, this represents a significant upturn in union organizing, especially in the restaurant industry where only 1.2 percent of workers have unions.

With Workers United growing, the company is retaliating. Over the last several months Starbucks has fired twenty employees engaged in union organizing activities, always formally fired for something else of course, such as breaking a company rule. Starbucks recently announced that it is closing one of the recently organized stores in Ithaca, New York where workers had walked out on strike. Workers United has filed with the National Labor Relations Board some 175 charges of unfair labor practices.

Yet the workers and the union are undeterred. The Service Employees International Union with two million members, one of the largest unions in the United States, has created for its affiliate Workers United a one-million-dollar strike fund to compensate the pay of strikers. Meanwhile, the union's organizing is spreading across the country and into regions with few unions. For example, the union recently won National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election victories in the South: in New Orleans, Louisiana; Tallahassee, Florida; and Columbia, South Carolina. Organizing a union in South Carolina, the state with the lowest unionization rate in the United States, where only 1.7 percent of its workers are represented by unions, represents a significant achievement.

The Guerrilla Army

The Starbucks union movement reflects the workforce; it is a movement of mostly young women and men of all races. Women make up 70 percent of Starbucks' workers; whites are 50 percent, but Latinos are 27 percent, and Blacks 8 percent; and most workers are in their twenties and thirties.

Starbucks workers are organizing

because the work is too intense, the pay is too little, condition are not always safe, and they feel that that the company often doesn't respect them. A Starbucks barista makes an average of \$13.50 an hour or \$26,325 per year, which is not a living wage. Starbucks workers have been seeking to win union recognition through NLRB elections, but they have also engaged in walkouts and short strikes, actions that are important to building the workers' confidence and increasing the union's combativity. Both the elections and the strike have raised the union's visibility so that other Starbucks workers also see the possibility of organizing.

The Starbucks organizing campaign, using guerrilla tactics, has been tremendously successful. One has to admire this achievement. They have organized 100 coffee shops—but there are 15,400 in the country. The workers have not yet built a large enough presence to organize regionally, much less nationally, and it will probably take regional or even a national strike—as happened in other industries like auto and steel, transportation and public employees—to bring the union to all Starbucks workers.

6 June 2022

The far right experience in Hungary

5 June 2022, by **Janos**

Fidesz, the Hungarian Civic Alliance, was formed in 1988 as the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége), a centre-left and liberal

activist movement opposed to the ruling Stalinist government, with Orbán as its leader. It entered the National Assembly after the 1990

parliamentary elections.

A little history

After the election, it embraced a liberal-conservatism which led liberal members to leave and join the Alliance of Free Democrats. It then sought to forge links with other conservative parties and, after the 1998 elections, managed to form a centre-right government. It embraced nationalism in the early 2000s, but its popularity declined slightly due to corruption scandals. It was in opposition between 2002 and 2010 and in 2006 formed a coalition with the Christian Democratic People's Party, a coalition that has not been defeated since.

Then came the Őszöd speech made by Hungarian Socialist Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány at the Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), in May 2006 in Balatonőszöd. Although the congress was confidential, Gyurcsány's speech was leaked and broadcast by Magyar Rádió on 17 September 2006, triggering a nationwide political crisis. Deliberately using vulgar language, Gyurcsány criticized the MSZP for misleading the electorate and said his coalition government had not taken any significant steps during his tenure.

The Őszöd speech was followed by huge mass protests and restored Fidesz's popularity, leading to their winning a super-majority in the 2010 elections. After regaining power in Hungary, it adopted national-conservative policies and moved further to the right. It also became more critical of the European Union (EU), leading the party to be branded as Eurosceptic. In 2011, the new Hungarian constitution was adopted in parliament and entered into force in 2012, although it was the subject of controversy due to its consolidation of power in Fidesz. One clause in particular is very favourable to it: the bonus to the party (or coalition) with the most votes. Its majority of seats remained after the 2014 elections, and following the escalation of the migrant crisis, Fidesz began using right-wing populist and anti-immigrant rhetoric. Since its inception, its political position has changed dramatically, with Orbán describing his model of government as an "illiberal Christian

democracy".

Following the previous election held in 2018, it held the majority in the National Assembly with 117 seats, while it had obtained only a relative majority of 49% of the vote. It has also held the presidency since 2010 and enjoys majorities in all 19 county legislatures, while being in opposition in the Budapest General Assembly. Fidesz was a member of the Liberal International until 2000, after which it joined the European People's Party. It remained a member until 2021, and since then he has sat in the non-attached group in the European Parliament.

Economic policy

Orban's main goal has been to establish a political system that allows for the accumulation of capital both externally and internally. On the one hand, in capital-intensive and export-oriented industries (such as manufacturing), this means providing a highly profitable business environment for multinational companies, for example by lowering corporation tax to 9% (the lowest in the EU), giving generous public funds to companies in exchange for "job creation", introduction of anti-worker legislation and so on. This explains the favour Orban enjoys among representatives of Western capital. In contrast, in the less capital-intensive and more domestically oriented sectors of the economy (banking, media, tourism, energy industry, agriculture, retail and so on), there has been a push to build a national capitalist class.

This last strategy of course requires a certain autonomy vis-à-vis the EU: taxes on foreign banks and energy multinationals, capture of European funds by Orban's friends putting European companies in tenders - and now increased economic ties with Russia and China, coupled with strong anti-EU rhetoric at home (for a decade, the EU has let Orban's friends and family seize EU funds with impunity, but has recently initiated proceedings for more transparency - China and Russia don't suffer from that kind of prudery!). However, the diversification of capital imports does

not mean a loosening of relations with Western capital: Hungary, as a semi-peripheral country, remains extremely dependent on Western technology and capital. Collaboration with German car capitalist lobbies is part of this relationship - a story that journalists at *Direkt36* (an investigative journalism site that aims to monitor those in power and expose their abuses, much like *Mediapart* in France) covered in detail in 2020.

Social policy

The desire to maintain the level of capital accumulation after the 2008 crisis, and in particular to support the management of the crisis by Western capital as well as that of local SMEs, forced the Fidesz government to suppress workers' rights. In this context, the government has completely emptied the institutions of tripartite social dialogue, adapted the Employment Code to the needs of employers, restricted the right to strike and so on. The "slave law" is part of this trend (in Austria, this law has been called the "BMW law", because according to anonymous sources, the German car manufacturer demanded this legal change in exchange for setting up a car manufacturing plant in the city of Debrecen). The decade-long anti-worker policies have sparked resentment among workers and unions: protests against the "slave law" and wage strikes that have erupted in various companies are clear signs of this.

However, the Hungarian trade union movement is not ready to retaliate in an organized manner. The unionization rate is low and has fallen over the years. Moreover, trade unions are mainly present in the public sector and in large multinational companies, representing the least precarious part of the Hungarian working class. After the protests against the "slave law", several unions reported a slight increase in their membership, but most people who join a union today face a stark and disappointing reality: the vast majority of Hungarian unions still retain the trade union culture of the years of so-called socialist statism: instead of grassroots organization,

mass meetings and collective actions, the focus is mainly on lobbying employers and a partial redistribution of union dues in the form of symbolic acts of well-being (gift cards for Christmas and so on). Over the past two years, signs of intensified unionization efforts have been observed in various sectors, but the Hungarian trade union movement is still far from being a major political force.

Populist measures

The main propaganda axis is support for “Hungarian families”: zero-interest mortgage for families (married, not couples!) who commit to having three children, work provided by town halls in rural areas, very badly paid but ensuring the survival of the poorest layers of the proletariat (especially the Roma) – many villages vote 100% Fidesz! – and, following the Ukrainian crisis, the freezing of the prices of sunflower oil and wheat flour, as well as petrol. At the same time, Orban has introduced a flat tax of 16% (while VAT is at 27%!), to ensure at least the neutrality of the wealthy layers.

The other axis is nationalism, based on nostalgia for greater Hungary (carved up by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920). For example, the Ukrainian refugees prioritised are those who come from Transcarpathia, a region of Ukraine that was part of greater Hungary and where Hungarian is still spoken.

Why Orban turned to the far right

Initially, Orban was an opponent of the Stalinist regime, liberal and pro-European. He even won the 2010 election against the Socialists by opposing drug franchises and the austerity plan. But his plan to develop Hungarian capitalism clashed with European rules of free competition. Even if they only concerned those sectors requiring the least capital and the least multinational concentration, such as services, it took capital and experience to win tenders. But the circle around him, family and friends, had no capital (the bureaucrats of the so-called socialist regimes have

privileges but no capital). It was therefore necessary to cheat, to rig the tenders, to discourage Western European companies and to hide all this from the Hungarian people. Hence the illiberalism and muzzling of the media. Hence campaigns whose main objective is to divert (criticism of Western banks and energy companies, anti-gay legislation and so on). Economically, this has led to a capture of European funds by Orban’s inner circle (with an over-invoicing of responses to calls for tenders of 25% according to the French Embassy). Merkel’s Europe let it happen, because in exchange Orban guaranteed a cheap and docile workforce for multinationals, including Mercedes, Audi and BMW.

The “Our Homeland Movement”

“Our Homeland Movement” (in Hungarian *Mi Hazánk Mozgalom*) is a Hungarian far-right political party founded by Jobbik dissidents who left the organization after the party’s leadership moved away from its radical roots. In May 2019, it was announced that the party would form the National Legion, a uniformed “self-defence” group similar to Magyar Gárda, the paramilitary wing of the nationalist Jobbik party, which was banned in 2009. In the 2019 local elections, the party managed to win eight seats in the county assemblies.

The party strongly opposes LGBT rights. After the release of a children’s book, *Meseország mindenkié*, which features LGBT members and ethnic minorities as characters, the party’s vice president, Dóra Dúró, called the book “homosexual propaganda” at a press conference and destroyed a copy by tearing up its pages and passing them through a shredder. This action caused significant controversy and attracted international attention.

Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the party protested against the lockdown measures put in place by the government, accusing them of “inciting panic” and ruining the country. The party is also promoting

vaccine hesitancy, launching a petition against the use of Covid vaccines on children aged 12 to 15. The party supports the reintroduction of the death penalty.

The Ukrainian crisis

The invasion of Ukraine puts Orban in a difficult situation: on the one hand he cannot fully support it, especially given Hungary’s history with Russia, but on the other hand he does not want to get angry with his friend Putin. He has adopted a balanced position: he welcomes Ukrainian refugees (in contradiction with his previous anti-migrant policy, but as for other European countries, white Christians are not really migrants, especially if they come from the former greater Hungary!), votes for sanctions but does not allow weapons to cross the country and rejects any embargo on Russian oil and gas, under the pretext of not penalizing “Hungarian families”.

The failure of the anti-Orban coalition

The six opposition parties that formed an electoral coalition – MSZP (socialist), Demokratikus Koalíció (centre-left), LMP (liberal ecologist), Párbeszéd (centre-left ecologist), Momentum (liberal) and Jobbik – published a document entitled “Guarantees for a change of era” which promised in particular “the drafting of a new Constitution [...] submitted to referendum”, the return of “a balanced public audio-visual service” instead of “false and hateful propaganda”, “restoring the independence of the judiciary”, Hungary’s accession to the European Public Prosecutor’s Office, the introduction of an electoral law “based on proportionality” and the election of the president by direct universal suffrage.

The electoral system means that a party or coalition presents both a candidate for the post of Prime

Minister and candidates for the posts of deputies. Whoever has the most votes in the election (even if it is less than 50%) wins both the post of Prime Minister and the majority of MPs.

Note the presence in the coalition of Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary), a former far-right party that has refocused. Stemming from radical and nationalist roots, in its early days, the party described itself as “a principled, conservative and radically patriotic Christian party”, whose “fundamental objective” is the protection of “Hungarian values and interests”. In 2014, the party was clearly anti-Semitic and a “neo-Nazi party”. From 2015 to 2020 (amid increasingly harsh Fidesz rhetoric), the party began to redefine itself as a more moderate conservative people’s party and changed the controversial elements of its message, culminating in its new declaration of principles now defining itself as a right-wing pro-European centre-party with some residual moderate nationalist tendencies (the position originally occupied by Fidesz). According to the

party’s “Declaration of Principles”, Jobbik “will always focus on the interests of Hungary and the Hungarian people rather than on a political group or ideology.” In any case, Jobbik voted for the law against “homosexual propaganda” in 2021. In the general elections on 8 April 2018 the party won 1,092,806 votes, obtaining 19.06% of the total, making it the second biggest party in the National Assembly. The strategy of refocusing the party undertaken in 2014 resulted in the emergence of more radical dissident formations, including “Our Homeland Movement”.

The coalition’s candidate for prime minister was Peter Marki-Zai, who defines himself as a former Fidesz voter, disappointed by corruption and illiberalism. He calls himself honest, Catholic and conservative. He opposed the increase in the minimum wage, believing that the market would be able to regulate remuneration, and a reform of the tax system. In an interview in November 2021, he said that “for the moment, it is in Hungary’s interest to be a tax haven”,

with a corporation tax of 9%. He is in favour of Hungary’s entry into the Eurozone.

During the campaign, he defended NATO, even declaring that he was ready to send the Hungarian army to Ukraine if NATO asked him to. This statement was used excessively by Fidesz’s propaganda, looping on all the media for days, to demonstrate that he endangered “Hungarian families”, and that only Orban’s “neutral” position could protect these families from the war.

The lesson of this failure is clear: waging a liberal campaign, without any measures for the popular classes, can only lead to failure in the face of far-right populism; capitalist Europe is largely discredited, while the Hungarian economy has been regulated by the multinationals since the fall of the Berlin Wall; NATO is seen as a purely defensive protection, as long as it does not engage.

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Rape as a weapon of war in Ukraine

4 June 2022, by **Noémie Rentsch**

The use of rape as a tactic within a set of military and war practices has been recognized since the early 1990s. This systemic practice of repeated, sometimes collective, rape by soldiers of women and children of the people or ethnic group considered as the enemy has been widely documented in the context of the war between Serbia and Bosnia, by Serb soldiers.

A tactic in an imperialist and patriarchal war

These acts of sexual violence are seen as practices of the arsenal of war as such, not as “accidental” by-products

of war. They result from a coordinated desire by the military hierarchy to harm the “opposing” population in its body, physical and social. Rapes are often committed in public, in front of the victims’ families or loved ones. In the case of Russian aggression, there are several indications that these acts are the result of direct orders to soldiers from the Russian government.

The reported acts of sexual violence in Bucha, which are probably just the tip of the iceberg, are part of the narrative of rape as a weapon of war. Several Russian soldiers allegedly raped a 14-year-old girl just outside the entrance to her house. An 11-year-old child was raped by two men in front of his mother. Two women were repeatedly raped by several men who

had invaded their homes and held them captive.

We know that women, gender minorities or non-white people are victims of armed conflict in a specific way, specific to the systemic oppressions that affect them. The coordinated and repeated use of rape of women and children in the context of the invasion of Ukraine, by male-controlled armed forces, which have ruled an imperialist country for more than 20 years, and which embody in many ways a dominant and violent masculinity, is thus an example of the patriarchal character of armed conflicts.

Internationalist feminist solidarity!

In the face of these war crimes, it is imperative that we work to build internationalist feminist solidarity. This involves support for the armed self-defence of the Ukrainian population, especially women and gender minorities, demanding that these rapes be recognised as war crimes and that material and psychological support be provided to all victims.

It must also involve a profound reflection, within our feminist collectives and political organizations, on how gender violence unfolds in a specific and structuring way in the current global context of a rise of authoritarian neoliberalism and the projects of the fascist right. This is the case during armed imperialist invasions but also with imperialist extractions of raw materials by multinationals in countries on the periphery of capitalist centres of accumulation, where women who resist the expropriation of their land are also frequently victims of sexual

violence.

In the fight against this gender-based violence, we must absolutely seek to go beyond demands only aimed at the national and international institutions that participate in producing and consolidating this neoliberal offensive, which paves the way for the far right. We must build an autonomous and self-organized feminist response.

2 May 2022

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Transnistria and Moldova: a lesson in Russian power play

3 June 2022, by **Vlad Iaviță**

For many, Transnistria is a geographical oddity, rife with crime, but with no clear geopolitical force behind it. But the explosions that rocked strategic locations in the separatist territory this week have put Transnistria back into the news. Moldovan President Maia Sandu has declared that the pressure to ramp up tensions comes from pro-Russian factions within Transnistria, while Russia called the attacks “acts of terrorism”.

In response, some analysts took to social media to tell their own stories of Transnistria, recounting how they discovered its existence in an accidental fashion, often through unpleasant travel experiences. For many that know of it, Transnistria is the archetypal “frozen conflict” zone, a faux state in eastern Europe that looks and behaves like a Soviet relic, and a paradise for organised crime that then affects neighbouring states.

For me, it is the place where my family comes from.

A disappearing way of life

I grew up in Bucharest, but Transnistria was always a fascinating place, where I would visit friends and family for anniversaries and celebrations.

This summer, I am looking forward to returning for a longer period, in part to document stories on the ground, in part out of apprehension that should the situation deteriorate further, it may be the last time I can re-experience those places as the same relatively peaceful, picturesque locations that I remember from my childhood.

If you are unfamiliar with the region's geography, Transnistria is a thin strip of land, stretching along the left bank of the Dniester River for much of Moldova's border with Ukraine.

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Transnistria was home to much of the industrial infrastructure of the Moldovan Socialist Republic and was the most Russian-speaking part of the

Republic. It effectively broke away from the administration in Chișinău, Moldova's capital, after the 1992 war, when separatist forces backed by the Russian military fought against Moldovan troops.

Since then, most of the territory has been administered as a self-proclaimed breakaway republic, without any international recognition – not even from Moscow, at least for now.

In a more prosperous and stable context, Transnistria's areas of stunning natural beauty would make great tourist destinations. In the Dubăsari district, the green, hilly banks of the Dniester River provide a scenic backdrop for limestone villages with houses painted in pastel blue shades.

In recent years, though, these settlements have been gradually fading away. It is a symptom of how the region's rural way of life is disappearing – and of the failure to provide for people to continue living and working there. The reality of corrupt and poor governance – backed, in effect, by Moscow – is too

much of a hurdle to allow such areas to thrive again through tourism or local industries. And so people are leaving, and their houses are crumbling.

For centuries, the region was crossed by trade routes that have encouraged the growth of diverse communities – Ukrainians, Romanians, Moldovans, Russians, Bulgarians, Poles, and members of Jewish communities from across the wider region. Partly because of the regime's suspicion of minorities, and also because of its location on the Soviet Union's western borders, it suffered greatly during Stalin's terror in the late 1930s. Many families on the left bank of the Dniester River have stories of relatives that were sent to labour camps, or simply executed and buried in unmarked locations.

Scars of war

But the most visible scars today were left by the fighting that established the current boundaries of the self-declared 'Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic' – to give Transnistria its official name. Villages and towns along the contact lines of the 1992 war still show signs of the fighting – schools, houses and garden fences pierced by shrapnel are everywhere.

Despite its complex history, Russian cultural influence remains strong here, reflected through the media and, in particular, popular TV channels. Even in the homes of my more Western-minded relatives, Russian television was always on – from films to talk shows, there was always something playing in the background.

Many in Transnistria also share a sense of nostalgia for the Soviet Union, at least for the 1970s and 1980s. People remember the period as a time when there was still a sense of community, with workplaces near home, good transport links, and frequent events – from parties to film screenings – even in villages and small towns. People's lives were lived within a radius of a couple of miles – it was not perfect or wealthy, but it was predictable and relatively comfortable.

Now, these smaller settlements are

depleted of people. Everybody leaves or is considering it – either for the West or the East, with the former becoming even more attractive after Moldova's Association Agreements with the EU came into force in 2016. Romania also has a very lenient policy on offering citizenship to Moldovans, which is used as the main avenue to emigrate to Western Europe.

It is difficult to paint a crystal-clear picture of public opinion today since there are no recent and reliable polls from the breakaway territory. It is clear, however, that some people are genuinely pro-Russian and look with disdain at Moldova's Western aspirations. Many others are just sceptical and seem to simply be preoccupied with the mundane worries of daily life. And of course, there still is a constituency that openly prefers re-integration within Moldova and its shift towards the West.

A kleptocratic regime

The reason behind the shrinking of villages and towns lies both in the shift in the demands of the global labour market and the reality of Transnistria's capture by a kleptocratic, authoritarian regime in Tiraspol, the unrecognised state's capital. Corruption and organised crime make many forms of business activity difficult and unpredictable, while infrastructure remains extremely poor.

Illegally propped up by Moscow politically and economically for the past 30 years, the Tiraspol kleptocracy fosters crime and human rights abuses. Human trafficking, kidnappings, killings: any form of violence you can think of, everyone in the region knows someone who has been affected.

The disturbing thing, though, is that despite the fact that this has been going on for decades, some people only find out about it – or find it noteworthy – now. In Ukraine, people were surprised to see Russia's preposterous claims of genocide against ethnic Russians in the country. The use of puppet regimes in Donbas

drew attention to 'new' geopolitical tricks by Russia. The use of 'provocation' operations by the Russian military to justify aggression in Ukraine gained notoriety after the warnings from Western intelligence agencies this winter. But it had all happened already, hidden in plain sight. The blueprint for everything that surprised the world in 2022 started in 1992, with Transnistria.

Russia, the separatist movement and the 1992 war

The separatist movement started under the arch-narrative that Russian-speaking citizens would be marginalised in a right-wing, nationalist Moldova. Russian military forces supported separatist militias before and during the 1992 conflict. The justification for the storming of the Dubăsari police station on 1 March that year by Transnistrian troops (effectively the act that started the war) was based on the false accusation that Moldovan police were responsible for the killing of a separatist leader.

Following the war, Russia endorsed, but not recognised, the separatist republic. It has used it as a proxy to force Moldova into its orbit, whether through control over its biggest electricity plants in Dubăsari and Cuciurgan, as well as its gas pipelines; through recurring election fraud in favour of pro-Russian candidates; or through constant military pressure and organised crime.

All patterns of Russian aggression and interference have been present in Transnistria. The war and occupation really started in the wake of the USSR's collapse. We were talking for 30 years about rapprochement with a democratising Russia, while its empire was still alive on our doorstep.

Given that the opportunity to learn from a cautionary tale has been missed, it is now time to think of ways of supporting Moldova in ensuring it remains stable amid these new attempts to destabilise the country. One healthy step in the right direction, beyond addressing the immediate security risk, would be understanding the needs of people living on both sides of the Dniester.

Stuff the Jubilee

2 June 2022, by **Dave Kellaway**

We make sense of our lives through the stories we tell ourselves and each other. The dominant ideology functions through the way it occupies or frames those stories. Since we live in an unequal society driven by a system of capitalist exploitation causing class struggle, this occupation and framing are never watertight, never 100 per cent effective. As Leonard Cohen says, there is a crack, a crack in everything, that's where the light gets in. We may despair at the mass immersion in the Jubilee events but there is a growing minority, particularly of young people, who understand the toxic nature of this institution. Wall to wall promotion and coverage of the Jubilee gives no voice to the significant minority who are against the monarchy.

The British monarchy is a national story that is an important cog in the current ideological system. Elizabeth Windsor's 70th Jubilee, which has been promoted for some time by the mass media and is "celebrated" this week in a series of local and national events, is the latest instalment in this story.

Many people really do place their personal life stories within the royal narrative. Just today on BBC breakfast TV the Indian heritage organizers of the Bollywood section of the Pall Mall pageant got quite emotive about the fact that their families were close up to the Queen during the previous jubilee. So we heard that as nine-year-olds they were waving flags at some event the Queen visited in Birmingham and that their Mum had been presented to the Royal entourage. People remember where they were and what they were doing at previous royal events such as weddings or deaths. Rather than measuring out our lives in coffee

spoons as T.S. Eliot would have it, people measure out their lives in the royal souvenir mugs and other junk they buy.

Royalist ideology is effective to a degree because it is able to play to a number of social realities that people have an emotional investment in – community, national identity and some positive values like service or charity. The state gives some material support for this by graciously granting an extra bank holiday to facilitate all those street parties and organized events. The local government association has estimated that there will be 16,000 street parties this weekend. Millions of people will be going to these parties without being particularly pro-royalist but to have a good time.

A billion-pound Jubilee industry producing endless pre-landfill tat has developed. Such commerce expresses the wastefulness and tastelessness of the consumer spectacle. At the same time, people are having to decide whether to heat or eat and food banks are overwhelmed by demand.

The Royal family makes a big deal of a patrician notion of service so it presides over a vast number of charities. It also takes care to draw certain lines in the sand when it comes to the commercialisation of its brand – hence the tensions with Prince Harry and Meghan. One or two commentators have made the point that the utter amorality and lack of ethics of Prime Minister Boris Johnson reinforces a reverence for the Queen's seventy years of "service". In this way, the royalist ideological system is a very useful compensatory backup for our rulers when politicians are increasingly reviled for their venality and dishonesty. People believe Johnson might make rules that he does

not follow but at least the monarchy is clean and is even possibly seen as something to be defended because it is not like Johnson and his cronies. Socialists should not underestimate how this 'separation' from the dirty end of politics means that if there were a very serious crisis for the British state then the monarchy could (would) be used to intervene in a way to defend the capitalist order.

Notions of royalist service to the nation are of course totally exaggerated. Ross Kemp (Grant from the long-running TV soap *EastEnders*) went so far as to proclaim the Queen our greatest "volunteer". Ross is not too clear on the way monarchy works – you do not volunteer but are born to it and there is even an element of "divine" selection in it all. None of the "good works" supported by the Royalty challenge the way the system makes people poor or "disables" people through the way it is socially organized. Whilst they may make pious remarks about helping disadvantaged people they are one of the richest capitalist families. They may make noises about the problems of housing for example but the Prince of Wales sits on a land portfolio that if taken into common ownership could provide the basis for a huge expansion of affordable housing for working people. There is a general lack of transparency too about the many tax loopholes that the Royal family benefit from.

The Royals have astutely modernized their brand and opened up more to the TV cameras. So Princes Harry and William talk about their personal traumas and endorse a slightly different profile of masculinity than male royals in the past. However, they know that the mystique of the monarchy with its internal rules and

secrecy has to be maintained too. Carrying out the 'firm's' day to day work opening things, doing charity or representing the military cannot be sullied by scandalous behaviour that crosses a certain line - hence the freezing out of Prince Andrew because of his connection with the paedophile Jeffrey Epstein. While there can be tension from time to time there now exists a parasitic symbiosis between the Royal Family and the mainstream mass media. The media is exploited as much as possible to keep the 'Firm' looking modern and up to date. Ultimately, even mildly critical TV dramas like the Crown are recuperated to their advantage.

Two other arguments are always rolled out to justify the monarchy. Calculations are made about how much tourism income is generated by the Crown. An increase in numbers visiting London this weekend has been heralded in the press. This argument assumes that all the buildings and artefacts associated with the monarchy would suddenly disappear if it was abolished. Countries which have abolished the monarchy like France or Italy do very well, if not better, with their tourism. The other argument is the supposedly positive attention the monarchy gets in the USA, Europe or elsewhere. But it is hard to distinguish this attention from the organized spectacle of celebrities in films, TV, sports or other walks of life such as entrepreneurs. In any case, the ending of royalty's constitutional role in other countries does not inhibit their place in the spectacle.

Should socialists and republicans despair at working people's continued love affair with the Monarchy? Certainly only 27% support abolition but this is an increase historically:

According to a [recent YouGov poll](#) conducted for the anti-monarchy group Republic, 27% of the population supports the abolition of the monarchy, with considerably

higher dissatisfaction among the young (a report, Jubilee Britain, produced by the [thinktank British Future](#) shows similar results). That's a notable jump on the [15% that has been the norm](#) for most of this century.

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You have to distinguish the popularity of the Queen and the reverence for the monarchy. Prince Charles is seen three times more negatively than she is. It is a distinct possibility that the reign of King Charles would be less popular and republican opinion may increase. Rising support for Welsh and Scottish independence in recent decades is certainly something that can erode Royalist sentiment. The enthusiastic promotion of the more popular Prince William by the media and the family firm itself is perhaps related to the fears of a post-Elizabethan period.

How should socialists approach the problem of the monarchy?

The old distinctions between short term and long term demands or tactics and strategy are relevant here. In the difficult conditions of today with working people still suffering the long term effects of a series of defeats - including the demise of the Corbyn project - it would be pretty silly to make republicanism a demand to take up in mass campaigns or struggles. Even at the height of Corbynism, this issue was never really posed. It would have been quite possible to have a left reformist government alongside the monarchy.

In the long term, a socialist strategy is a different question. As outlined above, the Royals' ideological role and constitutional responsibilities are obstacles to any radical break with capitalist rule. The Royal Family's role

in reproducing a sense of one nation that obliterates any real notion of class exploitation and struggle has to be fundamentally weakened if a socialist alternative can be really built.

On the other hand, Labour's social liberal conception of the nation fully aligns itself with the Royals. Labour Party leader Keir Starmer writing this week in the *Telegraph* has stated "it is your patriotic duty to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee". For Labour, the institution and the state fundamentally remain the same but with their policies, they are infused miraculously with some better values of responsibility, progress and respect - or whichever other banalities the leadership's advisors come up with.

No real anti-capitalist rupture of the system can be achieved without a solid core of internationalist activists and mass leaders who understand the class nature of the state. You cannot postpone the task of developing that core to some more favourable future, even if today the number of people the left can win to such a perspective is still a minority.

It is often asked what is the point of small radical left groups? In fact, the Jubilee is an occasion when they actually have a clear relevance. The Anti-Capitalist Resistance current, like other groups, will openly talk today about the need to abolish the monarchy and explain its negative impact on working-class consciousness. We will not just write articles on our sites but will produce badges for people to wear and create conversations. Social media memes can also spread the message. In some places, there might even be anti-Jubilee social events. The arc of unanimity can be broken. Very few from even the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs will be putting forward this message. So wear your Stuff the Jubilee or Abolish the Monarchy badges with pride this weekend and enjoy the extra day off - unlike the royal family you have earned it.

Source [Anti*Capitalist Resistance](#).

Pride 2022: and for a brief moment, we are immortal

1 June 2022, by **David Lhotellier**

The first Pride was a riot, in reaction to police violence against queer and racialized people. Today, it has turned into a simple parade, where cops and right-wing parties can strut around with impunity. So how do we bring some fight back into it? On Saturday, we applied a tried and tested method: all you need is a good group of tightly-knit and organized activists, a megaphone, a few well-felt slogans, a leaflet that clarifies your positions, a bit of breath and warmed-up vocal cords. And in no time, you find yourself with a block of a hundred or so young people who are overjoyed, who take up your slogans and propose their own.

The next day, you don't have much voice left, but it's worth it: you've talked about the oppression queer people face, but also, through it, about capitalism, the police, the class struggle, the revolution; and at the same time, you've created a crazy atmosphere. And let's face it, without all that, moving at 2 km/h only to get in the mood with the speakers we passed every 500 metres, we would have been really bored.

Towards a re-politicized Pride?

The rage is there. The thousands of

young and not so young people who come to march, dance and shout at Pride want to celebrate who they are, with their heads held high, but also, for many, to go further by expressing their anger, by leading a struggle. Today's Pride is what it is, but the wish to fight is not absent, far from it. So where are we heading? Towards a repoliticized Pride, next year?

Why not: the Paris Pride, for example, made a clear turn last year, under pressure from the most combative collectives, by choosing for the same event to start in a working-class suburb, to refuse the floats of commercial brands looking for pinkwashing, and to make it clear to FLAG, the gay police collective (which commemorated the Stonewall riots by shooting at people with water pistols...), that it was no longer welcome. We can go towards that, or towards a mass LGBT+ movement, which would no longer wait for Pride to organize and make its demands. This history has yet to be written.

But we need it, and we have the strength. There's no point in lying to ourselves: it's a bit hard, after a Saturday like that one (and the few extra days which, let's face it, took the young anti-capitalists into the wee

small hours of the morning), to go back to normal life, the one where you hide your sexual orientation in your place of study and avoid holding hands in the street. Because for a brief moment, we were immortal.

Pride is also the moment when there are thousands of us in the street and we are no longer afraid of being stared at or hit. It is the moment when we know that neither the cops nor the fascists will attack us, because we are more numerous than them, and stronger. We can even shout provocative slogans as we walk past a suit and a few uniformed policemen, just as we can kiss each other in the middle of the street. At the end of the day, it's all about the balance of power: and when you put several thousand people on the street, even in the most depoliticised march, the street is ours. So when we feel this, when we discover the power to impose our wills and to be who we are, everything becomes possible. I can't wait for this power to be felt every other day of the year.

25 May 2022

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