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The Uprising in China

30 November 2022, by **Yun Dong**

The fire led to the death of at least ten people and injured nine others from several families. It took three hours to extinguish it. Protesters believe that the victims could have been saved had the residential complex not been under Covid lockdown, despite the government's claims that the tragedy had nothing to do with the lockdown.

The deaths ignited a nightlong riot in Urumqi on November 25th, with demonstrators gathering in streets and public spaces, demanding that the government ease restrictions. Urumqi has been subject to repeated lockdowns for months, so people were already fed up and feared that something like the fire in the residential building was bound to happen.

The local government has imposed harsh and dangerous measures that included sealing off not only apartment complexes, but individual apartments with iron bars and new locks that prevented people from leaving their homes. Everyone subject to the lockdown had already wondered what would happen if a fire broke out.

Nationwide protests followed at universities, in communities, and on the streets of Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Chengdu and elsewhere in a powerful show of anger over the avoidable loss of life and their own frustrations with the Covid lockdowns. Thus far, there have been actions at

more than 50 universities and colleges across China.

Students variously called for liberty, democracy, freedom of speech and the rule of law and against the authoritarian rule of the Chinese Communist Party. Students at the prestigious Peking University sang the "Internationale," which is taught in school and represents the spirit of revolt from below, while students at Tsinghua University and elsewhere held up pieces of white paper to symbolize their mourning of the victims in defiance and mockery of political censorship.

One female student at Tsinghua University spoke out in a trembling voice, "If we dare not to speak out because of our fear of arrest, I think the people will be disappointed in us." For the overwhelming majority of protesters, this was their first demonstration. There has been nothing like this on this scale and so openly anti-government in China for decades.

An Uprising against Lockdowns

It is simply stunning how quickly masses of people have risen up and challenged the government and its policies. It is worth pointing out that this rebellion follows hot on the heels of Xi Jinping securing a third term at the highly orchestrated political theater of the 20th Party Congress in mid-November.

Xi had stacked the event with his allies and made sure that there were no alternatives to his new leadership team. Mainstream political analysis believed Xi had cemented total power and control over China for years to come. Workers and students have now shattered that illusion.

Seemingly out of nowhere, in late October, workers assembling iPhones and other consumer electronics in Foxconn's mega-facility in Zhengzhou, Henan, which employs over 200,000 workers, began to jump over walls and run away from the factory. Images of long lines of workers walking with their bags confounded the public, as it is something that has not been seen in recent memory.

These workers, many of whom are temps hired for the busy season, had been placed under the so-called closed-loop system. It prohibits workers from leaving the facility under the pretense of protecting them from contracting Covid.

The underlying motive, of course, is keep the workers churning out products for multinational corporations for the upcoming holiday season. Despite the closed-loop system, some workers did catch the virus, and then out of fear of a mass outbreak and being trapped in a lockdown, they fled the facility.

Under public pressure, Foxconn

apologized and allowed workers to leave. The local government followed by helping Foxconn recruit new temps with offers of high bonuses, and ordered local state employees to report for work to keep the plant in operation.

But Foxconn changed the terms of contract agreements, reducing workers' pay. Feeling lied to and cheated, workers started a riot, spilling out of the factory gate and clashing with security and the police. The government responded by imposing a Covid lockdown on the entire city of Zhengzhou to bring the protest to a halt. What started as a labor dispute escalated into a riot that caught the attention of the entire country.

Before the dust was settled at Foxconn, the fire in Urumqi triggered a riot. The local government's attempt to appease the people in Urumqi by easing the lockdown failed to quell the resistance. The fire was the last straw for a country pushed to the brink by lockdowns.

People went into collective action on a mass scale throughout the country. What the riots at the Foxconn plant and in Urumqi demonstrated to the public is that the harsh Covid restrictions can be resisted: people staged protests, and these forced Foxconn and the local government to begin to change.

The outpouring of grief and anger in the aftermath of the fire has been compared to the reaction to the death of whistleblower doctor Li Wenliang, who had protested the government's initially inept and repressive handling of the pandemic. That produced a wave of opposition to the government.

Since then, many had wondered where that spirit had gone, and were stricken with "political depression" over the seeming acceptance of the new zero-Covid policy. But it turns out that the initial spirit of resistance was never far from the surface. Foxconn and Urumqi rekindled it on a mass scale.

Waves of Local Resistance

This resistance is the result of a confluence of immediate catalysts and

long-term political and economic dynamics. It has shattered a certain political-psychological barrier among large numbers of people, leading them to lose their fear of arrest in a highly surveilled state and join mass demonstrations. In an environment where the threshold for participating in open expression of dissent on the street is very high, crossing that threshold itself is remarkable.

That China has not experienced any open form of dissent such as riots, mass protests and demonstrations is a fiction. In fact, China has had waves of large-scale protests and strikes in the 1990s, 2000s, and early 2010s. The Chinese government used to document what they termed "mass incidents," which was never clearly defined but nonetheless demonstrated social resistance against the inequalities and oppressions of contemporary China.

These incidents grew from 8,700 in 1993 to 87,000 in 2005 - or 238 incidents every single day of the year—when the government stopped releasing figures. In 2013, two activists began collecting statistics on social unrest. Before their arrest, they recorded over 28,000 mass incidents in 2015.

That number is certainly an undercount. The activists did not have the resources to document the much higher total number of incidents across the country. Most of these are caused by labor disputes, land seizures and other rural conflicts, and protests over urban housing policies. There have also been environmental protests and confrontations with notorious urban management bureaucrats.

These actions have been local and protesters tended to avoid criticizing the national government, blaming instead local officials or employers in the hopes of avoiding repression and persuading the national government to take their side in the disputes. Nonetheless, they demonstrate that people in China have a long record of protesting against injustices.

The End of an Era of Relative Social Peace

Seen in this light, the national wave of

protests against lockdowns and the calls for more freedom and democracy and denunciations of authoritarianism are extraordinary and unprecedented in recent history. The protests are against more than just the Covid restrictions; they are against the government's increasing intrusion on people's daily lives. This is a new development.

Beginning in the 2000s, the Chinese state withdrew from the private sphere, at least for the urban middle-class and some sections of the industrial working class. The government had withdrawn from that sphere to allow a burgeoning consumer society to develop, in which consumption of goods and entertainment was experienced by people as freedom from government meddling.

It is simply stunning how quickly masses of people have risen up and challenged the government and its policies.

During the same period from the 2000s to the early 2010s, civil society seemed to flourish with organizations becoming more vocal on social issues, and print and social media were more aggressive in working to hold the government accountable. Of course, millions of workers were exploited by state and private corporations and constrained by state policies regulating their mobility, and the party-state restricted political activity.

But otherwise, middle-class and working class people did not fear state interference in their private lives. And with the economy at that point still growing rapidly, rising living standards for most seemed to compensate for the state's rigid denial of freedom and democracy.

Lockdowns and Economic Precarity

Xi Jinping's zero-Covid policy and its lockdowns changed all of this. Suddenly, people's freedom of movement and daily life became subject to direct control by the state, and the slowing growth of China's economy compromised people's sense of their future prospects. But opposition to the state's intrusiveness took time to develop.

The government's Covid policies were initially tolerated as a part of the collective effort to defeat Covid-19. In fact, the initial anger at the spread of Covid was directed at the lack of state action to contain the virus. There was a genuine fear of being infected, which not only could make people sick but also put them into hospitals and quarantine facilities for prolonged periods of time.

Thus the lockdown in Wuhan in the early months of 2020 and the subsequent lockdowns across the country were largely accepted, if not celebrated. They were seen as necessary sacrifices to protect people's lives. But in reality, the state was imposing its new zero-Covid policies not only to stop the pandemic but also to quell the escalating social conflicts that had emerged in the 2010s, and to save Chinese capitalism.

Most of the policies of the Chinese state in the last few years, apart from zero-Covid, were primarily directed at curtailing the speculative excesses in the high-tech and real estate sectors and restoring economic growth. The state has also taken a more active role in incentivizing couples to have more children to overcome China's looming demographic crisis precipitated by low birth rates and an aging population.

All of this entailed increased state intervention into the economy and society. Zero-Covid then took the intrusiveness to an unprecedented level. The state's draconian new policy of lockdowns was certainly not the only option.

In the early months of the pandemic, mutual aid networks in Wuhan and elsewhere demonstrated an alternative. People delivered protective gear, transported medical workers, and supported residents in need. They worked to fill the vacuum left by state inaction.

All of this was shut down once the state stepped in and took control of fighting the pandemic. Since then, it has used its capacity to mobilize personnel and resources to enforce the zero-Covid policy. For much of 2020 and 2021, it seemed to have succeeded.

While many other countries suffered huge losses of life and economic crisis, China allegedly kept its death toll under a few thousand and maintained economic growth through 2021. People's lives seemed to return to normal. The government seized upon its seeming success to whip up nationalism.

Accumulated Anger

This all came undone over the course of the past year. In 2022, some cities have been under lockdown for weeks and months at a time. The "Big White," as medical workers dressed in hazmat suits were colloquially called, who had been looked up to as heroes making personal sacrifices for the collective good, became impersonal enforcers of harsh state policies.

People shared footage on social media of them chasing and beating up those deemed in violation of Covid protocols. The hazmat suits have now become masks to disguise these enforcers' identities, providing them anonymity and with that the confidence to engage in repression with impunity.

A string of Covid-related incidents further undermined faith in zero-Covid. Here are just a few examples: A bus taking infected patients to a quarantine facility crashed, killing 27 passengers. There has been a spike in suicides committed by those under prolonged quarantine. People were thrown into desperation when under lockdown they were deprived adequate access to food in Shanghai. In Guangzhou, migrant workers broke out from under lockdown. And untold numbers of people fell seriously ill after being locked in their homes with Covid and denied access to medical care at hospitals.

These and many other stories sparked anger, and that anger accumulated. Protests began to emerge early this year but were mostly isolated and more easily contained. Perhaps the most iconic of these was the lone protester hanging a banner over Beijing's Sitong Bridge just before the 20th Party Congress that criticized the zero-Covid policy and called for change. While it only sparked limited copycat actions throughout China, it encouraged many Chinese international students in the West to

follow suit and put up similar banners on their campuses.

Shattered Hopes for Change

A milestone in this whole story was the 20th Party Congress. Since the term limit for the Party Secretary had already been removed in 2018, no one was surprised at Xi extending his rule. The term limit essentially helps reshuffle different factions of the Communist Party to achieve balance and ensure orderly leadership transition.

Nevertheless, the maximum term limit cultivates hope that every ten years someone new will assume power and do things differently. Even this modest hope—which usually turns out to be an illusion that quickly turns into disappointment—was shattered.

People feel they are stuck with the same political system for the foreseeable future. Any lingering hope in the self-renewal and self-adjustment of the political system is no more.

Loss of hope in government reform developed at the very same time that people's economic prospects turned bleak. After rebounding in 2021, China's economic growth has slowed down. Some local governments, already losing revenues, are struggling to pay for mass Covid testing. The economic pain is keenly felt by workers, especially informal workers, whose livelihood and employment are most susceptible to lockdowns.

For young people, youth unemployment rate has hit a record high in recent months, reaching almost 20 percent among those between 16 and 24 years of age, while new college graduates face a dire employment situation. Record numbers are entering into the labor market each year at the very same time that jobs are shrinking, with China's leading tech companies laying off their employees rather than hiring. This precarity has stoked anxiety and anger among young professionals and workers.

Some people have hoped for a relaxation of zero-Covid after Xi secured the leadership at the 20th Party Congress. The government

sowed that illusion when it issued a new 20-point guideline that eased restrictions but fell short of implementing a new direction.

A few local governments, such as Hebei province's capital, Shijiazhuang, went further, lifting testing requirements and removing free testing. But many residents opposed this, and under pressure the local government reversed course and reinstated free testing. And now, with an upsurge of cases reaching its highest ever of over 30,000 a day, the government has reverted back to lockdowns to contain Covid throughout the country.

As a result, people are losing faith in the government's ability to change, doubt the effectiveness and rationality of its zero-Covid policy, and are reluctant to tolerate the sacrifices it imposes on them. They are also troubled by what appears to be an arbitrary and irrational implementation of the policy.

In the coming days, right-wing forces in the rest of the world's great powers may well exploit the revolt from below to justify attacks on China. But our solidarity with the people who are protesting and whose demands are rooted in the concrete, lived experiences should never waver.

Decisions about lockdowns of specific communities and homes are made by sub-municipal, local authorities, and they are often unexplained and cannot be challenged. The end of political illusions, economic precarity, and the irrational brutality of zero-Covid combined to build up mass frustration. Mass Resistance without an Infrastructure of Dissent

Mass frustration has exploded into protest over the last few days. The mobilization has been remarkable, and it has given people the confidence to express their mounting dissatisfaction. A critical mass of people overcame the fear of government repression and shared messages online, something that after the Sitong Bridge protest led to people's social media being censored and their accounts suspended or permanently banned. Now emboldened, people are posting and sharing comments and videos on

Weibo and Wechat.

Some of the protests seem to have been spread via social media or encrypted communication tools such as Telegram, although it is not easily accessible to most people. Driven by anger and indignation, people somehow find out about actions on social media and through word of mouth and rush out to join them.

Many of the protests have happened on campuses as well as in apartment complexes. These two sites involve shared spaces, enabling people to coordinate actions more easily than on the streets with participants from all over the city. As of yet, there is no centralized national leadership of any kind, and it is unlikely any will emerge. And though there are many active individuals, there also does not seem to be any local leadership.

That should come as no surprise. The Chinese state has not only banned all independent political parties, but also crushed human rights, civil society groups, and outspoken individual dissidents. It has broken up social movement infrastructure to call, organize, and sustain mass struggle. No one can lead or speak on behalf of the demonstrators.

But the demands are already clearly articulated and crystalized: opposition to the lockdowns. This is not to say the movement is unified. As in any mass movement and especially one without central leadership, there are multiple social groups with sometimes overlapping and differing demands that vary by class and locality.

The Foxconn workers' demands were focused primarily on workplace demands and secondarily on the Covid restrictions; the protesters in Urumqi expressed the strongest, immediate demands to lift the Covid restrictions that endanger their lives; university students are showing solidarity with those protesters in Urumqi while their demands focus on calling for democracy, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the rule of law; and the least reported and much more widely spread is the local, small-scale resistance by residents taking place within apartment complexes and gated communities that are centered

on the easing of restrictions.

The character of protests is also not uniform; they range from peaceful to overt confrontation. Most of these express liberal demands that are not radical in liberal democracies but are highly subversive in an authoritarian state. And they carry with them progressive and democratizing effects.

Despite this heterogeneity, the protests express a shared sense of people resisting the loss of dignity and of the denial of their ability to shape state policy that determines their lives. They share a sense that their very lives are at stake.

The national character of the uprising is important to underline. The protests are feeding off one another and showing solidarity with one another, emboldening different sectors to take action. Moreover, overseas Chinese students and the broader diaspora have also been mobilizing in Hong Kong, Taiwan, the UK, the US and Australia.

Dilemma of an Authoritarian Regime Faced with Resistance

Faced with a national wave of demonstrations, the Chinese state is caught in the classic dilemma of an authoritarian regime. Conceding and relaxing the zero-Covid measures risks confirming that protest works and encouraging others to organize and fight for their demands. But not conceding may drive demonstrators to escalate their struggle and invite others to join.

In recent years, the Chinese state managed to maintain a kind of equilibrium, combining repression and accommodation to manage and contain social conflict. But it has never faced a protest movement on such a scale.

As the demonstrations spread and radicalize, with some adopting explicitly anti-government and anti-party slogans such as "Step down CCP" and "Step down Xi Jinping," the possibility of state repression increases exponentially. At the same time, it is not inconceivable that a combination of selective repression and limited concessions on Covid

restrictions could quell the protests. This has been a pattern in the past with urban demonstrations dissipating just as quickly as they came together.

Yet even if the state is able to contain the demonstrations, the problem that brought us here in the first place remains. China is probably not ready to abandon zero-Covid. Doing so-without a legitimate, mass vaccination system-would lead to mass spread of the virus through a population that has either had ineffective Chinese vaccinations or remains unvaccinated, especially the elderly.

Such an outbreak would overwhelm hospitals and even a low rate of fatalities would, in a country of 1.4 billion people, lead to unprecedented mass death. One modelling by Chinese scientists estimate that at the current vaccination and hospital capacity level, opening up may result in 1.55 million deaths.

Such a catastrophe could provoke an even worse legitimacy crisis for the

Chinese state, which likely has been a part of their calculation to maintain zero-Covid. There is no denying that without an adequate vaccine and adequate healthcare measures, harsh Covid restrictions saved lives in China.

Opening up is not an option without massive investment in the healthcare system and immunization of the elderly. Many analysts have wondered why this has not been done. To do so now, however, will take time, something that protesters may not tolerate.

The party is so opaque that we have little idea about what it is likely to do. The newly reshuffled leadership stacked with Xi loyalists shows no sign of disunity, so it is doubtful that there will be any split in the party and open debate between factions in public.

Whatever the immediate outcome of the demonstrations, ordinary people in China are being radicalized by this experience and many have become

self-organized. This has dramatically raised mass consciousness and the experience of struggle for justice will stay with them regardless of the outcome. That bodes well for the future.

In the coming days, right-wing forces in the rest of the world's great powers may well exploit the revolt from below to justify attacks on China. But our solidarity with the people who are protesting and whose demands are rooted in the concrete, lived experiences should never waver.

Supporting people protesting from below will not escalate the US-led imperial conflict with China. In fact, our popular solidarity across borders is the best way to dampen down tensions and build a common international struggle for justice, equality, and democracy, all of which are under threat from our rulers throughout the world.

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Source [Spectre](#).

"Wages and the cost of living: take back control!"

29 November 2022, by **Léon Crémieux**

Participation in the demonstrations was on average three times lower: the CGT announced 100,000 people in the streets against 300,000 on 18 October. It was therefore a day reduced most often to teams of activists. The only notable event was the "warning" strike by agents of the RATP (Autonomous Paris Transport Authority); the inter-union appeal (CGT, FO, Solidaires, La Base), launched a long time before, mobilized very broadly and largely blocked public transport in the Paris region (buses, the RER-regional express network, and the Metro). While the general wage increase was only 2.2 per cent in 2022, the CGT and SUD (Solidaires) are demanding 300 euros.

For a month and a half from the end of September to the beginning of November, the movement of strikes in the refineries and oil depots of TotalEnergies and Esso-ExxonMobil marked the life of the country, imposing the question of wages, the high cost of living and the distribution of wealth as a central political issue. Obviously, this had been crystallized by the shortage of fuel and even the complete absence of supply in many service stations in the country. No other sector with as much impact has taken over. The strikers, who demanded a 10 per cent general increase, were finally unable to force management to go beyond a 5 per cent general increase for the 2,500

employees of Esso and the 14,000 of TotalEnergies. This is for the year 2023, with payment beginning this November. The strikes in the nuclear power plants, the SNCF and the electric power sector did not really turn into an ongoing strike.

The weakness of this day of 10 November and the absence of any announcement of a follow-up so far does not however take into account the very large number of local strikes for wages which have taken place since October, nor the real success of many of them, even though the increases obtained are most often lower than the 6.3 per cent inflation rate announced for 2022. They are

conducted within the framework of a renegotiation of the NAO [1] 2022 or an anticipation of the NAO for 2023 (this is the case at TotalEnergies for example).

In many companies, workers are all the more motivated to refuse a significant reduction in their real wages since many companies have recorded an increase in their turnover and their profits over the past two years, with big fat envelopes for top executives. This is the case, for example, of the 200 employees of the Geodis logistics platform, in Gennevilliers in the Paris region, who after four weeks on strike have just obtained a 5 per cent general increase for 2022. Employees of company, where wages are low, mobilized all the more strongly in the knowledge that Geodis had a 28 per cent increase in turnover in 2021, with 948 million euros in profits. Good results which allowed several executives of the company to receive a bonus of 300,000 euros to thank them for the efforts made by their employees during the Covid pandemic.

This is also the case for the employees of SANOFI, a large pharmaceutical group, which made 12.3 billion euros in profits in 2020, a net profit which increased further by 11.8 per cent in 2021. This does not prevent the management from proposing only a 3 per cent increase over two years for 2022 and 2023. The workers called a strike on November 22 and 23 and are demanding a 10.2 per cent increase for these two years. At ENEDIS, a company that manages the distribution of the electricity network, after several strikes since September, its employees have just obtained a 9.7 per cent general increase.

Many other examples could be cited, in many companies in the private sector, but the dominant characteristic remains despite everything the scattered nature of the reactions, making it difficult to build a relationship of forces against the MEDEF (the French employers' association) and the government. The trade-union confederations - fragmented in terms of the desire to build a global confrontation on wages and the cost of living - have not built a policy for an overall confrontation and

a centralization of existing struggles, nor a platform addressing the working class as a whole with the aim of obtaining from the government the satisfaction of demands on price freezes, the sliding scale and tax policy. This could make it possible to impose a different distribution of wealth, against a capitalist class that has greatly benefited from the profits of recent years.

It is true that on the divisions among the unions, there also weighs the proximity of the Civil Service elections from December 1-8, involving 5.6 million public sector workers, elections mobilizing a large part of the union apparatuses. There are also elections involving the 150,000 employees of the SNCF from 17 November. At the same time, the union leaders have engaged in recent weeks in a "consultation" with the government on the question of pensions, prior to the presentation of a bill to push back the legal retirement age to 65 (instead of 62 today), which in any case will necessitate significant social mobilization in the coming months. But the building of a relationship of forces for the workers also involves the ability to defend themselves against the fall in their wages, to challenge the rate of profit that the capitalists want to preserve.

The question of wages, of measures taken against the high cost of living and for tax measures, calling into question the class choices made for the benefit of the capitalists, is therefore vital. The challenge was therefore and still is to make the question of wages a political question, since the cost of living concerns the whole working class. Meanwhile, the government (as well as a very discreet MEDEF in recent months) acts permanently to try to contain social discontent without questioning supply policies or preventing capitalist companies from maintaining tooth and nail their rate of profit. Alongside Bruno Lemaire (Minister of Economy, Finance and Industrial Sovereignty), Emmanuel Macron has therefore been for months dead set against any measure which, in substance, would call into question his tax and income policy, pushing the mechanisms of "Macron bonuses", tax-exempted up to 6000 euros, the relaxation of the

mechanisms of profit-sharing and participation, the financing of up to 66 billion euros of tariff shields on energy. These measures preserve capitalist profits and avoid any structural measures, while further reducing Social Security receipts (with the system of tax-exempt premiums). Taking up the argument of liberal doctrine, Macron opposes a general increase in wages. He explained on October 26 on the France2 channel that "an indexation of wages to inflation would be tantamount to maintaining the rise in prices, inflation, to creating a loop that never stops". He couldn't have put it more clearly.

On the other hand, following the usual smokescreen tactics of Emmanuel Macron, a conference on "value sharing" was initiated by the government on November 8, a conference in which the Minister of Labour (Olivier Dussopt) is ready to talk about everything ... except wages and, precisely, the sharing of added value, of the wealth produced in production. Again, there is no question of calling into question the profit rate of the capitalists.

The question of wages will remain the main concern of workers, of the working class in general. The price of fuels, energy and food, among others, will weigh even more in the months to come; inflation will continue in 2023.

In addition to the divisions among the unions, there are also the political divisions on the side of the workers' movement.

Whereas the political and social context should enable the political, associative and trade union components of the workers' movement to occupy an important political space and to help organize popular mobilization in cities, neighbourhoods and workplaces, we are instead witnessing separate initiatives that break any possible dynamic. A few days apart, we witnessed on October 16 and 18, the demonstration at the initiative of the NUPES against the high cost of living, with other political forces such as the NPA, then the demonstration of the CGT, Solidaires, FSU and FO on wages. These ought to have been two springboards to

organize a common dynamic of struggle when, three days apart, the demonstrators were advancing the same demands and the refineries were on strike throughout the country. But the ball was not caught on either side. On the one hand, the leadership of the CGT took umbrage at the "encroachments" on the terrain of the trade union struggle by La France Insoumise (LFI); on the other, La France Insoumise, in the person of Jean-Luc Mélenchon, announced its determination "to avoid wasting time and creating unnecessary tensions. And worse, getting bogged down in meetings that unnecessarily delay the time for action and endanger it." In a word, the search for unity would require "walking separately to strike separately". Jean-Luc Mélenchon claims that LFI or NUPES could itself be the crucible "beyond the apparatuses" of a new Popular Front.

The leaders of La France Insoumise still see social mobilizations as a simple springboard for the promotion of their own party and the increase of their electoral audience in the event of the dissolution of parliament. Obsessed with the parliamentary struggle and the hope of new elections which would restore a central role to La France Insoumise, LFI neglects the construction of a unified movement, a political and social front, bringing together political parties and social

movements, nationally and locally, to organize a general mobilization based on the social needs of today. This attitude is a veritable obstacle to the construction of a real political and social relationship of forces.

The concrete result today is that Macron has won a first round: despite the social exasperation and the obvious need to attack the capitalists and their profits to impose the defence of our wages, the forces of the workers' movement have not shown themselves capable of being political actors in the social clashes of recent weeks, and the struggle for wages has returned to the framework of the industrial terrain.

Worse, whereas the struggles of the working class against the bosses are normally the worst political ground for the far-right National Rally (RN), the government and the media have been striving for weeks to make the NUPES inaudible, to engage in "NUPES-bashing". to get Marine Le Pen back in the saddle as representing the main opposition to Emmanuel Macron. Yet the RN is struggling to reconcile its few slogans of support for social demands and the taxation of super-profits. Its defence of small and medium-sized enterprises has led it to vote against any increase in the SMIC (minimum wage) and to propose exemption from social security contributions for wage increases.

Worse, the government and the media are rewriting their favourite scenario and stage-management of the months preceding the presidential and legislative elections: the focus on security issues and support for the police, fantasies about the invasion of France by Islam and migrants and the need to increase the number of OQTFs [2] in the face of the "criminality of foreigners"; just so many themes dear to the Minister of the Interior, Gerald Darmanin, who is already on the launching pad for the next presidential election of 2027, just like the Minister of the Economy, Bruno Lemaire, who gives a clear illustration with the conscientious unfolding of neoliberal capitalist measures. On the boards of this bad theatre, Marine Le Pen tries to reap the fruits of this nauseating hubbub, which seeks to drown out the social demands of the working class.

There is today a real issue at stake of political polarization, of crystallization on class bases of discontent and of social struggles. This obviously requires building in cities, enterprises and neighbourhoods unitary tools to build and crystallize a relationship of forces.

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The Islamic Republic of Iran: a capitalist, theocratic and patriarchal dictatorship

28 November 2022, by **Babak Kia**

This murder was the "last drop of blood" that broke the camel's back. For nearly 60 days, women, young people, national minorities (Kurds, Baluchis, Arabs, Azeris, etc.) have been on the front line of mobilizations. More generally, the assassination of Mahsa Jina Amini has once again brought to light the misogynist nature of the fundamental basis and laws of

the theocratic dictatorship.

In 1979, introduction of

laws relating to Sharia and Shiism

Basing itself on a patriarchal, unequal society and on the religiosity of a large part of the population, the power of the mullahs has, since 1979, instituted a set of laws relating to Sharia and

Shiism. For Khomeini “everything must be Islamic”. Women are therefore the target of a set of discriminatory measures establishing men’s total control over their bodies and their lives. The compulsory veil is “justified” by the fact that women’s hair is a source of sexual provocation.

Thus, while women and men were shoulder to shoulder during the anti-monarchy revolution of 1979, the regime immediately mobilized its supporters to push women back into the domestic cell. Symbolized by the slogan *ya roussari, ya toussari* which can be translated as “either the veil or we knock you out”, a whole legislative and institutional arsenal was being put in place, accompanied by the creation of brigades responsible for enforcing this new policy. Of course, this was not done without resistance, and there was resistance from the advent of the Islamic regime. The massive demonstration of Iranian women (despite its prohibition), on March 8, 1979 against this phallocratic orientation and against the compulsory veil marked the beginning of an individual and collective resistance of women which has never been ceased.

The introduction of the compulsory veil was accompanied by other measures such as the dismissal of women from jobs considered to be reserved for men, segregation in the health system, in education and more broadly in the public space. All of these measures and many others aim to drive women out of the public sphere, to impose social and political control over them.

In 2017, the latest statistics from the Islamic Republic revealed that all the legal provisions of the regime form obstacles to women’s equal access to the labour market. While women make up half of university graduates, only 14.9 per cent of them are employed, compared to 64.1 per cent of men. Officially, in 2017, the unemployment rate for women was 20.7 per cent, twice that of men.

The civil code of the mullahrchy: a legal instrument of oppression

The civil code established by the theocratic regime determines that the husband is the head of the household. As such, he can forbid his wife to work. In the same way, a passport application must be subject to prior authorization by the husband. Except in a few exceptional cases, women cannot obtain a divorce without the consent of their husband. Abortion is prohibited.

According to the laws in force, if a man or a woman has a sexual relationship outside of marriage, he or she is sentenced to be stoned to death. But simultaneously, the regime allows polygamy. A man can in fact marry for a limited time as many women as he wishes. He can also be married for an unlimited period to four wives. In practice, if he exceeds this number, he can always argue that it was a temporary marriage. For an identical

offence, a man therefore has the possibility of escaping the death sentence by relying on the laws in force, whereas execution by stoning is applied to women.

The civil code considers legal the marriage of little girls aged eight and a half. For a boy, the legal age is 15. It also authorizes “the marriage certificate before puberty” with the agreement of the “legal guardian” of the girl. The father or grandfather can, for example, marry off his 2-year-old daughter or granddaughter to a 60-year-old man and receive in exchange a “dowry” called “milk rights”. The mother has no right to intervene.

It would take too long to detail all the discriminatory devices or all the physical, moral and social violence that women suffer.

The present wave of protest is part of the social, political, democratic and feminist resistance of the past 43 years. The movement today has made possible a considerable leap forward in the feminist consciousness of Iranian society, and whatever the outcome of the current confrontation, there will be no turning back. The Islamic Republic is a capitalist, patriarchal and obscurantist theocracy. More than ever, the peoples of Iran and above all the women, workers and oppressed national, religious and sexual minorities need the solidarity of the radical left, progressive associations and trade unions.

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

Broadening of strike movements in Britain

26 November 2022, by **Thierry Labica**

And what was to come, moreover, from the confusion that arose at the top of the government during the chaotic weeks of Liz Truss’s tenure and the media focus now entirely directed towards the institutional

intrigues of a new succession to the post of Prime Minister?

A broadening of

struggles

Far from what we might have feared — “running out of steam”, weariness and discouragement, loss of visibility, cumbersome organization of new voting procedures (compulsory when the last strike dates back more than six months) — the struggles of the working class have not only resumed, but have spread and increased.

The organizations that have been at the forefront for several months remain combative. This is the case of the postal workers’ union (CWU), whose members voted, by more than 91 per cent, to organize new strikes at the Post Office (a mandate that is valid for the next six months, therefore). In addition, six days of strikes are already planned for December (including the 23rd and 24th) at Royal Mail (which employs 115,000 postal workers).

It must be said that the company (Royal Mail) is doing its bit for the strike: 758 million pounds in profits in 2021-2022, 567 million distributed to shareholders when inflation exceeds 11 per cent, and a salary “catch-up” offer of 7 per cent ... over two years! Using the pretext of losses attributed to strike days, since mid-October the company has gone so far as to

threaten to cut 10,000 jobs by August 2023.

For comparable reasons (derisory wage offers, destruction of jobs), the mobilization continues among railway personnel (RMT) with “yes” at 91.7 per cent and among train drivers (ASLEF) whose strike on November 26 is expected to affect eleven rail operators. On a smaller scale, we see the same thing with ground staff at Heathrow airport, with the 950 bus drivers from the Abelio company (Unite union) who have announced a ten-day strike in November-December, and even the fifty or so employees (Unite) of Funeralcare , a coffin manufacturer based in Glasgow (nearly two weeks in October-November).

Nurses, firefighters, universities...

However, things are taking a more massive turn when the strike is voted by a majority among the 300,000 nurses of the RCN (Royal College of Nurses), for the first time since its creation in 1916 (the drop in real wages is already 20 per cent over ten years), as well as among the 100,000 civil servants of the PCS union, where the strike was voted by 86.2 per cent.

Even in the universities, following an “increase” of 3 per cent, 70,000 personnel (unionized in the UCU) spread over 150 establishments, voted to strike (three days at the end of the month) by more than 80 per cent. Here too, while precariousness has become chronic and salary cuts are considerable, university presidents distribute around 45 million pounds a year in a sector which generated a record income of 41.1 billion last year.

The firefighters (of the FBU) have meanwhile rejected the proposed 2 per cent increase, and the mandate for future strikes is being voted on.

On the horizon, inflation is still looking a little more serious (7.4 per cent forecast for 2023). The budget announcements of November 17, despite some apparent adjustments, promise a continued worsening of the situation for the vast majority of the population, who will be called upon to plug a hole of 54 billion pounds in the state finances. It is in this same context that the government is adopting an additional anti-demonstration law (Public Order Bill) and that the Labour Party continues to expel its left, trade unionists in particular.

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

After the general strike of 9 November

25 November 2022, by **Mateo Alaluf**

The general strike decided by the three trade union organizations - the socialist FGTB (General Federation of Labour of Belgium), the Christian Democrat CSC (Confederation of Christian Trade Unions) and the liberal CGSLB (General Federation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium) - is the product of accumulated social rage and follows many previous mobilizations. Already on 21 September, a trade union rally in Brussels, which was intended to be symbolic, turned into a demonstration

in response to the impatience of the activists. The 9 November general strike paralysed the country and was a complete success. Participation was massive in both the private and public sectors and, significantly, small shopkeepers and many self-employed joined the salaried workers .

Wage indexation

and the wage standard

While many countries benefited, until the 1980s, from automatic wage indexation linked to the evolution of prices, Belgium, because of the determination and firmness of the trade unions, was one of the few countries (along with Luxembourg and Malta) to maintain this link between wages, pensions and social benefits

and the cost of living. Workers are very attached to indexation, which has enabled them to maintain their purchasing power, albeit relatively, and has served as a social buffer during economic downturns. [3] However, in return for maintaining indexation, the trade unions had to concede the adoption of a law (the 1996 law) which allows a wage standard to be set in order to 'safeguard the competitiveness of companies' in relation to France, Germany and the Netherlands, and which thus locks in wage increases outside the index. The 'wage standard', which was indicative at the outset, was later made mandatory and its provisions were tightened in 2017 by the right-wing government led by Charles Michel [President of the European Council since 1 December 2019].

In a highly institutionalized industrial relations system, trade union and employer representatives meet every two years to conclude a cross-sectoral collective agreement for the entire private sector, which serves as a framework for sectoral and company negotiations. The FGTB has repeatedly refused to sign the agreement because of the derisory negotiating margin allowed by the wage standard and has called for the 1996 law to be abolished. Faced this year with a 0% negotiating margin and some of the highest gas and electricity prices in Europe, the three trade unions rebelled. The rage and impatience resulting from the distress of very large sections of the workforce left them no option but to call a general strike.

The trade unions, which could not accept such a wage impasse, also questioned the inadequate government aid for coping with household energy bills and challenged the untargeted measures in favour of companies. In particular, the undifferentiated reduction in employers' contributions was denounced as a gift to companies with huge profits at the expense of social security revenues. While the employers took refuge behind the better protection of Belgian employees due to indexation, which endangers the competitiveness of companies, the trade unions insisted on the partial

nature of this protection. Indeed, on the one hand, certain products (such as fuel) have been taken out of the index and, on the other hand, there is a time lag (which varies according to the sectoral agreements) between the price increase and its wage translation. As a result, the index only partially compensates for the price increase. Moreover, the "index jump" [4] operated by the Michel government in 2015 has led to a structural fall in wages. Although the indexation system constitutes an appreciable protection for employees, it does not prevent a decrease in their purchasing power.

Government under pressure

The success of the general strike puts the government under pressure. Composed of a heterogeneous alliance of seven parties, it is torn by its polarization between the Liberals (on the right) and the Socialists and ecologists (in the centre-left). While the Socialists say they are in favour of the trade unions' demand to make the standard wage linked to the cost of living as before, the Liberals, on the contrary, make any modification of the 1996 law [5] subject to the abolition of wage indexation.

The trade-union organizations recognize the need for measures in favour of small and medium-sized enterprises that are unable to cope with the rise in energy prices. The position of the employers' organization (FEB-Federation of enterprises of Belgium) which refuses any wage negotiation by assimilating to small and medium-sized enterprises in difficulty those enterprises and sectors which distribute record dividends to shareholders and accumulate considerable profits, is felt by the strikers as a provocation. The Socialists, bound by their agreement with the Liberals in government, do not seem able to obtain the relaxation of the 1996 law, which would open the way to wage negotiations in prosperous sectors. At most, a compromise consisting of distributing a bonus to employees in sectors recording substantial profits seems to be the best possible agreement within

the government.

Salaries, not bonuses

It is doubtful that the workers, already marked by the bad experience of the "Covid bonuses" can be satisfied with such a compromise. Bonuses and "one shot" cheques, widely practiced by governments to appease popular anger, are hardly reassuring: with low wages, bonuses do not contribute to the level of pensions or to the financing of social security and do not appease workers who are concerned about their future. A compromise on bonuses would only exacerbate popular anger.

The automatic indexation of wages is a conquest which makes it possible to preserve, even imperfectly, the purchasing power of workers. Despite constant attacks from business and the right aiming to put an end to it, the system resists because of the unwavering commitment of workers. This is an indisputable advantage that the unions have been able to defend in Belgium. On the other hand, the law of 1996 which subordinates the negotiation to the wage standard leads to the paralysis of wage negotiations. The general strike of November 9 reveals the extent of the social crisis which divides the country. In a country in crisis, deeply divided and with political formations weakened and undermined from within, it is now the social dimension which takes precedence over the "communitarian". [6]

The general strike in Belgium is part of the same movement of resumption of large-scale social mobilisations in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Greece, etc. that is sweeping across Europe. A configuration in which the trade union movement, hitherto effaced and dominated by politics, is now in the foreground. The horizon is not only saturated by the rise of far-right populist/nativist forces in Europe. The current social conflictuality could also open up other horizons

12 November 2022

Forty-nine years ago the Polytechnic massacre in Athens

24 November 2022, by **Andreas Sartzekis**

The result of the repression: at least 24 dead -figures of dozens of victims-, hundreds of injured and arrests. A year later, the dictatorship, increasingly destabilised, fell, sending the Greek army to occupy the island of Cyprus and causing it to suffer a terrible defeat at the hands of the Turkish army, which led to the division of the island into two zones separated by walls since then.

Since the end of the dictatorship, 17 November has been a day of mobilisation for schoolchildren, with the preceding days often preceded by commemorative initiatives (debates, concerts...) whose meaning has never been lost despite the years. And of course, every 17th of November, demonstrations take place all over the country commemorating the struggle of the Polytechnic men and women, and strongly condemning the United States (in Athens, the demonstration ends in front of the US embassy, which can sometimes be seen behind hundreds of MAT helmets), NATO and the anti-worker and anti-youth policies fought against by the slogan "Bread, education, freedom".

Three more reasons for a massive commemoration this year

Apart from the fact that in previous years the mobilisations were very limited in number by Covid and the various pretextual bans, there were three additional facts this year to

make people want to go to the demonstrations or, at least for the families of the Athenian region, to go and lay a carnation in front of the monument and the entrance gate placed next to it to remind them of the barbarity of the junta:

- The large-scale policing carried out by the Mitsotakis government, reminding some of the climate of the dictatorship. The wiretapping scandal, which all evidence points to the Prime Minister, has taken on a dimension that would have forced any democratic government to resign. One has come to wonder whether he might not have actually succeeded in rigging the internal elections that a few years ago made him, the son of a politician whose action had at the time served to pave the way for the 1967 coup, the new leader of the right against the favourite Meïmarakis. Against these wiretaps, but more broadly against the use of violent repression as the only response to demands, popular anger is growing louder and louder;

- In the last few months, a dirty revisionist music can be heard: The Polytechnique revolt was a myth, on the one hand it was insignificant and had no effect on the fall of the junta, and on the other hand there were no deaths at Polytechnique, it was the left that invented all this... This propaganda, carried for almost 50 years by the fascists alone, has now found a relay in the governmental right, whether through the recycled fascist Minister of Development affirming that if there were any deaths, it was completely outside the Polytechnic, or through the Vice-Minister of Education, shamelessly repeating these lies. In the face of this offensive by the right-wing media,

militant testimonies are of course decisive, like the one just given on the website of the anti-capitalist organisation Anametrissi by one of the best known and most respected militants of the revolutionary left, our comrade Yannis Felekis, tireless builder of the Fourth International in Greece;

- Finally, the disastrous educational policy of the ultra-liberal government, of social selection and gifts to its private sector cronies, has been actively fought since 2019, and the impressive student mobilisations have often been mentioned here. But this year, the additional step in the repression constituted by the creation of a "university police" was welcomed as it should be: an unbearable provocation, which led and leads to numerous struggles to prevent the praetorians from entering the universities.

Very powerful demonstrations

One week after the very successful general strike of 9 November, the government was hoping for a "small" 17 November. For this purpose, as usual, it wanted to play on fear by deploying an army of MATs (almost 6000 in Athens) and by multiplying helicopters with searchlights. In Thessaloniki, the president of the university, who is happy that cops can patrol "his" university, had the university closed down, a sinister provocation against the memory of the Greek people's struggles and simply against democracy. The soothing speeches about 17 November as a "festival of all Greeks" (similarly, since the time of the dictator Metaxas, 1 May has been the "festival of flowers") and the whole repressive framework will have been useless: in the opinion

of many, the demonstrations on 17 November were even more crowded than those of 9 November. In Athens, the police counted 20,000 demonstrators as for the 9th, but our comrades from NAR announced between 35 and 40,000. The student processions were incredibly massive, the trade union ones were often packed, as well as those of the revolutionary or reformist left. Not forgetting the processions of associations, like the one of the inhabitants of Exarcheia, mobilised against a vicious project of a metro station in the square of the same name... And important demonstrations took place elsewhere, like in Thessaloniki, Patras, in the university towns of Crete...

The slogans were of course against Mitsotakis' policy, "Bread, education, freedom" being more than ever a concentrate of social and democratic

demands. Of course, the anti-imperialist slogans resounded very loudly, which is justified in the face of the gifts made to US imperialism which can now dispose of a maritime base in the north-east of Greece, in Alexandroupolis, not far from the entrance to the straits leading to the Black Sea. Denying Greece's involvement in a future inter-imperialist war, especially through these bases, is central. But we have to note a weakness of the anti-imperialist dimension of this 2022 demonstration, linked to the fact that on the issue of the ongoing dirty Russian war in Ukraine, apart from a few organisations with revolutionary Marxist positions, the "least bad" that we see in the Greek radical and revolutionary left is to denounce both US imperialism and the Putin invasion of Ukraine. Indeed, at a time when the Ukrainian people and territory are victims of a deluge of missiles aimed at punishing them for refusing to be a

submissive people, at a time when peace, the object of many slogans, is threatened by this cynical Russian imperialist aggression in the heart of Europe, the most effective anti-imperialist slogan would have been something like "Putin, the best agent in the service of Nato, unconditionally withdraw your dirty paws from Ukraine"...

Anyway - we can see that the debates on the war in Ukraine are indispensable in the Greek left - the day of 17 November was a strong point of the mobilisation that is indispensable to chase away the right, a right that is visibly nostalgic for the Greece of the colonels, and against which we have to fight without nostalgia but by drawing the best from the heroic struggles of the Greek people. Bread, education, freedom!

Athens, 21 November 2022

Alaa Abdel Fattah ends his hunger strike

23 November 2022, by **Alaa Abdel Fattah**

His family is very concerned about his physical and psychological condition. We reiterate: Egypt, which is ranked 135th (out of 139) in the World Justice Project's rule of law index, must release Alaa and the 60,000 prisoners of conscience without delay.

"Alaa had a near-death experience, but decided to live on"

We are publishing excerpts from the letter written by Alaa Abdel Fattah's family after visiting the prisoner on Thursday 17 November[[Letter published in full on the French newspaper site liberation.fr.]:

On Thursday 17 November, we saw Alaa for the first time since 24 October. We knew that from 1 November he would stop taking the 100 calories a day that had kept him alive for the past six months. When we saw him, he was exhausted, weak and vulnerable. He was very, very emaciated. We knew that on 6 November, the first day of the COP27 conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, he would stop drinking water. After that date, we knew almost nothing about what happened to him inside the prison, except for two short notes from him received on Monday and Tuesday of this week.

We saw him in Wadi El Natrun prison, in a visitors' box, separated by glass, with a poor sounding headset through which we were able to talk to him one after the other. Just as we knew nothing of

what was happening inside the prison, Alaa had virtually no idea of what was going on outside. [...]

He was very thin, very frail, but was happy to see his family again. There were no negotiations with the authorities and no promises were made. Alaa had no idea what was going on in the outside world. We tried to tell him as much as possible about the global wave of solidarity that his situation generated. "Any form of political organisation that can solve our global crises must be born out of movements of personal solidarity. Like in my case," he said.

We hope that the extraordinary global attention Alaa has received and the tens of thousands of people who have expressed their solidarity will lead to his release. Alaa had a near-death experience,

but decided to continue living. He will have no choice but to resume his hunger strike very soon if there is no progress in his situation.

This is what has happened over the

last ten days. We were hoping for more news, that he would be released. But the campaign for Alaa's release will continue, with the same strength. He needs our

solidarity now more than ever.

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

48,000 Academic Workers on Strike in California

21 November 2022, by **Dan La Botz**

It is also the largest strike in the history of higher education in America. The graduate student workers average salary is \$24,000 a year, which is not a living wage with the cost of rent for an apartment in the cities where the campuses are located averaging \$24,000 per year and \$37,000 in Los Angeles. And the inflation rate is currently over 7 percent, is eroding workers' purchasing power. Some students work second or third jobs, other sell their blood, and yet others have even become homeless.

The union is demanding an average salary of \$54,000 per year for most workers and \$70,000 for post-docs (who currently earn \$55,361) with a cost-of-living clause that would adjust for inflation. The union is also demanding \$2,000 a month for child care, expanded parental leave, and passes for public transportation. (Professors in the California Faculty Association whose salaries average \$85,000 to \$176,000 are not involved in the strike.)

Neil Sweeney, a post-doc in microbiology and president of UAW Local 5810, says the union is trying to make "transformational changes" that will improve workers' lives and also improve education and research. Contract negotiations had gone on for more than a year when the strike

began, and the union has filed 28 unfair labor practice complaints for the university's failure to bargain in good faith. The university administration wants mediation, but the union wants to continue negotiating while striking.

Workers on strike, post-doctoral scholars, academic researchers, academic student employees (teaching assistants, readers, and tutors) and graduate researchers on the university's ten campuses spread over 500 miles from north to south. They are members of three local unions all affiliated with the United Auto Workers union (UAW). (In the United States, as industry shrank, various industrial unions began to organize academic employees at the country's universities who today are represented not only by the UAW but sometimes by the United Electrical Workers, the Communication Workers, or the United Steel Workers, as well as by the American Federation of Teachers or the National Education Association.) Striking employees such as teaching assistants do much of the actual teaching and grading at the university and without them many classes have been forced to close while students' final examination grades may not get done on time. Since going on strike, the UC workers have received the support of the California Federation of Labor that called for the cancellation of all events

on campus. Teamsters representing UPS have said that they will not be making deliveries to the campus while the strike continues.

The Democratic Party governor Gavin Newsome has the biggest hand in running UC. The University of California is administered by a Board of Regents, 18 are appointed by the governor for 12 years, while others are top government officials. The regents oversee the \$43.9 billion budget, primarily coming from the state budget and student tuition of \$14,226 a year. University finances depend primarily on taxes on corporations, and California is home to some of the country's largest: Walt Disney, Chevron, Apple and Google, and many others. Yet these companies pay a flat tax rate of only 8.84 percent. Ultimately, the UC strikes must win concessions from the Governor and the state legislature which controls both the taxes and the state budget.

This huge strike, especially if it wins, could have a significant impact on other workers, in higher education and public employees. Together with the recent national strike by 2,000 workers in 100 Starbucks stores and the organizing at Amazon, we can see that younger workers are turning unions into fighting organizations.

20 November 2022

Sahel: with or without Barkhane, a policy against the people

20 November 2022, by **Paul Martial**

The end of Operation Barkhane sanctions its failure. This OPEX (external operation) which succeeded those of Serval in Mali and Épervier in Chad, had the stated aim of eradicating terrorism in the Sahel zone.

An overall negative balance sheet

In view of the initial results, the new target set has proved to be less ambitious. The aim was to contain jihadist attacks and protect populations. The toll that can be drawn on the ground is an increase in attacks accompanied by a humanitarian crisis. The jihadists are gaining ground to the point of controlling 40% of Burkina Faso's territory and entire regions in northern and central Mali. Now, the offensives by Islamist groups are spreading to coastal countries hitherto spared such as Côte d'Ivoire, Benin or Togo.

Barkhane's inability to put an end to

insecurity in the Sahelian countries, in addition to feeding anti-French sentiment already widespread in view of France's iniquitous policy on the continent, signals a political readjustment of the France's military intervention in the Sahel.

A new direction?

What changes with the end of Barkhane? At first glance not much, since the French troops, around 3,000 soldiers, will still remain stationed in the region. They are mainly present in Chad, which also hosts the command centre, and to a lesser extent in Niger with a "projected air base" and three "desert tactical groups". The field of action of the French troops deployed remains the same with the exception of Mali.

On the other hand, the type of commitment will change. The General Staff speak of "a logic of co-construction" and of "conducting operational partnership missions of combat and support at the request of the countries of the region". In short, from the leadership role in the fight

against armed jihadism, we would move to support for local armies. A strategy that resembles that developed in Africa by Obama, based on the concepts of "light footprint" and "leading from behind".

Barkhane was used against the people. We remember the exfiltration of the Burkinabe dictator Blaise Compaoré, following the revolution of 2014, allowing him to escape from the justice of his country. There was the intervention in Chad in February 2019 to defend Déby against the rebels of the Union of Resistance Forces (UFR) who had nothing to do with jihadist groups. Finally, the bloody repression causing three deaths in Niger during the demonstration in Tera against the passage of the Barkhane convoy.

The new military orientation advocated will, without a doubt, continue to be exercised against the peoples in struggle. Macron's support for the bloody dictatorship of Déby's son is a tragic illustration of this.

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

Social anger amid possible political storms in Greece

19 November 2022, by **Andreas Sartzekis**

Mitsotakis' policy is also easy money without sustainable jobs (summer tourism), energy decisions without an overall plan: authoritarian implantation of wind farms for the sole

profit of crony bosses and with the sole effect of massive local mobilizations, as in Euboea last week.

Overall, the situation is tragic for a large part of the population: record

inflation (12% in September), skyrocketing energy and commodity prices, and this without any prospect of real recovery. Of the 23 regions of the European Union where youth

unemployment exceeds 30%, six are Greek, and three million inhabitants (out of 10.7) are at the same time at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Faced with this, the staging of the “cheap housewife’s basket” by the far-right minister Georgiadis is considered as ridiculous as it is vain.

Surge of social anger

As various mobilizations show, anger is swelling in the face of a government that only serves the rich and that sinks into a logic of violent repression but also paranoid policing: the telephone tapping of the Mitsotakis circle targets not only the militant left and reformist or centrist politicians, but also the

heart of the right, including one of the pillars of the regime, the creepy owner of two of the main pro-government newspapers!

The crisis of the right may not last but will weaken the government in the face of social pressure from the street. Indeed, the GSEE (the single private sector confederation) and ADEDY (the single public sector federation) were forced to call a general strike on 9 November, to demand a real increase in wages, the restoration of collective agreements and the abolition of anti-union laws. The strike was massive, and the demonstrations very significant throughout the country: in Athens, the police counted 20,000 demonstrators, our comrades from NAR up to 30,000; we could count more than 15,000 with PAME (the trade union current of the KKE, with a

massive but rather dull procession), a very dynamic 10,000 with the rank-and-file unions supported by the radical and revolutionary left, 3,000 to 5,000 with the GSEE alongside which Syriza made a return to the streets.

But as always, three processions avoiding each other, and therefore an absence of unitary dynamics, risks offering as the only alternative perspective to the right a future Syriza-Pasok government to “better manage” the crisis of capitalism. Building in the struggles the united front to render credible the only real alternative, a break with the murderous law of the market, is urgent!

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

Czech Grandmothers with Ukraine

17 November 2022, by **Dan La Botz**

As a student activist in the early 1970s, Šabatová was arrested by the Communist government for her involvement in distributing leaflets during the parliamentary elections and sentenced in November 1971 to three years in prison, but was paroled in December 1973, though she could no longer continue her university studies in philosophy. In 1977 she signed Charter 77, a citizens’ initiative criticizing the “political and state power” for violating human and civil rights that it had promised to respect when it signed the final act agreement of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975. In 1978 she became co-founder of the Committee in Defense of the Unduly Prosecuted.

While her husband was imprisoned from 1979 to 1984, she continued their political work, publishing the movement’s newspaper Informace o Chartě 77. While working and raising three children she continued to be active as the spokesperson for the

Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity campaign.

After the Velvet Revolution, the mass movement that ended Communist rule in December 1989, she worked at the independent East European Information Agency and also returned to her studies at the university. In the Czech Republic, she served in government in 2001 as deputy public defender of human rights. She continues her political work today.

“I tend to be a pacifist,” said Šabatová, “and I was on 24 February when Russia invaded Ukraine, but when I saw what was happening, I thought, Ukraine has to defend itself. The Ukrainians must defend themselves and we must support the Ukrainians.”

When Ukrainian refugees from the Russian war on Ukraine began to arrive in the Czech Republic, Šabatová volunteered to take in a Ukrainian woman and her child. They stayed with her for five weeks until she and

her fellow solidarity activists were able to find the woman an apartment of her own.

As the war went on, Šabatová and a group of other like-minded women of her age who had long been involved in the fight for democracy and national sovereignty in Ukraine decided to form Grandmothers with Ukraine. She says that the majority of Czechs support Ukraine. The Social Democratic Party supports Ukraine, but the Communist Party is ambivalent. Neither party is currently in government.

The Czech left is weak, she says, with no seats in parliament at present. While the Pirat party is sometimes described as the country’s left party, she says they are not really. Still there are leftwing publications online such as A2LARM and Deník Referendum. Šabatová is currently involved with people in the Social Democratic and Green parties to form an alliance, officially approved by those parties, to run a slate in the Prague municipal

Human Suffering, Mutual Aid, Public Health, and Future Struggles in Ukraine

16 November 2022, by **Sam Freidman**

I have taken part in many such discussions as a supporter of the right of the Ukrainian people to determine their own destiny, and thus as a supporter of the defeat of the Russian invasion. **What I have rarely noticed in these discussions, however, is any deep understanding of the current realities and future lives of Ukrainian people as people.**

I feel this in part because I have worked closely with many Ukrainian friends since 2010 in efforts to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS among people who use drugs, sex workers and gay men and other men who have sex with men.

In many of these years, I have traveled to Ukraine two or three times, for up to three weeks a visit. Most of that time has been spent in or near Kyiv or Odesa, but I also spent some time setting up projects in Simferopol and Sevastopol (the two largest cities of Crimea), Kriviy Rih in central Ukraine, and Lviv in the western part of the country.

In the course of these trips, I have made many friends. In many ways they were comrades in struggle, with the struggle in question being the effort to protect people against infection and related efforts to get these people the best possible medical care. I also recognize that in spite of this involvement with them, and in spite of my own Ukrainian Jewish ancestry, my understanding of Ukraine and of the suffering of its people is only partial.

During the Maidan Revolution of 2013-2014, and the months thereafter, some of my friends took an active part. Others did not. My interviews with them were the basis for a paper I

wrote on these struggles (Friedman, Sam. "What happened in Ukraine?" Z-Net. July 6, 2015. Reprinted in New Politics; and (with footnotes) at International Marxist Humanist Organization & at Ukraine Solidarity Campaign).

Pandemic, Then War

The pandemic disrupted my ability to travel to Ukraine, and disrupted the lives of my friends. Nonetheless, they continued their work trying to reduce the spread of HIV and to help people get good care.

The invasion of Ukraine seriously disrupted their efforts. Much of their energy has gone into driving what had been AIDS prevention vans around the country to deliver medical supplies and food to hospitals and other organizations that needed them, including in frequently shelled areas. These supplies included medicines for the HIV infected and methadone for people who use drugs.

I have had several zoom conversations with my Ukrainian friends and exchanged many emails with them about conditions in the country. Some of what I will describe may be known or assumed by readers, but much may not.

First, even for those not in the military, the war has led to massive amounts of overwork and burnout. Some of this is due to a commonplace of class struggle: During wartime, governments and employers prevent strikes and routine workplace self-defense efforts, and get a degree of

worker support for this based on cries for national unity. (This was much of the motivation for the revolutionary struggles in Europe at the end of WW I, and the wartime strikes and post-war strike wave in the United States in the 1940s.)

In Ukraine, overwork and burnout are increased by volunteer efforts to help in war-related tasks and by volunteering to help those in need. In addition, the frequent need to deal with the aftermath of damages caused by bombs or shelling adds both to stress and overwork.

Importantly, however, much of this volunteering is conducted and led by people who mobilize themselves independently of governments or employers. It is a social mutual aid response to meet each others' needs and to build their own destiny. As such, it is one important seed from which later social struggles may grow.

Second, medical conditions have deteriorated. Hundreds of health facilities have been destroyed by Russian attacks and many others looted by Russian troops. COVID vaccination was paused, increasing vulnerability to disease and death.

Ukraine had high tuberculosis rates before the war. TB and COVID spread has probably increased due to the time people spend crowded in subways/bomb shelters, and overcrowded housing due to the destruction of many buildings, with a partial and lesser mitigation due to the decline of nightlife and similar crowded gatherings. Water supplies have been disrupted in many regions, and there has been unconfirmed news of a cholera outbreak in Mariupol.

Many people have had their housing destroyed. Increasingly, as Russia has attacked infrastructure, millions of people have had their access to power or to heating fuels reduced or eliminated.

Homelessness or informal housing causes stress, overwork, and exposure to cold and the weather more generally. Moving in with others often causes massive stress for everyone. And winter makes these conditions worse — even in southern Ukraine, as in Odesa, winters can be cold and icy. Displacement, Disease and Drugs

As mentioned above, my work with Ukrainians centered around HIV, particularly among people who use drugs and among sex workers. One effect of the war is likely to be massive increases in both drug use and sex work, and in the diseases like HIV, hepatitis C, and STIs that these spread.

There are already many signs that this is already occurring. Many displaced people — particularly women — are finding that sex work is their best available or only income source. Their potential clientele is increased because many women and children left the country, but this was forbidden for men.

Stress from having to leave your home and moving to another part of Ukraine may be leading large numbers of people to take up drug use. There is some preliminary evidence that this is happening in Odesa, for example. In addition, pain from war-related injuries or psychological trauma may lead some soldiers, ex-soldiers and civilians to begin to use drugs. [7]

There are of course many other health issues to be concerned about. I remember talking with some American veterans of the Iraq War in 2004 or thereabouts about their fear of exposure to depleted uranium from U.S. anti-tank shells. Undoubtedly, many forms of toxic exposure are affecting both civilians and soldiers in Ukraine. Their effects will become evident in future years.

So far, my discussion has focused on people living in areas controlled by Ukraine. Millions of Ukrainians,

mainly women and children, have fled to various countries in other parts of Europe or to the Americas. They face many but varying problems (even if less severe than those faced by darker-skinned migrants or those from the global South.)

More ominously, many Ukrainians live in areas controlled by Russian forces, or that have been controlled by Russia and been reconquered by Ukraine. Others in large numbers have been forced to move to Russia.

Most or all of the members of these groups of people have faced various hardships that I know little about. Their traumas will play out in future years. Drug users and sex workers under Russian rule will have to endure the rigors of Russia's highly stigmatizing environment that prohibits access to lifesaving drugs like methadone or buprenorphine, and is deeply hostile for all forms of harm reduction for people who use drugs or for sex workers.

Hundreds of people died in Crimea after Russia cut off access to methadone there. People who are queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual will have to face the stigmatization and oppression embodied in recent laws against LGBTQ "propaganda" as enforced by a harsh state under constant pressure from homophobic religious and other rightwing forces.

Even if the war were to end tomorrow, Ukrainians will face difficulties for many years to come. PTSD will be widespread, as will be the effects of missed vaccinations for childhood diseases and for COVID-19.

Problematic Future Prospects

In addition, many people may be victimized by the future politics of Ukraine. Any postwar period is likely to see many potential struggles and the effort of government to limit them by divide and rule strategies.

Ukrainian politics is already quite right wing, oriented to neoliberalism and anti-unionism. As mentioned

before, working people are likely to make demands and organize strikes and other struggles when the war ends — and financial constraints and the needs of corporations will force them and the government to resist.

Faced with social unrest, governments often respond by moralistic politics that scapegoat the vulnerable. This is what the Nixon forces did in the United States in the early 1970s with their wars on drugs and on crime. More generally, in many countries people who use drugs, sex workers, alcoholics, women who need abortions, and (e.g. in Iran) women who refuse to wear the hijab are examples of other people scapegoated by governments and corporations facing challenges to their power.

In a postwar Ukraine, efforts at scapegoating will be hampered by the extent to which the war has built many forms of solidarity among people of various backgrounds — and by the fact that any reactionary policy echoing "Russian values" or "Russian ways of doing things" will seem suspect or anathema to most Ukrainians.

Nonetheless there remains a strong right wing and moralistic strain within Ukrainian politics, and politicians' and employers' "need" to divide workers and communities seeking improved lives may lead to scapegoating to provoke such divisions.

Although the Ukrainian government has been supportive of donor-funded harm reduction services both before the Russian invasion and so far during the war, these policies might become a critical political battle if the right chooses to focus on people who use drugs, gay men, and sex workers in the postwar period. (This of course assumes that Ukraine will continue to exist and will not be destroyed by a Russian annexation.)

I am continuing to work (from afar) with Ukrainians to protect public health there. As such, if scapegoating politics do become important, I will support efforts to maintain and strengthen harm reduction and other programs that keep people who use drugs, sex workers, sexual minorities and others relatively safe from disease

and other harms.

Not only would cutbacks in these programs lead to disease spread, they would be deeply stigmatizing and hurtful of many groups of people. The politics behind such cutbacks would divide working class communities and people at work in ways that weaken their ability to defend themselves against attacks on labor and other demands by the powerful.

There are other ways, besides moralistic ones, to divide the working class and working class communities. If the pressures of neoliberalism and/or the International Monetary Fund for cutbacks in government spending and in workers' wages and conditions become strong enough, and drive unemployment to high levels, this might lead to programs to reserve jobs for men (or perhaps women) who were soldiers.

The probably-unavoidable realities of starving and delinquent orphans and other street kids in the war's aftermath could strengthen a scapegoating attack on "bad mothers" who do not supervise children adequately. Efforts to divide workers who are on strike from those who are not could become vicious. Scapegoating on the basis of language

or of having radical politics also might be successful.

In short, we on the American left who support Ukrainian efforts against imperialist invasion and oppression should understand that any end of the war is likely to see heightened social struggle within Ukraine (and indeed in Russia). It will also lead to many major health problems within Ukraine. During the war, and afterward, we should work to strengthen the power of working class communities to battle their enemies and to support harm reduction and other approaches to disease prevention and mental health.

When the war ends — once again assuming that Russia does not succeed in taking over Ukraine — the experience that working class communities have had in self-organized mutual aid may be the ground for future successes. Even though this experience took place during a war for survival, large parts of the Ukrainian working class have learned how to organize themselves and then perform non-alienated labor. If postwar struggles over the future of the country become intense, workers may generalize this experience and try to build a new world "on the ashes of the old."

Eugene Debs, the famous American labor organizer and socialist, once said, "Years ago, I recognized my kinship with all living things, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on earth...**While there is a lower class, I am in it, while there is a criminal element, I am of it, and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free...**" [8]

This statement of solidarity extends to us all and what we should do: During and after the war, support the struggles of the Ukrainian people, and of those Russians who resist the war; and during and after the war, to support the struggles of workers, including sex workers, of sexual minorities, and of people who use drugs in their efforts to defend their health and happiness and to transform the conditions of their lives.

Source January-February 2023 [ATC 222](#).

Author's note: I wrote this paper in interaction with Ukrainian colleagues who chose to remain anonymous. They fully deserve co-authorship, but under the circumstances chose not to make their names public. They also may not agree with elements of my political perspective.

A Rightful Place for Taiwan on this Planet

15 November 2022, by **Au Loong-Yu**

One China Policy—which China?

Beijing tries its best to make the world believes that its one China policy only means:

- There is only one China in the world
- Taiwan belongs to China
- The sole representative government

of China is the People's Republic of China (PRC)

- Taiwan belongs to the PRC

Taiwan challenged the third and the fourth point and we must be aware of its voice. Although the Kuomintang (KMT) regime had lost Mainland China to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949 and fled to Taiwan, its Republic of China (ROC) constitution has been continuously in force, hence its claim over Mainland China as well - hence the ROC is the sole legitimate representative government of China.

The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government (in power in 2000-2008 and again for two terms for 2016-2024) has adopted a pro-independence position in 1992 but has taken no step to implement it ever (see below).

US's interpretation

As for the US, it "*acknowledges* (my emphasis) that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United

States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves." (1972 Shanghai Communiqué)

The US deliberately used the word "acknowledge," not "recognize," while avoiding to name any countries on either side here, making the statement "Taiwan is a part of China" vague enough to continue exploring its hidden, but developing, agenda then. At that point, it still recognized the ROC regime but was already beginning to explore closer relations with Beijing. In 1979, this would materialize in the establishment of formal diplomatic ties with the PRC at the expense of the ROC, who had already been excluded from the United Nation at the end of 1971. Beijing's supporters would always try to create an impression that the PRC's establishment of official diplomatic ties with the US implies that the latter also recognizes that Taiwan belongs to the PRC—but the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué never stated this. The US did oppose Taiwan independence (which would mean officially replacing the ROC with something like "Republic of Taiwan"), but it has been consistently unclear in the question of which 'China' does Taiwan belong to, the PRC or ROC. The US's recognition of PRC in 1979 has not changed this either. [9]

On the other hand, one must also realise that Washington continues to recognise the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China, and continues to commit itself to discouraging Taiwan people's right to self-determination. Washington has adjusted its approach to the cross strait relationship but has not yet changed in any substantial way its Taiwan policy.

The "1992 consensus"

The White Paper attacks the DPP government in Taiwan for:

refusing to recognize the one-China principle, and distorting and

denying the 1992 Consensus. They assert that Taiwan and the mainland should not be subordinate to each other, and proclaim a new "two states" theory.

The "1992 Consensus" here refers to the conclusion of the talks between Beijing and Taipei's KMT government in 1992, with a verbal agreement between the two that "both sides of the strait" belong to "China" but "agree to disagree" over the interpretation of "China" (PRC or ROC). Obviously this implies that, as a matter of fact, both sides of the strait do not subordinate to each other". [10] Therefore it is odd to read the White paper accusing Taiwan for this. On top of this is that no matter what this or that head of state in Taiwan once spoke on the cross strait relationship and which annoyed Beijing, their government continue to uphold its ROC constitution, which implies that it has not breached its commitment to its "one China policy" at all. Beijing is simply muddling the water when it repents over what it had acknowledged in 1992.

Furthermore, the paper's interpretation of the "1992 Consensus" contradicts what Beijing's top leader once said to Bush. Back in 2008, when the Chinese and the U.S. presidents held telephone talks on Taiwan, then-Chinese president Hu Jintao said:

it is China's consistent stand that the Chinese Mainland and Taiwan should restore consultation and talks on the basis of "the 1992 consensus," which sees both sides recognize there is only one China, but agree to differ on its definition. [11]

Beijing has to confuse the world is because it does not only oppose Taiwan independence, but is also keen on wiping out the ROC altogether so that it can rule over Taiwan people. Thirty years ago Beijing was less aggressive to Taiwan, when it was

much less confident of itself than it is today – nowadays Xi Jinping no longer have the patience to wait for peaceful negotiation anymore. He may soon demand Taiwan to sit down for negotiation, accompanied by the threat of armed unification however. That is why Xi is increasingly being hard-line towards Taiwan. And this is why the White Paper could still promote its brazen "one country two systems" package to Taiwan even after this package has become politically bankrupt after Beijing's crackdown on Hong Kong's autonomy since 2020. It does not care about "winning over the heart of the Taiwan people" any more, it only wants to instil fear in the latter's heart. This level of arrogance and aggression not only antagonises the 23 million Taiwanese people, denying their democratic rights to decide their own fate, but also increasingly condemn the KMT – the only big party in Taiwan that is soft to Beijing – to unpopularity back home, narrowing Beijing's own options. If Beijing does not mind about this, it is only because it decides to bully Taiwan. To sum up, in the last ten years it has always been Xi's hawkish position that has been creating more tension across the strait.

The DPP's view

The DPP's 1991 program included the demand for an independent Taiwan republic through a referendum. It also attacked the ROC constitution's claiming jurisdiction over Mainland as obsolete.

As a matter of fact, the DPP has won four ROC presidential election but none of its presidents ever moved to implement its program of holding a referendum for independence. In fact, the party has re-interpreted its Taiwan independence program multiple times to the effect that its leadership has long abandoned its Taiwan independence program – summed up in the term "*de jure* independence" – and adopted a "*de facto* independence" position instead, ie, accepting the ROC constitution, and maintaining the ROC as a separate political entity from the PRC. By doing this the DPP is making a compromise not only in response to Beijing's

pressure but first and foremost to Washington's pressure. This is also practically a position of maintaining the status quo, which still has **the support** of more than half of the population (see below).

Beijing, obsessed with its mistaken idea of "Chinese nation" - that all Chinese speaking people must be unified into a single whole under its rule, and that the CCP is the natural representative of its version of "Chinese nation", with no regard at all on the will of the people concerned - flatly refused to even talking to the DPP.

Beijing's Imperial agenda

The White Paper justifies its claim over Taiwan by citing the **1943 Cairo Declaration** issued by the KMT China, the US and the UK which stated that "all the territories Japan had stolen from China, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and the Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China." The White Paper, in order to be politically correct, changed the names of the above mentioned territories to "Northeast China, Taiwan and the Penghu Islands" in its citation. But it has made itself very politically wrong to cite the document to justify its claim over Taiwan in the first place. Isn't Beijing supposed to be a "socialist" regime? Why would it relies on the authority of an agreement signed between the imperialists Roosevelt and Churchill on one hand and Chiang Kai-Shek, the hangman of the CCP, on the other? What kind of socialist regime gives full respect to the imperialist powers who are dividing the world between themselves, even though they also agreed to return Japan's occupied territory to Chiang just to goad the latter to fight the war harder? However, its incorrectness does not stop here at all. Implicit in the White Paper is a founding principle of the PRC which violates basic principle of socialism - that it sees itself as the natural successor of all the territories of the KMT regime - which in turn also did the same in relation to the Qing dynasty. This is nothing but the doctrine of empire building and

imperialism, even when the KMT's China was the victim of Western imperialism. No wonder back in the early 1940s the CCP already abandoned its original position (in line with the practice of the Bolsheviks) of supporting self-determination for the minorities in China like the Tibetans and the Uighurs. Beijing's recent claim over the nine-dot line in the South China Sea follows the same logic - "we must succeed all the territorial claims of the KMT regime", no matter how fragile the KMT's claim was. This kind of reactionary position is enough to disqualify the CCP as the legitimate representative of the Chinese people. Before talking about the "holy task of unification of all Chinese" one should first talk about rebuilding a China that is fully democratic and respectful of the right of its minorities' right to self-determination. This is the only way to save China from an unnecessary war.

The above review of the history of the "one China" policy also helps us to understand one thing - that if Beijing's interpretation has been accepted by many governments in the world, this has been based on their political perception only, namely their recognition of the PRC as the sole legitimate representative of China. But this in itself is not as solid as rock. That the PRC was admitted to the UN in 1971, at the expense of the ROC, was in turn merely the result of a change of UN member states' perception on the two republics. While Washington's position has been meant to serve its own imperial agenda, other governments adopting similar position by then might be out of a belief that the PRC is progressive (if not "socialist") and the ROC under KMT as reactionary. Fifty years has passed since then. While both republics have converged in terms of economic system since 1979 (as a result of Deng Xiaoping's capitalist reform), they diverged in terms of political institution and the space for protest movements. Beijing's autocracy only getting more rigid since then. On the other hand, Taiwan, because of the courageous resistance of the people there since the 1970s, have been able to transform the KMT's one party dictatorship into a liberal capitalism where lower classes have the right to organise, to protest

and to vote. Although the Taiwan elite class still has immense power over the lower classes, the latter still has some right to resist if they choose to fight. In contrast, under the Beijing regime there is no such space at all. Now is the time for supporters of democracy around the world to re-assess the nature of both republics in the 21st century, and to update their position accordingly.

What does the Taiwan People Want?

The CCP did support the Taiwanese's right to self-determination, including the right to independence - up until 1949. This was also the founding principle of the Taiwan Communist Party. In 1927, the Third International instructed the Japanese Communist Party to help the founding of the Taiwan Communist Party, in 1928. The CCP also played a great role in this endeavour. [12] On 3 May 2022, the *Diplomat* carried **an article** reminding Beijing of the above history by quoting an interview in Edgar Snow's well known book *Red Star over China's* with Mao Zedong in 1937: "...we will extend them (the Koreans) our enthusiastic help in their struggle for independence. The same thing applies for Taiwan." It drew fire from Beijing's **State Council Office for Taiwan Affairs** but the latter carefully avoided mentioning Snow's interview - it could not, because it is an established fact. [13] This ruling party has betrayed its founding principle so radically that it simply cannot face its own past.

However, right now most Taiwanese do not aspire to fight for the right to *de jure* independence through a referendum. They are for maintaining the status quo (interpreted by some as *de facto* independence), as is shown in a June 2022 **opinion poll** on Taiwan's future (see below).

Position	1994	2022
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For unification with Mainland China	20%	6.4%
For independence	11.1%	30.3%
For maintaining the status quo	48.3%	56.9%
No response	20.5%	5.2%

(Note: based on the figures given by the report)

Who were the Earliest Occupants of Taiwan?

The main reason for the growth of the pro-independence poll, at the expense of those pro-unification and “no response”, is Beijing’s increasingly reactionary policy. Its **White Paper** on Taiwan is the most recent example of this. The White Paper claims that “Taiwan has belonged to China since ancient times”, and even gives the year of AD 230 when the first Chinese record of Taiwan appeared as proof. To say this is to write off, with a sleight of hand, the Taiwanese indigenous people, who have been there more than 6000 years ago, not to mention that an ancient Chinese record about Taiwan proves nothing! The language of the Taiwanese indigenous peoples belongs to the Austronesian language family, whose speakers inhabit islands of the Pacific Ocean and maritime Southeast Asia as well as Taiwan. They were the oldest inhabitants of the island, but they are not Chinese. The White Paper avoids discussion of this issue altogether by simply ignoring the indigenous people – the terms “indigenous Taiwanese” or “aboriginals” do not appear once in the 14,000-characters long paper!

The indigenous people account for a very small proportion of the population – 2.3 per cent. But Beijing is equally disrespectful of the major ethnicity there, namely the

benshengren (descendants of Chinese immigrants dating back hundreds of years, mainly composed of Hoklo and Hakka, together they account for 86 per cent of the population). They are Han Chinese-speaking, but they have long lost connection with the Mainland and many see themselves as Taiwanese first – in contrast to the case of Hong Kong, where many people still have close family connections in the Mainland. As for the *waishengren* (or Mainlanders who only moved to Taiwan after 1949), their younger generation also increasingly identify themselves more as Taiwanese than Chinese, although this is relatively new. Also worth mentioning is that the choice of “Taiwanese” identity does not necessarily reject “Chinese” identity. In general, the Taiwanese people beginning to embrace *en masse* the “Taiwanese only” identity is a recent event – after Beijing’s 1996 war drill against Taiwan to warn the latter not to deviate a millimeter from its politically correct “one China” policy. A 1992 **opinion poll** showed that 46.4 per cent of interviewees chose “Chinese as well as Taiwanese” identity, while those who chose “Taiwanese” accounted for only 17.6 per cent. In 2021 the latter option had the support of 62.3 per cent, while the former had dropped to 31.7 percent.

Beijing is Promoting its Own Centrifugal Forces

There is no necessary connection between the changing trend of the choice of identity and a movement for independence however. At present most Taiwanese wish to maintain the status quo, and even among the 30.3 per cent pro-independence population, only 5.1 per cent are for “independence as soon as possible”, while for the other 25.2 per cent the choice is for “maintain status quo, move towards independence”. The conclusion? Taiwan independence is not imminent at all, hence its “threat” to Beijing (and Washington as well) is not real. What is adding fuel to the tension across the Taiwan Strait comes less from diplomatic gestures such as Pelosi visiting Taiwan than

from Beijing’s fundamental policy towards Taiwan – not content with stopping Taiwan from going independent, and its “red line” is quite arbitrary. Xi Jinping has overturned Deng Xiaoping’s more moderate approach in diplomacy in general and on Taiwan in particular, and has instead decided that he should unify Taiwan as soon as possible, by force if necessary, hence his hawkish approach. No wonder Beijing is now tearing up previous promises over Taiwan – its **White Paper** on Taiwan no longer includes the previous clause of allowing Taiwan, under its one country two systems vision, to keep its own army, and the promise not to dispatch its army there has also been dropped. We do need to prevent a war across the Strait, but this first and foremost requires a correct understanding of the situation there – it is Beijing which, through its denial of basic rights of the people of Taiwan, is pushing a growing number of Taiwanese towards independence, not the US, at least not now. Merely putting pressure on Washington to defuse tension across the Strait is of no use.

Taiwan society under the KMT had four classes of “citizens”, with the indigenous people at the bottom. Taiwan *benshengren*, although they had higher status than the indigenous people, were harshly repressed by the KMT, and there was discrimination against their language – for instance *benshengren* children speaking their mother tongue in school could be punished. The *waishengren* constituted the original base for the KMT when it lost the Mainland to the CCP, but most of them were also repressed by the KMT. Only ruling party cadres make up the privileged “political class” on the island. The common Taiwanese were oppressed by, one after the other, the Qing dynasty, the Japanese, and then the KMT. Their decades-long heroic resistance finally won them a liberal democracy since early 1990s. Their (unfinished) journey to freedom has followed a very different historic path of modernization from the Mainland Chinese, and this gives them the natural right to self-determination in relation to their fate. Respecting the wish of the Taiwanese people is an important building block for any

solution to the cross-Strait crisis. All democracy supporters need to remind Beijing that the basic principle for a democratic nation state to be formed among different parts of the people is their right to self-determination. The right to self-determination does not necessarily imply secession and the founding of multiple small states, rather it could open up the chance for a democratic and free re-union between neighboring nations and ethnicities, as the Bolshevik revolution has shown us.

In the eyes of Beijing all Chinese speaking people are its subjects who should kowtow only to it. Its tone is such that the Taiwanese are supposed to accept whatever Beijing dictates, or be ready for Beijing's "re-education" (this was what **a Chinese diplomat** told a French television station, "after unification [with Taiwan], we'll do re-education" there). This is the language of totalitarianism and colonialism. By flatly denying the rights of the Taiwanese. Beijing is re-enacting what Taiwan's previous oppressors did. This policy is the surest way to reinforce the ever stronger centripetal forces in the periphery of Mainland China and across the Strait. Chinese nationalists should ask themselves these questions: If Xi insists on a policy which is counter-productive in winning over the heart of the Taiwanese, shouldn't they dump him

as a leader? Or is it because behind his nationalist propaganda he is hiding his own agenda to gain absolute power?

Is Washington the True Friend of Taiwan?

Finally, a word about Washington. For the moment Beijing is on the offensive, which makes Washington seems to be the friend of Taiwan in the common cause of maintaining the status quo. But we must not forget that Washington, just like Beijing, has never endorsed Taiwan's right to self-determination. If the movement for independence grows more rapidly, then a possible scenario where it clashes with Washington cannot be dismissed. Precisely because of this possible scenario, Washington has always been intervening, behind the scenes, in Taiwan elections and the formation of public opinion, so as to keep the independence movement in check. Regardless how far it succeeds, this exposes the truth that the present common ground between the people of Taiwan and Washington will be more fragile in the longer run. If, right now, Washington presents itself as a friend of Taiwan, it is only because this suits its own tactical agenda. Its

strategic agenda of defending its empire does not always coincide with the wishes of the Taiwan people. Let us not forget the moment, in 1979, when the apocalyptic news descended on the Taiwanese that Washington was going to abandon Taiwan and recognize the PRC instead. To depict Washington as the true friend of Taiwan is thus a suspicious claim. An opposite scenario is also possible, however, where Washington changes its one-China policy and opts for supporting Taiwan independence instead, so as to serve its new agenda, even when Taiwan is not yet ready for that. Either way spells great danger for the Taiwan people because they are the smaller player in this great contest, easily bullied or betrayed by either this or that super power. Precisely because of this the international left must ask themselves this question: Who should be our first concern in this triangular relationship between Beijing, Taipei and Washington? I argue that it is neither Beijing nor Washington, but the Taiwan people. Any leftist who refuses to give a hand to the most oppressed, or declines to acknowledge their rightful place in this planet, but prioritizes the "peace" between two super powers over the underdog in between instead, this person is not worthy of the name "left".

27 October 2022

Solidarity with Mamadou Ba

14 November 2022

Who is Mamadou Ba?

He is an anti-racist activist of Senegalese origin who has lived and worked in Portugal for 25 years where he obtained nationality. He is currently attending a doctoral program at a North-American university. A leader and spokesperson for the Portuguese association SOS Racismo, Mamadou Ba is an active

voice in the public debate on the origins and realities of racism and is part of a generation of black activists who discuss the country's colonial responsibility with its long-lasting effects. His public exposure makes him a target for far-right organizations and he is often threatened by them. Because of these threats he once had to live under police protection.

What is happening?

On October 27, the Portuguese Judge Carlos Alexandre issued an instructive decision to pursue a defamation and injury complaint against the anti-racist activist Mamadou Ba, filed by the neo-Nazi Mário Machado. This means that Mamadou Ba will be taken to court to respond to the alleged defamation and injury of the neonazi and white

supremacist Mário Machado.

What is the complaint about?

In 2020 the neonazi Mário Machado accused Mamadou Ba of calling him the “murderer” of Alcindo Monteiro. Alcindo Monteiro was a young black Portuguese citizen, born in Cape Verde, murdered in 1995 by a group of neonazi skinheads. Mário Machado was one of the group members that killed Alcindo Monteiro.

The indictment of the Portuguese public prosecutor, taken by judge Carlos Alexandre, that decided to take the anti-racist activist to court, questions, “Can a person carry an anathema all his life, imputing to him the participation, in any capacity, in a homicide, whose deed has already been introduced in court and object of a thorough judgment and with the judgment of the supreme court of justice, where he is acquitted of this specific crime, but condemned by another? And call that freedom of speech?”. The judge further states, addressing Mamadou Ba, “What it cannot do is substitute itself for the courts and invoke the right to freedom of expression”.

The neonazi is claiming for compensation for moral damages.

When will the trial take place?

The exact date for the trial is not yet known. It may take weeks or months but given the speed that the judge demonstrated in the pre-trial phase, we believe that the trial will be scheduled quickly.

What can happen if Mamadou is found guilty?

According to the Portuguese Penal code article 180 for defamation (of crimes against honour) “Whoever, addressing a third party, imputes to

another person, even in the form of suspicion, a fact, or formulates a judgment about him, offensive to his honour or consideration, or reproduces such an imputation or judgment, is punished with imprisonment up to 6 months or a fine of up to 240 days.”

Likewise, the Penal code article 181 for Injury (of crimes against honour) “Whoever insults another person, imputing facts to him, even in the form of suspicion, or directing words, offensive to his honour or consideration, is punished with a prison sentence of up to 3 months or a fine of up to 120 days.” Considering the Portuguese jurisprudence, we expect that the possible scenario of conviction will be a fine.

Nonetheless, given that the judge himself considers that if the facts imputed to the accused are proved in the trial, the probability of Mamadou being convicted is greater than the probability of being acquitted. This would represent a moral and political victory of fascism over the anti-racist struggle, and the confirmation of the institutional racist bias of Portuguese justice.

Who is Mario Machado?

Mário Machado is a Portuguese neo-Nazi, founder and former leader of the Frente Nacional, a former member of the Hammerskins Portugal group and founder and former leader of the nationalist movement Nova Ordem Social, suspended in 2019.

Mário Machado’s national notoriety as a nationalist, bonehead and far-right leader has been aided by the largely sensationalist coverage of the Portuguese press.

Mário Machado has a long criminal record, which includes racial discrimination, bodily harm, possession of illegal weapons, defamation, kidnapping and extortion. He was also a suspect in the murder of Alcindo Monteiro.

The murder of Alcindo Monteiro -

the facts

On June 11, 1995, Mário Machado took part in actions of violence against several black Portuguese citizens in Bairro Alto, Lisboa. He was part of the group that murdered Alcindo Monteiro, a 27-year-old Portuguese citizen, born in Cape Verde. In the early hours of the morning, Alcindo was violently beaten in the Chiado area by a group of nationalists, who had come from a dinner commemorating the Day of the Race, the name given during the Portuguese Fascist Regime to the Day of Portugal, celebrated on June 10.

Alcindo Monteiro was found unconscious on Rua Garrett, being transported to the Hospital de São José, along with nine other victims of aggression, all black. Alcindo Monteiro died that night. At two-thirty in the morning, the police captured nine individuals (seven boys and two girls) near Cais do Sodré. Among these was Mário Machado, then active-duty soldier, 2nd Corporal of the Air Police of the Portuguese Air Force. On June 4, 1997, Machado was sentenced to four years and three months in prison for his involvement in the death of Alcindo Monteiro.

Recently, and a few days after the court decided to take Mamadou Ba to court for defamation, the public Ministry accused Mário Machado of a crime of incitement to hatred and violence and of a crime of possession of a prohibited weapon. The accusation follows a murder case on August 23, 2019, next to a nightclub in the Algarve. The alleged author of the deadly shots was a young black boy. In the following days, Mário Machado used his social networks, publishing messages urging all far-right members to look for the suspect and hand him over to him, with the objective of taking justice into his own hands.

What can I do

Please send a short video, audio or written statement in support of Mamadou to boispelosnomes@gmail.com

Democrats Stop the Republicans' "Red Tsunami"; Trumpists Defeated; Progressives Make Gains

12 November 2022, by **Dan La Botz**

Still, as of November 11, both the Senate and House elections are too close to call. In Georgia, where it appears that neither Senate candidate won a majority, there will be a runoff election on December 6. Nevada and Arizona are too close to call and many House races are still undetermined as counting goes on. It is possible the Democrats will keep their majority in the Senate though the Republicans could take control of the House. The Democratic success seems to have been based on young voters, women, and Blacks, and several progressive candidates did well.

The election was a defeat for former president Donald Trump and his candidates on the extreme rightwing of the Republican Party and weakens his chances in the 2024 presidential election.

The mid-term was the most expensive such election in U.S. history, with both parties spending more than \$16 billion dollars. Billionaires contributed to both parties, with their money making up 20% of all Republican and 14.5% of all Democratic contributions. Democrats tend to receive more small donations than Republicans who outspent Democrats by just \$200 million. As always Democrats had the backing of several major labor unions that mobilized their members to knock on doors, make phone calls, and get out the vote on election day, though many white workers—construction workers, steel workers—vote for Republican candidates.

Democrats'

Surprising Success

The Democrats' success in holding back the red tide came as a surprise both to them and to the Republicans. The Republicans ran on the issue of inflation, crime, and controlling immigration, while the Democrats primary issues were women's abortion rights and the preservation of American democracy. And the Democrats' issues appear—to the surprise of almost everyone—to have led to large turnouts by women and younger voters. Democrats can count on something like 80 percent of the Black vote; and while Republicans have made some gains among Latinos, still an estimated 60 percent voted for the Democratic Party.

Within the Democratic camp, progressive candidates did well. Progressive Summer Lee also won in Pennsylvania, as did Greg Casar in Texas, Maxwell Frost in Florida, and, with Senator Bernie Sanders' endorsement, so did Rebecca Balint in Vermont.

John Fetterman, who rejects the progressive label but holds progressive views, ran as the working class candidate and won the U.S. Senate seat in Pennsylvania. Said Fetterman, "For every job that's ever been lost, for every factory that was ever closed, for every person that works hard but never gets ahead, I'm proud of what we ran on." Fetterman, who suffered a stroke during the campaign also said, "Healthcare is a fundamental human right. It saved my life, and it should all be there for you when you ever should need it."

In New York State where the Democrats did poorly, losing

congressional seats, socialist Alexandria Ocasio Cortez has called for a root-and-branch reorganization of the state party. "It's no secret that an enormous amount of party leadership in New York State is based on big money and old-school, calcified machine-style politics that creates a very anemic voting base that is disengaged and disenfranchised," said Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. "We need to rebuild the party apparatus from the bottom up."

Biden's announcement that he is planning to run for president—depending on his health and a conversation with his family—may be a problem for the Democrats. Biden is 79 years old, too old in the eyes of many, and there is no obvious alternative at the moment. And Bernie Sanders, who has lost two presidential races, is now 81.

Republican Leadership in Question

Donald Trump, who in the last several years took control of the Republican Party, had endorsed a range of candidates for the Senate and the House, as well as state races. Many of these, following Trump, denied the results of the 2020 election, claiming that Trump had actually won, and Biden was not the legitimate president. Others were believers in a variety of conspiracy theories—anti-vaxxers and followers of Q-Anon—some were linked to far-right militias, and at least one had been in the Capitol at the time of the January 6, 2021 insurrection. Some were just kooky. Voters found many of these

candidates too far out and declined to vote for them. As a result, for the first time in years, several Republican politicians and rightwing media figures have criticized Trump and suggested that he should no longer be party leader. At 76 years of age, some also think he's too old.

At the same time, Trump's rival, Republican Ron DeSantis, who is 44 years old, won a resounding victory in his race for reelection as governor of Florida, receiving almost 60 percent of the vote. DeSantis will challenge and could displace Trump as presidential candidate and leader of the Republicans. DeSantis, who is every bit as conservative as Trump, has carried out repressive and racist immigration policies, opposes abortion, opposes "critical race theory" (a code term for discussions of racism) and became notorious for his "Don't Say Gay" legislation prohibiting teaching younger children about gender and sexual identity.

It is too early to say whether Trump

will lose his stranglehold on the Republican Party, but his grip appears to be loosening.

The Left at the Margins

Historically, the American far left argued that the Republicans and Democrats were both virtually the same, both capitalist parties, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and that working people needed their own party. Some argued it should be a revolutionary party, others that it should be a labor party, and various Communist and Socialist parties ran candidates. In 1996 a group of labor unions founded the Labor Party, though it never ran national candidates. Later many on the left supported the Green Party. There is always the fear, however, that support for a candidate on the left will take votes away from the Democrats and help to elect a Republican.

Since the 2016 presidential campaign of Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Party, supported by the Democratic Socialist of America, and with the threat of Trump's extreme rightwing politics, most leftists have supported the Democrats as a bulwark against Trump and fascism. The result is that socialists run in the Democratic Party or otherwise have virtually no chance of being heard, much less elected. When the Greens or other leftist parties run candidates, they generally get very few votes.

The debate in the left is whether one can build a future socialist party within the Democratic Party or one must run independent socialist candidates as in the past. All agree that until there is a mass movement of the working class the creation of a socialist party is not on the agenda. In any case, the collapse of the feared red wave gives us another few years to both build the movement and find the right political course.

11 November 2022

Geopolitical Instability Which May Cause Unexpected and Worldwide Nuclear Weapons Accidents

11 November 2022, by **Karen Yamanaka**

The report referred to Kim Jong-un's remarks: "war deterrent" and "nuclear response posture in unexpected situation at any time". Kim Jong-un also said "we have no content for dialogue with the enemies and felt no necessity to do so". The report showed that North Korea is promoting operations of tactical nuclear weapons targeting South Korea, Japan, and the US based on a long-term plan.

After launching long-range strategic cruise missiles on October 12, North Korea further escalated tensions by flying about 10 military aircrafts to their heavily fortified border and fired a short-range ballistic missile into the

sea on October 13 and 14. And on November 2, North Korea launched about 25 missiles and sustained fire about 100 times from various locations into the Sea of the Yellow Sea and others for more than 10 hours. It was the first time that about 25 missiles were launched in one day. After that, the escalated tensions are tightened day by day and not alleviated. On November 4, South Korea's military scrambled fighter jets after detecting about 180 North Korean military aircrafts [2].

North Korea's unprecedentedly frequent missile launches and installation of the tactical nuclear

operation units means steady progress from "nuclear development" to "possession of an operational nuclear weapon". It also means North Korea's refusal to engage in dialogue with the US. Korean crisis which seemed to have been eased in recent years still exists in the region as a potential crisis. And the crisis is still related to the three major powers (the US, China and Russia). The Russian Invasion of Ukraine provoked a fierce confrontation between the US and Russia.

On the other hand, the dynamics of militarization of the Asia-Pacific region are accelerating and the

conflict between China and the US is sharpening [3]. The US is losing the initiative in East Asia against China. Under the current situation, Kim Jong-un may carry out successive nuclear tests to have diverse tactical nuclear weapons. North Korea's diplomatic card against the US is changing from "denuclearization" to "nuclear disarmament". Changes in North Korea's foreign policies will bring a major impact on geopolitical chaos in East Asia.

Progressive ballistic missile development at extremely fast speed and miniaturization of nuclear weapons

Kim Jong-un has launched far more ballistic missiles and other missiles than any previous North Korean leaders. Kim Jong-il launched 16 missiles from 1994 to 2011. On the other hand, Kim Jong-un has launched more than 130 ballistic missiles from 2012 to present. Also, the number of nuclear tests that Kim Jong-un has already conducted (4 times) is twice as many as that of Kim Jong-il. Following is the number of nuclear tests conducted by nuclear power countries and their development periods to achieve the miniaturization of nuclear weapons and has developed nuclear warheads:

The US: 12 times, six years

Former Soviet Union: four times, four years

The UK: five times, four years

France: five times, two years

China: three times, two years

North Korea's first nuclear tests were conducted in October 2006. Sixteen years have passed since then and six nuclear tests have already been performed. On 3 September 2017, North Korea conducted its sixth

nuclear test (H-bomb test) and stated it had tested a thermonuclear weapon (hydrogen bomb) [4]. Estimated power output (TNT) was more than 13 times higher than the fifth nuclear tests. Considering other related mature technologies of the country, there is a high possibility that North Korea had achieved the miniaturization of nuclear weapons and has developed nuclear warheads. Meanwhile, North Korea has significantly improved a wide variety of missile technologies according to the information provided by its own media:

- Launches of multiple missiles at any time and from any point: from 2014
- Improved accuracy for hitting a specific target by launching ballistic missiles from different locations: from May 2019
- Continuous launches of multiple short-range ballistic missiles within 1 minute: from November 2019

The impact of the situation in Ukraine

Tensions and political instability in the East Asia/Asia-Pacific area are also related to the continued escalation in Ukraine [5].

Against the backdrop of NATO and other overwhelmingly dominant forces in the world, the US is enthusiastic about building an "East Asian NATO" as part of the expansion of its territory since the 19th century. And the Trans-Pacific Partnership is expanding US hegemony in the region especially after the Covid-19 crisis although the US is losing the initiative against China.

On June 29, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Seok-yeol joined the 2022 NATO Madrid summit for the first time. NATO invited the leaders of the countries, which the organization views as its "Asia-Pacific partner countries". It was also an unprecedented move.

Meanwhile, North Korea aims to possess tactical nuclear weapons with

various explosive powers amid the escalation of provocations and counter-provocations in Asia-Pacific region. Pyongyang has said in its own statements that the current situation in Ukraine is an extension of the past political situations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. In the past international situation, North Korea has repeatedly "learned" that only possession of nuclear weapons effectively protects "enemy" countries from Western intervention [6].

The Russian Invasion of Ukraine of this year provoked a fierce confrontation between the US and Russia. And the conflict between China and the US is sharpening.

For North Korea, this situation is a great chance to force nuclear tests despite strong opposition from the international community including China. With its ethnic nationalism, Kim Jong-un regime's political choices have provoked potential confrontation in the Asia-Pacific region at the expense of working population in the country. Its foreign policy reflects its repressive domestic policy.

The dictatorial regime cannot make other choices. Kim Jong-un may carry out successive nuclear tests, which is like the 1998 tests of nuclear explosive devices conducted by India and Pakistan, to possess diverse tactical nuclear weapons with the support of veto rights of Russia and/or China at the UN Security Council.

The neighboring countries adopting their confrontational policy

This year, North Korea made steady progress from "nuclear development" to "possession of an operational nuclear weapon" by frequent missile launches. And on October 13 and 14, North Korea flew about 10 military aircrafts to their border and fired a ballistic missile into the sea amid its frequent missile launches and installation of the tactical nuclear operation units.

The possibility of North Korea's seventh nuclear tests had also generated a whirlwind of discussions about the redeployment of US tactical weapons on the Korean Peninsula have emerged in South Korea [7]. To prevent the seventh nuclear tests, the US Air Force and ROK Air Force conducted a large-scale joint air training event Vigilant Storm.

Japan is also working to strengthen its defense capabilities to possess "the ability to attack enemy bases". This year, the Ministry of Defense of Japan asked for the largest ever budget \$40.4 billion for fiscal year 2023 [8]. From the standpoint of defense budget, Japan aims to become the third in the world after the US and China. Japan has been strengthening its defense capabilities in remote island areas around Okinawa [9]. And Japan is planning to put an electronic warfare unit on one of the remote islands Yonaguni, which is just 110 km away from Taiwan [10] and is also planning to station anti-aircraft and anti-ship missiles and hundreds of troops on Ishigaki island, 270 kilometers from Taiwan.

China, needless to say, continues to build up its military forces. One of the proposed amendments to the constitution following the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) represents an escalation in cross-strait relations. The new amendment states the CCP's commitment to "resolutely oppose and contain Taiwan independence" to promote its "unification of the motherland" [11]. In this way, countries around the Korean Peninsula have stepped up their military response, while their other approaches have disappeared.

Vicious spiral of militarization and nuclear escalation in the region

North Korea has no interest in dialogue with the US for denuclearization and is trying to gain status as a nuclear power country by the next Congress of the Workers'

Party of Korea. Meanwhile, diplomatic action of the US will be changed for "nuclear disarmament" according to the current level of tension in which North Korea is about to have diverse tactical nuclear weapons. Nuclear tests would have some impact on the neighboring countries such as China which shares a border with North Korea.

In a sense, the US and Japan, which are enthusiastic about building an "East Asian NATO", want Kim Jong-un to conduct nuclear tests. If the seventh nuclear tests are pushed ahead, relations between North Korea and China will deteriorate temporarily. As result of the Kim Jong-un's policy, the vicious spiral of militarization and nuclear escalation are about to be fueled in the region. It may raise the ghost of the pro-nuclear consensus which had already prevailed in East Asian countries such as South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan.

Meanwhile some other countries are trying to obtain neutral profits by taking advantage of this situation. Regardless of the energy output the nuclear tests, heightened and intensified regional tensions will endanger geopolitical stability which may trigger unexpected nuclear weapons not only in the Asia-Pacific region but in other parts of the world. Under these circumstances, a global anti-war movement carries a great responsibility especially in the areas/countries facing the danger of the military confrontation such as South Korea, Okinawa [12], and Taiwan.

The population in the areas/countries are victims of former colonial power Japan. It will also symbolize the normalization of diplomatic relations without the recognition of colonial rule, and the contradictions of the US-Japan and US-South Korea alliances caused by past colonial rule [13].

5 November 2022

[1] KCNA, 10 October 2022, "Respected Comrade Kim Jong Un Guides Military Drills of KPA Units for Operation of Tactical Nukes".

[2] Yoonjung Seo, CNN, 4 November 2022, "South Korea scrambles fighter

jets after detecting 180 North Korean warplanes, military says".

[3] PIERRE ROUSSET, IVP, 9 SEPTEMBER 2022, "The Taiwan Strait Crisis: Geopolitical Conflicts and the Right of the Taiwanese to Self-Determination".

[4] KCNA, 7 September 2017, "More Rallies Hail Successful H-bomb Test".

[5] KAREN YAMANAKA, IVP, 5 JULY 2022, "Military Alliances Aiming for Another "NATO" in East Asia".

[6] KAREN YAMANAKA, IVP, 17 APRIL 2022, "North Korea's ICBM Strategy under the Current Situation of Ukraine".

[7] Ji Da-gyum, KOREA HERALD, 25 October 2022, "US tactical nuke redeployment, NATO-style nuclear sharing off table, S. Korea says".

[8] Kosuke Takahashi, THE DIPLOMAT, 31 August 2022, "Japanese Defense Ministry Requests Largest Ever Budget for Fiscal Year 2023".

[9] Remote islands around Okinawa are closer to China and Taiwan than to the main island of Japan. And the distance from one of the remote islands Ishigaki Island to Taiwan is only 270 km, which is much closer to the Okinawa Main Island. Taiwan is visible to the naked eye from some of the islands.

[10] LOUISE WATT, Nikkei Asia, 20 August 2021, "Japan missile plan on Ishigaki island helps boost Taiwan defense".

[11] Mariah Thornton, THE DIPLOMAT, 27 October 2022, "China's 20th Party Congress Escalates Cross-Strait Tensions".

[12] With the Japanese victory in Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), early modern and modern Ryukyu-Okinawa problem faded as they were annexed as part of Japan. But the problem about separation of the Miyako and Yaeyama area from Okinawa has continuously been alleged by population in the area.

[13] KAREN YAMANAKA, IVP, 5 JULY 2022, "Military Alliances Aiming for

The Islamic regime in crisis steps up repression

10 November 2022, by **Dominique Lerouge**

When it was established in 1979, the Islamic regime declared that it wanted to put an end to the domination of the country by Western powers. It also proclaimed itself to be the power of the poor and disadvantaged. But 43 years later :

- Iran is still economically dependent on international capital, as well as on the policies of foreign powers like the US, China and Russia;

- the rich have become increasingly wealthy, and mainly those associated with the theocratic regime.

In an attempt to reaffirm its identity, the regime is neurotically clinging to another of its foundations: the domination of women through, among other things, the tightening of the conditions for wearing the veil.

A will to fight that is not denied

The ostentatious display of wealth by the privileged exacerbates the rage of the youth. At the same time, the worsening of women's oppression is leading to their desire to put an end to all misogynistic and patriarchal measures.

In addition, the seriousness of the economic crisis has been accompanied since the spring by a rise in social mobilizations.

All this explains why, for more than 50 days, the demonstrations have not weakened. On the contrary, they are becoming more radical, as shown by the omnipresence of slogans demanding an end to the theocracy and directly targeting the Supreme Guide, the paramilitary militias and the Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran) on whom they depend.

What are the possible future scenarios?

A blockade of the country by strikes would be the only way to put an end to Mullahrchia. But at this stage, a strike movement in the key sectors of the economy is overdue. The weak structuring of the workers' movement after decades of dictatorships of the Shah and then the mullahs, as well as the imprisonment of a number of trade unionists (since May for some), explains in large part why the generalization of strikes will take time. But we should not forget that it took two years of struggle to

overthrow the Shah.

For the British-Iranian researcher Yasmine Mather, "we are still a long way away from the fall of the regime", even if "the Islamic Republic of Iran is now facing a major challenge, more serious than at any time in the past 44 years." [14]

All indications are that the government has no intention of making concessions. It seems to believe that any search for possible compromises would constitute an admission of weakness, as well as an encouragement to mobilizations. To back down on the veil would also mean losing the support of the most fundamentalist currents in the regime.

In such conditions, we can expect a hardening of a repression that has already caused at least 273 deaths, including children and some twenty teenagers, thousands of injuries, and around 14,000 arrests.

In the face of this, international solidarity with the struggle of the people of Iran is more essential than ever.

10 November 2022

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

The Cold Civil War

9 November 2022, by **Anna Ochknia**

Every day I see how quite normal and decent people support the war, how they do not see any problem in the massacre of civilians, or how they mutter something about “not everything is so simple.” Or they justify the cruelties of this war which is disgusting to those with some higher goals, who truly hope for the good of the Motherland.

I do not mean the “professionals” working for propagandists, or those building a career on patriotic enthusiasm. I’m not talking about those who always sing along with the authorities and salute in response to anything, even the most ridiculous or criminal order. I’m talking about those who sincerely believe that our country is in danger and threatened by “Ukrainian Nazis” in collusion with NATO and the insidious “collective West”.

By my observation, there are much more such people than the oppositionists think - both liberals and leftists. They confidently predicted that the Putin administration would not survive mobilization, that “this will be Putin’s last order,” that the people would rise up and sweep away the Kremlin regime. So far, it has turned out differently: hundreds of thousands of young men from big cities, mostly capitals, have rushed away from mobilization: to Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia. But hundreds of thousands dutifully went to the slaughter. The mobilization is chaotic, it has been carried out with a multitude of violations, videos with indignant mobilized people constantly appear on the internet: there are no weapons, no food or uniforms, and sometimes the conscripts even have nowhere to live, they sleep in the open. But no uprisings predicted by opposition experts have begun. There are drinking parties, fights happen, but there are no uprisings.

The partial mobilization announced on September 21 did not unite the Russians, but, on the contrary, divided them even more. But if earlier disunity was based on some kind of tacit agreement that everyone is fighting for the well-being of his family, now hostility is penetrating our atomized social world. But this is not a consolidated indignation directed at

the authorities that started this obviously criminal war. No, an atomized society breeds atomized hostility: those who recognize this war as righteous or at least inevitable, those who could not avoid mobilization, begin to hate those who are against the war or simply fled from it. This hatred will grow, funerals and other hardships of the war will strengthen it, and it will not disappear by itself, and will not become the impulse of a popular uprising. This hatred now has no common object, it is chaotic, and therefore fruitless, although still dangerous.

The antagonism between opposing political forces is formed in a society which actually involves politics, where there are forces that recognize themselves as political, ready to fight for power and dominance in society. In Russia, politics has been killed, the opposition has been scattered both physically and morally; but in order to take the country back from the brink, this is clearly not enough. So cracks are running through our society - through families, friendly companies, professional communities. Cracks of the cold civil war.

What’s happening?

It is very important for a sociologist to capture in the lens of his analysis the intersection of personal biography and social history, about which the American rebel sociologist C. Wright Mills wrote so vividly and passionately. It is at this intersection that the secrets motivations of individuals and masses are revealed to the researcher; here, the paths of History, the intricacies of personal motives and social processes become mystically comprehensible.

So what do we have today at this intersection?

It cannot be denied that propaganda has done a good job of working on Russian society. But why did it work at all, and why did it work the way it did? Our propagandists do not have any special skills, and the authors of the famous “manuals” from the ideologues in the Presidential Administration are also mediocre thinkers. But it was their ignorance and intellectual poverty that helped them to hit the

nerve, and stupid and greedy propagandists managed to awaken bright and pure feelings in their audience, rousing a disgusting obedience to war.

I repeat, this is not a propaganda wonder, this is ordinary theft.

Modern Russian propaganda, much like the entire modern Russian state itself, continues to parasitize off of the Soviet Union. The cult of the Great Patriotic War and the cult of victory were created in the USSR. In Yeltsin’s time, it faded into the background, but it quickly became clear that this cult was necessary to, if not create, then to imitate national unity. True, this cult, which once so enriched both Soviet and world artistic culture, was greatly distorted in the Putin era. Sympathy for the suffering endured by the people, admiration for the national spirit, a natural internationalism and a love of freedom, saturated the best films and books about the war. All of this was squeezed out, but victorious fanfare remained, as did chatter about the greatness of the country, and some vague feeling that the world did not sufficiently reward the Soviet Union and its successor, Russia, for the victory it alone achieved.

Propagandists pulled on this nerve. Soviet symbols, Soviet slogans, even posters from the Great Patriotic War are used. For example, the slogan that penetrates straight into the historical subconscious of most Russians is “The Fatherland is in danger!”

None of the rational arguments sounding from the screens can be repeated verbatim and without going astray, and not a single admirer of the authorities, nor a single supporter of the war can deny it. Arguments don’t matter, emotions matter. And the emotions that Russians experience when they watch and listen to endless propaganda broadcasts are not at all caused by the squeals of Skabeeva and Simonyan, or the theatrical roar of Solovyov, or the Jesuit speeches of Kiselev. Emotions are caused by constantly invoked associations with the Great Victory, with the achievements of the Grandfathers, with the merits and hardships of the Motherland.

Of course, if an individual had political convictions before February 24, he would have a strong immunity to any propaganda, and he would be able to separate the real good of the country from the manipulations of propaganda. But in an anti-political and atomized society, how many Russians would even have clear political convictions?

Today, it is even more difficult for political convictions to be born: there is no habit of conscious resistance to the authorities, but there is a habit of eternal sabotage. And the spectre of "the fatherland is in danger" begins to interfere with sabotage. And irritation rises against those who wish for the defeat of their own country, which goes against all the rules and principles of a civilized mind.

What can happen?

The bloodless option is a traditional Russian coup from above. A new leader will come who, continuing the song about "the fatherland is in danger", will explain that the danger is not in the West and not in Ukraine, but, quite the contrary, in the wrong policy of his predecessor. Will the newly appeared "messiah" be able to wipe out all the cracks in our society? Very briefly. At best, the Kremlin coup will help our society to come to its senses and form in a hurry something like political beliefs and movements that will finally enter the historical stage and be able to withstand real dangers for our Fatherland.

But there is a bloody option. The cracks will grow, the society split by them will collapse into the nightmare of a civil war, and no sane expert can predict its outcome.

Of course, there is always a third option, such as a series of temporary strikes, widening cracks, and various local clashes, a slow revival of political forces, a real political struggle and, finally, the victory of sane forces. The victory of the insane forces would be a defeat not only for Russia.

These are the thoughts of a sociologist.

And I, a person standing at the intersection of History and personal destiny, can only exclaim: "My God, they are normal people!" Well, and also, of course, the eternal plea: If only you are willing, Abba Father, Allow this cup to pass me by today.

30 October 2022

Source [Russian Dissent](#).

COP27, new summit of greenwashing, green capitalism and repression

8 November 2022, by **Daniel Tanuro**

Like the previous ones, COP27 revolves around four challenges: reducing greenhouse gas emissions ("mitigation"), adapting to the now inevitable part of global warming, financing the necessary policies, all the while respecting the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and differentiated capabilities. In short: both in terms of mitigation and adaptation and financing, wealthy people and rich countries, who bear the main historical responsibility for the accumulation of CO₂ in the atmosphere, must assume their responsibilities regarding poor people and poor countries.

Bad weather for

the climate

Basically, over the course of the annual COPs, and despite increasingly urgent warnings from scientists, these four challenges have been met only in words. Paris (COP21) and Glasgow (COP26) clarified the objective on paper (stay below 1.5°C, or limit overshoot as much as possible, by staying "well below 2°C") but have not taken the necessary steps to make it happen. It would take a miracle for it to be otherwise in Sharm-el-Sheikh.

The summit is in fact taking place in a climate of growing inter-capitalist competition and geostrategic confrontation. Contradictions are sharpening at all levels: between powers, between blocs of powers, between North and South, between groups. Since the end of the pandemic, marked by phenomena of

economic desynchronization, and even more so since the Russian imperialist aggression against Ukraine, tensions over energy supply have had contradictory effects: increased investment in long-term renewables, and revival of fossil fuels - therefore emissions - and nuclear power in the short term [15]. As a result, profits are exploding in the oil, coal, gas... and arms sectors. Far from disengaging from them, finance is launching new investments that reinforce dependencies, the phenomena of "technological lock-in" [16], fuel leaks... and the tendency to armed conflict. No wonder CO₂ emissions from burning fossil fuels and methane emissions hit record highs in 2021 [17].

At the same time, evidence is accumulating that shows that the catastrophe can no longer be avoided: in Pakistan, in Niger, in Siberia, in

Europe, in the Horn of Africa, in Central America... everywhere, the growing violence of extreme meteorological phenomena, and the growing number of victims [18], echo the particularly strident cry of alarm launched recently by the IPCC; everywhere, the popular classes are hit hard. We must act, immediately, in social justice. But this message is less likely than ever to be heard. At the end of debates that are more difficult than ever, the best result that can be expected from this COP is that the protagonists - who have a common interest in making it appear that they are in control of the situation - will finally come together for the family photo, swearing that they have once again taken "a step forward". No one can be fooled.

Mitigation: ambitions at half-mast

At the time of COP21 (Paris), governments could not help but notice the deep gap separating their climate plans (or "nationally determined contributions") from the objective of "staying well below 2°C while continuing efforts not to exceed 1.5°C" while respecting "differentiated responsibilities and capacities". It was therefore decided to revise the climate plans every five years, in order to "raise ambitions" at all levels (mitigation, adaptation, financing). COP26 (Glasgow) failed in this task. As the next revision would have taken place too late in relation to the crucial deadline of 2030 (45 per cent reduction in global emissions to stay on the path to a maximum of 1.5°C), the participants agreed that the "mitigation" component of the climate plans, which is crucial, would be revised every year until the end of the decade.

Each government therefore had to communicate to the United Nations an updated version of its mitigation objectives before COP27. The UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) has summarized this through its annual report on the gap between what is done and what should be done in terms of reducing

emissions. The result is an insult to the populations that are victims of climate change. Indeed, these new commitments represent less than one per cent of the 45 per cent effort to be made by 2030! This is an announced reduction of 0.7 Gt, mainly thanks to the catch-up by the "bad students" who had not "raised their ambitions" before Glasgow (Australia and Brazil). Moreover, this year too there are "bad students": Turkey has not submitted new commitments, Great Britain has submitted a commitment similar to the previous one, India and Russia have submitted objectives involving ... more emissions than their previous commitments! [19]

Quantity is not the only issue. A group of scientists has looked at the quality of reduction pledges and found that a disproportionate share comes from tree planting and soil restoration projects. In total, government plans in this area would supposedly mobilize 1.2 billion hectares (almost one tenth of submerged land, minus areas covered with ice or rock!). This would inevitably generate contradictions with the requirements of food production. Most of this area (623 million ha) would be devoted to tree monocultures (very harmful to biodiversity). The real impact of these plantations on carbon emissions and absorptions is difficult to certify and rather slow to materialize (in certain ecosystems - savannahs for example - the IPCC notes that this technique can even have a negative effect on absorption of CO₂). But planting trees is easier - and cheaper for the sectors concerned! - than reducing the use of fossil fuels, decarbonizing food systems or ending deforestation. All the more so since, in very many cases, these "forest emissions compensation" mechanisms are not the subject of either serious regulation or rigorous scientific control. [20]

UNEP's verdict is clear: "the 1.5°C 'window' is closing." Because of the inaction of governments, commented the UN Secretary-General. The reason is pointed out in the report: "Most of the financial players, despite their stated intentions, have shown limited action in terms of reducing emissions because of their short-term interests, opposing objectives ("conflicting objectives") and the lack of adequate

recognition of climate risk." [21]. To put it clearly, what is in question is really the very foundation of capitalism: the race for profit between private groups who own the means of production. Because of this absurd logic, not only the 1.5°C maximum is compromised, but in addition the objective of remaining under 2°C of warming risks being pulverized. According to UNEP, in fact, the current policies and the complementary promises (if they are kept!) would lead to a warming of 2.4 to 2.6°C during this century. [22]

Adaptation, how far?

Since global warming is partly inevitable, the question of adaptation is becoming increasingly acute. Capitalist governments seize on it all the more willingly because they see in it the possibility of new markets in the sectors of construction, public works, regional planning, etc. Many forget the very clear warning given by the IPCC: mitigation and adaptation are two sides of the same coin; the more the warming increases, the more the possibilities of adaptation decrease.

It may no longer be possible to adapt to the most extreme phenomena, such as the terrible floods that hit Pakistan this summer. However, these phenomena are the result of a warming of just 1.1 to 1.2°C compared to the pre-industrial era. It must therefore be said clearly: any slippage beyond 1.5°C increases the dangers of ruin, disease and death for the poorest 50 per cent of the world's population, whose responsibility in climate change is insignificant., who lack the essentials, and who, by virtue of climate justice, have the right to multiply their emissions by three to meet their needs. As for the prospect of a warming of 2.4 to 2.6°C, it must be said without ambiguity: to trivialize it would be to put up with a mass massacre, a crime against humanity, on a scale worse than all the genocidal horrors committed in the twentieth century.

It is therefore very worrying to hear certain rumours lending to certain governments the temptation to

question the objective of +1.5°C, adopted in Glasgow. The member countries of the G7 dare not touch this objective. At their June 26-28 summit, under the German presidency, they reaffirmed their desire to reach net zero by 2050, passing by a reduction of 45% in CO2 emissions by 2030. But some G20 countries (which also includes those of the G7) are less clear. The meeting of their finance ministers, in Bali on July 15-16, 2022, was unable to adopt a clear position. Above all, during the meeting of the Ministers of Energy and the Environment of the member countries of the G20, in August, the representatives of China and India apparently pushed to put the accent rather on the 2°C. The Chinese representative is said to have even declared that this objective is "scientifically more realistic". [23]

It is too early to draw conclusions from such fragmented information, but one thing is certain: in all countries, it is highly likely that a certain number of political leaders will say to themselves *in petto* that 1.5°C is unachievable. ...and hypocritically wait for the insufficiency of their policy to provide "proof". During a recent interview, Greta Thunberg related a significant anecdote: "one of the 'most powerful people in the world', with whom she spoke at length in private, confessed to her: "If we had known what the Paris agreements really implied, we would never have signed them!" [24]

Who will pay ?

Maintaining the "1.5°C maximum" objective is only possible within the framework of a policy that strictly respects the principle of the "differentiated responsibilities and capacities" of countries. However, this commitment, made in 1992, does not materialize any more than the promises to reduce emissions. The developed capitalist countries are putting the brakes on. The Cancun COP (2010) decided to create a Green Climate Fund. Its function was to help the countries of the South to meet climate challenges, in terms of mitigation and adaptation. Rich countries pledged to pay one hundred billion dollars a year from 2020. This

promise has not been kept. In Glasgow, we learned that there was only 80 billion in cash. COP26 has therefore decided to hold a debate, which should culminate in 2024, on a new objective from 2025. In the meantime, it seems that 100 billion per year could be reached in 2023, but mostly in the form of loans, not of donations. However, the principle of "differentiated responsibilities" should imply donations!

An even more important aspect of the funding issue concerns "loss and damage". The countries most affected by climate change, and which are not responsible for it, are demanding that rich countries pay them compensation in the event of a disaster. In Glasgow, the developing countries ("G77") had requested that a specific fund be created for this purpose. The United States and the European Union are strongly opposed to it; they used the lack of time as a pretext to evacuate the problem. After the disasters in Pakistan and Niger - among others - the issue will come back in force at COP27. Pakistan, which chairs the G77, estimates the reconstruction bill at 35 billion dollars. At the moment, the aid he has received is less than 8 billion, and most of this sum, here too, is disbursed in the form of loans. This is unacceptable for a country whose external debt already amounts to 130 billion dollars. Combined with the rise in energy and food prices, the refusal of rich countries to pay for "losses and damages" risks accelerating the plunge of countries in the South into a new spiral of debt. The architect of the Paris agreements and head of the European Climate Foundation, Laurence Tubiana is right: "the legitimacy of the entire United Nations climate process will be called into question" if there is no progress on this point in Sharm-el-Sheikh. [25]

Finally, COP26 made much of the mobilization of the financial sector. Mark Carney, ex-Governor of the Bank of England, triumphantly announced the creation of the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ). According to him, bankers and pension funds around the world were itching with impatience at the idea of putting their capital at the service of the climate. One hundred and thirty billion dollars had already been

collected. A year later, the balloon is deflating. BlackRock and Vanguard have stated bluntly that they will not abandon fossil fuel investments. Several partners are reluctant to subject the "greenness" of their investments to United Nations criteria. They claim that these criteria would put them at odds with anti-trust law... [26]

Cynicism, cheating and repression

Even more than the previous ones, the Sharm-el-Sheikh COP is placed under the triple sign of cynicism, cheating and repression.

The cynicism of sponsors this year is embodied by Coca-Cola. Plastic pollution and the use of fresh water have successively crossed the thresholds of global ecological sustainability. [27] In this context, the fact that a giant of water grabbing and the consumption of plastics is sponsoring the COP is eloquent and does not deserve comment. The multinational asserts boldly that its support for the COP "is in line with its scientifically based objective of reducing its emissions by 25 per cent in 2030 to reach zero carbon in 2050". To clarify this statement, we will simply mention that Coca-Cola, between 2019 and 2021, increased its consumption of plastics by 8.1 per cent, to bring it to 3.2 million tonnes...

On the cheating side, we have a choice. We could make an inventory of all the so-called "agreements" - in reality simple declarations of intent - concluded with great fanfare by groups of countries at COP26: "agreements" on methane, on deforestation, on stopping fossil fuel investments, on "green defence",... and so on and so forth. Of all this, there remains nothing, or very little. The downside, when you pull such rabbits out of your hat, is that the trick quickly loses credibility. There are however thousands of private climate actors who are bursting with ideas out of the same barrel. One example among many: the Independent Science Based Targets.

Set up in 2015 by major pro-green

capitalism environmental associations (such as the World Resource Institute), the ISBT aims to certify by science the “net zero” plans of companies (for which the public authorities have not set any standards or regulation of any kind). In reality, the smart guys at ISBT are content to take the emission data provided by the companies that pay them at face value and put a nice “science-based” stamp on their “net zero” plans. As the data in question serves as a reference for the “net zero” plans, the crudest cheating is possible. The *Financial Times*, which is not an ecosocialist newspaper, cites the case of a pulp company that established its baseline by reporting emissions from forest fires on 139 ha. A specialist in satellite observation of forest fires proved that,

that year, more than 3000 ha of plantations of this company had gone up in smoke... and in emissions [28].

On the repression side, finally, we will limit ourselves to recalling that 60,000 prisoners of conscience languish in the jails of General Sissi. The dictator has decided that “his” COP will take place in an orderly fashion. This week, his gendarmes arrested nearly 70 people who had “plans for protests”, according to the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF). People have been arrested for “spreading fake news” after they shared content on Facebook calling for protests around the summit. [29] According to Al Jazeera, Indian environmental activist Ajit Rajagopal was also arrested during a peaceful

march from Cairo to Sharm-el-Sheikh. Etc...

This COP will be a new summit of greenwashing, green capitalism and the police state. It is a total illusion to believe that it could take the radical decisions necessary to seriously limit the catastrophe - not to speak of stopping it in a way that respects social justice. In reality, from COP to COP, the march to the abyss continues, and this infernal mechanism will continue as long as a convergence of revolts does not make the possessing classes tremble. It is up to us to work in this perspective.

Thursday 3 November 2022

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‘Russia will only negotiate if it suffers some defeats’

7 November 2022, by Denys Pilash

We are in the midst of one of the worst tragedies in our country’s history. Not since the Nazi invasion of World War II has Ukraine seen the magnitude of devastation and terror brought upon us by [Russian President Vladimir] Putin’s unilateral decision to aggressively invade Ukraine.

This invasion has devastated entire cities and towns. Many places in eastern and southern Ukraine have been almost completely destroyed. There are also places around Kyiv and Kharkiv — where Ukrainians successfully repelled the aggressors — where countless civilian bodies have been found, such as in Irpin, Bucha and Izium.

There is constant shelling of cities in the south and east targeting civilian infrastructure and homes. In Kyiv, the city has been targeted by hundreds of missiles and drones.

But Ukrainian people have withstood this imperialist aggression — one that

follows in the footsteps of Western imperialist aggressions such as in Iraq. And if Russia succeeds, it will set a precedent for all other imperialist powers to invade even more countries.

Resistance and solidarity

People have managed to resist this nightmare mostly due to the very spontaneous, solidarity-based resistance that emerged from the first minutes of the invasion.

Russia’s army was met with all types of resistance, not just people resisting with weapons but with their hands in the occupied regions. There were huge rallies in Kherson and other occupied cities, involving Ukrainian speakers, Russian speakers and other ethnic communities, until these protests were suppressed.

The people working behind the

frontline have also been essential. Millions have been involved in the humanitarian effort to assist people from war-torn areas. This resistance has involved countless numbers of Ukrainian working-class people.

These people are the target of Russian imperialism, because it is clear that Putin wants to erase Ukraine as a separate entity.

At the same time, these essential workers are being targeted by our own ruling class. You can see disaster capitalism at work in Ukraine, because the ruling class is grabbing this opportunity to push through its shock doctrine of neoliberal austerity, anti-worker legislation, and curtailment of social rights.

This is the double challenge that the people of Ukraine face.

The left

Since the beginning of the invasion, the majority of leftists — trade unionist, feminists, socialists, anarchists — have in one way or another participated in different humanitarian and war efforts.

Some joined the ranks of the Territorial Defence Units and the Armed Forces of Ukraine in general — even anti-authoritarian anarchists have created their own units within the military. Social Movement has comrades in the military, alongside many unionists who volunteered or were drafted.

Some activists, mainly anarchists, have created networks like Solidarity Collectives to provide help for comrades in the armed resistance. Some are involved in everyday humanitarian work to provide housing, food and assistance to those who need it.

We, as Social Movement, have, together with this humanitarian work, sought to put forward political demands that reflect the needs of the Ukrainian population in times of war, while linking them to a broader, global agenda for a more egalitarian world.

That is why we are promoting demands such as the cancellation of Ukraine's debt. Debt is an issue that affects Ukraine, as a peripheral country in Eastern Europe, just as it affects many countries in the Global South.

We are also promoting the need for a more socially-orientated, gender equal and ecologically just reconstruction of Ukraine, one that is done not in the interests of a handful of national and transnational capitalists, but for the benefit of the working majority. This includes demands for protecting labour and creating a renewable and sustainable economy.

Far right

The Ukrainian far right is given a lot of coverage by the pro-Russian media, but also by many pro-Ukrainian media who hero-ise them. There is lots of

talks around Azov, a regiment under the Interior Ministry; and the narrative of the defence of Mariupol was centred around Azov, though marines and other Ukrainian units constituted no lesser part of the city defenders.

But if we look at the role of far-right nationalism in the current Ukrainian resistance and compare it to eight years ago, when Russia annexed Crimea and instigated the war in the Donbas, the far right is not as significant as it once was.

This is because you have people from diverse backgrounds who have joined the resistance, so the far right has no exclusive ability to pose as the primary defenders of Ukraine. You have people from all backgrounds who have joined the ranks of the armed forces: inhabitants of all Ukrainian regions, Jews, Muslims, like the Crimean Tatars, Belarusian émigrés including anarchists, Roma people who are probably the most dispossessed and excluded in Ukrainian society.

What we have are two tendencies: one that leans more towards an ethno-nationalist vision of Ukraine, and another that embraces a pluralist and multiculturalist Ukraine.

This was evident in the last presidential elections, where [Petro] Poroshenko ran on a conservative nationalist platform, while [Volodymyr] Zelensky promoted a more inclusive and anti-nationalist platform. Zelensky defeated the incumbent, winning 75% of the vote in the run-off.

In general, extreme right-wing views are rejected by Ukrainian society.

Russian speakers

Millions of Russian-speaking people, including those who used to be pro-Russia, have lost faith in everything associated with Russia.

Many Russian speakers voted for Zelensky and voted for a peace process. In the first year of his presidency, Zelensky took steps towards negotiating lasting peace. But

Putin was very reluctant, saying he would only speak with Washington, as if Ukrainians did not exist.

Putin sought to avoid any kind of direct negotiation and then opted to invade. Obviously, when you are targeted by Russian bombs and Russian missiles, any pro-Russian sentiments you might have tend to disappear.

Many of the most ruined cities had predominantly Russian-speaking populations. They were levelled to the ground by the same Russian army that was claiming to somehow be protecting the Russian-speaking population.

The majority of Russian speakers in the parts of Ukraine that have been recently occupied clearly reject the occupation. You can see this in the participation of Russian speakers in the war effort.

Proxy war?

Victims of aggression have the legitimate right to obtain the weapons they need to defend themselves, even if they might come from nasty places. Look at the Kurds, who at one point were supported by the United States and were then abandoned by them.

But given this example, we have to understand that imperialist powers who support liberation movements do so for pragmatic interests, not because they feel some kind of solidarity. We should not place any illusions in these imperialist powers.

We should not forget that the West was a co-culprit in the consolidation of the new capitalist Russia of [Boris] Yeltsin and Putin, as it was with many other dictatorships. Just like with Suharto's Indonesia, Putin's Russia was initially a right-authoritarian, anti-Communist regime that secured the consent of the West for a brutal military campaign to conquer a peripheral republic.

But parallels with the occupation of East Timor can be drawn not only in the context of the Chechen wars. In 1999, progressive activists in Australia, Portugal, and the US,

remaining critical of their own countries' history of colonialism and their previous role in the conflict, nevertheless urged their governments and the UN to protect Timor-Leste's population and self-determination.

Likewise, international support is needed by all other victims of aggression, including the people in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian government also acts in its own class interest. At some points, this interest coincides with the interest of the general population, for example the shared interest of preserving Ukraine. There's also significant support for Ukraine from several countries in the region that share concerns about Russian expansionism.

At some points, it coincides with the intentions of Western capital who want to open up the country for their companies.

And at some points, the interests of Western capital and Western powers do not coincide with each other, as France, Germany, UK, US, etc have different interests.

But Ukrainians take offence when they are regarded as some kind of proxies, because Ukrainians are fighting on their own. There is no direct military assistance involving people from other countries fighting here. There are only

millions of Ukrainians resisting.

This cliché of "fighting to the last Ukrainian" has parallels with German propaganda during World War I, which said the British were fighting to the last French in France. It is derogatory towards these millions that are wilfully resisting the invaders.

Ukrainians are very conscious of what they are doing: they understand that this is an existential threat to their families, their friends, their community and their country.

Negotiations

In the first months of the war, the Ukrainian side pitched its proposal for negotiations: essentially, restore the pre-February 24 status quo and engage in long-term negotiations about the fate of Donbas and Crimea in return for Ukraine remaining neutral, not joining NATO and mutually guaranteeing language rights with Russia.

But negotiations stalled and Russia dropped out of the talks because their strategy is to grab as much land in Ukraine as they can.

In this scenario, providing weapons to Ukraine is like union organising, where in order to force the bosses to negotiate, you need to have some

power behind you. Ukraine needs some military strength to counter Russian military strength and force Russia into a proper negotiation.

We should add that military and financial aid for Ukraine is only a tiny fraction of Western budgets and that there is really no need to increase military budgets to support Ukraine.

We can distinguish between these two questions — the issue of defending Ukraine is in no way justifying the appetites of the military industrial complex.

It seems the Kremlin will only be pushed into negotiations after it suffers some defeats. Perhaps after Ukrainian forces take Kherson — hopefully — this may influence Russian thinking.

The majority of Ukrainians see the need to continue fighting to stop further terror and annexations — at least until we are able to achieve a reasonable diplomatic conclusion.

Because if Ukraine surrenders, it is not just surrendering its territories, it is surrendering millions of people who will be left under Russian occupation, where mass killings, rapes and other kinds of violence are regular occurrences.

*Kyiv
November 3, 2022*

No truce against the military regime in Sudan

6 November 2022, by Paul Martial

It is nearly a year since General Burhane and Mohamed Hamdan Dogolo, known as "Hemidti", head of the paramilitary Rapid Support Force (RSF), overthrew the civilian government resulting from the 2019 revolution that had brought down the dictatorship of Omar al-Bashir. Their primary objective is to consolidate

their position for financial and immunity reasons.

The military clinging to power

Since al-Bashir came to power in a coup in 1989 in alliance with Islamic

fundamentalists, the military hierarchy has gradually taken over the country's main businesses. The generals own banking establishments, agri-food and construction industries. As for Hemidti, with his militia, he has seized the country's main gold mines. The transitional government that emerged from the 2019 revolution had

begun to take measures against these monopolies. This was one of the reasons why the military deposed the civilian transitional authority.

Losing power also means that they risk being held accountable at some point for decades of corruption and economic plunder, but also for other extremely serious misdeeds. These include crimes against humanity during the wars in Darfur and other provinces of the country, as well as the assassinations and torture of protesters imprisoned in government jails. The stakes are high for the coup plotters: to obtain a civilian government that would be headed by a military council.

Burhane and Hemidti can benefit from the support of some countries. Egypt, which does not like the idea of a democracy being installed on its border, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which are using RSF troops for their war in Yemen against the Houthis, and finally Russia, which hopes to install a military base in the strategic city of Port Sudan.

The crisis is accelerating

The situation in the country is continuing to deteriorate. UN agencies estimate that nearly a third of the population, or 15 million people, are in a food crisis - an increase of 50%. Half of the country's children could die of hunger. In order to monopolize the gold mines, the government does not hesitate to use inter-community conflicts. The recent clashes in the West Kordofan and Blue Nile region, which have left more than a hundred people dead, are forcing thousands of people to join the camps for the displaced.

Sacked after the revolution, fundamentalists have returned to the country in force since the coup. They occupy positions in the upper echelons of the administration and in public companies. Moral order is once again imposed, particularly on women and youth. Young girls who are not veiled or simply wearing trousers can be arrested. A woman has just been sentenced to stoning for adultery. Young men with long hair or with Rasta hairstyles are imprisoned and shorn.

Continued fighting spirit

On 25 October, the anniversary of the coup, there were huge demonstrations against the junta. The slogans have not changed: a refusal to compromise with the military and the demand that they return to barracks. At the same time, following the murderous events in the Blue Nile, collections were organized for the victims, and slogans for the unity of the country and against racism were taken up.

Under the radar, the US, aided by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, is trying to extract an agreement with the old political parties on the basis of the military's proposal. That is, to return to the previous status quo with a civilian government with limited room for manoeuvre leaving the real power to the military. Hence the importance of structuring an opposition that remains faithful to the demand for a genuine civilian government. The resistance committees, the backbone of the struggle, with their charter of people's power, offer a real political alternative to a compromise agreement with the coup plotters.

3 November 2022

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“Bolsonarismo” after Bolsonaro: What Lula’s Electoral Victory Means for Antifascist Organizing in Brazil

5 November 2022, by Sean Purdy

Forty-nine percent of eligible electors—fifty-eight million people—in the second-largest democracy in the Americas voted for a candidate whose chief campaign slogan was “God, Fatherland, Family and Freedom,” literally copied from Brazilian Integralism, the homegrown fascist movement in the 1930s, and from German Nazi and Italian fascist rhetoric. Bolsonaro’s Liberal Party

(PL) and smaller, allied parties will control up to half the seats in the upper and lower houses of Congress while fourteen of twenty-seven state governors support Bolsonaro. The three largest states—São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais—will be governed by fierce Bolsonaro allies.

Voting is compulsory in Brazil resulting in a relatively low twenty-

percent abstention rate. Lula won handily among the poor, women, Blacks and Indigenous peoples, as well as in many large cities such as São Paulo and Belo Horizonte and in the entire Northeast region of the country. Bolsonaro won a large majority in the southern and midwestern states and narrowly took the remaining regions of the country, including his home base in the city of

Rio de Janeiro where allied paramilitary militias control large swaths of the poor urban periphery. His main supporters were middle-to-upper-class men and older voters in mid-sized cities and rural areas, but a significant proportion of the working class also voted for Bolsonaro in all regions of the country. Small wonder that on election day, the Federal Highway Police, headed by a family friend of Bolsonaro, actively tried to prevent voters in the Lula-dominated Northeast from arriving at the polling booths.

While they are not yet formally organized, Bolsonaro's violent shock troops will continue as a disruptive, anti-democratic force.

While they are not yet formally organized, Bolsonaro's violent shock troops will continue as a disruptive, anti-democratic force. They are ably assisted by the "Hate Cabinet"—composed of hand-picked operators from Bolsonaro's inner circle—who bombard social media with horrendous fake news. The most hard-core Bolsonaro supporters, including independent owner truckers and bosses of large trucking firms (some of whom forced their employees to participate) organized over five hundred blockades of highways around the country in the first three days after the elections, calling for military intervention against the election results. They were denounced by several truckers' unions and roundly condemned by politicians and the media but received formal support from many Bolsonaro cronies. The media have reported numerous cases of the Federal Highway Police assisting the blockaders and Bolsonaro himself, who only tacitly accepted defeat two days after the election, declared that he completely understood his supporters' frustration with "electoral irregularities." He only

slapped them on the wrist for their "methods" insisting that these were characteristic of the left. Three full days after the election there are still almost two hundred highway blockades.

Popular resistance against the anti-democratic blockades and the lack of formal actions by the PT, allied parties, the trade unions and established social movements are portents of the conflicts to come between the top-down parliamentary approach and radical, grass-roots mobilizations. Reluctant state police have broken up most of the highway obstructions after they were ordered to by the Supreme Court. Yet at least seven barricades in four states were taken down by concerted mobilizations of dock workers, poor local residents and left-wing football fan clubs, including two blockades in São Paulo, the largest city in Brazil. Initially calling on its members to forcibly unblock the highways, the Homeless Workers' Movement ended up signing an accord with other PT-supporting social movements and all the main trade union federations to merely "accompany" the actions of Bolsonaro's shock troops, but not to intervene to rout them.

Bolsonaro has already adopted Donald Trump's playbook after the latter's defeat in 2020: 1) Despite being widely debunked, every possible lie about the electronic voting system has been regurgitated to argue that the election was fraudulent; 2) His delayed recognition of defeat speech was a mere two and half minutes and only very timidly accepted the results of the election; 3) He and his supporters have continued to attack democratic institutions such as the Judiciary, alleging that they were victims of political persecution by a supposedly left-wing establishment; 4) Amply using fake news on social media, he has already mobilized his supporters to cause public turmoil to intimidate and threaten, including through physical violence, the left and other democratic forces; 5) He will enlist supporters both at home and abroad—from Trump and Bannon in the US to Orban in Hungary—to bolster his wild conspiracy theory. Racism, homophobia, transphobia and sexism will run rampant.

All this amounts to a fascist-inspired attack on the fledgling liberal capitalist democracy in Brazil. This anti-democratic assault has been tried and tested since Bolsonaro won the fraudulent elections in 2018 through massive fake news and a wave of anti-Workers's Party (PT) sentiment. Bolsonaro encourages his shock troops from below to do his nasty bidding as a complement to his formal, authoritarian politics from above.

There are no better examples of this than the appalling violence during the election campaign. At least four PT activists were murdered in September and October and hundreds of left-wingers were physically assaulted, including one young pregnant woman pamphleting who lost her baby. There were almost two thousand denunciations of electoral coercion by bosses in thirteen hundred different companies threatening their employees to vote for Bolsonaro or face dismissal.

The last week of the election campaign witnessed two bizarre, brutal yet unsurprising episodes by leading Bolsonaro supporters. On October 23, the ex-federal deputy and ferocious Bolsonarista, anti-semite and convicted thief, Roberto Jefferson, attacked the federal police who arrived at his house to arrest him for a vicious and misogynist video against Supreme Court Justice, Carmen Lucia. He fired more than seventy rounds and threw three grenades, wounding two police officers. While his indictment for homicide was officially endorsed by the Bolsonaro government, he received a huge outpouring of support from the Bolsonaro ranks.

And at noon hour the day before the election on a crowded city center street in São Paulo, the reelected federal deputy, Carla Zambelli, one of Bolsonaro's chief precinct captains in the state, pulled out her gun and pursued two young unarmed black men, supporters of Lula, who had argued with her outside a restaurant. Political commentators repeated that this was another shot in the foot for Bolsonaro but ignore the fact that the support she received for her blatantly criminal and racist behavior not only from rank and file Bolsonaristas, but

from leading government figures, including the President's sons, reflects what we face in the next months and years from the far right.

It's also breathtakingly clear that left-wing forces need to rethink how to organize and mobilize the working class and social movements.

It's abundantly clear that the left (not only the PT but smaller allied social democratic parties such as the Party of Socialism and Freedom (PSOL)) underestimated in the last four years the depth of support for Bolsonaro. Despite the lack of realism of Bolsonaro's program, it has struck a deep chord with many people, especially, but not exclusively, among the white, male lower middle class and evangelical Christians who comprise one third of the population. Feeling threatened by recent gains by workers, women, Blacks and the LGBT+ community—won through valiant struggle that forced left-wing parties to act—they have transferred their social economic insecurity and hate towards the oppressed, gambling on economic and social progress through top-down favors of the elite. As several innovative ethnographers of the far right such as Esther Solano and Rosana Pinheiro-Machado have shown, this has resulted in unconditional support for Bolsonaro by at least one-third of the population who have passionately welcomed authoritarian neoliberalism and attacks against the oppressed.

A vital component of this ideology is a gut hatred of the PT and the left—fed by outright lies—aggressively cultivated since the parliamentary coup against PT President Dilma in 2016. It is not at all clear yet how to fully explain this, but it seems worthwhile to revisit classic Marxist

studies by Wilhelm Reich and Theodore Adorno on mass consciousness during the Nazi years and recent studies of Trump's support among the American working class.

Yet it's also breathtakingly clear that left-wing forces need to rethink how to organize and mobilize the working class and social movements. As in the rest of the world during the global capitalist crisis, the left (not to mention traditional centrist and right-wing parties) has been inept in providing solutions to basic problems such as a poor standard of living, food security, lousy working conditions, environmental disaster and the persistence of structures of oppression.

In the Brazilian case, the PT has accepted key tenets of neoliberalism such as fiscal responsibility, kowtowing to the banks and agrobusiness and vacillating on the need for massive social investment to ameliorate one of the most unequal societies in the world. During the PT governments from 2003-2016, Lula and Dilma were temporarily fortunate in having a booming agricultural export sector which facilitated important but limited reforms in the welfare state, education and healthcare. But there was no transformation of the inherently unequal structure of Brazilian society and the state. And when economic winds shifted around 2014, the PT embraced neoliberal remedies for the crisis: reducing pensions and labor rights, slashing social programs and crafting alliances with dubious centrist parties. All this undermined the gains achieved, alienated the party's very base among the working class and paved the way for the right-wing backlash from 2016 to the present.

Send the fascists scurrying back to the gutter.

The PT's presidential platform is brimming with meek promises to reverse the policies of Bolsonaro, but there is little in the way of proposals for economic and social

transformation. And it is yet unclear whether Lula will be able to implement even modest reforms in the context of a hostile Congress and the coup plots of Bolsonaro. No doubt, the PT will forge parliamentary alliances with huckster politicians to pass moderate legislation that will gradually dilute left-wing proposals and demobilize left-wing forces. Lula's acceptance speech on election night already floated moderation and the necessity to "unite" the divergent forces in the country.

The Lula-led left coalition certainly improved during the second-round campaign. The first round witnessed a top-down, bureaucratic marketing conception of politics with few combative street mobilizations. In the last few weeks before the second round, however, Lula came out swinging in the televised debates and the left coalition organized numerous massive street rallies and marches in almost all capital cities. Offering a distinct alternative to neoliberalism, frontally denouncing the violent authoritarianism of Bolsonaro and mobilizing workers and social movements in the streets was always the best option and will continue to be so.

In the coming months and years, the left will not only need to confront the coup plots of Bolsonaro, but ensure that he, his family and key supporters be punished for their many crimes, including the criminal mismanagement of the pandemic that left seven hundred thousand Brazilians dead and widespread corruption and theft from the public purse. This will also be a critical form of combatting the far right.

Another danger is the incorporation of social movement and union activists into the Lula government, watering down the potential for independent and radical mobilizations from below while boosting the business-as-usual cretinism of parliamentary politics. This shift transformed the PT during the 1990s and 2000s into a party no longer against the capitalist order, but as an accomplice to the system. The inaction of the PT-allied trade unions and social movements to the highway blockades is already a worrying sign.

Continued mobilizations from below for social and economic gains (and, if necessary, against the Lula government) will be the first order of business. There are remarkable national homeless workers' and landless workers' movements, the unions are down but not yet out, and in the last years grass-roots organizations of secondary and university students, anti-racist, LGBT+ and feminist groups have

proliferated.

We need to learn from our history, too. In October 1934, a planned march by the burgeoning Brazilian fascist movement in Sé Square in São Paulo was fantastically routed by a grass-roots counter demonstration of communists, Trotskyists, anarchists, social democrats and unionists who sent the fascists scurrying back to the gutter. It is popularly known in Brazil

as the Flock of the Green Chickens since the fascists fleeing the square threw off their green shirts in their desperate attempt to anonymously flee. We need to be prepared to do the same with the green and yellow national football jerseys favored by the Bolsonaristas.

November 4, 2022

Source [Spectre](#).

Gustavo Petro tested in power in Colombia

4 November 2022, by **Patrick Guillaudat**

Colombia is considered a US forward base because of its strategic location, wedged between Central and South America, with the US military presence on the ground allowing monitoring of the Caribbean sea while keeping an eye on the rest of Latin America. Colombian right-wing parties have always ensured that the Colombian political left and social movements remain outside political power. Hence the victory of the Petro/Marquez ticket constitutes a break with the contemporary history of the country.

The Colombian exception

It could easily be believed that since Colombia has always been governed by the right, its people would have remained outside the upheavals of the Latin American world. The right has been in power continuously and the country was not affected by the "progressive wave" of the early 2000s. But then how can we understand that two of the most powerful guerrilla movements on the continent, the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and the ELN (National Liberation Army) are found in this country?

The explanation goes back to 1948, the date of the assassination of the liberal Jorge Eliécer Gaitan, when the

ultra-conservative bourgeoisie unleashed a wave of mass executions against the opposition, and everything related directly or indirectly to social organizations. This period of Colombian history, *la Violencia*, lasted until the 1960s and caused between 100,000 and 300,000 deaths. It was during these years that the Colombian left made the choice of survival and opted for armed struggle. The FARC was formed from the Colombian Communist Party while the ELN was created around supporters of the Cuban revolution, especially Guevaristas, and Christians committed to liberation theology, followers of Camilo Torres. Even the nationalist left was forced to go underground, totally or partially. This was the case, for example, with the M-19 (April 19 Movement), which laid down its arms in 1990 and from which Gustavo Petro came.

An attempt to return to legal political life was attempted by the FARC from 1984 with the creation of the Popular Union. But its activists were hunted down. A report by the National Centre for Historical Memory listed 4,153 activists murdered between 1984 and 2002. [30] It is not surprising that the armed organizations were able to survive, the population seeing no democratic and legal solution to its demands, any social demand leading to ferocious repression.

It was because of this internal war that a particular form of state developed in Colombia, with armed forces mainly engaged in the fight against the "internal enemy" and the creation of paramilitary groups, used by the government for "unofficial" tasks, most often in alliance with drug trafficking groups. [31]

Despite this deleterious situation, the US relied on the Colombian government to develop a strong military presence on the pretext of the "war against drugs", reinforced with the signing in 1999 of Plan Colombia, which came into force in 2001. Behind the announced objective of developing the country and fighting against social inequalities and drug trafficking lay a completely different motive: disarming the guerrilla organizations, primarily the FARC, and keeping Colombia under US domination. [32] Since then, governments have succeeded one another with programs limited to more or less one-upmanship in their commitment to fight against "terrorism", the prize for cynicism going to President Alvaro Uribe, former mayor of Medellín, intimately linked to drug trafficking, elected in 2002 to eradicate the guerrillas. During his two terms, he promoted the development of paramilitary groups that multiplied abuses, particularly in the countryside, punctuated by summary executions, destruction of crops by chemical spraying and

displacement of populations.

But this war against the FARC was a failure: guerrilla warfare still existed, and the Colombian people increasingly openly demanded that peace talks begin. This is one of the explanations for the victory in 2010 of Uribe's successor, Juan Manuel Santos, architect of the peace agreement signed between the Colombian government and the FARC in 2016. The "Uribist" right has tried to sabotage this agreement and hijack it to disarm the FARC while preserving most of the right-wing armed groups sowing terror in the countryside. This situation was used to conduct a campaign to denounce the peace agreement, all the more effective as peace seemed out of reach. [33]

Since then, Iván Duque, the ultraconservative candidate in the 2018 presidential elections and Uribe's nominee, has repeatedly taken up this demand, widely shared by the Colombian media. As soon as he was elected, he took over his mentor's policy of repression, and in 2021 international organizations noted that only 30% of the provisions of this agreement were implemented.

New forms of domination and resistance

To understand this triptych signature/denunciation/revival of the peace agreement, we must return to the profound changes in the Colombian economy. As in the rest of the continent, neoliberal reforms were implemented in Colombia, and during the last decade of the twentieth century labour market reforms, tax relief, and the disengagement of the state from social spending began. In addition to copying and pasting neoliberal recipes, the Colombian state has decided to transfer a large part of its social policies to local or regional administrative entities, reinforcing the prevailing clientelism.

But behind these reforms there was also a profound change in Colombian capitalism. The main vector of growth and export is no longer agriculture

(especially coffee), but the mining sector, which quickly became dominant and attracts foreign investors. Colombia entered the cycle of a rentier economy subject to the world market. However, mining requires prospecting and especially securing extraction sites, made difficult by the presence of armed groups on a significant part of the territory. There were two very different solutions to secure this primary development model. The first was to wage a life-and-death struggle against these groups – a priority issue of Plan Colombia. It is this strategy that was chosen by the Colombian bourgeoisie in supporting the candidacy of Alvaro Uribe for the presidential election of 2002. The second solution emerged as a result of the failure of this method: to negotiate a peace agreement opening the door to free movement in areas of future exploitation. This was implemented by the new President Santos, elected in 2010 and re-elected in 2014, a strategy that was denounced again by his successor Iván Duque, elected in 2018.

The effects of this extractivism quickly became a cause for mobilizations of Indigenous peoples who demanded to remain on their ancestral territories and denounced the social, health and environmental consequences of this new productive model. Connections thus began to emerge between these rural movements and those of urban youth, sensitive to struggles for the defence of the environment and the trade union movement fighting increased flexibilization of labour and the social ravages caused by neoliberalism. There were student strikes in 2011 and 2018 in particular, but the big mobilization of April/May 2019 was a global struggle against Iván Duque's anti-social measures, in particular against his tax reform, but also against the privatization of pension funds and the new reform of the labour code. This popular revolt tended to unify all social sectors against the government's policy. It was followed by that of 2021, which took the form of a massively followed general strike, in continuity with that of 2019. Although the government abandoned its new tax reform project after a few days of demonstrations and strikes that paralyzed the country, the

mobilization continued because the demonstrators also demanded an end to social inequalities and corruption and obtained the abandonment of the neoliberal reform of the health system. [34] The tax reform is all the more contested as it involves generalising income tax while reducing corporation tax and increasing the VAT rate on essential services (water, electricity and so on) and on several food products. By refusing to raise taxes on the richest and extending taxes to the poorest, Iván Duque's government has tried to have the debts accumulated with the Covid-19 pandemic paid off by the poor and middle classes, although the poverty rate increased by a third between 2020 and 2021.

Quickly this de facto conjunction of social struggles pointed the finger at a common adversary: neoliberal policies. By bursting into the political field, these social movements precipitated the reorganization of the political left, which was carried out by successive trial and error. First there was the creation of the Alternative Democratic Pole, a coalition of left-wing forces that stood for the first time in the presidential elections in 2006. But above all, there was the creation of the Historic Pact in 2021, a coalition of seven organizations, which led to the victory of Petro.

The Historic Pact, by bringing together national and local organisers of these struggles and presenting their candidacies at the general elections of 2022, has managed to become hegemonic within the social sectors in struggle. Through this interweaving, the Historic Pact represents a successful fusion between the social movements that mobilized widely in 2019 and 2021 with left-wing activists and political currents.

From mobilizations to electoral victory

Despite the opposition of the bourgeoisie and the unleashing of the media against social mobilizations and left-wing candidacies in the 2022 elections, the Petro/Markquez ticket

won the presidential elections despite the right's demonization of Francia Marquez in particular. [35] The Historic Pact achieved this feat by articulating the strong popular aspiration for peace and a promise to revive the 2016 agreement with a catalogue of anti-neoliberal measures. The strategy of starting from the aspirations expressed by the mobilizations "from below" to build a new political tool conceived as an outlet for the demands of social struggles has paid off.

This first victory of the left in the history of Colombia has accentuated the crisis of the right, a right shaken by the mobilizations of 2019 and 2021, divided on the issue of the peace agreement, and which led a hysterical campaign with the media against Petro's candidacy. So much so that it was the outsider Rodolfo Hernández who came out ahead on the right in the first round, beating the traditional parties. [36] But after Petro's victory, the bourgeoisie understood that it was necessary to avoid falling into a Brazilian-style situation with a Bolsonaro who managed to antagonize most of the Brazilian employers. For this reason, the Consejo Gremial Nacional (CGN), Colombia's main employers' organization, invited Petro on June 19 to "integrate a common program that aims at the unity of our country and the social and economic development of Colombia", thus taking the place of the political right, defeated, divided and in full reconstruction. [37] In response, on 23 August 2022, President Petro invited the GNC to discuss the tax reform project, which is expected to bring in \$11 billion and will finance social spending. He also asked the GNC to reach an agreement with the unions on labour reform in 2023.

Back to the Future

The country's economic situation is uncertain - although the OECD predicts GDP growth of more than 6% as inequality has continued to deepen

with an unemployment rate of over 13% and a formal employment rate of just over 50%. Uncertainties about the future prompted employers to quickly seek guarantees from Petro. This requires a revival of peace agreements, thus paving the way for the exploitation of the subsoil in sectors hitherto outside the control of the state. To achieve this, Petro has accelerated the process and is seeking to generalize it for all armed groups. He has proposed its enlargement to the ELN and has already called for the opening of negotiations with the drug cartels, promising appropriate penalties and the refusal of any extradition to the USA in exchange for an end to the violence. [38] One of the objectives is also to revive the agrarian reform project, part of which is provided for in the peace agreement but has never been implemented.

Without a majority in Parliament, to achieve its ends, the Petro government is counting on a part of the right, especially that which supported Santos. Petro has appointed members of right-wing opposition parties and even former ministers of previous governments to key positions in his government, and thus affirmed his desire to associate himself with an anti-Uribe right. [39] From a more global point of view, this action is based on his conviction of a vision of Colombia not as a dependent capitalist society but as a feudal society. For him, before arriving at an egalitarian society it is first necessary to create a capitalist Colombia with a developed national bourgeoisie. It isn't certain that this old antiphon will resist the popular demands that allowed him to accede to power. [40] As for the US, although the country's foreign policy is primarily oriented towards Asia because of the conflict with China, it is not certain that Biden will be satisfied with the new neutrality displayed by President Petro, especially since the new Colombian president wants to review the free trade agreement that binds him to the US and has decided to resume diplomatic relations with Venezuela.

Petro's Colombia is part of a relatively long sequence in Latin America where in many countries, the coming to power of new left-wing parties is driven by the waves of social struggles that preceded these electoral victories. Beginning in 1998 with the election of Hugo Chávez, it seemed to close with the return of the right in Ecuador, the coup d'état against Morales in Bolivia, Bolsonaro's victory in Brazil or the defeat of the Frente Amplio in Uruguay.

Yet, very recently, the victories of Boric in Chile, Castillo in Peru and Petro in Colombia have shown that we are still in the same sequence... but with strong nuances. The anti-imperialist discourse of the first wave has largely faded and these three new presidents are much more inclined to expand their majority towards a part of the right. These three newly elected representatives are entangled in their choice to respect institutions, whereas Chávez, Correa or Morales had made the political choice, in order to change the situation, to immediately convene a constituent assembly by relying directly on the social mobilizations that followed their victories. Petro decided not to take advantage of the window opened by the defeat of the right to advance his advantage by relying on the euphoria caused by his victory among the people.

From the point of view of political power, the hopes of social transformation of the Colombian people are now suspended on the laws that will or will not be adopted by the government coalition. It isn't certain that the faction of the right that supports the government and the employers goes in the same direction as the population that fought massively in 2019 and 2021. Given the scale of past mobilizations, it is also not certain that the Colombian people will be satisfied with this in-between for long.

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

Abortion: a pillar of a broad pro-democracy and human rights coalition

3 November 2022, by **Camila Valle, Mabel Bellucci**

Camila Valle: What forms of feminist consciousness or organizing gave rise to the abortion movement you were part of, and what were you reacting against?

Mabel Bellucci: In the 1980s and '90s in Argentina, discussion on abortion, along with lesbianism and sex work, was often silenced. This generated a tension between the more mainstream feminist movement and both feminist abortion activists and lesbian feminists. I started having tensions with hetero-cis feminists: While my compañeras for the most part were more liberal, I was a queer activist from the traditional left.

Dora Coledesky, a militant Trotskyist and feminist activist who had been in exile during the dictatorship, was a great mentor and teacher to me. When she came back to Buenos Aires, she realized that abortion was not a demand of the feminist movement and decided in the late 1980s to found the Commission for the Right to Abortion, which was the seed for what would later become the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion. She put "abortion" right in the title.

CV: One of the most remarkable things to me, as someone who organizes in the US, is the democratic popular culture in Argentina. There's a history of assemblies, national meet-ups, organizational fronts, collective spaces for debate. This is not only a political legacy of resistance to the dictatorship, but also of resistance against globalization and the external debt, and in particular of the uprisings of 2001, which were sparked by Argentina's economic crisis. Those mobilizations shaped the rise of

the the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion, which was officially established in 2005 and achieved its legislative victory in 2020. How did the broader uprisings impact the feminist movement, and how did the feminist movement shape the other erupting struggles?

MB: In the late 1990s, the Commission for the Right to Abortion and the Frente de la Democracia Avanzada [a left coalition made up of student organizations, human rights organizations, the feminist movement, the abortion movement, the queer movement, teachers, professors, and others] became more connected with HIJOS, an organization of the children of those disappeared during the dictatorship, who tended to be the most radical sector in the human rights panorama. They began to do *escraches* [an Argentinian term for a type of direct action that involves publicly shaming prominent figures, usually by gathering around their homes and chanting] of the repressors of the dictatorship.

I was on the Buenos Aires *escrache* committee. It was incredible. We would figure out where the repressors lived, go to their neighborhoods, and spend an entire month there raising awareness. We would knock on every door in the neighborhood and tell people that someone responsible for carrying out the brutalities of the dictatorship lived there. There were flyers, pamphlets, information everywhere in the community, so everyone knew. After this period of building relationships and informing the public, we would announce the *escrache*, and the whole community would come out. We would go on bikes, in vans. It was a rare moment of militancy in human rights organizations. Most things at that

point were about talking to the state, but this was street action that went straight to the doors of those responsible.

CV: It sounds like a carnival! Wasn't it Lenin who said that revolutions are the festivals of the oppressed?

MB: It really was! We had so much fun. We would go out in full costume; we did it all. It wasn't a thing of the left or of feminism, it was just celebratory people power.

CV: I've been thinking about the *escraches* a lot, because here in the US people recently tried to do a tamer and much more spontaneous version. After the Supreme Court memo leaked, people gathered around the homes of the justices who signed on to overturn Roe v. Wade, where they chalked the streets and chanted. Members of Congress have urged the criminalization of these types of protests and the prosecution of the protestors. Can you say a little about how the *escraches* with HIJOS were so important to the growth of the abortion movement in Argentina?

MB: As a form of collective protest, the *escrache* represented more than an imaginative provocation. Its modality was a "performative" staging of direct action, in which a multiplicity of cultural traditions converged. At first it had a single objective: the social condemnation of those who had not been prosecuted for their human rights violations during the dictatorship. But in a short time, the act of *escrachar* expanded its borders and went from being a classic expression of political rejection against the representatives of the dictatorship to being used by other

groups as a method of visibility, and of denunciation. Feminist groups built and organized escraches for everything, especially to publicly discuss abortion.

By the end of the 1990s, abortion had developed a different profile thanks to the coalitions, and the collective experiences of political development, of which it was a part. Feminism and women were protagonistic. Support for abortion became more public and widespread.

CV: Where did the movement direct that growing popular support?

MB: It played out in the mass popular rebellions of December 19th and 20th, 2001, which precipitated a new phase of struggle in Argentinian society—for democracy and against traditional political parties, politicians in general, austerity, and the external debt. We started organizing all types of actions in the urban centers: Buenos Aires, La Plata, Rosario, Córdoba, Mendoza, Neuquén. The rebellion's political character came from the piqueteros [unemployed movement], the student movement, the labor movement. We also built neighborhood assemblies that were mutual aid networks as well as political organizing spaces. We created an abortion assembly, where abortion was the focus.

But what happened with abortion in that conjuncture was that it was able

to move out of its silo, its side lane, into the other assemblies and movements. The abortion movement began to activate itself in all the assemblies, establishing itself in each one. By then, it was no longer really necessary to have just one specific grouping or assembly raise the question of abortion. Abortion became a pillar of all the fronts and coalitions. It became totally integrated, thanks to the campaign itself, which made it a central part of every other issue.

CV: I think this is a really important insight: The refusal of the abortion movement to be siloed from other radical movements helped develop it from being somewhat on the fringes to being a pillar of a broad pro-democracy and human rights coalition. The other lesson, another side to this point, is how collective experiences of democratization can help bring marginalized issues like abortion to the fore, both in society more broadly and within the left in particular.

MB: Absolutely. The assemblies were very heterogenous, and the official national campaign for abortion that emerged in those years took on a national and cross-class character. The assemblies also had as a starting point that abortion was a demand that needed to be raised, without fail, just as they demanded an end to

repression, discrimination, and the external debt. At that point, everything was mixing with everything: ecology, feminism, queer and trans movements, all forms of resistance.

CV: While abortion is entering a new phase of legality in Argentina, the opposite is true in the US. Any concluding thoughts about the parallels or differences between these trajectories?

MB: The experiences of countries in the Global North, especially the US, have shown us that legalization opens up its own new stage of struggle, one that will entail a fight against the strategies anti-abortion groups will develop in the coming years. In the US, we are seeing now the material and ideological effects of decades of assault on the right to abortion. There is a lesson there that we must think about in Argentina. Legalization never means that inequalities and oppressions have been abolished: A poor person choosing unwanted parenthood because they cannot or choose not to access abortion is of significant political concern to me. My hope in narrating the history of the fight for abortion as a gesture of disobedience is that we can begin tearing down the oppressive and totalitarian order as a whole.

*Source: **Jewish Currents**. This interview was translated from the Spanish by Camila Valle.*

Violent Attack on Speaker of House, Threats of Political Violence from Top to Bottom

2 November 2022, by **Dan La Botz**

The attack seems to have been driven by DePape's rightwing views. DePape had written hundreds of posts on Facebook and 4chan attacking Jews, Blacks and transgender people, the mass media and Democrats. He claimed that COVID vaccines were deadly and supported the Q Anon

conspiracy. DePape also seems to be deranged and suffering from delusions.

Whatever DePape's mental state, the attack is part of a pattern of rising rightwing violence. The pinnacle of the violence so far was the attempted

coup on January 6, 2021 when thousands of Trump supporters, led by rightwing militias like Oath Keepers and Proud Boys, invaded the Capitol to prevent the counting and certification of the vote that would make Joseph Biden president. Rioters threatened to kill then Vice-President

Mike Pence. They also went through the congressional offices shouting, "Where's Nancy?" One of the rioters said at that time, "We were looking for Nancy to shoot her in the frickin' brain. But we didn't find her."

Progressive congressional representatives who are women of color like Ilhan Omar and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, loathed by the right, have received innumerable death threats.

In October of 2020 the FBI arrested thirteen men from a paramilitary organization called Wolverine Watchmen, for plotting to kidnap Governor Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan. Two of the men were convicted of a plan to kidnap her and provoke a national insurrection.

Officials who oversee state elections have been threatened because their election results showed that Biden had defeated former president Donald Trump in 2020. Arizona Secretary of

State and Democratic nominee for governor Katie Hobbs, received this threat: "Attention ALL Corrupt and Treasonous Government Officials...If you Cunt Lickers continue to fuck with the integrity of the AZ Elections...I guarantee you, We the People will remove you from office...We will find you through the Tax Assessors Website...Remember the French revolution of 1799?"

A voicemail for Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich on Sept. 27, 2021, said, "When we come to lynch you, you stupid lying Commie son of a bitch, you'll remember that you lied on the goddamned Bible, you piece of shit. You're gonna die, you piece of shit. We're going to hang you."

Election workers are also threatened. In Vermont, a man told an election worker, "This might be a good time to put a fucking pistol in your fucking mouth and pull the trigger." There have been hundreds of such threats.

Republicans are mobilizing an army of

poll watchers to intimidate voters on November 8. In reaction, in Florida, Od'Juan Whitfield of a group of black churches called Faith in Public Life says, "We are sending pastors to the polling sites to be peacekeepers, to make sure that if any voter has any questions or any concerns that they can be answered, because protecting and expanding our freedom to vote and honoring the will of the people is our moral duty."

The attack on Pelosi is just the latest event in a growing pattern of rightwing violence aimed mostly at Democrats. Republicans with few exceptions do not criticize the violence and sometimes tacitly approve it. While American democracy is imperfect, dominated by corporate money and marred by suppression of Black voters, it remains a political democracy, but the rising tide of political violence could in the not-too-distant future sweep it away unless there is a united front to oppose it.

30 October 2022

Rishi Sunak - can he fix it for the Tories?

1 November 2022, by **Dave Kellaway**

At the same time, it shows how the closed English class system works because he made it to the top through the greased channels familiar to the native elite. He was sent by solid middle class parents to Winchester public school, where he became head boy. He studied Politics, Philosophy, and Economics and achieved a first at Oxford. Next, he took a business administration masters degree at Stanford in the USA. Sunak worked as an analyst at Goldman Sachs and became a partner at two hedge funds. He married the daughter of the billionaire founder of the Indian company Infosys. Sunak and his wife made it onto the Sunday Times rich list. He is the only politician on there. He will be the richest PM ever.

One word cloud based on public responses published recently had

competence and intelligence highlighted, but the biggest word associated with Sunak by far was rich. During COVID, he won some popularity with the furlough scheme and the "eat out to help out" scheme, but he also shared in some of the same deadly errors that Johnson made. His cheap eating out wheeze increased the spread of COVID. Many millions of pounds were lost in the way the business grants system was managed, as fraudulent claims easily got through. He never raised objections to the Tory 'mates' queue for personal protection and other health provisions when shoddy, useless products made people very rich. Negative publicity around his partner's non-dom status, his COVID fine, and his image as a rich toff living in a different world to most of us has already dented his image before his latest reincarnation

as saviour of the economy.

A problem of legitimacy

Constitutionally, it is perfectly in order for a governing political party to change its leader and, therefore, the PM without calling a general election. People vote for a party and its manifesto, not for a particular leader. However, the 24/7 media coverage of politics today focuses on leaders and personalities, so most people do not really concern themselves with all the constitutional intricacies. They see 3 prime ministers in 6 months and 4 chancellors in 4 months, and they feel they have no say in the change of direction and focus that each has brought to the table. It also looks

chaotic, incompetent, and provokes a sense of a crumbling regime. All of this is also happening in the middle of the worst cost of living crisis in fifty years. You can understand the mass resentment and bitterness, which is reflected in polls putting Labour over 50% and up to 30 percentage points ahead.

Even some Tory MPs, like Nadine Dorries and Christopher Chope, who are diehard Johnsonites, argued that since their hero did not compete in the ballot and he uniquely represented the mandate won in 2019, there should be a general election. Dorries suggested “all hell would break loose” if Sunak was crowned. She and others say that the parliamentary party shut down the voices of members who supported Johnson. Indeed, there is some truth in this accusation. The contest was organised in a way that was always going to favour Sunak. Currently, such minority views have been submerged in desperate cries for unity by MPs from all wings of the party. Sunak won easily, but that doesn’t hide the fact that his party base and network aren’t very strong. The pro-Johnson rump still holds him responsible for striking the first blow against their king. Johnson’s sigh that the ‘time is not right’ means he will still possibly hover in the wings, causing trouble for Sunak.

Can Sunak maintain Tory party unity?

Matt Frei, on Channel 4, made a good point when he asked if it was a cabinet of all the talents or of all the factions. Sunak, unlike Johnson or Truss, hasn’t built his own network or historical base within the party. He knows that the factional warfare between one nation Tories, the Spartan Brexiteers, the Johnsonites, and the Truss people will re-emerge once any fleeting honeymoon period is over. In the end, as Phil Hearse pointed out in a recent article on this site, the differences within the Tory party reflect the interests of different parts of the capitalist class. Sunak is closer to representing the interests of the transnational capitalist class. Brexit

was never really something that the dominant sectors of British or international capital wanted. The problem is that its political interests have been traditionally organised in parliament by the Tory party, which is made up of representatives of the middle classes, small businesses, domestic capital, finance, and international capital. Once Cameron let the Brexit nightmare out of the bag, the party was utterly divided.

The new cabinet contains all the factions, although the Truss team is much less represented—11 of her cabinet members did not make the new one. The supposedly squeaky-clean Sunak was also not above honouring a deal with Suella Braverman in exchange for her support at a crucial time in the leadership campaign. He has signalled that, unlike Truss’s recent line, he does not want to loosen the rules on migrant entry. The idea that he was less anti-woke and more socially liberal was shown to be false when he made Kemi Badenoch an equalities minister. She voted against same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland, banned gender neutral toilets and called trans women men. The new cabinet has less female representation (23%) than recent ones.

Everywhere he turns, he has issues that could set him against one or other of the factions. Rescuing Braverman rather than just reneging on the deal could come back to bite him. Jake Berry, ex-minister and chair of the party, stated today that there was more than one data security breach from Braverman that broke the ministerial code. As one might expect, Starmer and the other opposition parties are focusing on this aspect of the situation rather than principled opposition to Rwanda’s racist project.

Blocking welfare benefits from going up with inflation or dropping the triple lock could bring him up against the one nation people. Cutting back on the 3% defence budget target would mean a confrontation with Wallace. Any concessions to the EU on the Northern Ireland protocol would inflame Baker and his European Reform Group. Tory MPs have got used to voting against their government. The prospect of defeat in the next election will focus

their minds, but they may also think in terms of “we’re all going down anyway” and “I’m going to stick to my guns.”

It would be a very difficult situation, even for somebody with more years of political experience. Sunak is not that honed in the fine arts of politics. His antics in the leadership campaign against Truss when he kept doubling down on various issues in order to win the membership did not look like someone who was a strong leader with his own vision and strategy. The boasting of diverting money from deprived areas to the home counties did not go down well with the Red Wall Tories. It looked inept.

Will there be a Sunak bounce?

Possibly there will be. In fact, Starmer has rather stupidly already suggested it will happen—why reinforce the message your opponents are pushing? The Conservatives and their media will talk up the fact that he is the first PM with Indian roots and that he is only 42 years old. They hope this may play well among certain demographics. The Tory press has seamlessly and shamelessly changed tack several times in less than a week or so. From championing Truss’s mini budget to then rubbishising it, and then relishing the triumphant return of Johnson from his Caribbean luxury resort to lionising Sunak as the new saviour. The fact that he called out the dangers of Trussonomics from the start will also make him look more competent and serious than her or even Johnson.

However there are the negatives:

- he is not a completely new face,
- his shared bungling of COVID,
- the non-dom tax status of his partner,
- his ‘love of Britain that gave him so much is slightly undermined by his holding on to an American green card for so long,
- his rich toff otherness is highlighted rather than dimmed in his staged interaction with the public – the petrol station incident – he does not have the Johnson touch,

- his boasting about the way he was diverting government money going to deprived Labour areas won't help him in the red wall seats.

He is also facing a united call from all the other parties and public opinion for a general election. Labour looks a bit more vigorous and confident at the moment as its policies on several big issues are first rejected and then adopted by the Tories. The green energy public company and the windfall tax are popular.

What next?

Both the media and the government are framing the economic situation as 'how do we fill the financial black hole of 30 to 40 billion so that the markets are happy'. We explained in a recent article how the 'markets' and 'financial black holes' are political and ideological constructs. Different economic strategies can sustain bigger or smaller government borrowing. If borrowing for investment and sustainability is prioritised, then it can ease inflationary pressures. Bigger taxes can be imposed on the rich and corporations. These "holes" can change from one week to the next depending on the volatility of the markets. Postponing the financial statement to November 17, when it will become an autumn statement, is said to be already making the burden of borrowing £10 billion less as the worries about the Truss experiment fade from the memory of Britain's international creditors.

Sunak and Hunt have already stated that there will be eye-watering cuts to public spending. Today, the media is showing the NHS is on its knees with ambulances queuing to get a bed for patients and the crisis in the care system blocking elderly people getting out of hospital at the other end. Cuts will only exacerbate the cost-of-living crisis. It is possible that Sunak will consider new windfall taxes and make interventions to help the poorest of the poor. But overall, working people will be hit hard.

Public spending cuts are particularly difficult when the government is facing a full-blown strike wave in the

public sector. How can it carry out 15% cuts across departments and also meet pay demands for inflation-proof pay rises? Sunak may think that a hard line against the unions, backed up with new anti-trade union laws guaranteeing minimum service levels, could win back support for the Tories. All the evidence up to now shows the strikers are winning majority support from the public. Taking on the unions and causing them to work together more could even make it impossible to run the country and force a general election.

The increasing call for a general election raises the stakes in a positive way for all the strikers. A link can be made between the wage demands and a political solution to the crisis. People will see that if this government cannot meet the demands, then we need one that will. Usually, wage struggles do not take place in such a context.

Some people on the left are counterposing the need to build and support the strikes with the call for a general election now to kick out the Tories. They say that it undermines the struggle and breeds illusions in or reliance on Starmer's Labour. Some even say they would not vote for Labour against the Tories. We have responded in more detail to these ultra-left and sectarian arguments here. Workers understand there is a difference between Labour and the Tories, even if it is a case of "marginal gains" (to quote Dave Brailsford, the British cycling guru). Given the affiliation of unions to Labour, more pressure can potentially be exerted. Anyway, it is very difficult to have other options with our undemocratic first past the post system.

Our demands today

For the left, the most urgent demands for action now are:

- solidarity and support all strikers for inflation proof wage increases
- no cuts, tax the Rishi Rich, super profits of energy companies and others
- defend the democratic rights to protest, defend the eco-activists

- general election now, Tories out
- fossil free by 2030

The democratic rights issue is particularly important as the government's public order bill proposes even more draconian restrictions on the right to protest. So far, Sunak has shown no qualms about supporting them.

Going forward, we have no illusions that Starmer will lead a radical government. He is more interested in a prawn cocktail offensive to woo business than solidarity with any strikers. A more detailed action plan is needed on the left, which can begin with some of the more progressive policies proposed by the Labour Party on the Green transition, the new public energy company, proportional representation, and constitutional reform, including for Scotland and Wales. We can reshape them into policies that can begin to challenge capitalist rule. Such demands will have increasing traction if the confidence and self-organisation of working people develops as a result of the strike wave, cost of living campaigns and the eco-revolt.

Nesrine Malik, writing for the [Guardian newspaper](#) on the 24th of October against the ideology of "adult" politics, puts her finger on what opposition we need:

Even among a fuming opposition there is a sort of bloodless anger. "The damage to mortgages and bills has been done," tweeted Keir Starmer as if the economic impact is being felt by pieces of paper rather than people. It seems everyone has understood that injecting feeling and channelling the fear and deprivation that stalks people every day disqualifies you from being taken seriously as a politician. The "adult" approach seems to be keeping the markets happy and achieving abstract "growth", rather than also prioritising the security of those so on the margins they cannot benefit from that growth; those who will suffer most when the next round of soberly dictated cuts arrive.

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Source

Anti*Capitalist Resistance.